

Book Reviews

ARTHUR KLEINMAN and TSUNG-YI LIN (editors), *Normal and abnormal behaviour in Chinese culture*, Dordrecht, Boston, and London, D. Reidel, 1981, 8vo, pp. xxiii, 436, Dfl. 75.00/\$39.50.

Psychiatry as a well(?)-defined branch of medicine developed in the Western medical tradition in the early nineteenth century. The delineation of a medical field of knowledge dealing with the vicissitudes of the soul was probably stimulated by the ubiquitous dualistic body-soul conceptions so common in Western ideologies. The difficulties in studying Chinese souls, the Chinese having ceased to separate the soul from the rest of the body two millennia and a half ago, have long been acknowledged by students in the field.

The book reviewed is the first anthology of modern and original research contributions on Chinese behaviour covering Chinese history of ideas, anthropology, sociology, family studies, psychopathology, and psychiatric epidemiology. The scope is broad but the book is held firmly together by the two editors, who have divided the twenty chapters into four sections, introducing each section with an editorial. The sections are: I. Historical and cultural background of beliefs and norms governing behaviour; II. Child development and childhood psychopathology; III. Family studies; and IV. Psychiatric studies: epidemiological and clinical.

The editors are well-known experts in the interface between psychiatry and social studies. Arthur Kleinman, psychiatrist at the University of Washington, Seattle, is editor of *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, a quarterly journal; his main research interests are Chinese. Tsung-yi Lin, noted psychiatrist at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, has produced some of the most important research in Chinese psychiatric epidemiology over the past thirty-five years, and he has worked extensively in the WHO cross-cultural schizophrenia project.

Six editorials and an epilogue discuss more what should be done in the field than what has already been accomplished, and repeat warnings that we have no secure knowledge. One observation that *does* seem to be close to the truth is a different array of coping responses in Chinese as compared with Westerners, externalizing responses notably far outweigh internalizing ones with the result that the Chinese are prone to somatize primarily mental distress. Pre-occupation with somatized behaviour is apparently sanctioned by Chinese culture (and by many others). This fact is often repeated, and, for example, antidepressant medication works in Chinese patients presenting diffuse somatic complaints, irritability, and a firm conviction of some bodily and organic cause of their troubles. However, given the vanishing boundaries between the psyche and the soma in recent developments in the neurosciences, one cannot help wondering which will appear most biased in the future – Chinese (and East Asian) somatization or Western mentalization?

I note briefly the most impressive of the twenty chapters; Female suicide is the subject of A. C. K. Hsieh and J. D. Spence, demonstrating that for long periods of China's pre-modern history killing oneself was not regarded as a deviant practice, but at times rather an act openly praised by the state. "... What was deviant was not the suicide act, but the pressuring of a person into suicide" (p. 45). An enlightened and highly original dialogue between "Dr. Relativist" and "Dr. Universalist" on childhood psychopathology from a cross-cultural view is conveyed to us through D. Y.-F. Ho, who concludes, after many a delightful twist of argument, that it is possible to identify behavioural disorders regardless of culture if there is a consensus between members of the culture and outsiders that the behaviour in question is deviant or pathological. Deviant marriage patterns are described by J. P. McGough in a fine paper distinguished by skilful use of primary sources. Seemingly exotic habits like uxorilocal marriage, polyandry, spirit marriage, pawn marriage, and same-sex marriage are explained in a highly readable way. An important contribution is a review of epidemiological and clinical studies on mental disorders in Chinese cultures by K.-M. Lin, A. Kleinman, and T.-Y. Lin, including 151 references (in Western languages). The dearth of studies carried out in China proper is a source of frustration, but the situation is improving. An intriguing fact is the near-absence of alcoholism in Chinese cultures all over the world, in spite of the historical potential of the Chinese to abuse other sedatives, notably opiates.

The study of non-Western cultural variations of coping mechanisms offers an opportunity to get at the meshwork where psychobiology connects with overt behaviour. The many and varied

Book Reviews

contributions of this book will, no doubt, smooth and catalyse further understanding.

Hans Ågren
Department of Psychiatry
University Hospital, Uppsala

G. C. AINSWORTH, *Introduction to the history of plant pathology*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xii, 315, illus., £27.50.

This well-produced and -illustrated book is, of course, primarily intended for those dealing specifically with botany or agriculture. Yet much of it will be of interest to doctors and medical historians, and the author himself notes the importance of interdisciplinary studies to all professions.

Plants, like man and other animals, suffer predominantly from diseases caused by fungi, bacteria, and viruses. Dr. Ainsworth shows that the plant pathologist is in fact a plant doctor – or, rather, an epidemiologist – whose task it is to diagnose, treat, and prevent diseases of plant populations, and he has organized his book on this basis.

The medical historian is reminded that some of the fundamental discoveries concerning human medicine have been the outcome of research into plant diseases. The first experimental evidence of the pathogenicity of any micro-organism was provided, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by the demonstration that bunt of wheat is caused by a fungus; while the existence of viruses was revealed, at the very end of the century, by experiments on tobacco mosaic disease.

For the plant world, however, the fungi are by far the most important pathogenic agents, whereas in human and animal pathology the bacteria and viruses predominate. Since the fungi rarely proliferate within the human or animal body, their possible pathogenicity to man and animals has, until very recently, been largely ignored outside Russia and Eastern Europe. Yet, it has long been known that a toxic fungus was responsible for the outbreaks of ergotism which ravaged Europe from the Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century. Since the second World War, if not earlier, the Russians have incriminated exo-toxins of various fungi as the cause of other serious epidemic conditions in man and animals. More recently, it has been shown that some of these toxins may be carcinogenic in animals, and that such aflatoxins are widely present in groundnuts, wheat, and other crops used for human and animal food, and can even enter the milk of cattle. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the Russians have now been accused of initiating mycological warfare, with a “yellow rain” containing fungal exo-toxins.

It is, therefore, somewhat disappointing that Dr. Ainsworth, one of the world’s foremost mycologists, should confine this book almost entirely to the quantitative effects of plant diseases. Their qualitative aspects must surely be of interest to us all, and not least to plant pathologists and medical historians.

Elinor Lieber
Green College, Oxford

ROY PORTER (editor), “*The Earth generated and anatomized*” by William Hobbs. *An early eighteenth-century theory of the earth*. (*Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History)*, Historical Series vol. 8, 26 March 1981), 4to, pp. 158, illus., [no price stated].

The publication of this manuscript is to be welcomed, though the casual reader may be forgiven for asking why. After all, it caused no significant reaction in its own day, and its author, who seems to have been remarkably ignorant of contemporary works on the same subject, was an undistinguished naturalist about whom we know very little. But, as Dr. Porter cogently argues, it provides us with a vivid example of what the average “under-labourer” in the field of natural history in the early eighteenth century was doing and has enough intellectual merit in its own right to arouse the interest of the specialist in this field.

Hobbs’s approach to the problem of “y^e manner how, and when, the Shells, and other Marine productions, came to be immassed and mingled in the Rocks and Mountains” (his “principal design”) was curiously anomalous. At a time when most theorists were mechanists, Hobbs held