

To remedy this defect the author set himself the task of studying in detail the lives and beliefs of five politically active individuals. He interviewed each of them for 12 to 30 hours, spread over three to four months, partly in two Australian capitals and partly in London. These interviews and political catechisms form the bulk of the book. Reviewing this material at the end, the author is frank enough to admit that "there is an irremediable shallowness to [their] outlooks that repels". He was also forced to the conclusion that his subjects did not know how their political outlooks had been formed. He had to contribute this knowledge from his own preconceptions and the published opinions of other writers. He could obviously have done this without the enormous expense of time and energy he had devoted to the examination of his subjects.

The upshot of it all? Attitudes and prototypes encountered in the political outlooks of adults are derived from infantile experiences. This is admittedly not a very original opinion. Nor is it very helpful, for, as the author is at pains to argue, there are several reasons why it is impossible to predict from particular childhood experiences what kind of a man the adult will be.

F. KRÄUPL TAYLOR.

6. SUBNORMALITY AND CHILD PSYCHIATRY

The Mentally Retarded Child. Edited by PROFESSOR A. R. LURIA. Pergamon Press. 1963. Pp. 207. Price 60s.

If the reviewer had not previously read some of Professor Luria's contributions to the understanding of speech, he might have laid this book aside after reading the first chapter. If he had done so he would have been the loser.

The book has considerable value, although it is easy to point out many defects. In the Preface it is stated, "Long ago Soviet science concluded that mentally retarded children (and in particular, child-oligophrenics) were children who had experienced a serious brain disease during the intra-uterine or early postnatal period of their development". One might say that this book is the science of long ago—of the time before intelligence tests were available, before psychoanalytical contributions to the understanding of emotional interaction, before the contributions of Piaget and before Gestalt psychology. This, however, would be a criticism of the book for not being the kind that would be written in this country. It is more constructive to read it as a sincere effort to reach an

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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