

discussion document it is interesting and challenging but, unfortunately, is written in an adversarial rather than exploratory style. Further understanding of the process of schizophrenia in a social context and at the level of the individual will more likely be gained through collaboration between disciplines.

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**Practical Psychiatry.** TIM BETTS and CLAIRE KENWOOD. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1992. 555 pp. £14.95.

*Practical Psychiatry* is part of the Oxford University Press's excellent series of pocket medical references; since they are designed for those doctors who see the vast majority of patients in any health service, these are actually probably some of the most clinically influential textbooks currently published. This volume is concise enough to slip into any pocket, and adequately comprehensive to cover all the topics which lead to trainee anxiety.

Assessment, diagnosis, and management remain controversial in psychiatry, so quibbling with these competent authors would reveal more about personal clinical style than any substantive omission. Yet the lack of emphasis on seeking an informant, particularly for those from other cultures, was troubling; and the vague exhortation to talk violent patients down, without details on how this is achieved, was ominous. Furthermore, trainees will yet again leave even this book overwhelmed with the mass of information they must glean from patients, without any sense of what issues to prioritise, and when.

The academic psychiatrist may be irritated by statements like "... psychiatry is a less scientifically rigorous subject than the trainee has been used to ...", compounded by the authors' own inadequate definition of an operational classification.

The tutor of trainees will be impressed, but still left wondering what this book offers over similar titles such as *A Manual of Practical Psychiatry* by Bebbington & Hill. The problem is that all these works, in sifting out so-called essentials, strangle the life from their subject.

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**Self-Delight in a Harsh World: The Main Stories of Individual, Marital and Family Psychotherapy.** By JAMES P. GUSTAFSON. London: W. W. Norton. 1992. 152 pp. £15.95.

This is an idiosyncratic, interesting, but ultimately rather irritating book. James Gustafson who is Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin, is also chief of the Brief Psychotherapy Clinic in the Wisconsin Family Therapy Team. His theoretical orientation is eclectic, drawing on a wide variety of sources from the field of family therapy.

In this book Professor Gustafson explores the dangers of excessive objectivity or subjectivity in psychotherapy, and asserts the value of combining both with a 'narrative' view which emphasises the patient's participation in the continuing drama of everyday life. Professor Gustafson proposes that most peoples' 'stories' are determined by their responses to others' power, and suggests that these responses can be grouped under one of three headings: over-powering, subservience, and bureaucratic delay. The ideas are appealingly simple but seem surprisingly reductionist from an author who appears to have a fertile, creative mind and a wide theoretical background.

He gives numerous case examples from the three categories of maladaptive response, and it seems that therapy is directed at uncovering which of these basic dynamics is operating, and examining what alternatives there may be, the objective being the achievement of the self-delight referred to in the title. There are theoretical similarities with cognitive therapies and transactional analysis, with family therapy and with the dynamic psychotherapies. There is, however, no apparent interest in exploring the early life origins of present problems, nor in exploring transference phenomena. The clinical material is interesting in conveying Professor Gustafson's creative personal blend of different therapeutic approaches, but often fails to convey the underlying principles in a way which would inform the reader's own practice.

The general tone of the book is pretentious; the text is overembellished with quotations, some of doubtful relevance, and the colloquial American prose-style (justified at some length in the introduction) is irritating.

In summary the book is of interest as an idiosyncratic personal account, but could not be recommended for purchase for a psychiatric library.

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