

## Book Review:

### A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH PSYCHOLOGY

KRUGER, T.M.D. (1987)  
*A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH PSYCHOLOGY.*  
 (2ND ED.) CAPE TOWN: ACADEMICA.  
 127 PP, R13, 95.

First courses in psychology are often based almost wholly on a single introductory text in which the most salient aspects of contemporary psychology are covered. Frequently these are dealt with in such a way that neither the roots and development of psychology nor leanings and paradigms in modern psychology are accorded the attention they deserve. In this, the second edition of *A First Encounter with Psychology*, Professor Kruger attempts to fill this vacuum and manages to do so admirably.

An historical overview of the development of psychology, this work, whilst brief, contains references to the thinking of the classical philosophers including Plato and Aristotle. Also included are discussions on developments during the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods, with reference to the work of Locke amongst others and mention of the rise of natural scientific psychology in modern times. The period 1870 to 1900 is reviewed in somewhat greater detail. Notable in this regard are the discussions on Wundt, Darwin, Freud and Pavlov. In the section on early twentieth century psychologists, the major contributions by Thorndike, Watson, Spearman, Cattell, the Gestalt School and Piaget are reviewed.

A major strength of the historical overview is the way in which the thinking of psychologists and philosophers, representative of different historical stages, is linked by means of emphasis on the relation between their orientations and major propositions. In a subsequent chapter on the three major contemporary orientations in psychology, these threads are tied to psychoanalysis, behaviourism and existential-humanistic psychology. The nature of the historical overview therefore contributes to one's understanding of the origins of currents present in modern psychology.

In dealing with psychoanalysis, the author refers to Jung and Adler and pays particular attention to Horney's contributions on neuroses. Classical and operant conditioning, social learning theory and behaviour modification, in addition to important aspects of behaviourism, are dealt with. Finally, existential-humanistic psychology is illuminated by citations of the thinking and writings of Allport, Rogers and Frankl. Brief mention is made of the existential phenomenological movement as it is related to humanistic existentialism.

A final chapter is devoted partly to the historical views of man, human physiological structure and to man as a creature of culture. A general theme here is the humanness and uniqueness of man as an existential yet cultural being. The second part of this chapter contains a brief mention of the current problems in South African society, and the implications thereof for psychology in this country. The present role of psychologists is seriously questioned and alternatives, most notably the critical approach, are suggested.

Totally unbiased treatment of that which is fundamental to and current in psychology are few and far between, and this book is certainly no exception. The author's personal orientation relates perhaps quite substantially to existentialist-humanistic, phenomenological and critical psychology and no attempt is made to disguise this whenever it surfaces, especially in the final chapter. This does not however detract from the readability, or for that matter, the academic merits of his work.

In paging through the book, the reader is struck by the way in which important psychological concepts are deliberately brought to the fore and this will undoubtedly serve to enhance the vocabulary of any student of psychology. In addition to the topics mentioned earlier, the book contains an introductory chapter on psychology as a profession in South Africa and the fields of psychology, as well as two prominent South African psychologists. Good use is made throughout the book of excursions which contain discussions on topical psychological issues. Additional reading is cited for the reader interested in more information on any particular area.

To comprehensively cover the history of, and major orientations in psychology within the space of just over one hundred pages is nothing short of an impossibility. The author has however managed in this book not only to cover aspects of psychology in general, but to relate the discipline of psychology to the South African situation. Whilst not without bias or shortcomings, this introductory work makes for fluent and informative reading and can be put to good use by any teacher or student of basic psychology.

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