

Reviews

Analysis of Perception. By J. R. SMYTHIES, M.A., M.D., M.Sc., D.P.M. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1956. Pp. 140. Price 21s.

The study of perception, and its relation to the very diverse fields of philosophy, epistemology and neurophysiology, is a most difficult one. Few who have studied the subject have brought to it an adequately wide experience. Dr. Smythies, however, is a psychiatrist who is at present conducting research in physiological psychology, has worked in neurophysiology and anatomy, and has studied philosophy at some length. He has also worked with hallucinogens, and was one of the team responsible for the discovery that trimethoxyamphetamine was in this group. He is therefore unusually well qualified to write on the subject.

Such a subject, treated with the seriousness that it deserves, cannot make easy reading, and this book is no exception. It bears throughout, however, the mark of hard and prolonged thinking. It is clearly written, and should be studied by those who are interested in the subject.

W. ROSS ASHBY.

Probability and Scientific Inference. By G. SPENCER BROWN. Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1957. Pp. 154. Price 15s.

The author, a professional mathematician, believes that something is rotten in the state of Statistics, and in this book he attempts to display various inconsistencies, paradoxes, and other confusions that he believes to infest the subject. Plenty of confusion is certainly displayed in the book, though whether it is due to the subject or to the author's failure to think slowly and carefully must be left to the reader to judge.

The subjects of statistics and probability are not easy, and quite elementary questions are apt to provide tangles that need much thought for their straightening out. Those who like puzzling themselves will like this book, but the reviewer will pay closer attention when Mr. Brown stops stirring up difficulties and proposes some solutions.

W. ROSS ASHBY.

L'Homme Criminel. By DR. ÉTIENNE DE GREEF. Nauwelaerts, Louvain, and Beatrice—Nauwelaerts, Paris, 1956.

This is a symposium in honour of Étienne de Greef, a Belgian Criminologist (and clinical psychiatrist) of great repute—much greater abroad than at home we are told by Professor Leclerc, who opens the papers with a glowing critique of the man to whom the volume is dedicated, and who, much later on, contributes a major paper on the immediate future of criminology.

The book is divided into three sections: (i) the personality of the delinquent, (ii) psychiatry in the penitentiary, (iii) psychiatry and Social Defence (the contriving of a healthy social system, including the retrieval of all criminals).

The contributors are mainly pupils of Professor de Greef, at any rate in the first section, and they both readily acknowledge their indebtedness, and enthusiastically delineate the impact of their master on Belgian and on all French-speaking criminological thought. If to a non-Gallic reviewer the tributes are, at times, effusive, and seem to impede the otherwise very free thought, their sincerity is patent, as is the pleasure with which they are made.

The section devoted to the personality of the criminal contains five papers; the last being a tripartite discussion on responsibility, by a jurist, an anthropologist and a psychiatrist. On the whole, the very general, theoretical, philosophically flavoured and somewhat doctrinaire quality of this section is much relieved by Professor