The book is by acknowledged experts and its appeal will be confined mainly to fellow experts.

JOHN MARSHALL


To the reviewer, a clinician who struggles to understand the subject, this volume is a model of clarity and helpfulness. The author has outlined the information now available with great precision and indicates which are the questions which can not yet be answered.


This volume contains the Proceedings of the 12th International Symposium organized by the Permanent Section of Microbiological Standardization held in Talloires (France) in May 1965.

SABINA J. STRICH


This book reviews the majority of drugs currently used in the treatment of epilepsy and mentions their dosage and the type of epilepsy for which they are most used. It deals briefly with side-effects and their management. It also mentions the conditions and their treatment which may cause hypoglycaemia, since this is itself a common precipitant of convulsions. The book is comprehensive rather than critical. It is however a compendious source of reference to anti-convulsant drugs, well known and less well known. For this reason and because of its abundant list of further references it will be a valuable book for those who have to deal extensively with the treatment of epilepsy.


This is the seventh and final volume of a five-volume German Handbuch of human genetics, and it possesses other features traditionally associated with such publications—a magnificent bibliography, total comprehensiveness, a thorough and up-to-date review of published work from all countries, a balanced and critical summary of the genetic evidence for each disorder, and fine production. The contributions by Zerbin-Rüdin on schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, the dementias, and mental deficiency are especially remarkable for the skill with which various investigations of differing quality and scope are assessed, and for the clarity with which a unified picture is finally presented. Other chapters deal equally fully with metabolic disorders associated with mental deficiency (Bickel and Cleve), autosomal chromosoma abnormalities (Lenz), epilepsy and migraine (Koch), and the neuroses (Strömgren). This volume is an essential requirement for every psychiatric department.


This book summarizes the author's many years' study of the family dynamics in schizophrenia. Vectorialism is giving away without asking anything in return. The abnormality in schizophrenia (leading to the author's new term for the disorder) consists of being forced to give before one is ready to give, by reason of the parents' faulty attitudes. The flavour of the book can best be indicated by a quotation: 'Since schizophrenia is, as I believe, a product of faulty family relations that lead to a precocious hypervectorialism and impoverishment of the self-directed libido, the essence of therapy for schizophrenia and related disorders must be the reversal of interindividual catexhes and the establishment of a balance of intraindividual catexhes. More specifically, the reduction of libido investments in others and reinvestment of libido in oneself is the primary objective of therapy, and a prerequisite for any future adjustment.'

DIE MERKMALE SCHIZOPHRENER BILDNERE By Helmut Rennert. (Pp. xi + 164; 62 figures. 53s.) Fischer: Jena. 1966.

There has been a proliferation of ill-defined books and articles on the artistic productions of the mentally ill, in which the obvious attraction of the subject seemed to be correlated with a trend towards disjointed symbolic and undisciplined enthusiasm. Professor Rennert's book, though not without its quota of enthusiasm, is an orderly attempt to review the literature, and establish the typical characteristics of form and content which are found in the productions of schizophrenics. He has succeeded in these major aims, and has provided an illuminating, if still inevitably incomplete, survey of the similarities and differences between some forms of modern art and the art of schizophrenics. In schizophrenic art the formal characteristics listed by Professor Rennert are regression, distortion, condensation, transformation, stereotypy, woodiness, and disintegration; the anomalies of content are abstract shapes—for example, geometrical figures—and representational forms—for example, compositions reminiscent of byzantine art or stained glass. Sixty-one reproductions illustrate the text. The monograph is a worthy addition to the literature that was begun and stimulated by Prinzhorn's Bildnerei der Geisteskranken.


A large part of this monograph consists of a critical review of the relevant literature. In his own investigation the author has taken two groups—families in which one parent of a schizophrenic patient had a mental illness, and families in which a schizophrenic patient
now in the Reykjavik Mental Hospital had been reared by foster parents. All the brothers and sisters of the patients in the first group were studied to determine whether they had been in a foster home during the whole of their childhood and adolescence. With suitable precautions these two groups were examined to see whether separation from the biological parents during childhood leads to an increased risk of schizophrenia, and whether genetic factors predominate over environmental influences. The author concludes that the latter do not play an important part in causing schizophrenia but that they can bring it on at a particular time, or modify it. More surprising is his hypothesis that there are two personality characteristics—one associated with anomalies of thinking and the other with nervous tension—which are gene-controlled: the former being dominant and the latter recessive. When both occur in the same person, schizophrenia is likely to result: when one of them occurs alone it may have a beneficial effect, and he conjectures, not very convincingly, that 'the six per cent of the population who should possess this characteristic perhaps includes the individuals who are the cultural and habitual leaders in human societies'.


It is difficult for a reviewer, indoctrinated in orthodox psychiatry, to detach himself sufficiently from his prejudices to examine dispassionately a thesis that regards 'normality' as a half-way stage to a 'sanity' that very few manage to reach and that is nearer to 'madness' than to 'normality'. He is not helped by the occasional ironic aside (whether the formal training of psychiatrists includes qualifications in magical omnipotence is perhaps uncertain...), or by the loading of argument with emotion. It remains obscure how much contradictory demands made on a person by his family are responsible for a 'breakdown' labelled schizophrenia, or merely give it pathoplastic colouring. The author describes the interesting experimental unit that he organized at Shenley Hospital. The results, in a similar series of patients, expressed conventionally in 'An ironic addendum' in terms of discharge and readmission rates, and adjustment to work, are superior to those obtained by conventional treatment.


Eclecticism can be as dangerous in psychiatry as in architecture or philosophy: unless it has a rigorous systematic basis, it degenerates into a wishy-washy syncretism and its results appear as a patchwork of clashing fragments. Drs. Kaelbling and Patterson, writing for doctors who are not psychiatrists, avoid the fundamental grounds of contemporary dispute about such matters as the theory of psycho-analysis and the efficacy of psychotherapy; they provide instead a broad, well-informed, mildly biased account of conservative belief and practice. Their cautious half-way commitment is illustrated by the statement in their preface, that 'neither philosophy nor research methodology is of prime concern in teaching psychiatry, although one cannot be completely without either. What must be learned is how to identify a psychiatric problem, and then how it can be pursued to the frontiers of our present-day knowledge'.

There are some novel features, such as Tables which are catalogues of symptoms (for example, Table xii with the caption 'Major mental complexes designated after mythological figures', among whom Demosthenes and Epaminondas are listed alongside Cain, Hecales, and Oedipus); a distribution of space which slights the major psychoses—in Part 4, for example, on 'Clinical Psychiatric Syndromes', 62 pages are devoted to neuroses, personality disorders, and adjustment reactions, 50 pages to sociopathies, but only 25 pages to schizophrenia and nine pages to the affective psychoses. A professor from the English Department of their university edited the manuscript 'for style, grammar and logic—a humble but effective use of academic talent.'


This book begins with the following sentence: 'The human race is a myriad of refractive surfaces staining the white radiance of eternity.' Its concluding section is entitled 'The spiral of reciprocal mistrust in international relations'. The intervening pages are taken up with a rambling discussion focused on personal interaction; the description of an unstandardized and unvalidated test, the Interpersonal Perception Method; and the results of the application of this test to a small group of 'disturbed and non-disturbed' married couples. Although there is much talk about dyadic systems and a plethora of Tables relating to them, no mention is made of previous sociometric studies which have encountered the many problems of method in this field. Both Dr. Laing's admirers and his detractors will find their opinions confirmed by this volume.

BOOKS RECEIVED


Book Reviews

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