

understanding of a universal problem within the framework of the concepts which are available in Luria's own country. We may claim that science has no frontiers, but every professional and national group has its own blinkers.

Luria finds his explanation of oligophrenia in early diseases in the foetus which derive from inflammatory conditions, traumatic, toxic, and parasitic factors and the consequences of ancestral traumata. Underdevelopment of the brain and the appearance of fluid as the result of inflammation is referred to without any indication of the source of this pathological material.

Luria compares the findings of Soviet science with capitalist methods of categorizing children educationally which, he states, carry a social class bias. To support this he quotes from accounts of the Secondary Selection Examination at the age of 11 in England; he does not distinguish this from the ascertainment of the educationally sub-normal and the severely sub-normal.

It is difficult to distinguish the categories of the children he himself describes, and there is no indication of the numbers involved or the extent to which provision is made for them within or outside the Russian educational system.

Nevertheless, he describes his examination of the children with considerable sensitiveness and makes a plea for their special education. Each case study includes anecdotal material which is an inevitable substitute for the shorthand descriptions which are provided by structured intelligence tests. Even although many of us have become disenchanted with routine intelligence tests they form a good foundation for comparisons.

Luria depends upon neurological and electrophysiological findings and examinations of "orientation reflexes". The latter are tests of the child's capacity for active attention, and he states "The experience we have just described shows the elementary processes lying at the roots of the instability of the child's active attention which explains the many failures in their school training. The pathologically changed brain of the child is incapable of prolonged activity. He finds it difficult to become persevering, even with the help of the teacher's verbal instructions, and this fact is one of the most serious obstacles preventing his successful instruction". The point about verbal instructions becomes a key theme in his concept of education. In Luria's work on speech he speaks of a "regulatory" function in the normal and the mentally retarded child. This is a function which is overlooked when we consider speech as a two-way communication and as a medium of the child's personal creative expression. In our own child-

centred culture we perhaps ignore the function of speech in its presentation to the child of the prohibitions and formalized injunctions which were more apparent in the family and educational life some 50 years ago.

There is a purpose in postulating that all mentally retarded children have experienced some brain injury or disease. If one believes that all men are born equal and that it is only environmental difference associated with social class which gives rise to differences in adult performance, one must find an explanation when children are found to be unequal in an environment that has been specially created to provide equality. One must assume that some fortuitous incident or illness is responsible for failure to profit by the equal education.

Irrespective of Luria's theoretical basis, it is evident that he has become a protagonist for the provision for the special individual needs of mentally retarded children in his own country, and his work will be a source of progress there.

On our part, we have no room to be complacent with regard to the position of our theoretical or practical achievements, but our progress is likely to be on different lines.

J. H. KAHN.

**The Occupation, Training and Employment of Mentally Subnormal Adults in the Community.** By MARJORIE A. STRATON, B.A., LL.M. University of Manchester, Dept. of Social Administration. 1963. Pp. 149. Price 7s. 6d.

This monograph deals with a survey carried out by the author during 1959 and 1960 of sheltered workshops and adult training centres for the mentally subnormal in England and Wales. Following a brief historical introduction, there is a painstaking description of the different patterns of activity found in sixty-eight centres in England and Wales which were visited by the writer. Some general recommendations about training are made at the end of the book. Unfortunately the book makes decidedly dull reading, and the recommendations, though unexceptionable, cannot be said to be very penetrating. They are not likely to be of great interest to anyone who has a nodding acquaintance with the field. It is understood that copies of the book may be obtained from Dr. Gordon Rose, Department of Social Administration, Dover Street, Manchester, 13.

J. TIZARD.

**Somatic and Psychiatric Aspects of Childhood Allergies.** Edited by ERNEST HARMS. Pergamon Press. 1963. Pp. 292. Price 70s.

This is the first of a series of monographs on Child