

of existential philosophy, of parapsychological interpretations and of the Pavlovian school. They dwell on such romantic themes as to what extent the crime is the fault of the victim or (quoting such sources as "Felix Krull" by Th. Mann) on the psychology of the confidence trickster who is provoked into his role by the world who wants to be deceived and who afterwards gets frightened himself because he succeeds so well and begins to believe his own deceptions. A variant on this theme is illustrated by a quotation from Talleyrand about Napoleon: "This damn fellow fools us all: he plays all his emotions and in spite of it has them."

While this kind of anthropological preoccupation pervades every part of the book the medical and psychiatric aspects of suggestion are by no means neglected. We find very good discussions of experimental psychological work on suggestion, on the placebo effect, on induced "insanity" such as *folie a deux* or *en masse*, on suggestion and personality types, on the therapeutic use of suggestion in "the autogenic training," hypnosis, psychotherapy in general, etc. "Suggestion is a vital ingredient in all therapy and we must study the 'drug doctor,' its pharmacology, its indications and also its toxicology." There is also a chapter on suggestion and the practice of the law.

In short the authors have written a "respectable" treatise on this sometimes rather shady subject without making it dull. The very extensive and careful bibliography makes this book a valuable introduction to the literature on the subject and if I may venture a guess it has a very good chance of being translated into English. It would fit well into the excellent series of paper-backs on similar subjects of the social sciences, which have done so much in presenting difficult subjects to a wider public without sacrificing standards.

(The quotations were translated by the reviewer).

J. HOENIG.

**Thinking and Psychotherapy.** An Inquiry into the Processes of Communication. By HARLEY C. SHANDS. Harvard University Press. London: Oxford University Press, 1960. Pp. 319. Price 46s.

In the beginning, this book raises high hopes when the author declares his intention of reformulating psychiatric ideas in such a way that they become subject to precise observational verification, or better still, observational falsification which, according to Popper's Logic of Scientific Discovery, is the most effective tool in the scientific validation of ideas. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the author's intention succeeded beyond the level of simple reformulation.

In the first chapter, for instance, when a preliminary survey of the book's argument is presented, the author announces that "the final chapter reviews the 'defence mechanisms' in a different context. . . . It seems possible to obtain a greater degree of parsimony and elegance by classifying [them] into three mutually exclusive classes: alteration of point of view, diminution of informational input, and stereotypy of output." When we come to the final chapter, the classes are no longer mutually exclusive and turn out to be: reflective thinking, conversion-hysterical symptoms, and obsessive rituals.

Psychotherapy is defined as a "training in thinking." Its aim is to rationalize, with the help of interpretations, the irrational ideas of patients. Interpretations are explained as reformulations of the patient's ideas from the therapist's point of view. It is added that they require no verification. A reformulation is merely a description made from a certain viewpoint. "It may not be useful, but it cannot be wrong, as any description of a sunset cannot be wrong no matter how poor the poet." Freud, the author explains, followed the lead of the great poets; "where Freud was a scientist in relation to the poets, he was a poet by contrast to scientists in more abstract systems."

What about the validation of psychotherapeutic results? Again this is regarded as unnecessary because the author agrees with Freud that "the goal of successful psychotherapy is to transform neurotic misery into human unhappiness."

In looking for analogies and new viewpoints for the reformulation of psychiatric

ideas, the author considers the theories of many scientific disciplines, ranging from mathematics, physics and cybernetics, through neurophysiology and the psychology of language, to sociology and epistemology. The reader in search of new sidelights on psychotherapy will be rewarded by this book and enjoy the author's gift of finding epigrammatic expressions for many of his views.

F. KRAUPL TAYLOR.

**Conceptions of Perceptual Defence.** The British Journal of Psychology Monograph Supplements, XXXV. By WILLIAM P. BROWN. London: Cambridge University Press, 1961. Pp. 107. Price 25s.

This monograph reviews the literature from 1947 to 1959 on experiments which have sought to show the relationship between the emotional disturbance produced by a stimulus and its threshold for recognition. The commonest, but not the only, estimate of the emotionality of stimuli, when these have been words, has been the reaction-time in a word-association test; the commonest method of estimating the threshold has been tachistoscopic, exposure-time being increased until the criterion of recognition has been reached. As emotionality increases, the threshold might remain the same, or become longer (i.e., higher) or short (i.e., lower). Psychologists have taken special interest in findings that the threshold tends to be higher for stimuli of greater emotionality, and, to account for them, have referred to the conception of perceptual defence, a process akin to repression. Yet there is at least as good evidence of a tendency for the threshold to be lower for these stimuli, because of perceptual sensitization.

The core of the monograph is the author's advocacy of the hypothesis that the relationship is not linear, but has the shape of an inverted U, the threshold at first rising, with increase in stimulus emotionality, then reaching a peak, and subsequently falling. He also examines the several theories which have been advanced to account for experimental results, and elaborates on a Hullian type of S-R behaviour theory. Hitherto, the "hypothesis" theory of Bruner and Postman has been regarded as the most effective.

The test is a revision of, presumably, a part of a Ph.D. thesis and shows several stigmata of its origin: the conscientious inclusion of the trivial, the officious disinterment of investigations better forgotten, the scrupulousness in being fair, the eschewing of speculation, and the need to keep close to the topic and to make explicit each elementary step in the argument. Nevertheless it serves its purpose, and will be of help to those interested in work in the area, which is of some importance.

The reviewer is not impressed by the criticisms made of the "hypothesis" theory, and remains unconvinced that the shape of the relationship is an inverted U. It has sometimes been supposed, admittedly on not fully satisfactory grounds, that it is an uninverted U when the emotionality rises to the intensity commonly observed in clinical work. In most of the experiments discussed in the monograph, the level of emotionality is very much lower. In the author's experiments, for instance, the subjects were male and female arts students taking a course in psychology, and the stimuli were relatively familiar six-letter words. These were divided into four classes according to the reaction-times observed in each subject in the first session. In the second session they were exposed tachistoscopically, and the threshold was determined. The inverted U relationship was shown most clearly in a sub-group of girls with relatively low scores on the MPI Neuroticism scale, and also relatively low scores on the MPI Extraversion scale. The threshold was at a peak for words in the second class of emotionality, and was lower for those in the third class, and lower still for those in the fourth class. Before accepting that the relationship is N-shaped, however, it would be as well to consider whether there were not two or more processes at work, whose effects might be separated by refinements in experimental method.

D. RUSSELL DAVIS.

**Freud's Concept of Repression and Defence, its Theoretical and Observational Language.**

By PETER MADISON. University of Minnesota Press, 1961. Pp. 296. Price 38s.

This volume by an Associate Professor of Psychology at Princeton, who also runs the student counselling service, serves a useful purpose. The author found that his