

Book Reviews

Alas, Poor Darwin: Arguments against Evolutionary Psychology. Edited by H. Rose & S. Rose. Jonathan Cape, London, 2000. pp. 292. £17.99 (hb).

This book is another attempt to “escape” evolutionary psychology. The arguments are familiar and generally unconvincing.

First, evolutionists are smeared as political conservatives. The editors write, “the new science has a directly political dimension, although its protagonists vary in their advocacy of both the direction and speed of implementation” (p. 3). Where is the evidence? Have the editors uncovered some Nazi plot? Most of us Darwinians, it will disappoint the editors to learn, are left-leaning academicians just like the authors. Hilary Rose herself observes that evolutionary propositions can lead to widely varying political philosophies.

Steven Rose doubts that “evolutionary psychology or behaviour genetics will ever contribute anything useful to either art appreciation or crime prevention” (p. 252). Well, awareness of our evolved landscape preferences for greenery, water, and scattered trees informs architects’ designs of hospital grounds that speed patients’ recovery. As for crime prevention, it is useful to know that stepparents are at risk to murder their stepchildren—even controlling for social class, a fact of which Hilary Rose seems unaware.

Other problems arise concerning the proper relation between science and ideology. Empirical matters should be decided on the basis of the evidence and not on tests of ideological acceptability. Ted Benton expresses scepticism about the existence of universals such as prestige striving, sexual jealousy, and division of labour by sex. However, no contrary evidence is offered, just implicit disdain. Like them or not, well-established facts about human nature need to be accepted so we can design realistic societies that address people’s actual needs and propensities.

The book contains repeated mis-statements of evolutionists’ positions. Several contributors accuse Darwinians of genetic determinism despite the latter’s endorsement of gene-environment interaction. The true determinists are those environmentalists who deny or minimise the role of genes in human behaviour. A greater awareness of human ethology might have prevented some of these misconceptions. The ethological phenomenon of imprinting obviously entails an interaction between environmental factors and a genetic disposition. Another criticism—well articulated by Patrick Bateson and Annette Karmiloff-Smith—is that evolutionary psychologists such as Pinker and Tooby and Cosmides have neglected physiological mechanisms and development—but other evolutionists have not; see Archer (1992), Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1989), and Kimura (1999) for multi-faceted treatments. In particular, modular, cybernetic models of the brain may soon be eclipsed by recognition of ancient general mammalian motives (Panksepp, 1998). For example, animals flee danger, but evolution has shaped particular, species-specific mechanisms for doing so, such as aversions to heights, darkness, and animals in children. These aversions are modified by experience—which explains why Charles Jencks’ daughter does not fear snakes.

Perhaps the most egregious errors are by Steven Jay Gould. He attempts once again to discredit natural selection by referring to environmental catastrophes, constraints of the organism’s design, and other accidental factors in evolution, a stance refuted by Dennett (1995) and others. When Gould then dismisses attempts to understand prehistoric human behaviour,

he ignores inferences from tools, burial objects, skeletons, contemporary forager peoples, and other primates. He states that there is “no neurological evidence of a brain module for sweetness and no paleontological data about ancestral feeding” (p. 100). There are sweetness taste receptors that connect with the thalamus; and feeding habits can be inferred from an animal’s dentition.

This largely polemical book adds little to the “dialogue” between the Darwinians and their critics. Hilary Rose exults that since there are some stepparents who do not murder their stepchildren, we can discount the result mentioned above. Such a criticism, so easily rebutted, reflects disrespect for Darwinians and readers alike.

Glenn E. Weisfeld

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Youth on Trial. A Development Perspective on Juvenile Justice. Edited by T. Grisso & R. Schwartz. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000. pp. 462. £22.00 (hb).

It is refreshing to read a publication that is truly original, innovative, and challenging, addressing as it does all aspects and all stages of the impact of the legal process on adolescents. This immediately begs the question of why such a publication only exists in North America. The answer lies in the support and advantages professionals have there with “angel” funders such as the MacArthur Foundation. The Foundation has empowered and enabled researchers, expert lawyers, and psychologists to come together as affiliates of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice to take a developmental perspective to examine the maturity and hence culpability of young defendants charged with serious crime.

As in the United Kingdom, the drive for this work and subsequent publication arose out of the overall increasingly punitive attitude towards and about young offenders that led to children of the new millennium being tried and punished as though they were adults. Parallels on both sides of the Atlantic are evident, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in England and Wales leaving 10-year-olds deemed as responsible for their actions as adults, with an age of criminal responsibility in Scotland of 8 years.

The Adolescent Research Network, formed in 1996, having identified key issues drew in developmental, clinical, and social psychologists, sociologists and criminologists, law scholars, juvenile justice advocates, juvenile defense and prosecuting attorneys, and juvenile court judges. The aim was to communicate concepts and ideas that could be used by all professionals to inform interdisciplinary discussion.

Part I gives a historical review of the juvenile justice system in North America and the role and involvement of medico-legal experts, with many analogies with developments in the U.K. Alan Kazdin delivers a scholarly and informative review of adolescent development and mental disorders and explores how delinquent youth make decisions. This sets a useful working baseline for Part II, the specific issues of adolescent capacity and competence, both from a research and clinical standpoint. The authors take us through the legal pathways in North America, where similarities outweigh differences across the Atlantic, leading on to a detailed framework of how to undertake a clinical and forensic evaluation of a juvenile offender. Of special value is the template for how legal advisors can and should gauge and understand their client's competency. This raises the apparent inequity in England and Wales, where in order for legal advisors to be involved in Child Care proceedings they have to have specialist training, whereas no such training or accreditation exists if a solicitor or barrister wishes to represent the adult who happens to be a child (anyone age 18 or under: Children Act 1989).

Part III covers a diverse range of issues including penal proportionality, immaturity, and diminished responsibility. Here the reader gains an insight into what can and does happen to a young sentenced offender, and hence the enormous responsibility placed on the shoulders of expert witnesses and child advocates. A review of the research on adolescent's judgement, including attributional perspective of culpability, provides a helpful insight for anyone in the juvenile justice system either assessing or subsequently responsible for the offence-specific interventions with the young offender.

The reality of choices available to systems dealing with offenders and the consequences of decisions competent adolescents can make about their own outcomes in the legal system is detailed in a remarkably open and refreshing view of youth on trial from the judges' perspective.

Underlining the papers that make up this excellent book is the assumption that an effective legal response to young offenders cannot ignore the impact of the development realities of adolescence on the due process of law, the work of everyone in the criminal justice system, and the need to bring this knowledge and its implications to policy makers. This book should be a must-read for all professionals and policy makers in the U.K. who have any part to play in what happens to youth on trial.

Susan Bailey

Infant Development: The Essential Readings. Edited by D. Muir and A. Slater. Blackwell, Massachusetts, 2000. pp. 369. £13.99 (pb).

There is a very regular supply of edited volumes on Infant Development, involving these and other editors (e.g. Bremner, Slater, & Butterworth, 1997), with just a hint of presses being kept churning, but nevertheless such volumes can provide useful compendia through which readers can keep abreast of this rapidly changing field. This one is worthwhile because of the range and interest of original papers collected together and, still more, because of the good organization and synoptic summaries that the editors provide for each part and each paper. One could just read the editorial introductions (which are helpfully delineated by a grey background) and come away wiser and with a better view of the field, without reading each paper in detail.

The volume starts with an introduction giving a framework of development theories, which helps provide the reader with a set of pegs on which to hang the papers. The only surprise is that the recent dynamic systems models do not get a mention, in contrast to the Bremner et al. book (above). The papers are grouped into four parts: Theoretical Issues, Sensation and Perception, Cognitive Development, Social Development and Communication. In each part there are long and short original papers, each illustrating developments in these areas: some

neatly illustrate changes over a period of time, as in Meltzoff and Moore's 1977 and 1999 papers on facial imitation (pp. 167–181), some are vintage mould breakers (e.g. Papousek et al.'s 1990 paper on infant response to adult speech, pp. 261–267), and most are very recent contributions to the field, which link well together to form each part.

The editors give a disclaimer that, of course, this is only a selection from many thousands of publications, and they have done a good job in gathering a range of interesting and relevant papers that hang together well to illustrate developing fields to the reader. My reservation is that there is no inclusion of recent studies of emotional development and developmental neurobiology (such as those discussed in Siegel, 1999), which are now providing such exciting new insights to our understanding of developmental processes. In this the volume is still rather inclined to classical infant cognitive psychology rather than new directions in the field but, within its limits of space, this is understandable.

There are two typographical errors in diagrams (p. xvii and p. 7) but generally the book is well printed, well presented, and easy to read and use. The inclusion of a page of mug-shots of all the authors as they are now and as infants is either a nice light touch in an academic book, or a bit coy, depending on taste. I liked it myself, since it had the effect of communicating with the reader about the humanity behind the writing, and it is always interesting to see people's faces and to be reminded of our infancy.

Terence Gaussen

References

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Working towards Inclusive Education: Social Contexts. Edited by P. Mittler. David Fulton Publishers, London, 2000. pp. 212. £16.00 (pb).

In this book, Peter Mittler presents a broad vision of what is required in order to promote greater inclusiveness in education. The breadth of his perspective manifests itself in particular in two interacting themes that run throughout the book. First, Mittler reminds his readers that inclusive education cannot be divorced from broader considerations of social inclusion. Accordingly, although he highlights significant issues in relation to the educational system, such as the curriculum, teaching approaches, and the professional development of teachers, he does not limit his discussion to questions of formal schooling. Rather, he seeks to demonstrate that what can be achieved in relation to educational practice in schools must be viewed within broader family, health, and social policy contexts. Second, his focus is on all groups of children who are at risk of marginalisation and exclusion: this includes children with disabilities and with special educational needs, but also embraces those who are living in poverty and experiencing other forms of social disadvantage. Mittler locates the promotion of inclusion for all children firmly within a human rights framework and it is notable that, in common with a number of other current commentators, he expresses discomfort with the continuing use of the term "special educational needs", arguing that it can serve to "create or maintain mind-sets that perpetuate segregation" (p. 8) and distract attention from the challenge to the education system that greater inclusiveness represents.

Mittler writes authoritatively and persuasively, drawing on his long and distinguished experience in the field to develop and illustrate his arguments. His wide-ranging and up-to-date knowledge of relevant research and policy developments is used

effectively to present an overview of the multiple interacting influences that guide current thinking and practice. The book includes a brief but useful review of international developments, highlighting progress towards inclusive education and a range of the issues that are experienced across different countries and cultures. However, the main focus is on the U.K. context, within which Mittler presents a detailed discussion of developments in early years provision, social inclusion policies, and educational policy and practice. He is both constructive and generous in his evaluation of the many initiatives that have been introduced by the current government, but he also explores the continuing tensions and areas of confusion that remain.

In recent years a great deal has been written about inclusive education. Mittler's book makes a significant contribution to that literature, and can be highly recommended to those seeking a clearly written, authoritative, and up-to-date perspective on the complex educational and social contexts within which progress towards greater inclusiveness must be judged.

Sally Beveridge

The Child at School: Interactions with Peers and Teachers. By A. D. Pellegrini and P. Blatchford. Arnold Publishers, London, 2000. pp. 241. £14.99 (pb)

At a time when teachers are preoccupied with "delivery" of a prescriptive, centrally determined curriculum, this book is a welcome reminder that social, affective, and cognitive processes affect each other. Its scope is ambitious. The authors regard children's interactions with peers and adults as complementary, allocating six chapters to each with a short concluding chapter identifying some key policy implications.

The coverage is not comprehensive—that would be impossible given the book's scope—but it is wide. Some chapters provide useful, well-informed reviews, for example those on play, aggression in school, and teacher expectations. In others the authors address contentious and topical issues. Thus chapters on literacy learning in the social-developmental context of school and on school-based mathematics apply the concept of childhood as a developmental niche to core curriculum subjects, arguing that competence in the early years develops from interacting with parents and peers. This has implications both for the social organization of schools and for pedagogy. The authors make a lucid and convincing case that study of children's social lives and their impact on learning has important implications both for classroom practice and for wider policy. For example, interaction with friends can promote problem solving in ways that whole class teaching cannot. Breaktime in school (Chapter 5) has educational as well as social value, though teachers often see it as a low-level activity. Reducing breaktime may reduce concentration in lessons, though the effects vary depending on the activities engaged in. Although bullying is sometimes seen as a reason for reducing breaktime, the authors suggest that lack of opportunity for peer interaction may contribute to this problem.

My only reservation is that Pellegrini and Blatchford do not look in much detail at differences between schools and teachers in their influence on children's social interaction. Organisational variables are discussed, such as the effect of class size

and rows versus tables in primary classes. Yet the evidence consistently suggests that the differences between teachers are greater than the differences between systems. On the same note, although they recognise the importance of school culture or climate, they do not explore why it can differ so much from school to school. These are minor points, though; it could be argued that they lie beyond the book's scope.

The importance of this book for teachers should be obvious. Yet its message is equally important for clinicians and for social workers. Children's social interaction with each other, with parents, and with teachers is central to their development, healthy or otherwise. This book should be in every staff library.

David Galloway

Psychotherapy for Children and Adolescents: Directions for Research and Practice. Edited by A. E. Kazdin. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000. pp. 304. £27.50 (hb).

The author of this valuable book is a leading researcher and commentator on the subject. He holds an academic position and also directs a Conduct Clinic, an outpatient treatment service for children and their families. He is, therefore, in a unique position to appreciate the problems arising in research and the applicability of research findings to everyday clinical practice.

His first book on the subject, published in 1988, set out the state of play in the field at that time and listed 220 available child psychotherapy treatments. The present book lists 551 psychosocial treatments for children and adolescents. There may yet be more but the number of treatments evaluated by empirical research is still very small, with the majority of studies being in cognitive behavioural treatments and hardly any in psychodynamic treatments.

The book addresses some of the obvious questions about the research to date. Do any of the treatments work? Which work best? Do they all work for different reasons or through some common mechanism? These global questions were addressed many years ago by Paul (1967), who asked a more specific question—"What treatment, by whom, is most effective for this individual with that specific problem, under which set of circumstances?" These questions have not yet been specifically addressed although clinicians may be trying to apply them in clinical practice.

The issues of efficacy of treatment under research conditions and the effectiveness of treatments in clinical situations are very well discussed and the author recognises the problems of bringing the benefits from research into clinical contexts where other circumstances impinge. This is one of the problems facing researchers if clinicians are to take advantage of the new knowledge from research.

There are clear tables listing the appropriate and most effective treatments for the various diagnostic categories as well as the areas needing systematic assessment when evaluating how effective a treatment has been.

The book should be of interest and value to clinicians in all fields in child and adolescent psychiatry in deciding on how to treat a particular condition. It should be in the library of any clinic or department using child and family psychotherapies.

Lionel Hersov