

Special Review Feature: Who wants to read foreign books?

It is well known that science is international; indeed, this is one of its most attractive features. As far as the hard sciences are concerned, this general statement is undoubtedly largely true. As far as psychology is concerned, however, one is driven to the conclusion that it is very parochial. How many American and English psychologists read the German or the French literature – to say nothing of the Russian? This may be due to language difficulties, but it may also be asked: how many American psychologists read the English literature? The answer I think is undoubtedly that very few do so. Do we miss anything by not reading the German and French authors? Should we insist that our students show some proficiency in these languages, as used to be the case when a university education was still supposed to produce people who were educated, rather than force-fed a particular subject in the minimum amount of time?

Having had the good fortune (or the misfortune, depending on how you look at it) to have been brought up trilingual, and to have studied in Germany and France, as well as in England, I usually get sent all the German and French books from the various journals with which I am associated, and it seemed a good idea to go over the latest crop with a view to telling English readers about them and seeing whether they really miss anything at all. Let us start with one particular advantage that reading foreign books gives you, namely that it clarifies ideas very widely held, but which are nevertheless quite wrong. We tend to believe, for instance, that the Marxist position on the inheritance of intelligence is that so loudly proclaimed by our own militant students, namely that intelligence differences are caused entirely by environmental causes. It may come as a surprise, therefore, to readers of Guthke's (1978) book on the measurement of intelligence, which is published in East Germany under the auspices of the government, to find that he has the following to say: 'Marxist psychology does not deny the importance of genetic determinants for the differentiation of intelligence, as has sometimes been said by critics not properly informed of the facts, who rely on the extreme utterances of a few Marxist scientists. Both Marx and Lenin have always emphasized the biological and psychological inequality of human beings.' Altogether Guthke's book on the measurement of intelligence does not come to conclusions which in essence are very different to those Jensen or I myself would come to. The emphasis is not always the same, but this is far from that caricature of scientific writing which opponents of the Soviet regime so often present us with.

Much the same might be said of other recent books on intelligence, selection, and psychodiagnostics emerging from the DDR (Böttcher *et al.* 1974; Guthke, 1974; Gutjahr, 1974; Gutjahr *et al.* 1974; Rösler, 1976); these are all essentially acceptable to scientists in capitalist countries, and they often contain interesting material not always available elsewhere. Thus a book by Gutjahr (1974) contains the best exposition of the Rasch model which I have come across, and altogether as a textbook of the measurement of psychological qualities it ranks with the very best. The book by Gutjahr *et al.* (1974) is concerned with an evaluation of a special test (*Lerntest*) by Roether which is designed to measure concrete thinking. The test bears a striking similarity to ordinary non-verbal IQ tests and has about the same kind of reliability and validity as would, say, the Raven Matrices. The book helps to set at rest the minds of those who were worried that in communist countries the benefit of IQ testing may not be experienced; the term may be denigrated, but the reality persists! Even the problems which we experience seem to be very similar in communist countries, as becomes obvious from looking at the other books mentioned above.

The fact that communist and capitalist psychology are really very similar is brought out paradoxically by a perusal of Clauss's (1976) dictionary of psychology, which is introduced on the blurb as the first lexicographic book in German which is based on Marxist–Leninist teaching. Those who might be put off by this rather odd claim will be reassured by the fact that the great majority of definitions are perfectly straightforward and sensible, and the intrusion of the Marxist–Leninist jargon is so obvious that it can easily be disregarded. The definitions on the whole are accurate and well documented, even though there is a preponderance of Russian authors, and a dearth of American ones. Perhaps this very fact may redress the balance which has been seriously upset by the American habit of autarchy already referred to! Similarly, a book reviewing *Psychology in the DDR* (Klix, 1978) will reassure the reader who is worried about the breaking up of psychology into a communist and a capitalist side, that pretty much the same things are studied there as here, with pretty much the same outcome. The application of psychological findings may loom more importantly there than here, but that seems to be all.

But do the Germans, or the French, actually have anything new to contribute? The answer is undoubtedly in the affirmative, although these contributions are probably more obvious in the journal literature than in

books which review a whole field. Thus for instance there is the very important contribution by Merz, who showed that IQs can be substantially raised by having testees talk about their problem-solving behaviour. Very little about his important analytical work on this topic has appeared in the English-speaking literature, but it is very interesting, both theoretically and practically (Eysenck, 1979). There are many other examples that spring to mind, and some will be mentioned later on in this review.

The whole question of intelligence, heredity and race has been discussed in the French and German literature in books which do not always have a complement in English. A good account of the whole issue is available in English in the book by Loehlin *et al.* on *Race Differences in Intelligence*, but for most readers Hebert's (1977) book *Race et Intelligence* would probably be a better introduction to the field. ('Hebert' is in fact a pseudonym for a consortium of four geneticists and psychologists who wrote this book but did not dare put their names on it for fear of reprisals from the unenlightened left who had not discovered yet that Marx in fact was not on their side!) Merz & Stelzl (1977) have written an excellent short introduction into behavioural genetics, something really missing in the English literature, where the only works available are highly technical and much too complex for the ordinary student. Similarly Robert (1978) has written an excellent introduction on heredity insofar as it affects parents, and can be useful in genetic counselling; again, a suitable text in English is not available. Chauvin's (1975) book on gifted children presents a good survey of the literature, a literature which has been paid little attention to until the recent appearance of the book by Vernon, Adamson & Vernon *The Psychology and Education of Gifted Children*. All these books add certain French and German references which would not normally be encountered in English accounts.

There are a number of books in German which cover areas imperfectly covered by English books, and which introduce a fair amount of German literature not usually considered at all. Among these are two books by Birbaumer (1973, 1975) on the neuropsychology of fear, and on physiological psychology; one by Koch & Neuhäuser (1978) on the Klinefelter syndrome, and one by Johst (1976) on the biological analysis of human behaviour; most of what these books contain is available in English, but not all, and some of the theoretical conceptions used are interesting and novel.

There has been much discussion of psychoanalysis and its claims to being a science in the English literature, but few have the quality of Möller's recent book (1978) which is an outstanding contribution to the debate. The author clearly is a good philosopher as well as knowledgeable in the psychoanalytic field, and his criticisms of psychoanalysis on both philosophical and scientific grounds are well-taken and, while in many ways resembling those made by English critics, some are original and deserve to be read by anyone interested in this field.

Mention of psychoanalysis leads us into the field of clinical psychology, where there has been a tremendous increase in interest in recent years, particularly in the development of behaviour therapy. Pongratz (1973) followed the publication of his excellent textbook of clinical psychology with a handbook of clinical psychology which he edited (1977, 1978) in two gigantic volumes, totalling 4400 pages! This overwhelming and, some may say, typically thorough German production is quite unequalled in the English-speaking literature, and it contains many references which will be unfamiliar to British readers. Having contributed to it myself, I may be a biased judge, but it seems to me to present an outstanding handbook covering the whole field exhaustively. (Incidentally, the two volumes of this handbook of clinical psychology constitute the eighth volume of a twelve-volume handbook of psychology which equally exhaustively covers the whole of psychology. It would take even a fast reader a year to two to go through all this work with any degree of care, and I humbly beg to be excused from reviewing the other eleven volumes!)

There are several other books both in German and French on behaviour therapy such as Seron *et al.* (1977), Brengelmann & Tunner (1973), Westmeyer & Hoffmann (1977) and Angermeier (1976); these are good introductions to the field but as they do not add very much and for the English reader they may not be of any great special interest. This is not true of Lauterbach's (1978) book on psychotherapy in the Soviet Union. Lauterbach who speaks Russian relatively fluently and spent 6 months in the Soviet Union has written an excellent and most interesting book explaining just what Russian psychologists and psychiatrists do, what they think, and how they regard our own approaches. I found two points particularly informative. One is that concern with the empirical study of the effects of treatment is as rare in the Soviet Union as it is in the United States or in this country; different people do different things, and make extravagant claims for them, without any attempt to demonstrate that their claims are actually justified. The second point of interest is that the Russians, having denounced behaviour therapy as a Left Wing mechanist deviation, have now discovered it themselves, and seem to feel much more positive about it. The work of Pokrass on behaviour therapy (or rather using methods which are virtually indistinguishable from those we associate with behaviour therapy) has apparently become quite influential in the Soviet Union, and it will be interesting to

see to what extent his work is imitated by others, and may form the basis of a new approach. Lauterbach's book is of considerable interest to all those who are concerned with what is going on behind the Iron Curtain.

This is more or less a random sample of some 25 books that have recently come my way, largely accidentally, and of course it is impossible to say whether they are truly random or not. On the whole I feel I would have missed a good deal had I not read at least some of them. Many are similar in nature and purpose to British books, and nothing much is lost in not reading them, although even then some interesting references to foreign language literature might be missed. Some of them, on the other hand, are truly important, and should be familiar to people working in the various fields in question. On the whole I think that we are wrong in de-emphasizing foreign languages in the training of our students, and German in particular is likely to become more and more important as German psychology recovers from the almost lethal blow delivered to it by Hitler in the 1930s. I have no doubt that in a few years time the German literature will be as important in world psychology as is the British literature at the moment. Will our students still continue to be insular, and refuse to recognize its existence? I am pessimistic about the answer to this question, but perhaps good sense will prevail.

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