

research purposes can be restrictive to creative thinking within psychopathology.

British psychiatry assumes that it is possible to produce neutral, theory-free, descriptions of symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, or obsessions etc. This assumption can however be questioned: either by claiming that 'form' and 'content' in any given symptom (say an hallucination) cannot be meaningfully separated or by claiming that 'form' and 'cause' (or aetiology or origin) cannot likewise be set asunder. In other words, is the description of a symptom inextricably connected with the individual biographical context (as the Freudians believed it was) or is it simply dependent upon an account of the impaired mechanisms that generate it (as conventional psychiatry has it?) These postulated connections, which to a British psychiatrist may seem the result of muddled thinking, should be accepted for what they are, namely the result of a rival epistemological position.

The influence of Henry Ey can be recognized in 'Sémiologie psychiatrique' in that the basic theoretical framework is no other than Ey's notion of consciousness and its vicissitudes. Most psychiatric pathology is explained by Ey as the result of basic flaws in the structure (synchrony) or in the development (diachrony) of consciousness.

The book under review puts psychopathological signs and symptoms into a context of selected aspects of human behaviour. These behaviours are: eating, excreting, communication, aggression, suicide, perception of self and body and perception of reality.

By placing individual signs and symptoms into their wider behavioural contexts Bernard and Trouvé are stating that neutral, fragmentary, descriptions of behaviour are not epistemologically valid. Whether or not we take issue with this holistic epistemology one thing ought to be clarified: do we do so on metaphysical grounds (i.e. we feel that the French have got it wrong right from the beginning) or on practical grounds (i.e. to consider hallucinations in context is impractical as no proper conception of the environment has yet emerged?) Every psychiatrist in training should have a copy of this book.

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COMMUNICATION

Human Communication: A Revision of Approaching Speech/Communication. By MICHAEL BURGOON and MICHAEL RUFFNER. Eastbourne: Holt-Saunders. 1978. Pp 532. £7.75.

The psychiatrist looking for the conceptual base of

his practice must refer to a bewildering array of disciplines, and has inevitably to be content with a secondary and incomplete knowledge of many of them. Introductory texts for students in those basic sciences less central to psychiatric work therefore claim some space in psychiatric libraries. This volume might deserve consideration for such a space. It is a clearly written undergraduate text on speech and communication, discussing in three main sections the variables, the contexts, and the functions of human communication, considering communication in all sizes of group, from the dyad to the whole culture, and covering, as well as verbal and non-verbal communication, the impact of communication technology. The clarity of the text is reinforced by well-organized summaries to the chapters, and by various forms of quiz or test, whereby the reader can ensure that the author has communicated his message. However, it must be confessed that those sections dealing with areas close to psychiatric practice offered few new insights, and the main interest for this reviewer was to be found in the less familiar, but also less relevant, sections.

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Language and Communication in the Mentally Handicapped. Edited by PAUL BERRY. London: Edward Arnold. 1976. Pp 214. £7.50, £3.50 (paperback).

Since its inception, the staff of the Hester Adrian Centre at the University of Manchester, under the direction of Professor Peter Mittler, have been committed to bridging the gap between research and practice in the field of mental handicap. This is one of the first volumes to come out of the Centre in which a broad overview is taken of one relevant area—very appropriately, the area of language.

Inevitably, there is some unevenness in the contributions. It is a risky business to ask researchers in the middle of a project to attempt to communicate the implications of their work. Wisely, the editor has included contributions which are speculative, alongside those which are more middle-of-the-road reviews. This device hopefully introduces teachers and speech therapists both to sound overviews (making it worth their while buying the book) and to new ideas, only some of which will bear fruit.

Mittler's chapter on assessment both provides brief descriptions of current tests and makes the case for greater teacher participation in the assessment process. Wheldall challenges the widely held view that comprehension necessarily precedes speech produc-