

## HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

### Humanistic Psychology

By Prof. John Cohen. Pp. 206. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1958.) 18s. net.

THE history of Western psychology from Greek times onwards can be regarded as a series of attempts to study the human mind by the methods of the natural sciences, punctuated by periodic protests regarding the validity and fruitfulness of such attempts. Socrates protested against the analytical methods of the Ionians. It was he, Socrates, not the machinery of his bodily organs, who was responsible for his conduct and behaviour. The psychology of Hobbes brought forth the protests of Cudworth and the Platonists. Coleridge in "Biographia Literaria" expounds the reasons which led him to reject the physiological psychology of Hartley, thus initiating the idealistic reaction against British analytical psychology which was to come to a head later in the nineteenth century. James Ward, in his famous article in the ninth edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica", rejected a physiological approach to psychology, which advances in the physiology of the brain and nervous system had rendered increasingly attractive. The experimental psychology of the Wundtian period in Germany produced its counterblast in the influential 'understanding' psychology of Dilthey. To-day, on both sides of the Atlantic voices are being raised against the dominant modern trends in psychology, against the adequacy of physiological models, against conditioning theory, cybernetical concepts and quantitative methods. Prof. J. Cohen's book on "Humanistic Psychology" is the latest of these protests, and like most of its predecessors it shows strongly the marks of Continental influences and a certain aversion to Anglo-Saxon empiricism.

The book is a lively, if somewhat miscellaneous, collection of essays, in no way as the preface suggests a 'text', loosely held together by a common point of view. Cohen holds that the qualities of human experience are peculiar to themselves, cannot be reduced to the activities of the nervous system, and must be experienced from within. Man has a history as well as a nature, and he must be studied by appropriately humanistic methods. Cohen illustrates this theme by essays on childhood, the senses and psychological time, personal and group factors in thinking, and some miscellaneous papers on the psychology of work, illness and literature. The emphasis all through is on the richness, variety and incommensurability of inner experience, on that which remains over when physiology has done its best to explain, and on the need for a sensitive imagination if the psychologist is not to miss all this.

What the author has to say is interesting, stimulating and, in the best sense of the word, provocative. Let us be clear, however, that in spite of the references to empirical research and in spite of Prof. Cohen's own contributions to such research, this is not scientific psychology, nor a substitute for scientific psychology. It is too arbitrary and too much dependent on subjective insight. Views not unlike those of Prof. Cohen have brought to virtual ruin the not unimpressive edifice of German psychology. The scientific psychologist will continue his plodding way regardless of Prof. Cohen's barbed humanistic sallies. And quite rightly; for a scientific psychology must be firmly based on an adequate understanding of

elements and fundamentals. It cannot start 'on the heavenly plane', as Prof. Cohen seems to desire.

But Prof. Cohen's protest, like earlier protests, has its value even for scientific psychologists. For it may save them from that complacency in the adequacy of their theories and methods into which they so often fall. It is good that from time to time their attention should be directed to the wide gap which exists between what psychology has yet achieved and the manifest richness of human nature, to which the scientific psychologist is frequently blind. Prof. Cohen does this, and in doing so has written a witty and vivacious book which is a pleasure to read.

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## NEUROBIOLOGY

### Morphologie und Physiologie des Nervensystems

Von Prof. Paul Glees. Pp. xii+445. (Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag, 1957.) 58 D.M.

THE author describes this text-book as an attempt to organize the most important results of experimental neurology in a form suitable for readers interested in neurology and neurobiology. A valuable feature is its emphasis on neuroanatomy, the author's own subject, though his interests range far into neurophysiology.

The latter subject naturally falls into three sub-groups: (1) the traditional problems of localization which seek static answers and are intimately concerned with the anatomy of centres and pathways; (2) a dynamic variety dealing with circuit analysis, functional principles or, more generally, with problems of 'how' as opposed to those of 'where'; and (3) applied physico-chemistry elucidating in terms of the concepts of these sciences events which take place across membranes in nerves, synapses, end plates, etc.

Prof. Glees's references will help readers interested in these three fields to much of the relevant literature, even when the author himself is less fortunate in presenting leading ideas and has to be content with loosely connected facts. This criticism applies to the fields enumerated under (2) and (3), which are difficult to discuss interestingly without the background of a great deal of thought-provoking experimental activity. Since most of the work in these fields concerns structures below the brain stem, Prof. Glees's book does not really gather momentum until he has reached the level of the mid-brain, except when treating histology. It is, for example, still curiously disintegrated on the subject of the spinal cord.

The physiology of the brain is dominated by the first sub-group mentioned above, that is classical problems of localization which do not necessarily become neurophysiology in the stricter sense, merely because methods of degeneration and surgical removal have to some extent been supplanted by electrical equivalents, such as the method of 'evoked potentials' and other varieties of electrical recording and stimulation. On the other hand, the problems of localization are important in themselves, particularly when related to physiological points of view. Concepts used in this field are easily understood, while circuit analysis is still much concerned with the development of an appropriate arsenal of useful analytical notions.

In dealing with problems of localization the experimenter asks, for example, what parts of the brain are necessary for feeling thirst, hunger, for sleep and wakefulness, to what parts visual, acoustic and tactile