

Book Reviews : Boekbesprekings

PHYSICAL BIOLOGY

Comparative Physical Biology by Norman R. Joseph. Pp. vii + 229. \$35.00. Basel and London: S. Karger Ag. 1973. It is a commonplace that there are lies, damned lies, and statistics. In similar vein perhaps the same may be said of thermodynamics, at least as applied to biology. The author of this work, a physical chemist, applies his professional expertise in equilibrium thermodynamics to a number of biological problems with apparently devastating effect. A single example must suffice. He argues that as the ionic concentrations of the intra- and extracellular fluids are constant, the reactions maintaining these very different concentrations are necessarily reversible, and their net transport rates nil. And the second law clearly states that in an invariant system, isothermal reversible work is zero. Hence, by Occams principle, the concepts of ion pumps and active transport are superfluous, and can be discarded. One has only to consider a ping-pong ball supported on a jet of air to find the fallacy.

Other even more arresting suggestions are scattered throughout the text which perhaps are best left to those who enjoy philosophical speculation.

L.C.I.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Invisible Loyalties. Reciprocity in intergenerational family therapy. By I. Boszormenyi-Nagy, M.D. and G. M. Spark, M.S.W. Pp. xxi + 408. \$12.50. Hagerstown, Maryland: Harper & Row. 1973.

This book describes yet another technique of psychotherapy. The authors have moved beyond individual treatment or treatment with the 'nuclear' family to intensive group involvement with several generations of the family of the person who presents for psychiatric help, or as a 'problem'. Their thesis is that families are tied by invisible loyalties to a particular life style. In the case of children they find that 'the child's conflicts are directly connected with the interlocked, collusively unconscious, or denied processes which disrupt and interfere with growth of all the family members'. It is a valuable book but regrettably badly written and repetitious. The detailed case reports are, however, instructive and readable. One does feel a certain sympathy for grandparents who are suddenly confronted with the challenge of becoming 'self aware'. Self awareness must break down ego defences—hardly a comfortable experience for old people.

F.A.

MENTALLY-DISORDERED OFFENDERS

Law, Psychiatry and the Mentally-Disordered Offender. Vols. I and II. Ed. by L. M. Irvine, jnr, C.S.W., A.C.S.W. and T. B. Brelje, Ph.D. \$975 ea. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1973.

With new legislation imminent in South Africa the publication of 23 papers on the psychiatric and legal problems of mentally-disordered offenders is opportune. With Szaz to cry 'medical despotism' and with Maxwell Jones, Folsom, Zunin and others reviewing therapy, the book is rich in useful ideas.

For South Africans the space devoted to American Court procedures is excessive and of academic interest only, although indicative of healthy concern with shortcomings.

Those concerned with the treatment and rehabilitation of mentally-disordered offenders will find this book useful and interesting.

F.D.P.

MEDICINE IN A TRIBAL SOCIETY

The Doctor-Patient Relationship in an African Tribal Society. By G. Jansen. Pp. 224. Assen: Van Gorcum. 1973.

The author spent 11 years in charge of Madwaleni Mission Hospital in Elliotdale District in the Transkei and from this experience has arisen an intercultural study unparalleled in South African medical literature. His understanding of the language and culture of the Bomvana people, perhaps the most conservative of all Xhosa ethnic groups has enabled him to give guidelines not only to the difficult art of taking medical histories in a transcultural setting, both before and after examining the patients but also to the therapeutic and preventive approach.

This is an outstanding book and it is difficult to imagine anyone engaged in intercultural Bantu medical practice who would not both derive benefit and enjoyment from reading it.

W.G.D.

ALLERGIC CONDITIONS

Introduction to Clinical Allergy. By B. F. Feingold, M.D. Pp. xxii + 380. Illustrated. \$26.50. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1973.

This is a beautiful book, beautifully written, beautifully illustrated, and extremely clear. It is certain that practitioners, specialists or others can use this book to their benefit and the benefit of their patients.

Elucidation of allergic conditions of all systems is clearly set out. It is a great advance in the evolution of so many and unknown conditions which are due to allergic reactions and can be used by the medical profession as a whole for the alleviation of symptoms of the long-suffering allergic patient.

J.C.

HYPERTENSION

Hypertension. Vol. XXI. Hypertension in Man and the Experimental Animal. Ed. by J. C. Hunt, M.D. Pp. 188. Illustrated. \$5,00. New York: American Heart Association. 1973.

This book brings together a wide variety of concise articles reporting on recent research into hypertension. Research worker and general reader alike will find it stimulating.

The articles on the various physiological receptors are particularly interesting — emphasizing the utility of the receptor concept, setting forth new advances in the isolation and characterising of substances normally bound within biological membranes (as opposed to soluble intracellular receptors) and leaving the reader highly intrigued with the possibility that alpha and beta receptors 'have a common structure that can function in either the alpha or the beta configuration'.

References are comprehensive.

F.M.E.

NEUROPATHOLOGY

Progress in Neuropathology. Vol. II. Ed. by H. M. Zimmerman, M.D. Pp. xii + 460. Illustrated. \$29,00. New York and London: Grune & Stratton. 1973.

The second volume of *Progress in Neuropathology* contains 13 papers of almost monographic length on a variety of subjects of interest to neuropathologists and clinical workers in the field of neurology. Much of the material is devoted to electron microscopy appearances of neuropathological processes, and the publishers are to be congratulated on the magnificence of the photographic reproductions which are scattered diffusely through this volume. While some of the contributions may interest only those workers dealing with electron microscopic research, the papers on the pathology of motor neurone disease, and the contribution on neurotuberculosis would be of interest to a very much wider audience.

C.F.

MEDICAL CRISES

Crises in Medicine. Ed. by R. D. Eichhorn, M.D. and E. F. Beard, M.D. Pp. xvi + 263. Illustrated. \$11,95. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1973.

This book comprises mainly postgraduate lectures given at Houston, Texas, and is intended for the specialist physician and general practitioner. The cover blurb says that the text is a reference book, but the book is of such excellence that it would repay study from beginning to end. Unfortunately, the text is marred by careless proof-reading and many misprints are found. In general, the book is easy to read and covers all the common emergencies.

B.A.B.