

more sympathetic approach, and the chapter on "Clinical applications of hypnosis in psychiatry" is far from helpful. "Hypnosis in dentistry" is certainly of value but I wonder why the stage hypnotist, the lay use of hypnosis and medicolegal liability are included in this chapter.

Apart from the delightful passages by Erickson, the book has some merits but is far from essential reading.

DAVID WAXMAN, *Associate Specialist in Psychiatry (Retired), Department of Psychological Medicine, Central Middlesex Hospital, London*

Cities Are Good For Us. By HARLEY SHERLOCK. London: Transport 2000. 1990. 99 pp. £10.00.

The reason for reviewing this short book (prelude to an expanded version next year) in a psychiatric journal is that it links the subject clearly with health, and particularly mental health. It contains no specifically medical data, but a great deal of common sense that justifies the title; although it is mostly about Britain, the general principles apply almost everywhere. Sherlock is that rare bird – an architect who is less concerned with the impressive or fashionable appearance of structures than with their suitability for people; he also focusses in a highly practical way on the relationship of buildings to their surroundings and to the transport network. As the former chairman of Transport 2000, an enlightened but largely ignored environmental organisation, he is well able to argue that accessibility, rather than mere mobility, is critical to the life of cities.

Human history shows that people have migrated into cities since these settlements first existed: the flood is greater today than ever before. Yet, as Sherlock says, "cities are now seen, at best, as a great social problem and, at worst, an irrelevance to the twenty-first century". That the urban environment has, on the whole, become worse "is caused largely by unimaginative housing, misguided transport policies and the consequent loss of people and their activities from inner-city areas". The knock-on effect is that surrounding countryside is steadily destroyed by mostly unwilling migrants from the cities, so that both town and country lose out simultaneously.

The usual excuse for not doing what would make people's life better is that there is "no money". Yet the evidence here demonstrates clearly that to organise cities in a more healthy way would actually cost less overall than what we are doing now – even if a minority paid more for their privileges, such as unrestricted motoring. 'Universal' car ownership is largely a myth, yet relatively modest increases in commuting by car have brought city centres almost to a standstill, while at the same time undermining public transport, which is really a city's lifeblood. The same is true in housing: unimaginable sums have been spent on 'comprehensive' redevelop-

ment and the creation of megastructures; these mostly function worse than what they have replaced, and ruin everything that remains around them.

At the end of this impressive tract it is hard to resist the thought that national policies which affect the human habitat are wholly irrational, although short-term economic gains often provide the explanation. Yet only few other countries do better than Britain, as those attending the World Psychiatric Congress in Athens last year will have been well aware. Most ordinary people detest what is happening, but seem powerless to change it.

HUGH FREEMAN, *Editor, The British Journal of Psychiatry*

Examination Notes for the MRCPsych Part I. By BASANT K. PURI and JON SKLAR. London: Butterworths. 1989. 165 pp. £9.95.

No prizes for guessing that the authors have aimed this primarily at the needs of examination candidates. Who else would be so desperate as to choose a text consisting largely of bare headings and lists? I know: psychiatric lecturers and tutors. Wrong: apparently medical students, psychiatric nurses, psychologists and trainee psychotherapists should also find this useful.

For the most part the book works its way conscientiously, chapter by chapter, through the topics specified as the content of the multiple choice questions (MCQ) paper in *General Information and Regulations for the MRCPsych Examinations* (which is essential reading), but in reverse order. The concentration of factual information is impressive, if indigestible, and the sections on neuropharmacokinetics and drug actions and interactions are particularly helpful. The chapter entitled "Methods of clinical assessment in psychiatry" contains (under the subheadings "Qualities of a good history" and "Clinical skills") some golden words of advice. All the greater is then our dismay to find this followed not by a synopsis of the broad topic of explanatory psychopathology but by an exposition of one small part of this – psychoanalytic theory. The unwary reader should be warned that the examiners may not be so blinkered. Valuable space is then squandered on some curiously incongruous dissertations ending with "The sexual life of the patient". The final chapter on classification, also loses its way, distracted by the exotica of psychodynamic nosology.

This book is unlikely to appeal to the collector of MCQ samples – only eight specimens given here, all available elsewhere – but will doubtless find avid readers among those given to the frenzied last minute swot; they will find a compact if not especially well balanced meal here.

DAVID JULIER, *Littlemore Hospital, Oxford*