

## Book Reviews

A. J. W. Taylor

*Antarctic Psychology (DSIR Bulletin No. 244)*

Wellington: Science Publishing Centre, 1987

Pp. 142.

Reviewed by Robert A. M. Gregson.

A tiny fraction of humanity has lived, worked, or died in Antarctica, and of them the psychologists are still a tinier fraction compared with other disciplines represented in research or exploratory teams. The compelling interest in how one may survive in hostile environments, not just fed by the tradition of early explorers but rekindled by cosmonauts in space stations, ensures that the crumbs of facts and the plethora of speculations get published in biography, popular science, and technical reports.

Taylor has certainly been involved in Antarctic studies more than any other New Zealand psychologist, so it is fitting he should attempt a review of stress and coping parameters found or suspected to occur in the working conditions found there.

The problem with Antarctica is that the psychologist and the people studied do not go to it with an open mind, but with a colourful tradition of the successes, and the self-destructive ineptitudes, of the early explorers. Taylor does not exactly help by some quotations out of context, and the odd misattribution of a source. He fails to note that what some explorers called *polar anaemia* was severe vitamin deficiency with its psychological sequelae. This sustains the myth that Antarctica should create special stress patterns, connected with the four-month winter dark, cold and isolation. The conformity pressures of working in small groups constrained by little living space have resulted in some odd behaviour being recorded, and some groups unfortunately bring with them collective values more appropriate to hearty adventurous recreation than to a scientific working laboratory. The diverse reports from France, USA, USSR, Britain, Australia and

NZ give us the hint that trying to psychologize from NZ to other teams could be less valid than Taylor would like us to believe. Some groups are effectively on military outstation postings, others on construction contracts, and Taylor focusses on men selected in some way for small teams to perform routine work in partial isolation.

The key problems are to predict who will cope, and what performance decrements they may show. The results on personality testing are singularly unsurprising; the desirable qualities being those we would select for in any working environment where interpersonal dependence can be critical for survival. Data on performance levels and decrements fall into three types; observations on the thankfully rare cases of near-psychotic behaviour apparently induced by the stimulus-impoverished environment, self-report on affect and cognition, and psychophysiological testing. Repeated attempts by a few experimental psychologists to detect psychophysical performance changes have shown only that performance, when monitored on a diversity of sensory, cognitive and neuropsychological tasks, may actually improve over a period of winter duty in a modern base. Taylor has repeatedly strained for an explanation of why self-report doesn't square with actual behaviour on such measures (the most recent instance being Taylor and Duncum, 1987, after this book), not grasping the implications of the findings about changes in suggestibility detected in Antarctic personnel by Barabasz and Gregson (1978). In other environments besides the polar ice caps people have but poor insight into fluctuations in their sensory and cognitive performance. Suggestibility born of presuppositions about what the environment must do to the organism, in either non-psychologists or psychologists, is also not a rare antarctic phenomenon. Taylor's comment (p. 95) that subjects "might simply have lowered their psycho-sensory reactions subconsciously to comply with the lower demands (of Antarctica)" is a sad example of the circularity inevitable when

someone tries to explain psychophysics with psychoanalysis. One can better argue that sensory 'demands' are in fact greater because the signal/noise ratios are less (as is the case for olfaction at low ambient temperatures) and so sensitivity should rise slightly, which is what it often does.

The impression we are left with is that there is nothing that is unique about Antarctica, but it furnishes us with a laboratory to study the combined effects of low stress in teams who have no prior insight into what is going to be demanded of them. Studies have that diffuseness and repetitiveness which is characteristic of personality profiling, and we should not be at all surprised.

#### References

- Barabasz, A. F. and Gregson, R. A. M. (1978) Effects of wintering-over on the perception of odourants at Scott Base, *New Zealand Antarctic Record*, 1, (3), 14-23.
- Taylor, A. J. W. and Duncum, K. (1987) Some Cognitive Effects of Wintering-over in the Antarctic. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 16, (2), 93-94.

Mark R. Leary and Rowland S. Miller  
*Social Psychology and Dysfunctional Behaviour: Origins, Diagnosis, and Treatment.*  
New York: Springer-Verlag 1981.  
*Reviewed by* Ross Flett.

Leary and Miller have produced an excellent book which emphasises the importance of interpersonal processes in the development, maintenance and treatment of dysfunctional behaviour. Leary will already be well known to a number of researchers and clinicians for his work on social anxiety and Miller has published in the area of shyness.

The result of their efforts is a straightforward and useful overview text. The writing style is relaxed and easy to read and will be of interest to both students and teachers of social and clinical psychology.

The book is divided into three main parts, the first of which is a very brief introduction and places the current relationship between social and clinical psychology in a historical context.

The second section describes the role of

interpersonal processes in the development of dysfunctional behaviour. The first two chapters describe the role of attributional processes (particularly self attributions, attributions of control and more generally perceived control) in the development of depression. In the two subsequent chapters the role of motivating factors such as self-esteem maintenance, self awareness avoidance, and impression management, are discussed in relation to a range of dysfunctional behaviours such as aggression, social anxiety and avoidant behaviour, schizophrenia, and physical illness. This section ends with a very nice (albeit brief) discussion of troubled relationships.

The third section deals with interpersonal processes involved in clinical diagnosis and treatment. Problems associated with clinical inference (e.g. belief perseverance, illusory correlations, overconfidence etc) are discussed at some length and represents a useful summary of the area. The role of factors such as attributions, attitude change, compliance and expectancies in influencing behaviour and cognitive change are also covered.

Overall the book offers a broad, thorough overview and fits well into an expanding literature reintegrating social and clinical psychology (e.g. Weary and Mirels 1982). It may be worth noting that the third part of the book has a strong emphasis on a counselling/psychotherapy model of intervention rather than the cognitive/behavioural model which some New Zealand clinicians may be more used to. In general though, I have no major criticisms of this book and if it achieves the authors' stated goals of furthering the cross-fertilization between social and clinical psychology, then it will have been a very worthwhile book indeed.

#### Reference

- Weary, G., Mirels, H. L. (1982). *Integrations of clinical and social psychology.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Geoffrey H. Blowers and Alison M. Turtle (Eds.)

*Psychology Moving East.*

Sydney University Press, 1987.

Pp. 362.

*Reviewed by* Jack Clarkson.

This book originated from a Symposium on the "Historical Development of Psychology in Asia". Of necessity it is concerned mainly with recent history but in many of the twenty one contributions, varying in length from four to twenty pages, there are interesting potted summaries of the changes which have taken place in boundaries and political constitutions of the participating countries, and the state of education within them. South Korea for example, which had six departments of psychology in 1976, now has twenty three, with an explosion of student numbers from five hundred and eighty two to over three thousand. We learn that the first Korean psychologists were educated in Japanese universities in the thirties, when Korea was still under Japanese domination, and the development of the subject is traced from philosophy. This is of some interest since Japan itself has a tradition going back to the last century when selected European and American texts were translated. A very different origin for the subject from that in the Philippines where "... colonial education fosters the belief that scientific psychology ... is an American creation."

In common with what seems to be happening in departments of the West, there has been a large growth in the number of women studying psychology in many parts of Asia. The extent of this growth is generally greater than in other subjects. Professor S. M. Moghni writing for Pakistan tells us that "Male psychologists both in academia and the professions are on the way out and women are taking their place" and "One distinct direction women seem to be taking is clinical psychology." Whether this is because, or in spite of, the fact that Pakistan is an Islamic country is not clear. The trend is similar in Japan, Bangladesh, South Korea ... etc.

Do the contents of this volume throw any light, as the editors hoped they might, on

fundamental questions as to whether differing world views ... "contain ideas comparable or in conflict with the concepts of modern psychology?" There are hints of the usual Islamic distrust of material from the "decadent west" and Professor Moghni tells us that "Sufi doctrines and practices are beginning to have an impact on psychology in Pakistan" but he also makes the wise observation that "Modern psychology, wherever it is, cannot and should not be cut off from its western scientific moorings." Communist countries, like North Vietnam, look to Russia rather than the West for their psychology — "Marxist Psychology" doesn't seem to be much more than a re-naming.

It might, perhaps, still be too early to discern differences which could develop, more particularly in the social and clinical areas, but who is to decide when a difference becomes big enough to be worthy of note?

Apart from its general psychological interest this book will be of value to cross culturalists.

Stephen Walker

*Animal Learning: An Introduction*

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1987.

Pp. 426.

*Reviewed by* Fiona McPherson.

Stephen Walker's book is described by his publishers as an introductory text for undergraduate students, as well as providing 'broad historical and biological perspectives for theories of learning which will be of interest to students and teachers in other disciplines'. Of the interest I have no doubt — Walker is a fluent writer with a clear and very readable style. Moreover he has two talents, both of which are unfortunately only too rare among academic writers. He has a gift for summary, and a talent for integration. The reader is constantly reminded of those issues already discussed, and how they relate to the point of discussion.

For these reasons, I found Walker's book a pleasure to read, and a source of considerable interest. However I would hesitate to recommend this text for those with no

background in the area. The broad coverage does mean that many terms and experiments are referred to in insufficient detail for a naive reader to fully grasp the meaning. Nevertheless, Walker provides ample references and an undergraduate student would surely benefit from its use as a text.

On the subject of references, I would also like to commend Walker for his bibliographic index, which details the pages on which references are made to particular papers. This is a more specific version of the usual author index, and to my mind, more useful.

My major criticism of this book relates to the distribution of time. Of the nine chapters, six are on the subject of habituation, classical conditioning, instrumental learning, and avoidance learning. A seventh chapter is an historical review of ideas about learning (with a disparate amount of

time spent on the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle), which leaves only two chapters for discrimination, selective attention and pattern recognition (one chapter), and memory, communication and reasoning (one chapter). If however, as seems apparent, Walker's intention is not to provide an introduction to animal cognition as such, but is to provide the budding comparative cognivist with the necessary background in the simpler learning phenomena and their relevance to the more complex, then he has succeeded admirably and is to be commended. Even in view of this however, I found some surprising omissions: e.g., the considerable work on context effects was almost completely ignored; research into numerical competence was totally omitted; and I would have liked some discussion of the work done by Fantino and others in attempting to provide laboratory analogues of natural behaviours such as foraging.