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Book Reviews

Editor: Sidney Crown

Brain Imaging. Applications in Psychiatry. Edited by NANCY A. ANDREASEN. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press. 1989. 384 pp. £55.00.

When in 1974 computerised tomography (CT) became available, a new era of imaging had started. For neurology and neurosurgery the benefits of CT were immediately obvious. Accurate and painless diagnosis was now possible where before, unsatisfactory and uncomfortable investigations prevailed. A few years later, the advent of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) improved the visualisation of various brain structures and had the added advantage of not using radiation. To these well-established techniques a further two, single photon emission tomography (SPECT) and positron emission tomography (PET), have been added in recent years. Both SPECT and PET, still to be considered as research tools, are functional imaging techniques capable of measuring cerebral blood flow and receptor function, and in the case of PET, regional brain metabolism.

The contributions of these techniques to psychiatry have been many. Patients have benefited from the ease of investigation, and the presence of co-existing gross brain pathology has been explored safely and efficiently. More subtle abnormalities such as regional asymmetries and ventricular and sulcal dilatation in the major psychoses, hinted at by previous radiological techniques, have been carefully documented, and the use of SPECT and PET holds great promise for unravelling the mysteries of brain function in many psychiatric conditions. Equally important, however, are the indirect spin-offs. Thus knowledge derived from imaging has led to new disease classifications and has brought about a revival of interest in the neuropathology of psychiatric illness.

In this context of rapidly evolving knowledge, this book is a welcome contribution. It contains five chapters, dealing with CT, MRI, SPECT, PET and computerised EEG and evoked potential mapping. Each chapter is divided into two parts. The first gives a summary of the technique, and the second reviews its contribution to psychiatry. One of the main virtues of the book is that it provides a review of all these techniques, and this will be appreciated by clinicians trying to catch up with a fast-growing field and needing to refer to several sources. It can also be said that the book has an eye on the future, in that over two-thirds of it are devoted to SPECT and PET, the newest of the research techniques with as yet no widespread clinical applications. This is no bad thing, and I especially enjoyed the review of PET technology, which is clearly written while incorporating an account of its inherent difficulties. Much of the rest of this chapter is devoted to physiological activation studies, and it makes interesting reading. I would extend the same praise to the technical introductions of all the other chapters, often written by clinicians who have made them accessible to the general readership. Computerised EEG and evoked potential mapping are included for the sake of completion, but they are succinctly dealt with, as is appropriate for techniques of doubtful experimental and clinical value.

The reviews of published psychiatric studies are somewhat less impressive, and at times inclusive coverage rather than critical appraisal seems to be the priority. A further problem, perhaps an unavoidable one, is that delays in publication mean that the most recent references are two years old, a drawback when the area is developing fast. In practical terms this results in MRI spectroscopy, a technique which appears increasingly promising, being barely mentioned, and the use of MRI contrast agents suffers the same fate. The book is well illustrated and contains copious references. For those who want to become familiar with the new imaging techniques in a painless way this is an excellent book. The descriptions of the various techniques will remain useful for some time, providing a solid base from which to keep abreast of the literature.

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Eating Behavior in Eating Disorders. Edited by B. T. WALSH. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989. 232 pp. £22.50.

This book, based on an American Psychiatric Association meeting in 1987, brings together recent research on the biological and behavioural aspects of eating disorders. In common with other books based on symposia there are up-to-date chapters written by experts discussing their own fields of research, but unfortunately there is no unifying perspective that brings these chapters

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together and places them in context. The introduction talks of the reader participating in an expert examination of the issues; this doesn't really excuse the lack of an editorial examination of the work detailed in the individual chapters.

A serious defect is the lack of an index; different aspects of the same research, e.g. on the role of serotonin in bulimia, are found scattered over separate chapters. Such information is therefore difficult to find and hence hard to assimilate.

The early chapters describe research that is attempting to unravel the neurotransmitter pathways controlling food intake. They provide an interesting and exciting insight into an expanding body of information, albeit one that is proving difficult to unify within one theory. The later chapters focus on behavioural and laboratory studies of abnormal eating. Some of these concentrate overmuch on individual research projects, to the detriment of adequate background information. The chapters on eating behaviour in bulimia could have been combined in an attempt to rectify this.

While the book claims to "meld basic science with clinical relevance", it is not strong in discussing the clinical implications of the research. Details of the evolving behavioural and pharmacological treatment possibilities are given, but once again this information is scattered throughout the book without being brought together and evaluated.

As a reference source this book will have a useful place on a library shelf, providing information for the specialist that is not found in more general textbooks. However, its rather indigestible format will not tempt a wider clientele to partake of its fare.

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Psychoanalysis – A Theory in Crisis. By MARSHALL EDELSON. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1988. 432 pp. £31.95.

This book is a challenge to the psychoanalytic community to put its own house in order and settle its theoretical claims by scientific rather than metapsychological, hermeneutic, rhetorical, and socio-political means. It expresses the author's passionate concern for the status of psychoanalytic theory and its empirical foundations in the face of its misuse and denigration.

Part I explicates and clarifies the author's imperative claim, that a statement of each analyst's distinctive core theory of psychoanalysis is needed. His personal conviction is that psychoanalysis is a psychology of mind (not of behaviour or interpersonal interaction); more specifically, that it is an intentional psychology concerned with the science of imagination and symbolic function, particularly those aspects implicated in wish fulfilment. His core theory gives priority to unconscious sexual fantasies which have causal power and efficacy as mental dispositions and problem-solving processes. Five nomothetic themes are treated as distinctively psychoanalytic. Edelson's unnamed theory is akin to classical drive theory. Object relations theory, noted as being currently more popular, is given negligible coverage. I hope that these theorists will state their own core theory.

Part II is concerned with scientific method and explanation. Edelson seeks to justify the characteristic psychoanalytic modes of enquiry: firstly, of free association as a method for obtaining relevant data, and secondly, the case study method, used as a means for generating and testing hypotheses, but subjected to the use of certain canons of reasoning and scientific method. In the final chapter the author gives his rational grounds for belief in the causal inferences and explanations of clinical psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis has provided an abundance of assertions and hypotheses, but its data is regarded as questionable evidence. Here we have a formidable attempt to provide a level of remedy. On some issues, strong reservations and differing perceptions will be evoked; but not I hope on the crucial issue, that psychoanalysts must clarify and simplify their own core theory and demonstrate that its causal explanations are warranted.

The book is remarkable for its clear exposition of complex concepts and its wealth of lively argument. It should be of great interest to the research-oriented psychoanalyst, psychotherapist and psychiatrist, and may help to address those who pontificate on subjects they have ceased to explore.

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Psychology Exposed: Or the Emperor's New Clothes. By PAUL KLINE. Routledge: London. 1988. 164 pp. £25.00.

In this all-too-brief book, Britain's only Professor of Psychometrics argues that experimental psychology studies topics which are trivial and no longer central to human concerns, since having been seduced by the prestigious but barren method of science. This has led it, in particular, to avoid delving into feelings and the unconscious. Influential ideas in the main fields of psychology are examined and found wanting as being purely descriptive and without serious implications for theory or application. The major fields surveyed include memory, psychometrics, social psychology, computer models, and animal psychology. To escape being condemned with such pagan fallacies as iridology, phrenology, necromancy, and coprology, psychologists are urged in the final chapter to save themselves and their discipline by reaching out for the three methods of perceptgenetics, drive activation, and G analysis of projective tests to study the greater glories of the unconscious and

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