

all these jail's problems my personal optimism arises quite from this bad reality, where, however, it was done so far that I am sure that very little changes will give fast and big improvements."

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The Alcoholic Family. Drinking Problems in a Family Context. By PETER STEINGLASS with LINDA A. BENNETT, STEVEN J. WOLIN and DAVID REISS. London: Hutchison. 1988. (Basic Books, 1987). 381 pp. £25.00.

Graham Swift, in his finely woven tapestry of a family history novel, *Waterland* (Heinemann, 1983), says of the current generation: "Since you cannot dispose of the past, since things must be, they had to make do." Those of us who deal with families where one member is designated as having alcohol problems are painfully aware of that. What Steinglass *et al* do for us in this book is chart that process of "making do".

While recognising that these families are more different than similar, the phases and the patterns that many of them demonstrate can be understood by examining their family histories, and by exploring the rituals, the routines, and their problem-solving. So this book describes ordinary family life development and compares it with the arrests and distortions which occur when problematic alcohol use is a major feature of family life.

The book consists of six parts: 'A family systems approach to alcoholism', 'The life history of the alcoholic family', sections on the early, middle and late phases of the development of such a family, and finally its treatment. There is a good supply of references, which mercifully are not monopolised by the authors' own work. The book is tightly structured and clearly and evocatively written, with numerous real-life clinical examples. Each part has an introduction and conclusion which link the parts of the book together naturally, with helpful repetition.

This is manifestly the work of precise, perceptive clinicians who have the added ability to 'change gear' into complex clinical research methodologies. Again and again, clinical observations are made; hypotheses are then generated and tested. The results are presented, conclusions drawn, and then off go the authors onto the next set of observations and a repeat of the process. Thus, gradually, the images of the families, their rules and the impact of the alcohol become clear. The "making do" makes sense.

It is possible to criticise the book – in particular, its rather short and dogmatically abstinence-oriented treatment part, especially when earlier in the book there is a description of the usefulness of a family member's drinking (to trigger the intoxicated family system which can have real short-term problem-solving benefits). This

bias may well be the consequence of the heritage of the North American 'alcoholism movement'.

It would have been better for the authors not to try to discuss treatment at all; to leave this book as an elegant account of family processes and the impact someone's drinking may have upon them. That would leave room for the sequel on treatment implications of these observations – Steinglass II!

This book is important. It is not too difficult to predict that it will become a signpost to the alcohol field of the same significance as McAndrew & Edgerton's *Drunken Compartment* (Nelson, 1969) or Orford's *Excessive Appetites* (Wiley, 1985). The authors confess that after "examining couples and whole families with alcohol problems, even during episodes of intoxication, our research perspective has never been the same". Clinicians reading this book may well be subjected to the same transformation.

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Psychiatry Update: American Psychiatric Association Annual Review, Volume 6. Edited by ROBERT E. HALES and ALLEN J. FRANCES. Washington: American Psychiatric Press. 1987. 852 pp. £25.00 (pb), £55.00 (hb).

This is the sixth annual *Psychiatry Update* published by the American Psychiatric Association. Of the 68 contributors, all but Michael Rutter work in North America.

There are six sections, each dealing with a broad topic and each containing several review chapters. Section I, which deals with bipolar disorders, is well written and covers the topic thoroughly. Section II, on neuroscience techniques in clinical psychiatry, is interesting and contains much new information. Section III is concerned with "differential therapeutics", which means the selection of a specific treatment for a specific patient. This is a weak and disappointing section, in which one chapter considers whether the patient needs individual, group, or family treatment while another considers the indications for psychodynamic, behavioural, or cognitive treatment. The token chapter on pharmacological treatment deals inadequately with topics dealt with in full in other sections.

Section IV is an informative set of reviews on violence and the violent patient. The general tendency towards over-inclusiveness, however, is shown by the mention of Wilson's disease, normal pressure hydrocephalus, and Cushing's syndrome in a table of organic mental disorders associated with violent behaviour. Section V, on epidemiology, edited by Myrna Weissman, justifies the entire volume. The first chapter, by Weissman herself, is a splendid introduction to the topic. Equally good is the second chapter, by Lee Robins, on diagnosis in epidemiological studies. The rest of the section at least approximates to these high standards. Section VI, on

unwanted drug effects and interactions, is well written. One of the section editors writes an afterword in which he cites various anecdotal reports that might help mitigate some of the untoward effects mentioned by his authors.

It appears that the editors chose the six topics and then the section editors. They in turn chose authors to write appropriate chapters. This makes for exhaustive inclusiveness and for the expression of all possible points of view, but not for any uniform outlook. As the section editors of the first section say, "An edited volume exposes the reader to a variety of different perspectives . . . on the other hand, the level of integration and synthesis possible in a book authored by one or two individuals simply cannot be achieved in a collection of chapters . . . conceived and written largely independently of one another". Well said!

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Essential Psychology for Medical Practice. By ANDREW MATTHEWS and ANDREW STEPTOE. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. 1988. 171 pp. £7.50.

The authors, psychologists involved in teaching medical students, have aimed to "develop a single concise source that would convey the essentials of psychological knowledge required for medical practice". The book is written in a textbook fashion rather than in note form. There are liberal numbers of headings and sub-headings, tables, and diagrams. The breadth of coverage is quite impressive, ranging from the function of the brain to more clinically-orientated chapters on the psychology of the pain and communications between doctors and patients. This is the main strength of the book. Other endearing qualities are the use of highlighted areas of clinical importance and study questions at the end of chapters to facilitate learning. The book is very readable, but postgraduates may find it more useful than undergraduates.

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Ethical Issues in the Psychotherapies. By MARTIN LAKIN. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988. 174 pp. £20.00.

This lucid and readable book uses an adjective which neither I nor the Oxford English Dictionary had previously encountered. In a section dealing with psychotherapists whose interventions are determined by their own needs, whose responses are excessively aloof or intrusive, who seek personal gratification at their patients' expense and display inconsistent and exploita-

tive behaviour, Lakin refers to these therapists as "psychonoxious", and it seems to be an excellent and necessary term. That it needed to be discovered, however, does indicate the difficulties inherent in this subject. While people have long been preoccupied by the issues surrounding ethical behaviour, the investigation of such issues within the context of the therapeutic alliance is necessarily recent. It is to the author's credit that to read his book is to be left with more questions than answers. Psychotherapy is neither a religion nor a business, but its ethical concerns pertain to both. Optimally, it requires of the patient a preparedness not only to trust the judgement of his therapist but also to trust in him or her to the extent of permitting an intimate relationship to develop; yet there is also the awareness, implicit or explicit, of a contract between patient and therapist, with all that that implies in terms of expectations, obligations, profits, losses, and risks on both sides. Most readers will readily have distanced themselves from the "psychonoxious" therapists described above; however, as Lakin painstakingly illustrates, few therapists, after a little guided reflection, would be prepared to cast the first stone. When does 'confrontation' cease to be therapeutic and become abusive? When is a paradoxical intervention honest and not deceitful? When is a family therapist active and when is he directive? In the context of a treatment which regards psychic pain as part of the process, how much pain is it acceptable to inflict? When is an employee maladjusted and when is he simply out of favour with his boss? When is treatment unethical and when is it simply incompetent and is there a difference?

In order to illustrate the ethical problems with which he deals, the author interviewed 100 or so practitioners who specialised in various therapeutic treatments. What struck him most forcibly in the course of analysing his results was the 'garden variety' of ethical dilemmas encountered in daily practice. He outlines these in his first chapter, and then moves on to a general consideration of the negative effects of the psychotherapies and the effects on the therapists themselves of the ideologies and value systems inherent in their professional training. There are separate chapters on the ethical dilemmas peculiar to family therapy, group work, and individual treatment and an attempt is made to draw some comparisons between these various approaches. This is the least successful part of his book, since in the attempt to reduce the complexity of his subject he comes close to falsifying it. What is important about his argument, however, is that no therapeutic treatment can be value-free; the issue is whether the values are those of the patient or the therapist. Here Lakin is thorough in his attention to the difficult issues raised by matters of religious faith, cultural affiliations, and traditional values.

The strength of this book is that, like good therapy, it promotes understanding of the dilemmas faced by all concerned. It is anxious that the patient should be