

Book Reviews

INSPIRED PIONEER

A Study of Franz Brentano

His Psychological Standpoint and His Significance in the History of Psychology. By Antos C. Rancurello. Pp. xiv+178. (Academic Press: London and New York, July 1968.) 74s. 8d.

THE life and work of Franz Brentano (1838–1917), which it is the object of this book to record, is in itself a memorial to all that was best in German erudition of that period. This is not to give the impression of a series of ivory towers, but, on the contrary, to recount the early years in the progress of a new science, namely, psychology. Brentano, an Italian by birth, spent his span of active labour in Germany and Austria, retreating later to Florence, and finally to Switzerland. As it happened, he had an opposite number in Wilhelm Wundt, a figure of considerable mental stature, who managed to establish an experimental laboratory of psychology at Leipzig, which Brentano failed to do in Vienna. Meanwhile, having gained his doctorate at Tübingen (rather characteristically *in absentia*) for a thesis entitled "On the Manifold Meaning of Being according to Aristotle", he studied theology for a couple of years, and was ordained a priest in 1864. His restless intellect battled with the eternal mind-body problem, he delved deeply into metaphysics, and maintained that philosophy and psychology were partners in the adventures of life, whatever species of zeitgeist may have been the current fashion.

Nobody could properly call Brentano the father of modern psychology; nevertheless, its power, its aesthetic quality, and even its dangers were assessed by him with an insight probably unmatched before or since. Edmund Husserl was at one time his pupil, and thus Brentano had a share, and perhaps more than a share, in the foundations of phenomenology. In all these ways, the reader can discern how keenly he suffered and how much he achieved. The array of distinguished names displayed in these pages is in itself impressive, though "Baltzmann" for Boltzmann (twice) is a pity.

In 1872 Brentano visited England and met Cardinal Newman. Never a hint, however, about Oxford or Cambridge. It is a fair guess that this wayward foreigner never experienced an evening at high table, or a word in season with the professional philosophers of the day. Indeed, there was a great gulf fixed. Brentano's thinking placed psychology at the summit of human knowledge, even though as a discipline in its own right it had scarcely topped the foothills. Herein lay his prophetic genius and his worldly weakness; the former because of the quality of his mind, the latter because his claims were social rather than personal. William James might have reacted differently, but he was an American, and more venturesome.

As a youth, Brentano forged ahead in mathematics, even suggesting that parts of it might be incorporated into logic, a precursor indeed of Peano and of *Principia Mathematica*. Morphologically he was aware of the limitations of the so-called "and-summations", and thus participated in the birth of Gestalt psychology in 1910–12. Both Brentano and the scarcely less distinguished psychologist, O. Külpe, died in the thick of World War I, and

it has taken a long time to bring all this sturm und drang before English-speaking readers.

In sum, this is not a book from which to learn the elements of psychology as such, still less of philosophical techniques. It is a careful and well told story of an inspired pioneer, who grappled courageously with the gravest issues which confront mankind.

F. I. G. RAWLINS

FLASHES OF WIT

Analysis of Behavioral Change

Edited by Lawrence Weiskrantz. (Harper Psychology Series.) Pp. 447. (Harper and Row: New York, Evanston and London, 1968.) \$12.50.

PROFESSOR WEISKRANTZ modestly claims to have edited this book, though six of its fifteen chapters are his. It aims to survey the nature and effects on behaviour of all kinds of experimental variations as used primarily in neuropsychology and with animals as subjects in the main. Even thus limited, Weiskrantz and his ten collaborators are committed to encompassing a fair proportion of comparative and of physiological psychology, together with a dash of ethology thrown in for good measure, and a good measure it is.

Though the book has many authors, the editor's influence has clearly extended beyond his numerous contributions, and a coherent and sustained intention and thought emerge. It is stimulating, wide-ranging and well written. Some contributors have caught the editor's lightness of touch, so that flashes of wit enliven some of the most complex discussions. The subdivision of psychology is conventional (reinforcement, attention, learning, memory, discrimination and so on) and the approach broadly eclectic. In each case the authors have succeeded in presenting and evaluating a body of experimental work bearing on the main theme of change in behavioural responses—its measurement, assessment and implications. I was particularly struck by the distinguished treatment of emotion in a chapter in which Weiskrantz pokes gentle fun at the coprologizomaths among us who devote much time to counting rat faecal pellets as a measure of emotionality.

The almost complete emphasis on animal work gives way in a long chapter in which Hans-Lukas Teuber and Brenda Milner join forces to provide an authoritative survey of the effect of brain lesions on human perception and memory, respectively, in which the many problems associated with the evaluation of treatment effects are especially clearly revealed. The editor rounds off the book with chapters championing—against some British critics—the ablation approach to the study of brain function and discussing what he characteristically entitles "some traps and pontifications". Here he explores the problems of experimental design and the extent to which the ideal can be approached.

Despite the American colours which this book flies—the ubiquitous loss of "u" in behaviour, to which we are now resigned, and some less acceptable Americanisms, such as "behoove", "gotten" and "presently", to affront the purist—the majority of the contributors are British, and European work is well represented, with the exception of Russian contributions. Nevertheless, this bias reflects the quite remarkable progress in Britain since the Second World War in comparative and physiological psychology—important areas but sparsely represented previously. The editor, whose own notable contributions have been of considerable importance in this progress, is himself an expatriate from America where these disciplines have long flourished. Here then we have yet another example of what Berlyne calls the colonization of European psychology by the more advanced and better supported American