

BOOK REVIEW

Grant J. Rich and Uwe P. Gielen (Eds.). *Pathfinders in International Psychology*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2015. xiii+268 pp. ISBN 978-1-68123-143-3 (Paperback); 978-1-68123-144-0 (Hardback); 978-1-68123-145-7 (ebook).

International psychology is an interesting field. Its origins lie in the dominance that American psychology enjoyed in the decades immediately after the Second World War. Many parts of Europe, Germany especially, had been devastated in the war and psychology had yet to be established in places such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America on a large scale. This situation resulted in many American psychologists becoming insular in their approach. For example, many of them never read the journals that were published outside the United States.

This situation could not last forever. Europe eventually got back on its feet and psychology began to expand to other parts of the world. One of the consequences of these changes was that some American psychologists began to argue that their colleagues needed to take a more international approach. Literature with the aim of informing American psychologists about psychology in other parts of the world was produced (e.g., Sexton & Hogan, 1992) and an important development came with the establishment of Division 52 (International Psychology) of the American Psychological Association in 1997. This was followed by more literature, such as the *Handbook of International Psychology* (Stevens & Wedding, 2004), and a book that had the aim of encouraging a more international approach to the psychology curriculum in the United States (Leong et al., 2012). American textbooks on the history of psychology were just as insular as the rest of American psychology and these developments have had a modest impact on the field. My own edited book, *Internationalizing the History of Psychology* (Brock, 2006), was intended to be a contribution to this literature.

In spite of these developments, there is still the curious situation where the vast majority of historians of psychology work only on the history of psychology in their own countries and, given that history of psychology is not an important priority among psychologists in many developing countries, the history of psychology in these countries is relatively unknown. The editors of this book are prominent figures in international psychology and they argue that there are many gaps in our knowledge of the history of psychology as a global phenomenon. The aim of the book is to fill in some of these gaps.

The book is a collection of 17 biographies. These are the figures in the order in which they appear: Anton Mesmer, the Marquis de Puységur, Pierre Janet, Emil Kraepelin, Maria Montessori, Lev S. Vygotsky, Alexander R. Luria, Otto Klineberg, Charles D. Spiegelberger, Mustapha Soueif, Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero, Durganand Sinha, Kuo-Shu Yang, Geert Hofstede, Frantz Fanon, and Saths Cooper. They are mainly psychologists but they also include a few psychiatrists, an educator, and two early figures in the history of hypnotism. The biographies cover a broad span of history from “hypnotists” who were active in the eighteenth century to Saths Cooper who is the current president of the International Union of Psychological Science.

Many historians of psychology will not be familiar with the names of the editors or most of the authors. Virtually all of them are psychologists who specialize in other areas of psychology. While few historians of psychology would want to discourage psychologists from becoming actively involved in the field, it entails learning new skills and there is a common view among psychologists to the effect that history of psychology requires no special expertise

and is something that any psychologist can do. This view has led to a book that is amateurish in many respects.

While it is not unique to works by nonspecialists, the decision to center the book on individuals helps to encourage the common view that the history of psychology is a collection of biographies and there are no other ways in which the subject can be approached. It is also internalist history with a vengeance. The basic message of the book is that psychology is good and international psychology is even better. I often had the impression that I was reading something akin to *Lives of the Saints* (Butler, 2005). It is not always clear what was particularly international about some of them. They seem to have been included as part of an attempt to include psychologists from as many different countries as possible and the decision to include historical figures who were not psychologists may also reflect this aim. Some of these figures are very famous, while others are less so, and the book is a curious mixture of original material and information that is already well-known. For many psychologists, the history of psychology is mainly a pedagogical field and the book has been written with pedagogical intent.

As strange as it may seem, the book lacks an international perspective on international psychology. It arose in response to the insularity of American psychology that its international dominance produced and this may explain why it has not been popular elsewhere. In many countries, psychology has always been international and so it does not need a specific branch of the subject with the aim of achieving this end. The book also takes an ahistorical approach. The dominance of American psychology that led to the insularity that international psychology has been trying to change was only for a short period in the history of psychology. The discipline was an international enterprise from the start. Many Americans went to Europe to study psychology and psychologists like Edward B. Titchener, William MacDougall, and Hugo Münsterberg came in the opposite direction. Textbooks were translated, laboratory equipment was imported, and international conferences were held. There was more international contact in the 1930s when refugees from Central Europe arrived in the United States. This might explain why some of these early figures were more international in their outlook than many psychologists today. Preparing the way for a branch of the subject called, “international psychology” was not what they were trying to do.

In spite of these problems, the book contains original material that is not available elsewhere. The editors are right in saying that there are gaps in our knowledge of the history of psychology as a global phenomenon and teachers of the subject who want to adopt a more international approach than the standard textbooks usually provide will find some useful supplementary material here. If historians of psychology are unable or unwilling to examine the history of psychology as a global phenomenon, psychologists with a more international view of the subject will attempt to fill in the gaps. No one should be surprised by that.

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