

BASIC CONCEPTS?

Disordered Behaviour: Basic Concepts in Clinical Psychiatry. By ERIC PFEIFFER. Oxford University Press. 1968. Pp. 214. Price 51s. (cloth) 34s. (paper).

The author, as Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, addresses himself to medical students, students of social work, nursing and abnormal psychology, as well as to teachers, clergymen and intelligent readers in general. For this wide audience, Dr. Pfeiffer aims to provide an introduction to clinical psychiatry by presenting 'not a new point of view but a new integration of many differing points of view.' (author's italics). Certainly, no fresh viewpoint is to be found here, but neither, alas, can one discern any integration—new or otherwise—of existing theories.

Criticism must be levelled at both the style and content of this book. The reader is assailed by a liberal sprinkling of obfuscating jargon such as 'structuralization', 'normatively', 'societal', 'conflictual' and 'casual scanning'; Scottish readers, incidentally, will be surprised to learn that 'Scotch verdict' refers not to an alcoholic judgement but to the ruling 'not proven'.

The descriptions of psychiatric disorders are heavily slanted in favour of psychodynamic theory (of various denominations), with only perfunctory attention to evidence from other disciplines. The discussion on mania, for example, completely ignores all genetical, biochemical and systematic clinical studies as well as the use of lithium in treatment.

The concept of denial figures prominently in the author's scheme of things. Denial is important, apparently, not only in mania (pp. 27, 28), but in schizophrenia (p. 42) and even in G.P.I. (p. 86). By that stage, Dr. Pfeiffer has both feet firmly off the ground:

'One may speculate why euphoria and grandiosity should be more prominently seen in dementia due to syphilis than when it is due to other causes. Euphoria in general is a manifestation of the prominent use of denial. It is possible that dementia due to syphilis has to be more vigorously denied (because of the social unacceptability of syphilis) than when it is due to other causes.'

The tendency to substitute fanciful speculation for reasoned argument, coupled with an uncritical

acceptance of theories which are neither proven nor, in most instances, verifiable, make this book singularly unilluminating. To those with enquiring minds, Dr. Pfeiffer's introduction to clinical psychiatry will not commend itself.

S. GREER.

CHILDHOOD EPILEPSY

L'Enfant Epileptique. By ALBERT GRASSET. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1968. Pp. 252. Price Fr. 10.

This paperback is one of a series on child psychology and psychiatry published by the Presses Universitaires de France. It is a clear and concise account of most aspects of children with epilepsy from the pathophysiological to the psychosocial. As would be expected, its theoretical orientation to the problem of epilepsy leans heavily on the French school, especially Gastaut. The resulting account is clear and for the most part accurate, though the author fails to do justice to some of the recent work on anoxic lesions in childhood producing epileptogenic areas. The book is to be recommended as a broad account of the subject; if other booklets in this series are of a similar standard, then they must fill a very useful function in medical schools.

D. A. POND.

NOTICE

Two recently published pamphlets which may be of interest to readers have been brought to our attention. The first is the February 1969 edition of *British Book News*, published by the British Council at 3s. 6d., which contains a short review of 'British Books on Psychiatry' by Professor Michael Shepherd. The second is an annotated and indexed bibliography entitled *Psychological and Social Aspects of Human Tissue Transplantation*, written by Jacquelyn H. Hall and David D. Surensen, and published as Public Health Service Publication No. 1838 at 40c. by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Institute of Mental Health. It contains 176 references to literature on the psychological, psychiatric, ethical, moral, social, and legal aspects of human tissue transplantation and the artificial maintenance of life.