and helpfully illustrated, this volume provides an introductory overview of the thymus at a single short reading.

The immunological biases of the authors, however, pervade the text. Of the book’s six chapters, Ritter and Crispe devote only one to a truly developmental biological discussion. The remaining chapters focus on T-cell ontogeny, from the viewpoints of “Thymocyte populations and dynamics,” “The T cell repertoire,” and “The thymic microenvironment.” Even in the initial introductory chapter, Ritter and Crispe already begin to discuss the mechanisms of major histocompatibility (MHC)-mediated T-cell restriction, and, in a final chapter on “unresolved issues,” they focus on purely immunological problems, such as the regulation of the T-cell receptor. If they mention non-thymocyte cells or thymic morphology, they consider these aspects only in terms of contributing to T-cell development. Although the authors appropriately pay much attention to T-cell paradigms, which have provided substantial impetus to thymic research, they unfortunately dismiss other areas of interest.

In addition, Ritter and Crispe’s discussions offer little critical insight into their subject. Even though some sections describe detailed experiments and developmental models, the text remains curiously distant, never engaging the material. For instance, during a discussion of double-negative thymocytes, they address previous conflicting findings regarding the cell surface expression of the IL-2 receptor peptide p55, but do not mention more than these unexplained experimental observations. Rather than try to make sense of these confusing findings, they merely write, “The function of IL-2R p55 on these cells is not understood.” Apparently, the book’s breadth has compromised its detail to the unfortunate extent that otherwise clearly written discussions simply summarize previous experiments, conflicting or not.

Consequently, The Thymus may disappoint readers who seek a more thoughtful, critical review of thymus knowledge. Although it provides a straightforward introduction to immunologic aspects of the thymus, the book stops short of a broader discussion of the development, characteristics, and functions of non-immune thymic cells. For the reader interested in general biology, this volume limits its discussion too narrowly, and, for the immunologist, it spreads its albeit timely topic too thin. Ritter and Crispe’s book represents an admirable attempt to summarize the vast, confusing knowledge of the thymus, and the book’s deficiencies perhaps simply reflect the difficulty of the subject.

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MADNESS AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS. LIVING WITH THE MAD IN ONE FRENCH COMMUNITY. By Denise Jodelet. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1991. 310 pp. $49.00.

Denise Jodelet’s Madness and Social Representations comprises the final edition in the University of California Press’ five-volume series “Medicine and Society,” edited by Andrew Scull. Designed to “examine the development of medical knowledge and psychiatric practice from [a] historical and sociological perspective,” this series concentrates on mental disorders and their social ramifications. Jodelet describes one society’s conception of madness in an effort to develop an understanding of the social trends that such attitudes represent. Drawing upon historical, sociological, and
anthropological methods, she articulates fundamental social themes which affect the relationships between and among the mentally ill and the community. Although predominantly a scholarly work, the book hopes to reveal several issues not only for sociologists but for all those who study or work with mental illness.

Jodelet chooses to study the French community Ainay-le-Château, where a colony for the mentally ill has existed since 1900. Rather than being enclosed in an institution, the patients here live with ordinary families throughout the community. Such close interaction between patients and community provides Jodelet with a provocative framework by which to observe issues of identity, representation, and collective memory. After a description of the formal arrangements between the patients and the families, Jodelet delves into a consideration of the unseen separation established by social representations of illness between the patients and their community. A final conception of madness involves several dialectics, including issues of otherness, contact, and magicism: “Our path has passed through the signifying practice which permits the expression of the real or imaginary experience of that on which the institutory [sic] practice bears. It is a path at the end of which, when the illness has revealed all its secrets, the patient takes on another face, that of the rejected object.”

Even with the tremendous value of this thesis and the many ramifications it offers, Jodelet’s work still poses some limitations. Most strikingly, Jodelet does not fully consider interactions between the “abnormal” community of the patients and the “normal” community of Ainay-le-Château. Although she considers the separateness between the two groups “interesting,” only briefly in the epilogue does she consider such issues as marriage, sex, and other presumable taboos of interaction with the mentally ill. From an anthropological viewpoint, then, she only brushes the surface of the true society, also treating lightly issues concerning the interviewer-interviewee interaction, as well as issues concerning gender and race. Throughout, Jodelet retains a complex, literary style, focused only on a thorough consideration of social psychology in Ainay-le-Château.

All the same, the far-reaching themes of Jodelet’s writing palliate the intricacy and the limitations. Her book demonstrates the potential breadth of social psychology in engaging and synthesizing several allied sociological fields. Her fundamental conclusions exceed the limits of psychology in a strict sense, and so a comprehensive consideration may not be possible within these few hundred pages. The conceptions developed by Jodelet hold relevance to several issues beyond simply the mentally ill, indeed to such issues of health care as the doctor-patient and patient-community relationship. Like Sontag’s Illness as Metaphor, Madness and Social Representations offers a metaphorical model for the conception of illness through which health professionals and scholars will further their understanding of medicine.

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