

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

PSYCHIATRY

Lewis, Aubrey. *Inquiries in Psychiatry; Clinical and Social Investigations.* Pp. vii + 335; *The State of Psychiatry; Essays and Addresses.* Pp. ix + 310. London, 1967. Routledge and Kegan Paul. Price 63s. each.

THESE TWO VOLUMES which contain a collection of Sir Aubrey Lewis's papers have been published to mark his retirement from the Professorship of Psychiatry at the University of London and the Directorship of the Institute at the Maudsley Hospital. Between the covers there are some old and familiar friends to be found; also some who are less familiar but whose presence is welcome nonetheless. It is a pleasure as well as a convenience to have these papers collected together. They will not only be read and re-read by every psychiatrist with a genuine interest in the advancement of his subject (and should certainly be compulsory reading for all those who aspire to specialize in this branch of medicine) but will appeal also to other students of mankind.

Reading his historical essays on Philippe Pinel and Henry Maudsley one is drawn inevitably to compare the author with his subjects. His writing which reflects his character betrays many of the qualities of both of them. Pinel best remembered "because he showed that cruelty and neglect play no part—except a shameful one—in the care of the mentally ill" was described by his pupil Esquirol as "one of the luminaries of our time". But humanity apart he was also a scientific psychiatrist whose statistical approach to his specialty seems to have been well in advance of time and thus initially "bore dubious fruit". But, as Lewis points out, the "history of therapeutic efforts and fashions, controversies, successes and disappointments in psychiatry might have been less jerky if Pinel's principles had been heeded". Elsewhere in several of his other papers Lewis tells us the same, but in different ways and on his own account.

One is also drawn to consider how much Henry Maudsley's autobiographical self-judgement could appropriately be applied to Sir Aubrey. Maudsley divided men who influence mankind into two classes—those of wide intellectual grasp, vast wisdom and serene energy who observe sincerely, think fully and feel deeply, and men of limited vision, intense feeling and impetuous energy "persons who are clever but flighty, talented but unstable, intense but narrow, earnest but fanatical . . .". Maudsley quite rightly placed himself for the most part in the first of these two classes.

Professor Lewis's psychiatry is the psychiatry of fact, not fiction. He is ambivalent about philosophy and hostile towards random speculation. He observes, in the second Manson lecture, that psychiatry which was for far longer than any other branch of medicine "preoccupied with philosophy and dependent on it . . . had so little profit from its fidelity that it reckons progress from the time when it struggled away from this allegiance". He also castigates psychiatrists for their readiness to accept irrational or naïve hypotheses although they may lead to useful action, and the complaisant and pragmatic attitude of eclectic psychiatrists towards diverse systems of psychopathology.

While clearly a hard taskmaster, Professor Lewis has sometimes been unfairly accused—by the less successful of his pupils, one may suspect—for being at times destructively critical. Those of intellectual stature which may sometimes approach but rarely if ever equal his, will know from reading his papers or from personal acquaintance that the barb of his criticism though painfully felt serves the very necessary purpose of winking out the soft centre from a false argument. It has also been suggested by some—those perhaps de-

feated in debate—that his critical faculty is overdeveloped at the expense of creative originality. Inspection of his own original contributions to clinical and social psychiatry, of the now classic clinical survey of melancholia for example, which is reproduced here in full apart from the detailed case histories, will at once dispel this illusion and indicate that it is no more than the juice of sour grapes.

Nevertheless, it has to be said that it is as a critic, in the best and widest sense of this description, that Sir Aubrey is revered by his colleagues. Psychiatry, as a discipline *sine* discipline and with an inclination to tumble all too readily head over heels, has need of a watchdog. Read for example in *Between Guesswork and Certainty in Psychiatry* what is really meant by verifying a hypothesis and what is not meant: “Interpretations which explain the phenomena only too readily, lead to a feeling of certainty which closes the mind to further inquiry and makes the believer hostile to any breath of scepticism”.

Professor Lewis also has a sure eye for the psychiatric cliché which masks the woolly concept. To him the loose use of words is an anathema: “semantic carelessness over the meaning of terms in psychiatry leads easily, as we all know, to faulty diagnosis and sometimes in consequence to faulty treatment”. In contrast his own use of words is for the most part impeccable and achieves a degree of lucidity which all might envy. Among many elegant turns of phrase there are many quotable quotations, some of them jewels. Thus he describes an obsession as a mental foreign body—“homemade but disowned, a sort of mental sequestrum, a calculus that keeps on causing trouble”. Again: “The unconscious”, he states, “is unhappily named: so positive a concept should not have so negative a verbal symbol”.

Lucidity apart he can be remarkably incisive. In discussing the place of child psychiatry and psychoanalysis in post-graduate psychiatric education, many a lesser man might have been content to remark lamely that this is a controversial issue. Not so Lewis. He begins a new paragraph with a short verbless punch-line, a sentence having almost a fanfare-like quality. “Child psychiatry and psychoanalysis—igneous topics these”. One can sense the coals of conflict glowing.

Finally in *The Study of Defect* he points out how in the beginning investigations into mental defectiveness were at first largely anthropological. We read: “Interest in the size and shape of skull became intense. Medical writings on defect in the first half of the nineteenth century are cluttered with cranial measurements . . . But little was gleaned from all this craniometry. Thomas Fuller put the matter in a nutshell . . .”(1). Intentional or not the pun is worthy of Charles Lamb. What the splendid matter Fuller put in a nutshell was the reader must find out for himself, for Lewis in addition to supplying us with fresh stock has a sure eye for the quotable quotations of others. How numerous and always apt these are is a further tribute to his erudition.

W. H. TRETOWAN

POPULATION

Dupaquier, J. (Editor). *Annales de Démographie Historique 1966*. Paris, 1967; Société de Démographie Historique; Editions Sirey. Pp. 440. Price 32F.

IN THE WORLD of historical demography, the French are pre-eminent. Their commitment to the subject is immense. The volume of their output is unmatched as its importance, both at the substantive and methodological levels, is unequalled. They dominate the international conferences. Not surprisingly, therefore, one looks forward eagerly to this annual publication of the Société de Démographie Historique, of which the current number is the third.

The *Annales* of 1966 opens with a number of articles, most of which were presented as papers to meetings of the Société de Démographie Historique and to which are appended comments by discussants. We have P. Guillaume on nineteenth-century Bordeaux; P.