

historical and historiographical themes in Western legal medicine from the mediaeval period to the present. The first two chapters focus on the emergence of forensic medicine as a response to particular needs of mediaeval law and governance. She deftly guides the reader through a maze of jurisdictions and legal systems (Roman, canon, barbarian, customary), and shows how differences in form impacted upon practice. Most important here is the distinct paths taken by the Continental and Anglo-American systems following the abolition of trials by 'ordeal' in the thirteenth century. The former developed an 'inquisitorial' trial model dominated by judges who acted as agents and protectors of the state, directly questioning witnesses and gathering and assessing evidence (including formal expert reports). The latter was 'accusatorial', driven by private rather than state prosecution, with fact-finding and the determination of proof squarely in the hands of a lay jury rather than with expert-assisted judges.

In Chapter Three, Watson eases the reader into the modern era, focusing on the emergence of a new conception of experts and expertise in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This entailed a shift from prior notions grounded in personal know-how, to one derived from intellectual competence, and was signalled by the gradual recognition of the expert's distinctive ability to deliver testimony based on opinion rather than on direct experience. She then provides six national case studies to demonstrate the ways that political and institutional contingencies shaped local meanings of expertise, before concluding with a discussion of one of the most publicly visible forms of medico-legal expertise in nineteenth century – toxicology.

Chapters Four and Five focus on forensic medicine as applied to questions of mind and behaviour. The former surveys debates over criminal responsibility and the insanity plea, showing how a nascent psychiatric profession attempted to use forensic psychiatry as a

means to move out of asylums and onto the public stage. Yet, would-be psychiatric experts' command of the courtroom was tenuous, constrained by the fact that criminal responsibility was ultimately a legal rather than a medical concept. The next chapter considers the ways in which forensic medicine, by laying claim to the adjudication of suicide, infanticide, impotence, and 'anomalous sexual practices', participated in what Watson calls the 'medicalization of deviance'.

Watson concludes her overview with a selection of five of the most innovative and significant medical, scientific and institutional advances in forensic medicine over the past century: the diagnosis of physical and sexual abuse in children; the development of laboratory-based forensic medicine and science; techniques for establishing individual identity and time since death in homicide cases; blood typing and DNA analysis; and offender profiling. Here, as elsewhere, it is possible to question the choice of topics covered, and to wish for a fuller discussion of others, but this is inevitable in any brief survey. Engagingly written and exuding enthusiasm for the subject and its potential, Watson's book offers a trustworthy guide to forensic medicine's past, and a warm invitation to its pursuit in future historical inquiry.

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**Ian Marsh,** *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. xii + 251, £19.99/\$34.99, paperback, ISBN: 978-0-531-13001-1.

The linkage of mental illness and suicide is, for the most part, accepted uncritically within medicine and psychiatry, by healthcare agencies and the media. Ian Marsh's *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth* attempts to

understand how suicide came to be read as the consequence of some form of internal pathology, and has thus been absorbed into the domain of psychiatry. The book draws on the work of Michel Foucault, applying the 'analytics of truth' as a strategy for critically examining the pathologisation of suicide. The author examines how authoritative knowledge is established, objects and subjects are defined, and truths disseminated in professional accounts of suicide.

Marsh begins with mapping a contemporary 'regime of truth' that constitutes suicide as pathological in nature, examining how a link between pathology and suicide is constructed and positioned as self-evident. The extent to which suicide has become primarily an issue of psychiatric care is illustrated by reference to psychiatrists' clinical practices and their roles as advisors on government policy, and as editors of medical journals and authors of books. Marsh highlights how psychiatrists have developed 'knowledge communities' by means of certain 'rhetorical strategies', which allow them to achieve authority and construct the concepts and objects that make a link between pathology and suicide. The dissemination of professional truths through non-professional channels is also considered. Drawing on the World Health Organization's guidelines on media reporting of suicide, Marsh argues that, a narrow picture of suicide is constructed based on the notion that suicide is an issue of individual mental health.

In the next section of the book, Marsh delves into the 'history of the present' and draws on historical accounts 'to call into question the presumed naturalness or inevitability of contemporary truths of suicide' (p. 78). He first cites evidence from ancient Greece and Rome to illustrate that, at other times and places, suicide was not always interpreted as pathological in origin. The emergence and eventual dominance of medical theories in relation to suicide occurred much later, in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Suicide was initially conceived as a morbid action of the body, later as an internal impulse, and eventually as a symptom of

degeneracy (p. 116). The asylum provided the emerging psychiatric profession with the opportunity to observe and treat suicidal patients, and therefore produce new truths (p. 117). In this discussion, Foucault's historicist approach is employed to analyse specific historical medical texts and practices that relate to suicide; an analytic strategy absent in histories of the medicalisation of madness (p. 8). It is this close examination of medical explanations, in order to understand the cultural and historical forces involved in the construction of suicide, that makes Marsh's study a refreshing contribution to histories of suicide and the asylum.

The 'psy' discourses and practices of the early twentieth century acted to extend the notion of pathology as the primary cause of suicide, as well as to challenge the authority of psychiatry. Marsh examines how the emergence of psychoanalysis introduced new theories of suicidal behaviours and new practices that were based on a pathologised 'psyche'. During the twentieth century, a variety of distinct professional groups emerged (social workers, counsellors, psychologists and psychiatric nurses), each offering their own form of 'pastoral' care. Importantly, though, psychiatrists' position of authority is not fully eroded, as ultimately the psychiatrist intervenes when suicide seemed likely. 'Psy' disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, offers an alternative means that extended the possibilities of conceiving suicide in terms of individual pathology, rather than mounting a serious challenge to the doctrine produced by nineteenth-century psychiatry.

*Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth* is a successful application of an historicist, Foucauldian, analytical approach to the subject of suicide. By emphasising the many possibilities for thought, action and experience that exist with respect to suicide, Marsh's provocative study encourages us to 'think against the present' (p. 230), to critique existing truths and ask new questions. This is a highly engaging book that can be recommended to researchers and professionals

interested in history, psychology, psychiatry and sociology.

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**Roger Smith,** *Being Human: Historical Knowledge and the Creation of Human Nature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. viii + 288, £25.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-7190-7498-1.

*Being Human* is a masterful argument for the value and necessity of the human sciences and of their history. In a reflexive dialogue with a long Continental tradition, from Giambattista Vico to Hans-Georg Gadamer, Smith makes a case for the human sciences *qua* sciences proper. This requires some qualification for the English reader, to whom ‘science’ normally means ‘natural science’, whilst Smith employs it in the non-disciplinary sense of the original *scientia*. In a nutshell, the argument is that human sciences are sciences just as much as the natural ones, that they are defined by different purposes – not objects or methods – and that they are constitutively historical and moral. The human sciences are, in principle as in practice, irreducible to the natural ones – indeed, the opposite argument emerges throughout the book. Their legitimacy is grounded on their intrinsically reflexive character – as opposed to the extrinsic ‘reflectivity’ of the natural sciences – that expresses itself in the specificity of their object (the concrete, historical making of being human) and in their dialogical, hermeneutic approach. There is no place out of history. Thus, materialistic and naturalistic claims to ‘exclusive access’ (p. 7), to knowledge about what is human, are simply declared as ‘mistaken’, on grounds that being human is not about possessing a nature, rather it is a reflexive act engaging the past, present and future in a moral process of self-formation. ‘Human’, Smith argues, is a moral category, defined in and by its making. That is

why the human sciences do not, and cannot, constitute a disciplinary form of knowledge, but ‘[create] a social space where disciplines seek to co-operate’ (p. 213). *All* sciences that have a bearing on being human can be human sciences, provided that their own historicity is acknowledged, and with it, the necessity of multiple perspectives on being human.

*Being Human* can be read as an argument for historical science as the pinnacle of knowledge, the science of all sciences in their concrete becoming. Smith seeks to avoid this by constant reference to a multiplicity of legitimate knowledges, serving different contingent purposes. This leads to some complications. First, the problem of the epistemological relations among the sciences: one cannot see how the human sciences, in this context, can ever be open to any input from the natural sciences. ‘Indeed, knowledge of nature needs reinterpretation in the light of knowledge of people, not vice versa’ (p. 13). Much as the multiplicity of the approaches is stressed, again, as inherent to the concept of human sciences, a hierarchy of knowledge unfolds through the book, reminiscent of Croce’s absolute historicism (which Smith does not address). Second, the reference to different values and interests grounding the multiplicity of perspectives opens up a related, if different problem: that of the concrete historical relations of the natural and human sciences. Smith does not address this issue systematically, although at all critical points but one he makes enlightening references to the institutional and political dimensions of these boundary disputes. Where he fails to provide this contextualisation is in relation to the present. The Humboldtian university, which provided the blueprint for the disciplinary and professional organisation of knowledge, was consubstantial to the ideal of *Bildung*. That model has come to a crisis: the scientific disciplines are dissolving into interdisciplinary fields, while the criteria of productivity and significance of the natural sciences, together with their organisation of labour, are being extended to all education and knowledge production. The historical sciences