

Reaktionen, Neurosen, Psychopathien. Ein Grundriss der kleinen Psychiatrie. By WALTER BRÄUTIGAM. Stuttgart: George Thieme Verlag. 1968. Pp. 175. Price DM 7.40.

The author's professed intention is to give a basic book on so-called 'minor psychiatry' to medical students and general practitioners, as the instruction on this subject is deficient in the medical curriculum in Germany. Yet, in spite of the apparent brevity (164 pages of text) and the small size of the book, its treatment of the subject-matter is quite comprehensive and is richly illustrated with case-histories.

Bräutigam begins by surveying different psychiatric schools and their explanation of the neuroses. His own approach is mostly analytical. He discusses in some detail the Conflict and its part in the aetiology of Neurotic Psychopathic 'Development'. He reviews the frequency of 'minor psychiatric disorders' in different countries, considers their 'spontaneous' prognosis and the results of various types of treatment, and discusses the aims and the techniques of psychiatric interview.

Three detailed chapters are entitled 1. Conflict Reactions; 2. Neurotic 'Developments'; and 3. Psychopathic 'Developments'; each treated under the headings of Symptoms, Precipitating Factors, Course, and Aetiology, with a classification that is not only meticulous but often quite involved.

The booklet is well written, quite readable, and contains a lot of information, and in spite of Bräutigam's cumbersome and unduly complex classification it is on the whole interesting: probably more suitable for a young doctor preparing for his D.P.M. than for a general practitioner or a medical student. Technically, the weak points are the small print and, for a German book, a surprising number of printing errors (I counted eleven).

NARCYZ LUKIANOWICZ.

GENETICS

New Aspects of Human Genetics. British Medical Bulletin, vol. 25, No. 1, Jan. 1969. Ed. by C. E. FORD and HARRY HARRIS. London: The British Council. Pp. 118. Price £2.

This paper-backed volume of reviews of recent advances in human genetics contains many papers of interest to psychiatrists. An over-view of the ground covered is provided by L. S. Penrose in his introduction, and he points out some of the lessons that we may learn: the difficulty of separating the effects of heredity from those of the environment, the applicability of models in which an extreme of quantitative variation may lead to pathological effects, the need to pass beyond the polygenic explanation if the data

for analysis are available: 'Whenever a locus is found with a great many alleles, which have quantitative measurements, it is difficult to distinguish its effects from a continuous distribution resembling the Gaussian model . . . there are twenty different variant forms of glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase enzyme, which are equivalent to twenty alleles in traditional genetics. Consequently some apparently polygenic traits may be controlled by single loci.'

This statement bases itself on the work of Harry Harris, who has shown in some beautiful studies the immense number and variety of genetical differences, such that one can assume each one of us has a unique enzyme constitution as much as a unique antigenic one.

Of special interest to the reviewer are the papers of J. H. Edwards and C. O. Carter. Carter's discussion of the genetics of common disorders is highly relevant to our views about the hereditary contribution to the aetiology of schizophrenia and manic-depression. Polygenic causation can be taken as proven in several fairly common congenital abnormalities, not least from Carter's own work, and highly probable in others. An exceedingly interesting feature of these conditions, which is as yet unexplained, is that there is a marked sex preponderance in one sex or the other. Thus there is a male preponderance in pyloric stenosis (sex ratio m/f 5.0), talipes equinovarus (2.0) and cleft lip (1.8), and a female preponderance in spina bifida cystica (0.8), anencephaly (0.4) and congenital dislocation of the hip (0.15). This would suggest that polygenic inheritance is more probable in manic-depression, with a marked female preponderance, than in schizophrenia, with sex equality. Carter discusses the tests that may be applied to familial data to distinguish expectations based on a polygenic from those based on a monogenic model. These possibilities are fruitful in ideas for future research.

The paper by Edwards has wit as well as wisdom, and is an important discussion along mathematical lines of the polygenic model, and what one means by the concept of *heritability* which is derived from it. His ideas will be of particular interest to workers concerned with any of the common disorders (such as the psychiatric ones) which unfortunately are a good deal more refractory to genetical analysis than conditions which are rare or very rare.

ELLIOT SLATER.

PSYCHOPATHS

Psychopathic Offenders. Edited by D. J. WEST. Cambridge: Institute of Criminology. Pp. 87. Price 17s. 6d.

The Institute of Criminology at Cambridge has

now undertaken a series of 'Cropwood Conferences' to enable people who are professionally interested in all aspects of criminology to meet in small groups. This booklet reports the proceedings of the first such conference.

It is a valuable document, which most psychiatrists will find of interest for it contains not only the usual cross-section of views about psychopathy but also a good deal of new data. The key question 'What is a psychopath?' is of course unanswered, but West's brief introductory comment on the use of the term is as informative as one will find anywhere, and a concentration of viewpoints in a slim volume enables the reader to clarify his own thoughts a little.

From an extensive survey of the use of psychiatric services by the courts, Walker, McCabe and Burgess conclude that the term is not really used in a diagnostic sense but as an administrative recommendation for action: doctor rather than punishment. Bearcroft and Donovan had examined 100 psychopathic males referred to them by courts and noted that they were younger than other mentally abnormal offenders, most of them had some degree of family disturbance as a child and a history of a severe disability in interpersonal relationships since childhood. Most of the other writers agree with this view and relentlessly add a long list of other epithets 'indisciplined', 'demanding', 'importunate', 'few friends', 'impulsive', 'aggressive', 'suspicious', 'cold-hearted', 'selfish', 'many suicidal attempts', 'frequent abnormalities of the EEG', 'mood swings', 'childlike', 'vague diffuse anxiety', 'rebellious', 'unwanted', 'prone to sex deviations', 'affectionless', 'primitive', 'egocentric', 'inadequate', etc., etc.

It is difficult to believe that any group of individuals can really be so unpleasant, and one is tempted to think that the psychopath is a twentieth century scapegoat. This is, however, an incorrect view, for the majority of contributors express considerable medical interest, the feeling that we are discussing not so much a scapegoat as a scapegrace who needs assistance. Maybe Walker is right in suggesting that the term is not really a diagnosis but rather a call for a particular kind of action. Maybe to some extent the term is a semantic mechanism whereby we can graciously change our posture towards the persistent offender. At the beginning of this century the idea that the biological sciences, let alone the medical sciences, should become interested in all forms of abnormal human behaviour would have been considered very eccentric; by the end of the century the term 'psychopath' may have lubricated a difficult philosophical metamorphosis. Mitcheson, in his survey of the use of section 60 of the Mental Health Act, concludes that greater use would be made of this

disposal if more facilities were available, implying that attitudes are ahead of resources.

An engaging short article by Scott and Kahn setting the XYY chromosome firmly into perspective rounds off this opuscle. Considering the price it is perhaps churlish to complain of the generally poor technical production, but the lack of an index reduces the usefulness of this publication.

JOHN GUNN.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Exercises in Social Science. By JOHN LIGGETT and RAYMOND COCHRANE. London: Constable. 1968. Pp. 308. Price 45s.

This modestly titled volume is an extremely useful introductory text-book of the methods and scope of what the authors term 'social science'. The authors are in fact psychologists rather than sociologists, and this fact may explain their workmanlike approach to the systematic study of social behaviour.

The psychiatrist is (or should be) an expert in the techniques of individual case study and in the analysis of data relating to a number of such cases. But studies which utilize only biological and personality variables in trying to understand psychiatric illness are liable to omit a vital part of the explanatory equation. As Birley (1968) has written in a recent article, 'We must follow the modern trend of observing our patients in their natural habitat and studying the interaction between their health and what goes on around them.'

Liggett and Cochrane's text-book should, in this respect, provide the reader with a quick and painless immersion in the sometimes confusing waters of social research. There are valuable chapters on the influence of the family on behaviour; on the variability of behaviour in widely different cultures; on the interpretation of criminal statistics; on the techniques of sampling public opinion; on attitude scale construction; and on the modification of behaviour and attitudes in a social context. Extensive exercises are appended to each chapter. These exercises also contain an introduction to elementary statistical methods, an introduction which has the merit of being tied to the practical examples presented in the text. There is also a brief introduction to the use of card sorters and electronic desk calculators.

The volume contains a section on personality testing which is adequate for the social science student; but the psychiatrist would do better to refer to the work of Eysenck and Vernon on this subject, for the authors' treatment is necessarily brief. Liggett takes the opportunity of reproducing figures from his own projection test in which subjects are required to