

## Book Reviews

### *Evaluation of Behaviour Therapy*

**Behaviour Therapy in Clinical Psychiatry:** V. Meyer and Edward S. Chesser. (Pp. 288; 15s.) Penguin Books. 1970.

I have never understood why comparisons are considered odious. Even if they are, the temptation to compare this book on behaviour therapy with that by Dr. Joseph Wolpe (see *B.M.J.*, 2 May, p. 284) would prove irresistible.

Wolpe's book is in effect a short manual giving details of how he applies the "new" therapy in his day-to-day practice. Like Hamlet, Wolpe knows not "seems." He is absolute in his beliefs and categorical in his statements. His approach is that of the "E Type"—fast, confident, and the envy of lesser breeds. As he speeds along the road to the therapeutic New Jerusalem he cocks a snook at the well-worn, expensively upholstered limousine with Viennese number plates standing punctured at the roadside. Our present authors, in contrast, progress sedately along the same road at a speed sufficiently slow to give them time to review and chart the newly discovered territory around them (they give about 600 "map" references), time to see the hazards

ahead, and time, too, to doff their caps respectfully at the stranded vehicle aforementioned.

As a work of scholarship Meyer and Chesser's book is certainly to be preferred. Indeed the introductory chapters on the theoretical concepts on which behaviour therapy is based are masterly, and are urgently recommended to those with the hurdle of the D.P.M. ahead of them. But the authors are more than scholars; they are in addition scientists, and as such have the right degree of scepticism in their make up to appreciate the limitation in the theory and practice of this increasingly fashionable method. "It is easier to account for discrete symptoms such as isolated phobias in terms of learning principles than to account for complex neuroses and personality disorders," they say, and concede that "it is certain that genetic and organic processes are necessary and sufficient causes of some psychiatric disorders and it is impossible to exclude them from being involved in some

of the 'functional' psychiatric disorders." They engage in the same low gear when discussing the results of behaviour therapy. They endorse Eysenck's dictum that claims made for any treatment must be assessed against the natural history of the disorder or its "spontaneous remission" rate. It is at this juncture that they are severely critical of Wolpe's claims to success, which he puts as high as 90% recoveries, and give cogent reasons for their criticism. In their final chapter Meyer and Chesser positively apply the brakes. They point out the red, flashing warning lights ringing the wrecks of other psychiatric procedures that have failed to recognize the pitfalls on the road. Behaviour therapy is already in danger. "It was oversold initially and subsequent investigations have shown that its value is not limitless," they write, perhaps more in sorrow than in anger.

If there should still be doubt as to which of these two books is the better buy may I commit yet another solecism and mention money, or rather economy—always a potent stimulus in any human conditioning process. Wolpe's book costs 50 shillings; Meyer and Chesser's a mere fifteen.

HENRY R. ROLLIN.

### *Interpretations of Immunobiology*

**Immunobiology for Surgeons.** J. Wesley Alexander and Robert A. Good. (Pp. 220; 102s.) W. B. Saunders. 1970.

I must admit when I first opened this book I looked to see what the authors had to say about heart transplantation, and was surprised to find no mention of Christiaan Barnard in the Index and no discussion of events subsequent to the "let's have a bash" approach which he initiated in this field. Instead, the inside of the cover of the book lists advances in surgery and immunology on a time scale that extends from 2000 B.C. until A.D. 1950 and the preface and foreword indicate that the text is concerned with immunological mechanisms in a broader sense than current interest in transplantation problems dictates.

The authors' intention is "to provide a source of basic facts and interpretation for those young surgeons and students of the art to whom it has become obvious that a knowledge of immunobiology is a desirable and almost essential requisite for modern surgical practice." They succeed in this aim. The book is short and beautifully written and the text is not inundated with references. Immunosuppression and the mechanisms of immunological injury are discussed in the light of a clear description of immune mechanisms. Relatively short chapters towards the end of the book are devoted to cancer transplantation problems, allergic drug reactions, and primary and secondary immunological deficiency diseases.

This is the book for the budding surgeon who is presently perplexed by the flood of papers on immunological aspects of disease.

It selects for him the up-to-date basic knowledge that he needs in order to be able to understand and evaluate reports from the veritable army of front-line laboratory researchers.

FRANCIS J. C. ROE.

### *Nerve Junction Transmission*

**The Pharmacology of Synapses.** J. W. Phillis. (Pp. 358; 120s.) Pergamon Press. 1970.

This is a comprehensive and well written account of the physiology and pharmacology of synapses. It has the great advantage of being the product of one author who has himself made very important contributions to the subject.

The 1930's showed a great burst of interest in synapses; the post-war advances in electronics and microelectrode techniques allowed more and more intimate investigations. It is interesting that although the controversy over electrical versus chemical transmission at mammalian synapses died out many years ago some new work suggests that it is just possible that electrically transmitting junctions occur in mammals. A large portion of the book is, as would be expected, taken up with metabolism, effects, and release of the well known transmitters acetylcholine and noradrenaline, but considerable attention is devoted to other candidates such as gamma aminobutyric acid, serotonin, and histamine. The criteria for admission to the status of true transmitters are not always easily satisfied. The two chapters devoted to transmission in inver-

tebrates are of considerable importance to zoologists.

This book will be read and reread by physiologists and pharmacologists. It could be put into the hands of a good honours student preparing, for example, a paper on neuromuscular transmission. Clinicians—especially anaesthetists—interested in the action of drugs interfering with the metabolism or the effect of transmitters may find this a useful reference book.

G. H. BELL.

### *Modern Therapeutics*

**Medical Treatment.** A Textbook of Therapy in 4 Vols. Vol. 3, 3rd edn. Rheumatic, Skeletal and Renal Diseases; Metabolic and Endocrine Disorders and Acute Poisoning. Ed. Kenneth Maclean and George Scott. (Pp. 797; 45s.) J. & A. Churchill. 1970.

This is the third volume of a 4-part textbook of which the two previous volumes have already been reviewed (19 October 1968, p. 172, and 23 August 1969, p. 461). The fourth volume, which will contain the general index and a chapter bringing up to date the earlier volumes, is expected to appear before the end of the year.

In this third volume the focus on treatment is sharper than in the past. There is an excellent opening chapter on the rheumatic disorders, including the collagen diseases. The large number of remedies, their frequent adverse effects, and their relatively low efficacy are impressive. The next three chapters deal with diseases of the bones and the endocrine glands and the use of corticotrophin and the adrenal corticosteroids. Paget's disease becomes commoner as the population ages, and it is therefore