

Book Reviews

PROF. FRANK FISH

An Outline of Psychiatry for Students and Practitioners. By FRANK FISH. Second Edition. Bristol: John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1968. Pp. 292. Price 42s.

'Psychiatric teachers have to admit that sound aetiological understanding has been reached in respect of only a few of the disorders which they treat; . . . until basic knowledge in our specialty advances, psychiatrists will have to tolerate this uncertainty; but they are not obliged to dwell on it in their teaching. On the contrary, it is possible to show that many of the clinical phenomena of psychiatric illness can be observed systematically and can be described in clear-cut terms.' Thus, in his generous introduction, Professor Carstairs admirably pinpoints the most characteristic qualities of the late Frank Fish's book, justly entitled an 'outline'. He describes himself as 'neo-Meyerian'; an eclectic who accommodates the best of every viewpoint and gives room to many not his own with a disclaiming 'some psychiatrists believe . . .' or 'others hold . . .'. Often, though, a named theory is set down flat and naked for the reader to make what he will of views clearly cold-shouldered by the author; but all are included. Occasionally outraged tolerance is expressed in summary dismissal, as when, speaking of shortened forms of psychoanalysis, 'frowned on by the purists' he remarks 'they seem to be worried that the patient may be cured by the wrong technique'.

To cover the ground in less than 300 octavo pages requires rigorous jettisoning and compression. Child psychiatry and subnormality are accounted stowaways more fit for other craft, while catalogue and schema work overtime to squeeze in the bulging cargo. Eight types of anxiety states and twenty of organic states (not diagnoses) are listed. Happily, concise, assimilable summaries and aphorisms abound to lighten this plain fare. Occasionally the stripping down leaves a bare patch, however; in the description of aphasia, dysarthria is not mentioned in contrast, nor the greater facility of impulsive utterance in aphasics. A very serviceable index, glossary and annotated bibliography are provided, but there is no list of references to the authors mentioned in the text (Leonhard, for instance), and authority for many firm assertions on disputed topics is missing. Students

of the author's own sceptical temper will find this a trying omission, and it could well have displaced the bulky chemical formulae of psychotropic drugs. Exemplification, too, is sparse, though apt where provided, as in the following instance of 'Engagement Neurosis': 'The intended spouse is told: "I am ill, darling: it would be unfair to marry you." He or she replies: "You are ill, darling: you need me all the more. I will look after you." There is thus no escape from the prospect of marriage.'

The downright, clear-cut approach is particularly successful in the chapters on psychosomatic disorders and on schizophrenia, where terse summary is applied to admirably selected and arranged material. Some lengthier histories of psychiatry contain less pithy information and point than this thirteen-page résumé. The paragraph on contradictory evidence in court is a refreshingly pertinent signpost to the pitfalls of this area of psychiatric activity. The reasonable suggestion is made that 'autonomous dysthymia' should be substituted for 'depression' to indicate illness, thus distinguishing lay and psychiatric connotations of this term; but 'secondary autonomous dysthymia' is too self-contradictory for satisfactory use to indicate 'reactive depression'. Despite an accompanying warning that it can cause tissue necrosis and abscess I am sorry to see paraldehyde injection given approval.

The author is comprehensive, including epidemiology and recent psychopharmacology in his scope. He had a wider acquaintance with German psychiatry than the majority of his British-born colleagues, and this enriches large parts of this book; prominently the chapter on abnormal personalities. The flavour of his writing was savoured in meeting Frank Fish: with the professorial mantle laid aside he added pungency by unabashed proclamation of his own allegiances and humour in his salty observation on the contemporary psychiatric scene.

DAVID C. WATT.

CURRAN AND PARTRIDGE

Psychological Medicine: an Introduction to Psychiatry. By D. CURRAN and M. PARTRIDGE. Sixth Edition. Edinburgh and London: E. and S. Livingstone. 1969. Pp. 447. Price 35s.

A short textbook of psychiatry which has reached its sixth edition and has been reprinted six times

must be regarded as most successful. It means that lots of the people at whom it is directed are prepared to buy it; yet reviewers are generally people at whom the book is not directed and some may have little or no contact with the potential readers.

I read this book as one who has been teaching psychiatry to medical undergraduates for nineteen years and also as one who has recently entered into modest competition, and I have tried to see the book from the standpoint of the undergraduate.

It is good value. For 35 shillings one has a very readable distillation of considerable psychiatric experience which is designed to be helpful and informative and achieves these ends. There is a refreshing absence of that ambiguous obscurity which bedevils much psychiatric literature, and the reader is in no doubt as to what the authors are saying. Students can learn from it without undue effort and what they learn is useful.

The authors have not rested on their laurels, but have updated the text and modified some previously hallowed but now discredited views on aetiology and treatment, so that the student can buy the book with confidence.

The plates, which are retained from edition to edition, could do with similar treatment. It must be very tempting to retain plates which hardly add to the cost rather than replace them by others which would. Yet they are getting very dated now, and the book would be better without some of them.

Further criticism would merely be directed against the personal testaments of the authors rather than against the book; but these give spice and individuality and do not obtrude detrimentally and their elimination would kill the book. But who am I to object to authors including personal testaments in a text?

MYRE SIM.

HENRI EY ON CONSCIOUSNESS

'Das Bewusstsein' (Consciousness). By HENRI EY. Phänomenologisch-psychologische Forschungen, Band 8. Eds. C. F. GRAUMANN and J. LINDSCHOTEN. Translated into German and introduced by K. P. KISKER. (Original: *La Conscience—Le Psychologue T.16*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1963). Berlin: W. de Gruyter. 1967. Pp. 316. Price DM. 56.

This book is an excellent German translation from the original, which, of course, is in French, and it contains an introduction by the translator which considerably enhances the value of the book by relating the author and this work to its sources and to the framework of European phenomenological

thought and to psychopathology in general. (Kisker has dedicated the translation to K. Schneider on his 80th birthday.) The original was published 7 or 8 years ago and will perhaps be better known to the English-speaking public than this German translation is ever likely to be, but the book has in no way suffered by the translation and the elegance of style of the original is preserved.

Ey, who is General Secretary of the World Organization for Psychiatry, an organization brought into being largely by his own efforts, is one of the towering figures of world psychiatry of our day. Working at no university or research institute, but in a provincial hospital in France, his writings have had an arresting effect on contemporary psychiatry and psychopathology, and beyond it on psychology.

Ey, in his now well known nosology, appears as a proponent of the unitary diagnosis; and alterations in consciousness as one diameter of variability along which lie the different psychopathological syndromes are a fundamental aspect of his entire nosological theory. In re-examining the complex and illusive problem of consciousness following it through from normality to its various pathological changes, Ey brings together a great number of diverse theories and schools of thought.

Ey's teachers were Guiraud and Claude, through whom he is linked with the great tradition of French descriptive clinical psychiatry. Philosophically he is influenced by Bergson. He acknowledges the fundamental importance of Husserl's phenomenological psychology, but deals very extensively with the unconscious (which plays no part in Husserl's psychology, as being inaccessible to the phenomenological method). Ey's relationship to Freud's teachings is problematic, and is described by Kisker as a position of immanent criticism, which Ey summarized recently as 'Que je suis et que je ne suis pas psychoanalyste'. Ey also goes beyond phenomenology in another sense, in that he includes brain physiology into his psychopathology which takes him into another methodological realm. As regards his phenomenology he does not confine it to the strictly pragmatic approach of Jaspers, but includes the ontology of Husserl as it is applied in German psychiatry by Heidegger and Binswanger and in French psychiatry by Minowsky and Merleau-Ponty. Ey also draws on concepts from Gestalt psychology, particularly when he writes about relationships between neurophysiological structures and levels of consciousness, but he does not accept the theory as such and goes beyond it. He calls it 'a girl for all purposes'.

When using these diverse schools and theories, bringing them together, Ey does not subscribe to a shallow eclecticism, but strives for an integration