

Book Reviews

GILBERT LEWIS, *Knowledge of illness in a Sepik society. A study of the Gnau, New Guinea*, London, Athlone Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. x, 379, illus., £12.50.

The author, being medically qualified and Lecturer in Social Anthropology in the University of Cambridge, is uniquely equipped to produce this study of the occurrence, recognition and explanation of illness in a primitive community. By examining these aspects of the inhabitants of the forest village of Raut, a useful insight is afforded into their views of their world. But to be successful it is necessary to be aware of other cultural themes and their relationships to illness, so that the author gives here a partial ethnographic account of the people he is studying.

Using his dual training, Dr. Lewis was able to investigate the occurrence of disease and then to relate its nature to the current explanation for it and the measures taken to combat it. Most previous research of this nature has been selective, and limited to the explanation and management of illness, which has been used to illuminate other themes of the society under investigation. Clearly an examination of the phenomenon in its entirety is alone likely to give an accurate picture of primitive medicine. The author could do this, for he states, “. . . The external standpoint of modern medicine thus enabled me to define a field of misfortune and then to see the differential social pressures and concerns which acted to select certain of these events for more marked attention . . .” (p. 2). His aim is thus to contribute to the anthropological study of disease, by focusing on diagnosis and explanation.

Dr. Lewis deals in turn with the social structure of his chosen community, its environment and disease, the incidence and prevalence, and recognition of illness, the classes of causes, causality, and the explanation of actual illness. It would have been useful to have related his findings to those of other primitive societies and to have cited more of the general literature on his topic; references in the bibliography to W. H. R. Rivers', *Medicine, magic, and religion* (1924), M. J. Field's, *Religion and medicine of the Gā people* (1937), and F. E. Clements', *Primitive concepts of disease* (1932), are notable omissions, and the work of Professor E. H. Ackerknecht, who is perhaps one of the few living scholars with comparable qualifications, should have received more attention. However, Dr. Lewis has provided the deepest analysis so far available of primitive concepts of disease, illustrated with excellent photographs. It will be of vital importance to historians of medicine who, although recognizing the possible hazards of the technique, equate present-day primitive medicine with the palaeo-medicine of prehistoric man.

LLOYD DE MAUSE (editor), *The history of childhood. The evolution of parent-child relationships as a factor in history*, London, Souvenir Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. [iv], 450, £5.00 (£3.00 paperback).

It is true that the history of childhood is a relatively neglected field in the history of medicine, but whether to exploit it we should join forces with the psychoanalyst, who has proprietary rights on childhood, is another matter. The psychohistorians include those that do, and they present here ten essays, which review systematically the attitudes and practices of western parents towards their children as exhibited from the late Roman period to the nineteenth century. Each is a scholarly contribution with excellent documentation and together they form an excellent source of historical

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information on children and their adult associates.

In addition to applying the conceptual framework from psychoanalysis to traditional historical research, those of sociology and anthropology are also being used. From these new approaches novel questions arise and much deeper insights into child-adult relationships are being investigated. This can be regarded as an important advance, whereas the possible contribution of psychoanalysis is less acceptable to some. It is, however, less in evidence in these essays and even when purveyed may supply useful information, even though the basic premise is rejected.

On the whole, the picture revealed here is one of unloving handling of children in the past, when abuse of them far exceeded devoted care. The explanations for this appalling response of parent to child are various and several are put forward here, ranging from psychoanalytical romancing to solid commonsense reasoning. Swaddling, the wet nurse, education and other fascinating aspects of the child in the past are dealt with. This book in general is a useful pioneer excursion into a new area of research and can be recommended as such, as long as readers are willing to evaluate cautiously and critically some of the psychological elucidations and suggestions put forward.

LEONARD ZUSNE, *Names in the history of psychology. A biographical sourcebook*, Washington, D.C., Hemisphere, London, John Wiley, 1975, 4to, pp. xvii, 489, illus., £11.30.

The author describes this book as a kind of *Who's who* in psychology, intended primarily for students. There are 526 entries arranged chronologically according to birth dates, and each has minimal biographical data, with summaries of the individual's work and publications. References to further biographical sources are included and there is often a portrait. Although a strict and fair system of rating has been adopted there will inevitably be criticisms of selection and complaints concerning omissions. It is, thus, difficult to defend the inclusion of Brown Séquard, Ramón y Cajal, Claude Bernard, Marshall Hall, John Fulton and many more. And if Fulton is included why not Penfield, even though still alive when this book was being compiled. Perhaps the title should have been, . . . *and allied sciences*.

These persons being outside the author's area, the information concerning them is often faulty: Brown-Séquard was never head of a hospital in London and he did not train Hughlings Jackson; Cajal is not usually thought of as a discoverer of the function of the synapse; Bernard was by no means the founder of experimental medicine. The portrait accompanying the entry for Paracelsus is almost certainly of Paré. Bell and Magendie are said to have rediscovered Erasistratus' distinction of motor and sensory nerves, which is rubbish. References to further literature are inadequate. Many men are claimed as "founders" or "fathers" of subjects, a dangerous and unnecessary technique. The accounts of early works, particularly those in Classical Antiquity are especially faulty, and there are many minor mistakes that alone are trivial, but taken together reduce the value of a book intended for reference; there are also many misspellings. A work of this kind must be impeccably accurate, or the author can be accused of encouraging the transmission of error. It is axiomatic that the discovery of a few inaccuracies implies that more exist.