

**James R. Barclay.**  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT:**  
**A THEORY AND SYSTEMS APPROACH.**  
Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing, 1991.  
449 pp. \$38.50.

How refreshing it is to see a book published about psychological assessment that really untangles the knots inherent in this domain! Barclay clarifies, classifies, and integrates the underpinnings of psychological assessment into a meaningful conceptual framework. Based on the author's personal conception, the main goal is to develop a comprehensive philosophy of assessment. A second purpose is to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the methodology utilized to validate the raw data. Its final purpose is to make recommendations on the integration of data into a cogent gestalt.

The author attempts to achieve his goals by approaching the material on the following three levels: (1) organizing statements, (2) text explanation, and (3) further information. The book is meant to provide summary reviews for professionals, explanations for graduate students, and commentaries for researchers.

Barclay defines assessment as human assessment, with the emphasis on the personal nature of such a task. Using a systematized approach, human assessment is seen as a naturalistic process and goes beyond the traditional view of assessment. It is concerned with the physical structure of the human body and its systems. It pays close attention to the area of perception and awareness, and encompasses both diagnosis and treatment by integrating empirical, behavioural, and psychometric components.

After defining assessment, the author examines the relationship between perception, inference-making, and meaning. He reminds us that the level of our discriminatory ability is the critical factor in the assessment process. Barclay goes on to explain various forms of reasoning, epistemological differences in inferring, and links these ways of knowing to the integration phase of diagnosis. The author then proposes a structural form of assessment. This includes (1) identification, (2) integration, and (3) inferential steps in assessment, reflecting a unified theory of personality.

Barclay traces the evaluation of the scientific paradigm in assessment through drawing on primitive, sociocultural underpinnings, Grecian-Roman contributions, and the history of psychometrics. This approach to psychological assessment draws on the theory of evolution, psychoanalysis, behaviourism, physiology, psychophysiology, statistics, and psychometrics. Psychology, as a "scientific" authority on assessment, is discussed with emphasis placed on its historical components as derived from clinical and counselling

domains. The attack on testing as “the gatekeeper” in American society in the 1960s led to the current state of psychological assessment and there is a need for a new paradigm. It is this need to which the author is dedicated.

Empirical methods of observation are discussed so that clinicians can realize their usefulness in terms of enriching our ability to categorize and process information, as well as providing us with a variety of assumptions for our theories of interviewing. Further, personality approaches favour certain empirical methods of observation. They provide clinicians with *a priori* assumptions of meaning and operating modes that increase the likelihood of gathering reliable and valid information.

Barclay believes that it is the interviewer’s ability to interpret information that is most critical to the accuracy of assessments. He presents a detailed series of flow charts that cover the interview process. They include analyses of temperament, cognition, behaviour, life history, and body expression. Clients’ perception is assessed by examining the interaction between structural, intentional, and judgmental factors. Further, coping effectiveness is assessed by evaluating the integration of the above characteristics, and by evaluating problem-solving ability and moral development.

The link between psychometrics and inferencing methods are discussed from a critical point of view. With regard to cognitive and personality measurement, the distinction between objective and projective testing is discussed in terms of their inferential value. The author reminds us that with projective testing the examiner tries to guess what the subject is thinking, while the reverse is true with objective testing. Projective testing leaves a greater opening for inferential reasoning, which is, of course, predicated on *a priori* assumptions. There is, indeed, evidence for a decline in the use of projective techniques in the last decade. The author notes the frequency of abuse in psychological testing. He wisely reminds clinicians that, in any case, testing is but one part of the assessment process, and, as such, has limited inferential value.

The author devotes an entire chapter to the construction of self-concept. He alerts clinicians of the limitations such a construct has, in terms of how it bears on psychological evaluation. One of Barclay’s criticisms of the self-concept construct is its simplification of a highly complex matter. He retracts his pessimistic view of the construct at the last moment in the chapter. In the next chapter, sociometry is reviewed as a theory and method of measuring social relationships within a psychometric framework. The author has developed the *Barclay Classroom Assessment System* and he explains it in fair detail.

Up to this point, the author has focused on various methodologies of assessing individual differences. He shifts gears somewhat, and begins to

emphasize the sources of these individual differences. This chapter seems to be a pivotal point in the author's thinking, and it is here that he begins to make his most meaningful contributions. He cites the brain and environment as critical factors in specifying the nature of individual differences, and goes on to say that their interaction is mediated through variations in cognition and motivation. He clarifies the constructs of cognition and motivation, and integrates the brain and human structure into methods of assessment. He then links this with environmental press. He summarizes the major by-products related to the complex issue of heredity and environment, and stresses that in the past, not enough emphasis has been placed on the influence of environmental pressures.

Barclay then moves his topic laterally to a discussion about classification. He presents methods and criteria used in classifying a variety of psychological phenomena. He provides an excellent classification of assessment procedures by delineating assessment into empirical, psychometric, and intuitive components (p. 316). He then examines each from a direct and indirect perspective, linking objective with subjective observations. He presents conceptual linkages between alternative classification systems, such as biomedical measures, body characteristics, process observation, and behavioural analysis. With this approach, interview data, constitutional characteristics, functional characteristics, and psychometrics are enjoined with any "abnormal" characteristics as espoused by the DSM-III, for example. The author urges us to remain skeptical of more intuitive methods of assessment. Although he qualifies his position in his notes, and makes the recommendation that our curiosity about projectives continue, he points out that further research is needed to determine the soundness of inferences drawn from such pseudosciences.

The author proposes the construct of temperament, as a mediating factor, in the assessment process. He utilizes temperament to develop a typology that is appropriate to psychological assessment. He cites numerous studies that provide evidence for the meaningfulness of this construct. Temperament is becoming a meta-theory within the domain of human behaviour theories. Partially anchored in biology, it is parsimonious in identifying activity, sociability, impulsivity, and emotionality.

In the last chapter, Barclay integrates the material presented in previous chapters, and presents his integrative model of assessment. It is multidimensional, interactive, and hierarchical (p. 393). On the first level, it is comprised of (1) individual assessment, (2) content problems/needs, and (3) diagnostic-outcomes. Within each level are three sublevels: (1a) empirical methods, (1b) psychometric methods, and (1c) intuitive methods; (2a) cognition-learning, (2b) emotion-behaviour, and (2c) conation-willing; (3a) classification for description-placement, (3b) classification for performance-competency, and (3c) classification for performance-competency, and (3c) classification for

treatment therapy. Further, provision is made for what the author calls **special assessment**. This may include learning disabilities, depression, alcoholism, sexual disorders, and so on. Finally, a section is allotted for systems assessment. This includes the area of family, business, and other organizations.

This newest book on psychological assessment by Dr. Barclay may well be the harbinger as well as the benchmark of a new era in psychodiagnostic scholarship. The author has taken on a formidable task. His endeavour evolved out of 30 years teaching graduate students, and, no doubt, observations concerning serious voids in the area of psychological assessment. The most notable omission has been the lack of an integrative approach to an area that has immense implications to each and every one of us. The author successfully analyzes and synthesizes an abundance of information as parsimoniously as possible. It is an impressive, comprehensive effort to truly encompass all aspects of his chosen area. He brings the major developments in psychological assessment with its philosophical, theoretical, clinical, and scientific underpinnings into conjunction with each other. It has taken him 449 (well worth reading) pages of heroic labour to manage this virtuoso feat, and the reward to all of us is enormous.

**Tina Goodin Waxman**  
University of Ottawa

**Frances E. Ballantyne**  
**SMALL BEGINNINGS:**  
**A PERSONAL MEMOIR OF THE PRIORY SCHOOL.**  
Montreal, QC: Anlo Inc., 1991.  
61 pp. \$10.00.

This book takes the reader on a delightful journey. It's a series of "snapshots" depicting events, places, and people that influenced education in Quebec. Educators and historians alike will find this a "gem."

As seen through the eyes of Frances Ballantyne, one of The Priory School's founders, the reader is taken back in time to the 1930s when the "seeds" were planted for starting a private elementary school in Montreal, for young English-speaking Catholic boys. The fascinating part was that at the time, convent schools that were well-established undertook the responsibility of educating girls only or little boys until they received First Communion. (Today, The Priory enrolls both boys and girls.) Attempts made by others to open a school for young Catholic boys were short-lived, due to the years of World War II.