

Arthur Thomas Shearman

*The Development of Symbolic Logic: A Critical-Historical Study of the Logical Calculus*

Dubuque, IA, Reprint Library, William C. Brown, 1988; and Bristol, Thoemmes Antiquarian Books, Ltd., 1990

xii + 242 pp.

## REVIEW

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Were it not for these two separate facsimile reprintings of the original *The Development of Symbolic Logic* [Shearman 1906], its author would very likely be entirely forgotten today, even by the majority of historians and philosophers of logic in whose fellowship he once belonged. It is useful, and certainly instructive, to examine this book in the historical context of other histories of logic of the same era and of histories of logic of the immediately preceding and succeeding generations, so that we can examine and compare the conditions and evolution of the historiography of logic in this period and from the perspectives of the immediately preceding and succeeding generations.

Unlike historians of logic such as Carl [von] Prantl (1820-1888) of a generation earlier than his own, Shearman had—at least until his book was reprinted—largely been forgotten, along with his book. If Shearman’s book has largely been ignored since its first publication, we must ask why. Is it because it offers nothing of contemporary historiographic value? or because it was insignificant at the time it was published? or because perhaps, decidedly unlike Prantl’s book’s still today, its viewpoint is today uncontroversial? or for some other reason? Is there any good historical or historiographical reason for reissuing this book so many years after it fell into oblivion?

Shearman’s study of the history of logic differed drastically from Prantl’s famous or infamous *magnum opus* of 1870. Even to this day, over a century after Prantl’s death, Prantl’s history is quite capable of raising the hackles of latter-day historians of logic; for example, the late Jean van Heijenoort (1912-1986) had accused Prantl of “stunning ignorance” (“*ignorance étonnante*”) of the subject [Van Heijenoort 1957],