



A History of Intelligence and “Intellectual Disability”TM: The Shaping of Psychology in Early Modern Europe

By C.F. Goodey

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Starting with the hypothesis that not only human intelligence but also its antithesis 'intellectual disability' are nothing more than historical contingencies, C.F. Goodey's paradigm-shifting study traces the rich interplay between labelled human types and the radically changing characteristics attributed to them. From the twelfth-century beginnings of European social administration to the onset of formal human science disciplines in the modern era, *A History of Intelligence and 'Intellectual Disability'* reconstructs the socio-political and religious contexts of intellectual ability and disability, and demonstrates how these concepts became part of psychology, medicine and biology. Goodey examines a wide array of classical, late medieval and Renaissance texts, from popular guides on conduct and behavior to medical treatises and from religious and philosophical works to poetry and drama. Focusing especially on the period between the Protestant Reformation and 1700, Goodey challenges the accepted wisdom that would have us believe that 'intelligence' and 'disability' describe natural, trans-historical realities. Instead, Goodey argues for a model that views intellectual disability and indeed the intellectually disabled person as recent cultural creations. His book is destined to become a standard resource for scholars interested in the history of psychology and medicine, the social origins of human self-representation, and current ethical debates about the genetics of intelligence.

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Editorial Review

Review

A Yankee Book Peddler UK Core Title for 2011 'The publication of A History of Intelligence and 'Intellectual Disability' constitutes a major event. Anyone interested in psychology, philosophy, ethics, and English literature, as well as medieval, early modern, eighteenth-century, and disability studies should take note of it. Twenty years of research went into this book, which presents a history of ideas ranging from the ancient Greeks to the current period. It is thorough, rigorous, comprehensive, and painstaking in its analysis while also being simultaneously measured and provocative in its conclusions. With regard to disability studies, I suggest that this book ranks among its best scholarship. I further suggest that this is the MOST significant book coming out of disability studies to focus exclusively on intellectual disability... More importantly, no other study exists (that I know of at least) that goes to the tremendous lengths (breadth, depth, complexity, layering, self-questioning) that this one does, and so successfully. In terms of style, Goodey knows his way around a metaphor and at times can be humorous. The writing alone makes this an enjoyable read.' Chris Gabbard, Department of English, University of North Florida 'This superb interdisciplinary study analyzes a wide range of texts from antique philosophy, religion, medicine, and psychology, to show how the history of disability is intertwined with that of social and cultural formations. A must read for all who want to know how their own discipline organized the world of understanding in a way that made some human beings invisible at best, and despicable at worst.' Hans Reinders, VU University, Amsterdam 'Goodey shows the influence of social, political, and religious factors that shaped the pre-modern and early modern views of intelligence and of lack-of-intelligence. In so doing, he has created a magisterial work - one that should be read by historians, sociologists, policy makers, and students of disability studies. Finally, he has set a high standard for those scholars interested in studying intelligence and intellectual disability in periods before the 20th century.' Reviews in History 'In this breath-taking work of scholarly inquiry [...] Goodey takes us on a mesmerising, though utterly compelling, journey from the ancients of Greece and Rome, through medieval society, economy, theology and philosophy, into Locke and early modern Europe. Scarcely pausing to draw breath, A History of Intelligence completely disassembles our contemporary understandings of intellectual disability, only to reassemble them in ways that make us feel as though we are staring at the utterly familiar as if for the first time. It is a remarkable accomplishment and an almost unparalleled contribution to the historiography of intellectual disability.' Social History of Medicine '... [a] magnificent exploration of the history of the idea of intelligence... the author is a historian and a very accomplished one at that. His argument, backed up by a rich mastery of an immense range of historical sources, is that the idea of intelligence we understand today has its roots in the early modern period (16th and 17th centuries) in Europe... Goodey argues powerfully that intellectual disability is historically contingent and a cultural creation of modern society... 'History of Intelligence' has given us more than enough. Densely argued, richly sourced and complex... The book is on the borderland of what the intelligent general reader (what a loaded phrase that suddenly becomes) rather than the academic can enjoy. However, I cannot recommend it highly enough to anyone prepared to invest the time and effort to absorb themselves in it. It will be particularly challenging for psychologists, whose very value as a profession Goodey challenges, but they should read it for that reason alone. The growing field of intellectual disability history now has its own historian of ideas, and what an excellent one it has in C F Goodey.' British Journal of Learning Disabilities 'This is a fascinating book that shows quite brilliantly the interconnection between socioeconomic, religious and medical modes of thought in the history of the intellect... This rigorous, provocative [...] book establishes new directions in the history of science and disability and is required reading for practitioners in both these areas.' British Journal for the History of Science 'C.F. Goodey's new volume compellingly undermines the notion of 'intelligence' as a natural category or transhistorical concept. In fact, I cannot think of another work

that does such a thorough job of examining and dismantling any such social construction, let alone one as complex as 'intelligence'. The book (a tome, really) is impressive in its chronological scope (ranging from the ancients to the moderns but focusing on the early modern period) and range of materials (he examines texts from philosophy, literature, science, folklore, law, and more).' History 'It is only rarely that one encounters a book able to remind oneself of the immense magnitude and strength of one's own socialisation and the culturally embedded values of contemporary society. With his book "A History of Intelligence and 'Intellectual Disability' " C.F. Goodey manages to do precisely that... contains thought-provoking contributions in the fields of history, sociology, history of science, psychology, philosophy, ethics, and to some extent philology. This is bound to generate wide interest in different research environments... [a] momentous work...' Christian Ydesen, Institute for Learning and Philosophy, University of Aalborg, Denmark, in Academia.edu 'Can practitioners, researchers, and teachers of psychology and medicine afford to neglect Goodey's challenge to our current notions of intellectual disability, which are complacent, if not static?' Metapsychology 'This timely, daring and challenging book ... a phenomenally ambitious, interesting and reflective interdisciplinary history of ideas ... assembles some convincing evidence for the processes by which changing sets of ideas, or an accident of historical contingencies, have come to shape allegedly incontrovertible universal truths. At the risk of turning a tautological phrase, this is a highly intellectual history of intellectual disability.' Medical History 'C.F. Goodey's book is an ambitious attempt to trace the development of the idea of intelligence and its various counter-concepts in European society, with a focus on the roots of the idea of intellectual disability... There is much here that is praiseworthy. The dual focus on intertwined conceptions of intelligence and intellectual disability is sustained effectively throughout, and the range of material surveyed, from popular literature to systematic philosophical treatises and commentaries, is extensive.' American Historical Review 'C. F. Goodey has written an interesting and thought-provoking monograph on intelligence and the lack thereof. He has an easy, enjoyable style, and is not afraid to play with ideas, both constructs from the present and the past - Early Modern, in particular, but those stand cheek-by-jowl with ancient, medieval, and modern illustrations... This book belongs on the shelves of all those interested in the history of mental health, disability studies, and the history of intelligence and psychology. It is accessible to a sophisticated undergraduate population. I recommend it highly.' Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences 'C.F. Goodey provides a somewhat radical study of the concepts of intelligence and its antithesis, 'intellectual disability', in order to argue that both are merely social constructs that are historically contingent in nature. The author draws upon a stunning range of contemporary and historical sources in order to examine ideas from psychology, biology, medicine, genetics, anthropology, theology and literature to highlight the fluctuating nature of the given concepts throughout the last two and a half millennia... Goodey provides a unique and insightful contribution to this field of research that should in no way be overlooked. The vast array of questions that arise from this work, such as what place people with intellectual disabilities hold in modern thought and practice, should stimulate a wealth of research and debate that may help to address the clear research gap in this area.' Disability & Society 'In this erudite book, C.F. Goodey details the malleable nature of historical ideas around intelligence and what is now called 'intellectual disability'. He demonstrates that it is a fallacy to claim, as have modern psychologists and intelligence testers, that these two categories have had a stable, immutable definition since the time of the ancient Greeks. Far from it. Contemporary notions of who is and is not considered intelligent and why, reflect constructions around who is valued as belonging to an 'in-group' or devalued as being in an 'out-group'.' Canadian Bulletin of Medical History 'While most readers will be familiar with the development of concepts of intelligence and its measurement in the nineteenth century, this book offers its prehistory... creating a subtle and complex picture of the relationship between the modern concept of the intellect, and the theological, philosophical, and social classifications from which it developed... An important overview of the origins of some of the most tenaciously held ideologies of personhood... the book is impressively researched and thorough. It is also eminently quotable, with many passages offering pithy summaries that wittily deflate received wisdom... Overall this book is an essential read for anyone interested in how our concepts of the mind and intellect came to be constructed in the particular ways that they did.' H-Disability, H-Net Reviews

'This is an impressive study that embraces an incredible array of primary sources and evinces a deep understanding of the periods and societies under investigation... [the book] will prove a valuable reference for anyone with an interest in modern notions of intelligence and intellectual disability.' Parergon '... Goodey provides the growing field of disability studies with an immense contribution, not only by presenting intelligence as a spurious social construct, but also by inviting his readers to grapple with the rich intersection of religious, philosophical, legal, emotional, and medical ideas that comprise a society's variegated conception(s) of intelligence, not to mention who does or does not possess it.' Sixteenth Century Journal '... magistrale. ...Un livre precieux qui ouvre un vaste domaine de recherche quant aux rapports entre le champ social et ce que nous appelons l'intelligence et ses deficiences.' ['Magisterial. ... An invaluable book that opens up a vast research domain concerning the relationships between the social arena and what we call intelligence and its deficiencies.'] Gesnerus

About the Author

C.F. Goodey has researched and published on the history of 'intellectual disability', including the ethical and social implications of the concept, for more than 20 years. His articles have appeared in a number of scholarly journals, including History of Science, Medical History, History of the Human Sciences, Political Theory and Ancient Philosophy. He formerly held teaching and research posts at Ruskin College, Oxford, the Open University and the University of London Institute of Education, and is currently an independent consultant working for national and local government services on learning disability in the UK.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dan Williams:

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