

Lehrbuch der biographischen Analyse. By G. CLAUSER, M.D. Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag. Pp. 214. 1963. Price DM. 29.70.

The book's subtitle is "Theory and practice of the biographically oriented approach to disease and therapy". The author starts with Jaspers' statement that every proper case history leads to biography. But, he asks, what is a proper case history? He regards Freud's contribution to medical biography as by far the most important. Psychotherapy is impossible without the biographical method, even in those cases where mental conflicts led to somatic damage. Three types of pathobiographical correlations can be differentiated. (1) Coincidental reactions, i.e. experience and symptom follow each other within a few days or, if the experience extends over a long period, they co-exist. (2) Dissident reaction, i.e. symptoms follow the stressful experience after a considerable interval. (3) Divergent reaction, i.e. symptoms result from a cessation of stressful experiences. In 572 cases of psychosomatic diseases the author found that the first correlation had existed in 63.3 per cent., the second in 32.5 per cent. and the third in 4.3 per cent. The pathogenic experiences in adult life could frequently be related to traumatic events in childhood. Coincidence was the most common correlation in asthma and migraine, while intestinal disorders seemed to present delayed reactions to experiences. The book contains a detailed guide for the collection and arrangement of biographical data, with a model "pathobiogramm" of a patient suffering from psoriasis. The use of diaries, letters, poems, paintings, etc., is also discussed. This is a valuable presentation of the historical method in psychiatry and especially in psychosomatic medicine.

E. STENDEL.

A Psycho-somatic Approach to Cystic Glandular Hyperplasia of the Endometrium. By LARS BAGGE. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell. Pp. 164. 1963. Price Sw. Kr. 28.

Cystic glandular hyperplasia (C.G.H.) of the endometrium is one of the commonest causes of that rather heterogeneous syndrome termed dysfunctional uterine bleeding. Histologically and pathologically it represents a well-defined entity which is the result of failure of ovulation and the abnormal persistence of follicles. This work investigated various possible constitutional factors in this illness—family history, body build and personality—as well as the role of stressful experiences in provoking the illness. It was found there was a raised incidence of C.G.H. and other menstrual disorders in the families of these patients; they had significantly greater body fat in

their body build and they showed certain personality characteristics as well as a tendency to depression. The high incidence of stressful events before the onset of the illness suggested that these may be important in the aetiology of the condition.

Dr. Bagge has approached the considerable problems inherent in this type of investigation with commendable care. He has taken great pains to provide adequate controls and to tackle the problem of personality assessment. His work is a model of its kind. Perhaps one's greatest reservations are about his sample of patients. In a recent investigation into dysmenorrhoea it was found that personality factors as well as the condition itself were important in deciding whether a woman goes for treatment; thus it may be that there is a bias in this sample of C.G.H. patients who were obtained from a gynaecological clinic.

However, the interrelationships suggested by this and similar investigations on menstrual disorders are fascinating and relatively unexplored. There is the possibility of constitutional endocrinological differences manifesting themselves at different levels—the predisposition to develop the illness, the development of a certain body build and the development of certain personality characteristics. It is probable that the exploration of these complex constitutional relationships, rather than the search for specific precipitating factors, represents the most fruitful area for psychosomatic research.

A. J. COPPEN.

Alcoholism and Society. By M. E. CHAFETZ and H. W. DEMONE. Oxford University Press. Pp. 319. 1963. Price 49s.

This book, written by a psychiatrist and a social scientist, reviews the causes and treatment of alcoholism, and discusses the influence of social factors on drinking habits. Psychological, behavioural, genetic and biochemical theories of causation are considered rather scrappily, but there is an interesting account of the attitude of different societies to alcohol.

The authors emphasize that the alcoholic must be viewed as an "individual and a member of our complex society", a view with which few psychiatrists will disagree. They fail to take a broader view of the problem, however, and do not make a clear distinction between different types of alcoholic. A young psychopath who drinks to relieve tension, or a manic-depressive whose drinking bouts coincide with his depression, are very different both in terms of prognosis and treatment, from the middle-aged compulsive drinker whose tolerance for alcohol is