

Thus Straus succeeds in his endeavour to discriminate physical, physiological and psychological aspects of the complex phenomena. This leads him to criticize and finally to refute epiphenomenalism, of which, as he shows, Gestalt psychology is a modern representative. His own views are most clearly elucidated in his discussion of time and space as physical and psychological concepts. The application of his theory to the interpretation of hallucinations and depersonalization is of special interest for psychiatrists.

This book is distinguished by its profoundly philosophical attitude. The reader, however, will find plenty of psychological details formulated with a subtlety which defies brief presentation.

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Opicinus de Canistris. Edited by R. SALOMON. (Studies of the Warburg Institution.) London, 1936. Two vols. Pp. xlv + 348.

In these two volumes the reader will find a photographic reproduction of a Codex of the Vatican Library, a detailed description of its parchments, a printed copy of the written text and the learned commentary of the editor.

The manuscript was recommended to Prof. Saxl, Director of the Warburg Institute, because it seemed to offer astrological material. It proved to be of interest, since it contained the author's biography, and autobiographies of the time of its origin are rare. According to his own statement, the writer was in an abnormal state of mind when he produced these most curious and disconnected tables, and this is the reason why this publication may be recommended to readers of the Journal. "Opicinus was in a pathological state of excitement," the editor (Salomon) writes, and goes on: "I had much doubt, whether it would not be the best thing to dispose of the whole manuscript as a 'pathological product', but finally I overcame my objections on the consideration that the application of that always uncertain classification into "morbid-sane" does not give us the right to lay aside as historically useless any remarkable relic of past times. There may be in abnormal products something that furthers historical knowledge, not to mention the experience that the products of a morbid personality generally are not morbid throughout and that they may show the spiritual potentialities of a period in a one-sided, but peculiarly clear light."

Salomon avoids describing the case from a medical angle, and restricts himself to publishing the material. He mentions the idea of inviting the co-operation of a psychiatrist, but rejects it, partly determined by his experience that, after a lecture on Opicinus, two medical men who attended it held exactly contrary views of the diagnosis.

Opicinus was born (1296) and educated in Pavia. When 20 he had to emigrate to Genoa for political reasons and had to earn his living by giving lessons and illuminating books. Later on he was able to return to Pavia, became a priest and wrote on theological subjects. Forced again to leave his home-town, he went to Avignon, where he published some religious-political papers, as well as a descriptive account of his native town. In 1333 he was involved in legal difficulties; in 1334 he became severely ill. "I was laid up for a third of the month of April, nearly dead. When I came round again, I found myself invalid in all my limbs." He was "dumb and paralysed in his right hand" and had lost a good deal of his *memoria litteralis*. He

improved to a large extent, he recovered speech, writing and drawing, but still, 1336, i.e., at the time when he finished his autobiography, he was in some abnormal state of mind. He compares it with that of Job. He is full of self-tortures and self-reproaches, and the simple and plain style of his writing on his native town is now a jumpy, dark, artificial and exaggerated language. He repeats the same thought or metaphor over and over again, combines paradoxical ideas without criticisms and indulges in etymological subtleties. This text is scattered over the tables, which mainly contain a network of geometrical constructions, maps, astronomical and astrological drawings, calendars, pictures of saints, etc., difficult and partly impossible to analyse, even for the expert. A self-portrait exhibits him as a sick and haggard man. Only in his autobiography, which is the last part of his work, does he return to his original plain diction.

How far Opicinus recovered cannot be inferred from the few data available.

Salomon regards as important for the psychological interpretation of the tables the endless repetition of some details, the author's manner of separating things which belong together, his arbitrary distribution of marginalia over the tables, and his reckless destruction of any æsthetic effect of the drawings by overloading them with inscriptions.

The historical and philological analysis of the editor is of particular interest for the psychiatrist, since Salomon can explain many peculiarities of form and content in the light of manner and tradition of Opicinus's period, whilst a superficial glance at the pictures might have led the reader into identifying them with the products of schizophrenic thought. Even the apparently very odd and eccentric language with its dark allusions, quotations, metaphors has—according to Salomon—its parallels in contemporary literature. Thus the case demonstrates impressively how valuable, if not necessary, an expert analysis of the symptoms is for the psychiatric interpretation of the picture, and this the more so if the symptoms appear in a field which is not primarily our province. On the other hand, one would have thought that the historian, who undertakes the study of "the spiritual potentialities of a period in the one-sided, but peculiarly clear light" of the products of a morbid personality, should be interested in the kind of light in which he sees the things—in other words, in the psychopathology of the underlying state. It might prove of importance for the historical interpretation of an autobiography of a depressed person that patients of that sort tend to falsify their life-history in the direction of their self-reproaches or hypochondriacal ideas. We may see something of the spirit of our time in the hallucinations and delusions of our patients, but we know how difficult it must be to use their statements as historical documents. The same applies, one would think, to patients of past periods and their products. At any rate, the history of such an elaborate case is stimulating literature, and the admirably reproduced tables are, apart from all else, of great psychopathological interest. The Warburg Institute has performed a considerable service by the publication of these documents.

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