

## Reviews and Notices of Books.

**Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality.** By FRANZ ALEXANDER. New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co., 1930. Pp. 176. Price \$2.50.

IN this book Dr. Alexander endeavours to apply in a practical manner to the neuroses those theories of Freud which are set out in the Ego and the Id. This he does in an admirable way and his presentation is so clear that even those who are not initiated into the Freudian vocabulary will be able to follow it with interest and profit. Those who approach the study of the neuroses from a neurological standpoint will no doubt find much to criticise, notably the assumption of the capacity of the infant to undertake mental tasks of considerable intricacy which are presumably conscious at this stage and are only repressed into unconsciousness during the beginning of the latency period. It would be of great interest and importance to discover whether the child of under five really has enough fully developed neurones at his disposal for this purpose; the recovery of these 'memories' under analysis is not altogether convincing evidence. The other point is the extreme personalization of the divisions of the personality, which however, Alexander fully admits and deliberately adopts for purposes of description.

The personality is separated into three divisions under this scheme: (1) the conscious ego, (2) the purely instinctive id, and (3) the still unconscious superego, which represses the socially undesirable demands of the id. In large measure conscious and environmental repressions are handed over to this unconscious superego much as walking is handed over to lower centres once the process is learnt.

In the normal subject there is a reasonable balance between the demands of the id and the claims of the superego, so that the former are sublimated into desirable activities. In the neurotic there is over-repression by the superego, so that there is always a demand of the instinctive strivings (the id) for satisfaction and a demand of the superego for punishment. The symptoms of the neurotic therefore always have a double purpose, an instinctive wish-fulfilment and a self-punishment. In conversion-hysteria this is fulfilled at one and the same time, the symptoms being at once an indirect gratification of the id and a punishment of the self by restricting the activities of the individual. In compulsion neuroses there is a highly unstable equilibrium between the indirect satisfaction of the id and the punishment demands of the superego. In manic-depressive psychosis there is an alternating preponderance of id (manic stage) and superego (depressive stage), which accounts for the tendency

for suicide in the latter stage: the self-punishment corresponds to the death-instinct (Thanatos) and the id to the life-instinct (Eros) of Freud. There is an interesting discussion of the extroverting socializing influence of 'Eros' and the introverting individualizing influence of 'Thanatos.' Altogether this is a brief, clear and commendable exposition, and all serious students of the neuroses ought to study it with care.

R. G. G.

### **Reflex Action ; a Study in the History of Physiological Psychology.**

By FRANKLIN FEARING, Ph.D., Northwestern University. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox. 1930. Pp. 350. Price 30s.

PROFESSOR FEARING has laid the neurologist and psychologist under a debt of gratitude for his minute historical survey of the vicissitudes undergone by the conception of reflex action. Any close reader of the scientific literature of the day in these two subjects must be impressed by the looseness of thought characterising use of the term in many instances, and by its extension to cover all kinds of movement. With a view to providing a thoroughly reasoned basis the author takes us seriatim from Descartes and Vesalius right down to the present, to the day of Pavlov and Sherrington. He cannot give a simple and unqualified definition, but allows a threefold classification. (1) Reflex action is involuntary, unlearned, predictable, invariable, purposive, and does not involve the cerebral cortex neurally. This is the 'specific' concept. (2) The 'genetic' concept declares it is derived from voluntary action through the intermediary of impulsive and automatic action. (3) According to the 'mechanical' concept *all* behaviour is predetermined by reflex neural arrangements. 'Choice' and 'purpose' disappear as factors. Terminological difficulties are ever in evidence in connexion with this analysis, and, be it once more stressed, artificialities. Division of arts into volitional, automatic, habitual, reflex, etc., makes an 'artificial stratification of animal responses.'

**Nouveau Traité de Psychologie.** Edited by GEORGES DUMAS, Professor at the Sorbonne. Paris: Felix Alcan. 1930. Pp. 430. Price 75 fr.

THE first volume of a new system of psychology, to be completed in ten, has made its appearance. Edited by Professor Dumas of the Sorbonne, with the assistance of a large number of distinguished collaborators, it promises well if we are to judge by this first instalment, which is concerned mainly with prolegomena. Successive chapters deal with the place of man in the animal series, with anthropology, with the physiology of age and sex, the general and special aspects of neurophysiology, consciousness from a biological viewpoint. After these introductory matters the subject proper begins with a discussion of the objects and methods of psychology.

There is much of interest to the philosophical neurologist and to the psychiatrist in these pages: the summaries of present-day knowledge as regards the functions of the nervous system and the relation of