

**The Structure of Human Abilities.** By PHILIP E. VERNON. University Paperbacks, Methuen and Co. 1971. Pp. 208. Price 90p.

In many ways, this book is a classic. First published in 1950, it went through a second printing before entering its second edition ten years ago. The present issue is a paperback facsimile of the later edition. While the content may appear to be dated, it is by no means obsolete.

In the book, Professor Vernon describes in a comprehensive but concise and readable presentation what was then known of the structure of human abilities. He collated information from factor-analytic studies of intellectual, educational and occupational abilities, among others, and in addition to integrating these findings has examined the ways in which these are influenced by practice, difficulty, speed etc. While there have been major developments since 1959, these by no means invalidate his conclusions. It is therefore likely to remain as essential and basic reading for anyone concerned with the study of human abilities. For this reason alone, its publication as a paperback is most welcome.

M. BERGER.

**Psychology: A Social Science.** By JOHN WALLACE. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia/London/Toronto. 1971. Pp. xvi + 429. Price £4.05.

This book is intended as an introductory text in psychology, psychology being viewed as a social science. It contains ten chapters, the first three of which deal with general problems such as methods of study of social thought and behaviour, the special problems encountered in psychological inquiry, and the relevance of such inquiry across a number of 'levels of analysis'. The remaining chapters discuss topics such as interpersonal and group interaction, behaviour within complex organizations, the individual in society and cultural influences on behaviour.

The author's approach is highly selective and American-orientated, and the reader will find extended treatments of such topics as racism in America, alienation, power and manipulation motivation, violence in society and the ecological catastrophe. Although the author deals with the subjects from a rather personal point of view, nevertheless there is adequate textual reference to the work of others, and each chapter ends with ample bibliography. Illustrations are numerous, but they contribute little to the understanding of the text.

The author states that the book is sufficient to stand alone as an introductory textbook for the teacher who wishes to adopt an exclusively social approach. However, unless the book is read in conjunction with other textbooks of social and general

psychology the novice reader is bound to get a biased view of the nature of psychological science.

MARIA WYKE.

**Assessment of Brain Damage.** By E. W. RUSSELL, C. NEURINGER and G. GOLDSTEIN. John Wiley. Price £6.25.

This monograph presents a computer programme in Fortran IV for the analysis and interpretation of the test results of brain damaged patients. The test battery is a considerably modified Halstead Battery and the method of analysis is described as a 'key approach'. By this the authors mean a fairly complex and rigid routine similar to the botanists' 'flora'. Persuasive evidence is presented for the efficiency of this technique in terms of the agreement of the 'key' with neurological examinations and neuropsychological reports. However, this evidence must be considered in the light of 'at least twelve hours' testing' for each patient. The authors claim no more than a level of accuracy as good as that of an experienced 'neuropsychologist', but argue in favour of the key on the basis that it may be improved with further research whilst making the assumption that clinical skills will not be improved. It also tends to assume the apparently limited objectives of the 'neuropsychologist' of identifying and localizing lesions. A considerable body of clinical psychologists would argue that such objective constitute only a minor part of what should be their contribution to the diagnosis, care, and treatment of brain damaged patients. However, one cannot but agree to the need for attempting a systemization of the assessment and classification of data in clinical psychology, even if only to clarify the logic in clinical decisions. The 'key' is one quite acceptable approach.

This is more of a monograph for the user of the Halstead Battery than a general study of the utility of the 'key' approach to diagnosis. It would be of interest to a much wider group if it had been written less with 'neuropsychologists' in mind.

There is a certain wry humour in the fact that where no abnormality is found the computer programme omits 'thanks for referring an interesting case'.

HARRY BRIERLEY.

#### PHARMACOTHERAPY

**Discoveries in Biological Psychiatry.** By F. J. AYD and B. BLACKWELL. Blackwell Scientific Publications for J. B. Lippincott. 1970. Pp. 254. Price £3.25.

Psychiatrists are apt to take the remarkable advances in pharmacotherapy of recent years somewhat for granted. Or rather, although they base much