

Vernon does not seem to appreciate that from the social and economic viewpoint this really means the clinical combination of data has yet to justify itself; perhaps time and money are less important when psychological services are socialized. Empiricism often comes in for some knuckle-rapping in this account of assessment, but surely this should be reserved for those occasions when it is rashly offered as a substitute for original ideas. In the verification of ideas, however original, empiricism has no substitute. The author provides a valuable entrée to literature on construct validity, incremental validity, convergent validity, and the problems of base rates and cutting scores. In a neat example he shows that when a screening test with a validity of .5 is used in a situation where the base rate of "pathology" is 10 per cent., the ten highest scorers in a sample of 100 will only include 3 true positives; it is not until the cutting score is lowered to include the top 60 per cent. that 9 of the 10 true positives are detected, but then at the expense of 51 false positives. Lower base rates make even greater demands on the validity of a test.

Sharing importance with the problems of various validities is that of the criterion in assessment research. It is so often fallible and unreliable that it is better thought of as a non-test indicator. Psychiatric diagnosis is especially vulnerable to both criticisms, but a partial solution is not sufficiently emphasized in Vernon's survey. Q-sort methodology is discussed, but primarily as another test used by a subject rather than in its more important role of providing a criterion description which combines globality and quantifiability. The author opts for viewing a test's validity as lying "in the inferences we are entitled to make from it" as shown by its correlates with other observable behaviour. This is essentially a restatement of the construct validity approach. The overall assessment position which this account appears to favour is one which combines an organismic or whole person point of view with the reductionism of time-honoured experimental psychology.

Can the use of a psychological test as a diagnostic indicator to the psychiatrist be justified on the basis of information in this book? Probably not. Should tests then, continue to be ordered by the psychiatrist? Yes. But only where they lead to more efficient decision making. A test consumer has a right to know the percentage of true positives and true negatives in settings like the one in which he works. The consumer is entitled to normative data for a minimum of two levels each of sex, age, social class, and intelligence; in other words sixteen sets of norms and a normative sample of 800 to 1,600 subjects.

Professor Vernon's survey has stripped psychological assessors of their obsessional defences—tests—

without providing sufficient hope or charity. Hopefully the profession has sufficient ego strength to reconstitute itself in a positive role as purveyors of scientific methodology applied to psychopathology.

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**The Rorschach in Practice.** By THEODORE ALCOCK. London: Tavistock Publications. 1963. Pp. 252. Price 63s.

Rorschach workers in this country who have come under Miss Alcock's influence, and there can be few who have not, will be delighted that her wisdom and long experience of teaching and testing have now been set down in permanent form. The book is also to be welcomed as the first major British contribution to Rorschach literature. Though the test has been used in England since the nineteenth-thirties, workers have had to rely mainly on literature from America.

The Rorschach is practised in the five continents and the bibliography listed by Bruno Klopfer *et al.* had some 2,700 items in 1956. Yet, not so long ago there was in this country a lively controversy between psychologists who believed in the test and those who did not, and up to the present the psychiatrist is no rarity who views the test—and its user—with reserve. It seems, however, that some mode of co-existence has been achieved between psychologists. Those trained in the camp of the "non-believers" are heard to say that the Rorschach test can give valuable results in the hands of an expert but that to reach proficiency takes several years which not everybody might like to invest that way.

Miss Alcock's book is addressed to all who have made up their mind that the prize is worth the toil and who are prepared to submit themselves to the strict discipline which the test demands. In the first part she discusses the technique, from administration, scoring, psychogram, sequence analysis, and indicators for differential diagnosis to an integration of the data—the foundation on which a sound interpretation has to rest. In the second part she demonstrates on eight case studies (six adults, two children) what can be achieved with the "Rorschach in practice". The third part, a study on asthmatic children, gives the contribution the test can make to personality research.

In her interpretation Miss Alcock combines Anna Freud's mechanisms of defence with Fairbairn's developments of the object-relations theories. The scoring is based on Bruno Klopfer. A novelty is the concept of "buffer" content (e.g. architecture, plants) to which Miss Alcock assigns the function of warding off "unwelcome affect aroused by percepts more closely related to the human field". An inter-

esting suggestion is that failure to see intra-blot relationships may correspond to social disability in real life. The strongest contribution, however, is the emphasis on the healthy personality. It is not by chance that the book begins with a detailed account of the percepts which the blots suggest to many people: "the reality of the blots". Certain freedoms underlying mental health are postulated and there is a psychogram of a "healthy personality, functioning effectively without excessive tension either intellectual or emotional". The "vulnerable personality" is another new and useful concept. Miss Alcock warns against a witch hunt for pathology and in the first case study demonstrates the importance of giving weight to the positive forces.

The book is written clearly and concisely in straightforward English. It should find its rightful place amongst the teaching books by the leading authorities in the Rorschach technique.

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## 5. SEX

**Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Male Homosexuals.** By IRVING BIBER *et al.* New York: Basic Books. 1962. Pp. 358. Price \$8.50.

In May, 1896, Freud read a paper to the Society for Psychiatry and Neurology in Vienna, in which he proudly announced that he had discovered the cause of hysteria. In 18 hysterical female patients, he had succeeded, with the help of hypnosis and waking suggestions, to revive forgotten childhood memories of sexual seductions and assaults by their fathers. He had come to the conclusion that the cause of hysteria lay in these sexual traumas. Soon afterwards, however, he realized that his conclusion had been premature, that he had mistaken the "psychic reality" of recalled fantasies for the objective reality of recalled experiences. Much time has passed since then, and neither Freud nor his followers have always paid due attention to the distinction between psychic and objective reality.

In this book, history repeats itself, though in an inverted form. The ten authors proudly announce that 58 members of the Society of Medical Psychoanalysts in New York had psychoanalysed 106 male homosexuals and collaborated in a research which uncovered the cause of homosexuality. To quote the authors: "From our statistical analysis, the chances appear to be high than any son exposed to this parental combination will become homosexual or develop severe homosexual problems." The "parental

combination" mentioned consists of a father who is detached and hostile to a son, and of a mother who sexually overstimulates a son "through seductiveness, or through sexual overstimulation implicit in over-close intimacy", who in many other ways binds him emotionally to herself, discouraging masculine attitudes and behaviour patterns in him, and who dominates and minimizes her husband.

The authors, unlike Freud, never suspect that they might deal only with a psychic reality. They are so convinced that the pathological parental combination they describe is an objective reality and the main cause of male homosexuality that they take Freud to task for assuming that constitutional factors also play an important part in the aetiology of this sexual deviation. "The reliance upon constitutional factors to account . . . for the psychopathology involved in homosexuality appears to us . . . to be unwarranted." The only constitutional factor the authors accept is a "basic biological tendency towards heterosexuality". Starting from this Panglossian premise that every inherited constitution is for the best in this best of all possible biological worlds, it follows that homosexuality is due to "pervasive fears surrounding the expression of heterosexual impulses". They continue: "In our view, every homosexual is, in reality, a 'latent' heterosexual."

The most impressive claim made by the authors concerns the therapeutic success achieved by psychoanalysis. The Wolfenden Committee had, after interviewing a number of medical witnesses, come to the conclusion "that a total re-orientation from complete homosexuality to complete heterosexuality is very unlikely indeed". It is therefore unexpected to read that of 72 patients who had been "exclusively homosexual" at the beginning of treatment 19 per cent. had become "bisexual" and another 19 per cent. "exclusively heterosexual". Of 30 patients who had been "bisexual" at the beginning of treatment 50 per cent. had become "exclusively heterosexual". It is unfortunate that these splendid results are not adequately documented. They were merely "reported to the Research Committee by the responding psychoanalysts at the final follow-up inquiry".

This is the first time that a research committee has succeeded, not only in enlisting the participation of a group of full-time psychoanalysts in an extensive research project, but also in publishing the results. The authors must be congratulated on this achievement. It is to be hoped that they will feel encouraged to continue their investigation, and that an improved research design will enable them to refute some of the criticism voiced in this review. It would be