

aspects of their work, this book can be very strongly recommended. Even if it does not cover all the aspects of this large field equally well, it is, nevertheless, learned, lucid, fair, well-organized and keenly alive to the interest and the growing-points of its subjects.

H. MERSKEY.

'TRIPS' FOR ALL

Altered States of Consciousness: A Book of Readings. Edited by CHARLES T. TART. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 1969. Pp. 575. Price 88s.

This first book dealing with altered states of consciousness (ASCs) is more for the research worker than for the ordinary reader, and with its over 1,000 references should find a place on his bookshelves. The thirty-five papers, to which as many authors have contributed, treat of the physiological, psychological and pharmacological factors that determine ASCs, and among the many varieties described and discussed are hypnagogic states, dreaming, Zen meditation, hypnotic trances, mystical experiences, autogenic training states and drug intoxications (LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, marijuana, etc.). It is stressed that the form and content of an ASC depends on many variables, e.g. the type of individual concerned, the particular physical and interpersonal setting, the prevailing sociocultural pattern: this explains the extremely varying and sometimes utterly contradictory experiences reported.

A question naturally asked is, to what extent are uncontrolled ASCs beneficial or harmful? With some varieties there may not be great differences of opinion. For example, an ASC produced by the aesthetic experience of concentrating on a work of art will generally be regarded as worthwhile, whereas most people would relegate as harmful a drug-induced intoxication characterized by derealization, hallucinations and delusions. With some other varieties of ASC one cannot be dogmatic. Those who have undergone a mystical experience which has given them ineffable joy, blessedness and peace will of course regard such experience as highly desirable: those who have not may consider it an illusion which runs the danger of leading to a Quietistic withdrawal.

With regard to the possible therapeutic value of clinically controlled ASCs, well-defined results have not as yet been established, to quote a phrase from the conclusion of one of the papers, 'it is too early to be certain.' In assessing and comparing results

we are faced with the usual multiplicity of variables as in any therapeutic adventure, such as the selection of patients, the expectations of subject and therapist, the authority and prestige of the therapist (be he styled Teacher, Instructor, Advisor or Guru), and the particular technique employed, even such details as the playing of classical music or giving the subject 'a fresh rose to hold and experience' during a lengthy LSD session may prove of significant importance. With a lack of uniformity between one therapist and another, useful comparisons are impossible, and one author remarks: 'Unfortunately, each successful therapist forms his own school.'

In his introduction the editor admits that 'our scientific knowledge of the nature and effects of these ASCs is so limited that we can offer little sound guidance on public policy with respect to such practices as psychedelic drug use'. In these circumstances, surely the soundest advice is to tell the community to avoid 'psychedelic' drugs until further research can prove their possible beneficial values. The reviewer regards the editor's prophesy—'ASCs are going to become increasingly important in modern life'—as ominous, for he suspects that the increasing indulgence in ASCs by members of the community at large is a symptom of an increasingly sick society.

I. ATKIN.

DO-IT-YOURSELF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Ego Psychology and Psychiatric Treatment Planning. By HARVEY J. WIDROE. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 1968. Pp. 201. No price stated.

In psychoanalytic theory the ego is a hypothetical entity, an explanatory concept, or model, to account for the activities of a part of the personality which attempts to reconcile the needs of basic drives, the real world and the conscience (super-ego). It has a particular practical importance for the planning of brief psychoanalytic psychotherapy, which must take into account both the intact and threatened or disrupted ego functions (such as reality-based thinking versus thought-process disorder) and the type, balance and intactness of other ego functions, the most important being the anxiety-coping mechanisms ('defence': repression, denial, projection, etc.). Brief psychotherapy finds an important use with University students, and so a book by the present author is of interest, as he is head of the psychiatric in-patient service of the 120-bed medical, surgical and psychiatric hospital of the Student Health