

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).

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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