

e.g. "tyramine in food that is eaten". More seriously, the sections outlining pharmacological methods of treatment are seriously flawed and could lead to instant failure in an examination or have deleterious clinical effects. The examples are numerous, for instance it is suggested that thirst and polyuria due to lithium might be treated with chlorothiazide; that phenothiazines are useful in alcoholic delirium tremens, or that oral chlor-methiazole is the first choice in controlling the DTs. The illustrations are at about first year secondary school level, e.g. a line drawing of a brain, with 'limbic system' pointing to somewhere above the corpus callosum.

From a publishing stand-point the book is printed on poor quality paper, which is already yellowing and falling apart as I write this review.

It is useful to consider this book alongside other similar, general postgraduate texts and I think they all have advantages over this. The 'Oxford textbook' is the best; it is precise, comprehensive and sound. The *Essentials of Post-Graduate Psychiatry* has a stronger discursive style for the discerning trainee and a wider bibliography, and the recently published *Postgraduate Psychiatry* is an excellent and cynical attempt to flesh out the new MRCPsych syllabus with the minimum of fuss. All of these represent better value for money.

On the whole it is difficult to fault the book as I think it achieves its main aim, but I will continue to revise from, and recommend to others, the Oxford textbook.

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Essential Psychology: Psychology Clearly Explained and Defined. By DAVID COHEN. London: Bloomsbury. 1990. 241 pp. £5.99.

Essential Psychology is effectively a dictionary of psychology, but it is rather more than a set of definitions. Thus, although the book is predictably arranged in the way one would expect of a dictionary, the alphabetical entries are more akin to an encyclopaedia. David Cohen is at pains to point out the controversies and conflict that exist within psychology. In his brief introduction, he outlines some of these issues, such as the debate over free will versus determinism. The author's intention is to "indicate critical thinking on key issues so that readers get a sense of the varying positions and indeed rows". In a book of this size, the contents are inevitably selective and Cohen seeks only to outline what he considers to be the most important terms and ideas in current usage. Broadly speaking, his selection seems like a reasonable cross-section, possibly with something of a bias towards the clinical end of the spectrum.

Entries vary from the brief one sentence variety (e.g. 'hypothalamus'), to those several pages long on more contentious subjects, such as 'consciousness'. Although most terms chosen are predictably mainstream, there is

a fair sprinkling of the more esoteric. My favourite was 'orgone', which turns out to be "an entirely mythical substance that played a large part in the work of Wilhelm Reich". Apparently, it has something to do with orgasms and Reich even invented an 'orgone box', into which one could step and have a "wonderful experience"! For those who prefer a quieter life, there is no shortage of alternatives, ranging from 'CAT scans' to 'cognitive style'. There is also a selection of potted biographies of some of the 'major thinkers' in the discipline, such as Eysenck, Freud and Piaget.

Essential Psychology offers a handy and affordable resource which would be of particular value to those who are dipping their toes in before taking on something more substantial. My only gripe is that I would have liked a few more illustrations to break up the words. In spite of its attractive cover, all we are treated to is two diagrams of the brain!

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Psychological Evaluations for the Courts. By GARY B. MELTON, JOHN PETRILA, NORMAN G. POYTHRESS and CHRISTOPHER SLOBOGIN. Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 1987. 511 pp. £32.95 (US\$60.00).

The authors of this book have combined their extensive experience in training lawyers, judges and clinicians to produce a comprehensive guide to the legal issues clinicians commonly address in Court.

The book covers general medico-legal considerations, issues surrounding the criminal process and non-criminal adjudications, children and families and communications with the Courts.

Each chapter is divided into sections, and lettered and numbered subsections, an organisational device which makes the content of the chapters more accessible, provides ease of cross-referencing, and facilitates up-dating through future supplements. The chapters finish with a conclusion or a summary as well as about ten bibliographies each. Following the body of the book the authors have added a valuable 22-page glossary which is followed by nearly 70 pages of notes and references grouped according to chapters. The book finally ends with a five page index which appears rather meagre in view of this very comprehensive volume.

This book in paperback, half-size, with a more extensive index and at the same reasonable price could well become the standard other books in this field are measured by. Mental health professionals working in the forensic field, as well as lawyers concerned with medico-legal issues will find it invaluable.

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