

namely that planning tends to be a process of muddling through rather than rational-comprehensive in nature.

D. P. FORSTER, *Senior Lecturer in Community Medicine, University of Newcastle upon Tyne*

Mental Illness and the Law. By TONY WHITEHEAD. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1982. Pp 181. £4.95.

As representatives of two of the groups for which this publication is intended, I asked a nurse and a social worker for their opinions on this book. Both said that it is excellent and I agree with that view. Dr Whitehead has accomplished the difficult task of providing a clear guide to British legislation concerned with mental illness. There are some mistakes. For example, it is said that if both prosecution and defence psychiatrists agree to a finding of diminished responsibility the charge of murder is reduced to manslaughter and the Court then has to decide only upon what punishment, if any, should be given. The tribulations of Mr Peter Sutcliffe prove that this is not the case. The blurb promises that the author will criticize current injustices and suggest desirable reforms and it is in this exercise that the book is weakest. In any event, such opinion is misplaced in a guide to legislation. The book should be more comprehensive in dealing with the law relating to children and young persons and much of the outline of the Mental Health (Amendment) Act has been outdated by changes agreed in the Commons' Special Standing Committee.

PAUL BOWDEN, *Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Maudsley Hospital, London*

Psychopharmacology of Sleep. Edited by DAVID WHEATLEY. New York: Raven Press. 1981. Pp 256. \$39.44.

This book is divided into two sections; the first addresses itself to the nature of sleep. The papers review and update our knowledge of the neurochemistry of sleep, of chronopharmacology, of endogenous sleep peptides and of the molecular pharmacology of benzodiazepines. A very interesting chapter on the phylogeny of sleep concludes that the function which sleep subserves throughout the animal kingdom is far from clear: experimental findings however suggest that some animals have learned to make better use of the state we call sleep under the shaping forces of chance and necessity.

The second part of the meeting covered the management of sleep disturbances. Valuable contributions range from an updated working knowledge of the pharmacokinetics of hypnotic drugs, an essential prerequisite to intelligent prescribing, to the effects and after-effects of these drugs. There is an excellent chapter on the management of a variety of sleep

disorders such as narcolepsy, sleep apneas and sleep disorders during childhood. The need for new hypnotics is discussed, with agreement that the need is for more knowledge about existing hypnotics rather than the development of new ones.

Reading this book left me with more questions than answers: an updated knowledge of the pharmacokinetics of hypnotics, although helpful, could not be married in practice to our experience with their effects and after-effects. The reader is not left much wiser as regards the question of which hypnotic, in what dose, for what patient, and our use of hypnotics remains empirical.

This book can be recommended: the first section is valuable to sleep researchers, the second section provides a working knowledge of the use of hypnotics in the management of sleep disorders for psychiatrists, physicians and general practitioners.

M. T. ABOU-SALEH, *Senior Registrar in Psychopharmacology, West Park Hospital, Epsom, Surrey*

Psychosocial Aspects of Depression. By LARS FREDEN. Chichester: John Wiley. 1982. Pp 202. £14.50.

With an endless series of new antidepressant drugs all equally effective, the advent of Beck's cognitive therapy brought an air of excitement to the subject of depression. There can now be very few mental health professionals who would not agree that the management of depression must be comprehensive and always include a psychotherapeutic element. The patient's social context, and his family and work relationships must be taken into account in understanding the aetiology and the future management of the case.

This book by a Swedish social scientist reviews the phenomena of depression and samples the various studies to date, and reports the author's own research. He is an advocate of Ernest Becker's approach to depression which sees depression as arising from threats to self esteem associated with feelings of lack of control over one's own actions. The patient has a limited repertoire of possible actions arising from his rigidity and "depressive personality"; there is a failure to cope and he becomes depressed. The author refers to other theories including Seligman's learned helplessness and Bibring's psychodynamic approach. He also produces extensive evidence of the need to involve the family, particularly the spouse of the depressed patients.

Unfortunately, there is an element of crusading against mental hospitals and the author builds a straight-jacket for psychiatry. The psychiatrist is a blinkered "confused", "biologist", with no understanding of psychodynamics or psychotherapy.

In his view psychiatric treatment "leaves the patient in a state of lethargy. Nobody has tried to delve into his everyday life, to help make his existence more meaningful; instead he is probably told that 'the whole thing will go over in time'." The psychiatrist, in the author's view, is limited to using drugs and ECT and never speaks to the family...well hardly ever.

It is a pity that this otherwise comprehensive and useful book is marred by an unreal view of contemporary psychiatry. Perhaps psychiatry must work harder at presenting a better image to the public and to professional colleagues: we must be seen to be comprehensive in our treatments, especially of depression.

ROBERT J. DALY, *Professor of Psychiatry, University College, Cork, Ireland*

The Clinical Treatment of Substance Abuse. By LEON BRILL. New York: The Free Press. Pp 250. No price stated.

The author—a well known and very experienced American therapist and research worker in the field of drug dependence—attempts in this book to describe dynamics and the specific modes and techniques of treatment of drug abuse (including alcoholism) in some detail, and he succeeds well in his aim. He advocates (as is now generally accepted) a multidisciplinary approach and addresses himself to all the professional disciplines concerned with the problem as well as to interested laymen. He deplores the confused terminology prevalent in this field and society's moralistic and judgmental attitudes, reflected for example in the division into "hard" and "soft" drugs; and he advocates a "rational approach to drug abuse; that is directed towards greater objectivity and centres on the user rather than on the drug. Numerous case illustrations and theoretical discussions provide the bulk of the book; the cases have been chosen from five representative American treatment centres and reflect the somewhat different therapeutic approaches and models needed to cope with the diversity of clients. The book is arranged in three parts, Overview, Treatment of Substance Abuse, and Adjuncts of Treatment followed by a Summary and Retrospect and two Appendices. Much sound information (based on the writer's own vast experience

and American findings and observations in general) is presented in a very lucid form by a writer with a great understanding of the drug abuser's problems, his plight and the need for adequate help.

M. M. GLATT, *Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist, University College Hospital, London*

Crimes of Violence by Mentally Abnormal Offenders. A Psychiatric and Epidemiological Study in the Federal German Republic. By H. HAFNER and W. BÖKER. Cambridge University Press. 1982. Pp 384. £20.00.

This book, an English translation of a German monograph (published in 1973), contains the results of an epidemiological survey of all men and women detained as legally irresponsible (diminished responsibility or unfitness to plead) in the Federal Republic of Germany between 1955 and 1964, suffering from psychosis or serious degrees of subnormality after committing homicide or intended but unsuccessful homicide. For certain aspects of their study a control group of non-violent mentally ill persons detained in mental hospitals was used.

In style (and content) it equates with a research thesis and the data is examined in exhaustive and painstaking detail. Their main conclusion, that mentally ill or subnormal patients are no more or no less likely to commit homicide than the mentally healthy (a finding not out of keeping with other studies of the period particular for this somewhat restricted "violent group") is probably of less interest than in their very detailed description and analysis of the interaction of the many factors that they study.

With modern laws and regulations for the protection of confidentiality and personal data in almost all Western nations, such studies are unlikely ever to be repeated and for this alone it is worth having this translation. It is unfortunate that the form of typesetting used makes continuous reading very difficult. However as this is a book for libraries specializing in forensic psychiatry and to be dipped into rather than read, this may not be so serious a problem.

T. G. TENNENT, *Medical Director, St Andrew's Hospital, Northampton*