

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

PHILIP MANNING, *Freud and American Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005, xiii + 166 p., index.

Philip Manning's *Freud and American Sociology* (2006) is an interesting, well-written and useful little book, despite its idiosyncrasies and misleading title. Manning, the author of one of the very best books on Erving Goffman and a very creative theorist and sociologist in his own right, has a talent for concisely getting at core issues in the theorists he discusses. This book outlines a thoughtful account of the relationship between symbolic interactionist and Freudian influenced sociological perspectives, research traditions and theorists. The book is particularly helpful in discussing Goffman's negative attitude towards psychoanalysis and outlining ways in which Freudian and Goffmanian influenced theories can be combined in micro-oriented social theorizing.

The idiosyncrasies of the book relates to its genre confusion. *Freud and American Sociology* contains a historically detailed discussion of the early 20th century reception of Freud in American sociology journals, but the book is not really a history of the relationship between Freudian thought and American sociology. Most of the book, in reality, discusses various symbolic interactionist thinkers (Cooley and Goffman, in particular) and continues Manning's broader attempt to develop a synthetic social theory in the style of Giddens. The history of Freudian thought in American sociology included in the book is threadbare, and only touches the surface of the various neo-Freudian theorists who attempted to combine sociological and psychoanalyst insights in the 20th century. Is the book history or contemporary theoretical intervention? A little bit of both, and thus the book does not really succeed at either project.

There is a nice discussion of the sociology of Philip Reiff, a provocative and controversial sociological iconoclast and the author of the classic books *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer* (1959) and *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (1968). *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, in particular, lays out a pioneering and influential account of the ways in which therapeutic culture undermines individual ego strength and democratic culture in the modern world; this is a theme sociologists such as Robert Bellah and a growing literature in the sociology of culture have picked up on and developed in later empirical research. In addition, Manning's discussion of Nancy Chodorow's feminist psychoanalytic sociology is well done and thoughtful, particularly in the ways Manning distinguishes between clinical and sociological contributions. And the discussion of Parson's Freud is

competent and useful. While the book is relatively strong on theory and rather thin on discussion of empirical research findings, the chapter on the relationship between Freudian perspectives and contemporary “auto-ethnography” is a valuable contribution.

But the most original and provocative parts of the book are not really about Freudian and psychoanalytic thought at all, but instead consist of a historically informed revisiting of the work of early symbolic interactionists as well as Goffman with some of the themes suggested by Freudian theory in mind. Manning is a good writer, so the text moves along smoothly and he always has interesting things to say about Goffman, in particular. But ultimately the book fails to seriously engage psychoanalytic theory and does not really take up a discussion of the serious tensions between psychoanalysis and sociological perspectives in its modern empirically oriented and professional form. Manning discusses a few examples of recent scholarship where Freud could (or does, to some extent) meet ethnography, but Manning is rather light on specifics. We have numerous good histories of the Freudian movement and its influence on American intellectual life and a variety of innovative attempts to use Freud by sociologically informed social critics (Fromm, Riesman, Lasch, Sennett, Benjamin, Chancer and, of course, Chodorow, to mention some of the most prominent). There remains, however, a space in the literature for a real history of American sociology’s relationship to psychoanalysis as well as sophisticated theoretical work linking recent developments in object-relations theory with the sociological imagination and empirical research in the discipline. Manning’s book, while worth reading for scholars in the symbolic interactionist camp, does not really address the gaps in the scholarly literature on Freud and American sociology, and thus is a minor disappointment.

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