

The Chemistry of Thought. By CLAUDE A. CLAREMONT. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1935. Pp. 259. Price 8s. 6d. net.

The main defects of this book are embodied in its title, which might lead one to suppose a dramatic addition to available psychological data. This is not meant to imply any lack of merit in the doctrines propounded, but the theory of the complex unit, capable as it is of explaining certain phenomena encountered in the author's experience, cannot be taken to imply established scientific truths. The author insists on freedom and individuality of method within the confines of psychology, a very permissible viewpoint, but involving potential sources of error, since it tends to a confusion of comparative data. The doctrines of the direct perception of causation, and the identification of necessity with causation, as well as the previously mentioned theory of the complex unit, are, at the very least, stimulating additions to knowledge.

The section on the application of the previously enunciated principles to the arts exhibits the defects inevitable when it is desired to incorporate a whole firmament of facts into a single constellation. The psychological interpretation of cultural pursuits must surely, if it is to have scientific validation, embrace an expert knowledge of artistic technique, and certain bald and highly provocative statements on the part of the author cannot be permitted to pass without criticism. There is a short section on the distinction between prose and poetry, which should summon the protesting shades of Landor, Pater and Moore from their graves. Such a topic as this, so summarily despatched to the limbo of ruthless classification, is enough to occupy any reasonable, non-hair-splitting investigator for a score of years.

The later chapters show a certain lack of definition in the terms they employ. Such statements as "The instincts actually shown by the child are detailed and specific; they alter with his age", are illustrative of this tendency.

A point for the attention of doctors in institutions for oligophrenes; by the Montessori method "idiot children" can be made to pass state examinations in reading and writing, as set for normal children. Is this a miracle, or merely an error in definition?

A. GUIRDHAM.

Vom Sinn der Sinne. By E. STRAUS. Berlin, 1935. Pp. v + 314. Price Mk. 12.

This book attacks a far-reaching problem. The author endeavours to give psychology its own epistemological foundation by freeing it from the mathematical-physical conceptions upon which the biological sciences have been based since the time of Descartes.

Straus demonstrates in the introductory chapter how much Cartesian philosophy still dominates present views, using Descartes' doctrine of sensory perception as a paradigm and discussing its place in his philosophy. His theory of sensation and of man as a feeling subject serves as a prototype of mechanistic thinking. This is especially illustrated in the way that Descartes carried over into psychology the atomistic conception of time as used in physics. Furthermore, Straus illustrates his view that the interpretation of psycho-physiological experiments is always fundamentally dependent on the interpreter's philosophical concepts, by criticizing Pavlov's investigations