

Book Reviews

DETACHMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

Psychiatry in a Changing Society

Edited by S. H. Foulkes and G. Stewart Prince. Pp. xviii + 211. (Tavistock: London, October 1969.) 50s.

THIS volume is a byproduct of its senior author's year of office as chairman of the Psychotherapy and Social Psychiatry Section of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association (the organization to which nearly all British psychiatrists belong). As Dr Foulkes explains in his introduction, he took office at a time when there was vigorous discussion about the future of this section: in particular, about the desirability of separating its two principal components.

One school of thought, expressed in a lucid opening chapter by E. H. Hare, argues that the term "social psychiatry" has come to be so vague and all-embracing as to serve little purpose. Hare points out that some writers—notably Maxwell Jones—have used this term to refer to methods of treatment which enlist the contribution of members of a social group; others—notably Sir Aubrey Lewis—have emphasized the need for research designed to identify and measure the influence of social factors on the incidence and outcome of mental disorders.

Foulkes makes it very clear where his own sympathies lie. He vigorously rejects Hare's contention that "between psychotherapy and social research there is a deep, almost a fundamental, distinction". As he puts it: "The philosophy behind this concept of social psychiatry is that of an impartial science, incompatible with participation in or motivation for change". He believes that emotional and rational motivations determine the behaviour of those colleagues who disagree with him, preferring, to what he pejoratively calls objective psychiatry, his own brand of personal psychiatry: "The latter is a dynamic pursuit, entailing involvement and change in one's own person, and threatening values and attitudes. There is resistance against such change. The techniques of segregation, isolation, detachment and non-involvement are clearly preferred".

Many social scientists would contend that only by introducing an element of detachment and non-involvement can they guard against the self-deceptions which so readily accompany subjective impressions. Their doubts on this score can only be intensified by some of the *obiter dicta* in Foulkes's closing chapter, such as: "The concept of scientific detachment is outdated. . . . We must get away from a false impartiality in favour of a conscious participation in the service of humanity".

There is an important difference of opinion here about the proper content and methods of research in social psychiatry; but the argument presented is a rather one-sided one. Most of the book consists of essays by seven guest speakers, none of them psychiatrists, who addressed the section during Foulkes's year as chairman. Their contributions are interesting and diverse; Professor and Mrs Fortes report on the apparent increase in psychoses among the Tallensi people in Northern Ghana, during a period of 30 years; Dr Menzies describes her method of carrying out a study of nurse training in a teaching

hospital; Dr M. R. A. Chance gives a detailed account of the application of techniques of ethological observation and analysis in the study of primate behaviour.

Of these papers, that by Menzies corresponds most clearly to Foulkes's concept of personal involvement in the social interactions which are being studied. Norbert Elias, a sociologist who writes on "Sociology and Psychiatry", contrasts the paradigms of "Homo psychiatricus" (who tends to be viewed as if in isolation from his fellows) and of "Homo sociologicus". He urges that more use should be made of the conceptual model which sees men as open systems, in which both events in their private histories (the usual concern of psychiatrists) and influences arising from their social interactions (the usual concern of sociologists) are each given due weight as determinants of behaviour. In his view, only Foulkes's own group analytic approach succeeds in fully exploiting both individual and group factors in therapy.

Paul Halmos, a social psychologist, contributes a refreshingly disquieting essay entitled "Psychology and the Ideology of Progress". This starts by recalling the familiar antithesis between vitalistic and mechanistic psychologies, but soon becomes more particular by focusing on the question: does the infant's experience of "good mothering" consist only of a finite, artificially reproducible number of sensory impressions—or is there more to it than that? In this chapter, as in the book as a whole, the interest lies in the questions which are raised rather than in any claim to have discovered the answers.

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VIRUSES REVEALED

The Chemistry and Biology of Viruses

By Heinz Fraenkel-Conrat. Pp. x + 294. (Academic Press: New York and London, September 1969.) 84s.

THE study of virology as a biological science falls naturally into two parts. First, there is the nature of the complete virus particle, its chemistry and macromolecular structure; and second, there is the manner in which the virus interacts with host cells to give an infected complex. Professor Fraenkel-Conrat's concise and readable book covers both of these aspects, although approximately three-quarters of his book are concerned with the structure of viruses. It is difficult to write a textbook in a rapidly changing field such as virology, but in this case the author and publishers have chosen to produce the book in less than a year, an achievement well in evidence from the many recent references to research literature.

The book has been written to provide an introduction to virology both for students in the biological sciences and for research workers who are seeking to broaden their horizons, and both groups will benefit greatly from the wealth of interesting information presented. The experimental observations are explained and interpreted particularly well, the bench work being clearly related to the more formal model. Thus in a section describing methods of controlled degradation of viruses, it is easy to visualize the process as it would occur; while in other parts of the book the reader is made aware of the possible dangers of interpretation, for example, when the infectivity of viral nucleic acid is considered. Some excellent photographs, diagrams and tables help to convey the data.

The later chapters are concerned with the various modes of virus-cell interaction, and while many facts are described and many references provided for further exploration if desired, the impact, so much in evidence in the earlier section on virus structure, seems to be less. Perhaps this is because some basic concepts of virus infection are not covered adequately—for example, the single-step growth experiment which in 1939 provided the basis for the development of quantitative virology.