Book reviews

author’s sincerity and powers of reasoning are apparent but his arguments are so concentrated that their meaning is not always clear to the uninitiated reader.


So much material, neurophysiological, behavioural and clinical, having a more or less direct bearing on the central problems of normal and disordered behaviour and its cerebral control, now pours from research centres that many people must feel the need to have some opportunity of sitting back and digesting it. This book provides such an opportunity. Not everybody will agree with some features of the general picture which emerges or with some of the particular emphases suggested. But the authors have sought a large perspective and accepted evidence from a wide catchment area. It is a book capable of stimulating a variety of readers each to his own thoughts.


This book brings together a series of papers and their discussions read to a meeting of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association. It follows the unfortunate modern trend of reporting discussion verbatim. It is consistently verbose, tends to be repetitive, and is sometimes diffuse. Despite these shortcomings it contains a core of useful material. It is a pity that many who would read a pruned and edited version will not read this. Its main theme is the place of hallucinogenic drugs (mescaline, L.S.D., and related compounds) in psychiatric treatment. This still seems to be controversial. There is a short final discussion by laymen on the significance of hallucinated experience. The chief use of this book will be as a reference source for work in progress in this field: as such it may tend to be ephemeral.


This book consists of a somewhat rambling account of the two most widely used forms of physical treatment in psychiatry. The review is accompanied by personal comments and judgments and by clinical illustrations. Most of the material is readily accessible elsewhere and the author’s opinions are neither original nor stimulating enough to justify another publication on this well-worn theme.


A perceptive social observer has recently emphasized that ‘. . . it is easier to put up a clinic than pull down a slum’. This carefully designed study demonstrates that it is easier to pull down a slum than to evaluate what has been achieved in the process. Favoured by local circumstances in the city of Baltimore the authors set out to assess the relevance of the quality of housing to morbidity, selected behaviour and attitudes, psychological state, and performance at school. They were able to interview several hundred Negro slum families and then to organize regular follow-up assessments over the ensuing three years of not only a group of 300 families who moved to superior accommodation but also matched controls whose housing remained unchanged during the triennium. Though on the whole the differences on most indices were not dramatic they did provide some evidence in favour of the re-housed groups. Some social planners may object that half a million dollars were spent to establish the obvious. Nonetheless, it is through more work of this type that the rational foundations of the applied social sciences will be laid.

BOOKS RECEIVED

(REview in a later issue is not precluded by notice here of books recently received.)


MENTAL SUBNORMALITY By W. A. Heaton-Ward. (Pp. 88. 7s. 6d.) Bristol: John Wright & Sons. 1963.


SPANISH-PORTUGUESE SOCIETY OF NEUROSURGERY

The sixteenth annual meeting of the Spanish-Portuguese Society of Neurosurgery will take place in Valencia from 29 to 31 May 1964. Further information can be obtained from Professor J. J. Barcia Goyanes, Marques de Turia 62, Valencia.