Book Reviews

K.R. Eissler
Der sterbende Patient

The ‘Problemata’ series is edited by Günther Holzboog and has been published since 1971.
‘Problemata’ is to be a forum for the negotiation of important problems and interests of the day which are dealt with according to the rules of science, yet unimpeded by the boundaries of scientific disciplines. K.R. Eissler is the author of this book which appeared in the US under the title The Psychiatrist and the Dying Patient. In the first part of the book, Eissler takes up the question of the psychic meaning of death for the dying person, for his or her environment and for society, i.e. for us all who know that we are bound to die. What metapsychological processes take place in someone who is conscious of impending death? What is the response of our culture and ethics to this offensive area on the frontiers of existence?

In 17 assays, the author investigates these problems, taking into account cultural, psychonanalytical and sociopsychological aspects. In doing so, he sketches the beginnings of a thanatology and illuminates facets of a science of death. In the second part, the author depicts three clinical cases with an urgency and a gift for literary presentation which has seldom been found in psychoanalytical literature since Freud. The common feature of these cases is the attempt of the psychoanalyst to alleviate psychic suffering during the last days of the patient’s life and to support the dying person in the attempt to realize previously unlived possibilities of psychic experience. In the description of these cases, the outlines of a specific technique for the accomplishment of these tasks become visible. In his foreword, Eissler writes that he was motivated in an impressionistic manner to look into some ideas which could not be called particularly scientific as the consequence that there exists so little knowledge with regard to the psychology of death. It can be attributed to Eissler that he solved this task in the same outstanding manner as he presented his books in the past.

H. Freyberger, Hannover

A. Reading and Th.N. Wise (eds.)
Symposium on Psychiatry in Internal Medicine
Medical Clinics of North America, vol. 61, No. 4 Saunders, Philadelphia 1977 240 pp.; $ 10.00

Following the recent symposium entitled Hypertension the topic Psychiatry in Internal Medicine is treated. 19 authors deal with various fields concerning psychosomatic aspects in internal medicine. A systematic disposition of the book is missing. Obviously, the authors were primarily selected and, then, motivated to give any contribution. The reviewer does not regard such an unsystematic approach as an advantageous one. The themes are dealt
Book Reviews
179

with too generally and are, therefore, too superficial. Particularly worth mentioning are the contributions ‘Psychological studies at the Downstate Medical Center of patients on hemo-
M. Masud R. Khan, born 1924 in India, is living in London as psychoanalyst and co-editor of the Journal of Psychoanalysis. The reader may be particularly motivated to deal with this book on account of the knowledge that John Rickman, Anna Freud and Donald Winnicott are teachers of the author. In his initial thanksgiving, Khan expresses ‘that not one of the contributions published in this book would have come about without the friendly and altruistic help of my three teachers’. Khan starts from the two statements that psychoanalysis is a completely private concern which demands much sensibility and very specific practices and, furthermore, that the practice of psychoanalysis is suitable for strengthening this private character. There arises a particular relationship between two persons in which the two are exclusively engaged together and, therefore, both change mutually. In his book, Khan succeeds in glorifying the distinguished personal changes which develop in the protracted process of the psychoanalytic situation with the aim to discover the ‘hidden self which is concealed behind the facade of the superficial human being. On the basis of techniques descending from child analysis and dream psychology, Khan examines the course of the relationships. Furthermore, Khan deals with the multiple problems concerning regression, transference and countertransference as well as integration and communicative silence.

Erik H. Erikson

Kinderspiel und politische Phantasie
140pp.;Sfr. 20.-
ISBN3-518-07489-X

In this book, which appeared in the US under the title ‘Toys and reasons, stages in the ritualization of experience’, Erikson deals with the relationship between play and reality in various life stages and various fields of human existence including the ‘politics’ of everyday life. On the basis of Erikson’s analyses important aspects of certain conscious and unconscious motivations are clarified. These motivations facilitate or inhibit the development of more universal conceptions of the world.

In certain present developments Erikson sees a progressing tendency with regard to higher universalisation. According to Erikson this tendency includes the reanimation of traditional liberty values: in the relationship of the sexes, in the relationship between parents and children as well as in the general pedagogic field. Furthermore, in the view of Erikson this reanimation concerns the attention to food and the whole body, the new respect with regard to the person as well as the changed attitudes concerning the natural and spiritual environment.

S. Kasl and F. Reichsman (eds.):
Epidemiologic Studies in Psychosomatic Medicine
Epidemiological studies contributed considerably to the accumulation of knowledge in psychosomatic medicine. Psychosomatic medicine and social epidemiology are based upon similar concepts. They deal with the same psychosociobiological mechanisms and partly employ the same methods. The new volume of the ‘Advances in Psychosomatic Medicine’ centers on several specific illnesses and life stress situations which have been thoroughly investigated and may be considered as paradigmatic: coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, anorexia nervosa, bereavement and grief, migration, occupational mobility, and retirement in relation to physical health and illness. The reader will easily recognize that most of the results in this particular field of research may at best only lead to ‘careful optimism’. Only a naive beginner could become enthusiastically impressed by a review of single incoherent results, as the contributions show. The main problem is the close interdependence of theory, hypothesis, methodology, result and interpretation. All the well-written and critical articles agree that the workers in this field were extremely negligent in the formulation of specific theories and research hypotheses. Either the theories were too global not allowing any inferential conclusions, or they excluded everything which is important in human life, especially in the origin of an illness, apart from the specific social stress under study. In an impressive concluding chapter Stanislav Kasl critically analyses the single review articles and their basic conceptions. In a synthetic view he tries to show a way out of the dilemma. We need more longitudinal studies, particularly in the form of ‘natural experiments’, even if we acknowledge the fact that the longitudinal approach is not the panacea. Kasl’s article is the very best I ever read in this field. It is a ‘must’ for each student of epidemiology, psychosomatics and sociology.

Manfred Pflanz, Hannover

Book Reviews

181

H. Pohlmeier

Selbstmord und Selbstmordverhütung


Dr. Hermann Pohlmeier, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, is Chairman and Professor of Medical Psychology, University of Göttingen and President of the German Society for Suicide Prevention. On the basis of his book it is Pohlmeier’s aim to inform doctors, paramedical persons and interested laymen about the topic ‘Suicide prevention’. Pohlmeier discusses in detail whether suicide is the expression of a pathological depression in every case (medical view). Furthermore, the social conditions which lead to suicide are described (sociological view). Also, he outlines the importance of psychic structures and prerequisites with regard to suicide (psychological view). Finally, he deals with the legal and moral obligation to prevent suicide as well as with the duty to abstain from the prevention. This book represents a suitable information for the interested non-psychiatrically trained doctor and the layman.

H. Freyberger, Hannover

T. von Uexküll with R. Adler, J.M. Herrmann, K. Köhle, O. Schonecke and W. Weslack (eds.)

Lehrbuch der Psychosomatischen Medizin


In the book edited by Thure von Uexküll, former professor of internal medicine and psychosomatics at the University of Ulm, ‘psychosomatic medicine’ is not conceived as a
discipline which labels a limited number of diseases as ‘psychosomatic’. In the opinion of the authors psychosocial influences on the origin, course and final state of diseases raise just as important and legitimate questions for medical science as the influences of physical, chemical or microbiological factors do.

The book has 7 main parts: ‘Theory of Science and Psychosomatics’; ‘General Psychosomatic Medicine’; ‘Forms of Organisation in Psychosomatic Patient Care’; ‘Diagnostic and Therapeutic Methods’; ‘Functional Disorders’; ‘Eating Disorders’, and ‘Psychosomatic Aspects of Internal Medicine’. In the first part the authors try to develop a general theory of medicine which aims at systematising and correlating the various concepts of psychosomatic medicine. In the second part the most important models of psychosomatic medicine concerning pathogenesis are presented, at the same time newer – not undisputed – theories (‘alexithymia’) are discussed too. The third part deals with methodical and organisational problems of patient care such as are of interest for the clinician and the practitioner. The different diagnostic and therapeutic methods of psychosomatic patient care (e.g. anamnesis, interview, psychoanalytic therapy, behaviour therapy, therapy with psychoactive drugs) are pointed out in the fourth part. In the fifth part the functional disorders as conversion syndromes, hyperventilation syndrome, and functional cardiovascular disorders are discussed. The part on eating disorders (obesity, anorexia nervosa) is followed by the last – and extensive – part on psychosomatic aspects of internal diseases (e.g. bronchial asthma, Crohn’s disease, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes). Problems of haemodialysis, organ transplantation and of intensive care units are explained here, psychosomatic aspects of gynaecology and geriatrics are touched on. The final part is on attitudes towards incurably ill patients. The 48 sub-chapters are each followed by – partly very extensive – references.

31 authors – most of them co-workers of von Uexküll – cooperated in writing this book. The long time involved in preparing the material for the book is reflected in the way the articles are all related to each other. The book takes the needs of the practitioner into account without disregarding the important theoretical questions of psychosomatic medicine. The authors address readers who are not only interested in the facts, but also in the problems lying behind the facts, and who are willing to come to an understanding of these problems, because they do not merely concern psychosomatic medicine, but medical science as the whole and consequently each physician.

R. Liedtke, Hannover
Eddy D. Palmer
Funktionelle gastrointestinale Krankheiten
translated into English by F. Paul
Huber, Bern 1978. 140 pp; Fr. 28.-/DM 34.-
ISBN 3-456-805-78-0

Dr. Eddy D. Palmer is Professor of Medicine, New Jersey College of Medicine and Director, Department of Gastroenterology, Veteran Administration Hospital, East Organs, N.J. The title of the original English edition was ‘Functional gastrointestinal disease’. Palmer starts from the statement that the functional disorders dominate within the gastrointestinal diseases; furthermore, that particularly in these patients the ‘primary immediate’ doctor-patient relationship is a very important one. With regard to the functional disorders, Palmer does not only present the psychophysiologic correlations, the typology and symptomatology but also
some relevant psychological traits of the patients and the connected central importance of the
psychotherapeutic procedure which concerns the ‘primary, immediate’ doctor-patient
relationship. The latter chapters are highly readable and bear witness of Palmer’s talent
concerning the understanding of patients’ psychological problems. On the basis of his talent and
his very original manner in describing psychologico-medical facts, Palmer is optimally prepared
to mediate his far-reaching clinical experience to the reader who will certainly profit concerning
his daily dealing with these patients’ groups.
In detail, Palmer particularly refers to the following functional disorders: abdominal pain, globus
hystericus, heartburn, pruritus ani, regurgitation, rumination, nausea, functional vomiting,
irritable bowel syndrome, diarrhea, obstipation, aerophagia and anorexia nervosa. Furthermore,
Palmer gives some comments concerning duodenal ulcer, ulcerative colitis and carcinophobia.

Book Reviews

However, Palmer does not deal with a special interdisciplinary orientated topic; namely, the
important problem which patient groups suffering from functional gastrointestinal disorders may
be treated by the gastroenterologist alone and which patient groups must be treated by the
psychosomaticist as the consequence of their more severe neurotic troubles. The clarification of
this problem represents the main supposition with regard to a more complete therapeutic care of
the patients as it has been the case up to now. This supposition includes the clarification of the
following two questions: firstly, if the gastro-enterologist’s so-called ‘natural psychological
talent’ (‘gesunder Menschenverstand’) is sufficient to deal with the patients’ psychological
problems and secondly, if it will be necessary to realize possibilities concerning the
gastroenterologists’ advanced training in the field of psychological medicine and to elaborate
criteria by which the gastroenterologist is able to decide if he can personally guide the patient or
must transfer the patient to the psychosomaticist. This relevant consideration is also partially
manifest in the foreword to Palmer’s German language edition which was written by the German
gastroenterologist, Friedrich W. Schmidt and concerns the following statement: ‘In his book –
written for general practitioners and clinicians – we are reminded by Palmer about our charge
and our role concerning the diagnosis and therapy in functional disorders. We are the doctors
who are firstly consulted by these patients, who finish the diagnosis and are mostly intensively
confronted to accept the therapy; a task which cannot be taken off by anybody else.’

Hellmuth Freyberger, Hannover

J.P. Foreyt and D.P. Rathjen (eds.)
Cognitive Behavior Therapy. Research and Application
This is a book concerned with cognitive behavior therapy a self-contradictory subject -as
Mahony writes in the foreword – but indeed it represents a valuable step toward demonstrating
the compatibility and efficacy of combining intrapersonal, environmental and scientific concerns.
The role of cognitive factors in clinical treatment is regarded from several perspectives.
The first chapter shows the development from behavior analysis to social learning theory and
cognitive behavior therapy concluding that, although cognitive behavior techniques show some
promise, one cannot ignore direct behavioral measures.
In the second chapter a structural learning model is used as the basis of an overview of cognitive
factors in social-skills training.
The following chapters are concerned with overview of both the behavioral and cognitive approaches to several disorders and problems like sexual dysfunctions, mood disorders, stress and anger, somatic disorders and pain.

In the last chapter issues of therapeutic compliance and resistance are discussed from a cognitive viewpoint.

Book Reviews

184

In all chapters is emphasized the importance of changes in patient’s cognitions for the therapeutic outcome, but nevertheless the most effective methods to change cognitions seem to be a combination of both well-established behavioral and recently developed cognitive intervention strategies.

This volume is a valuable resource for exploring some of the newer applications of cognitive behavioral techniques. It should appeal to both researcher and practitioner.

H.-W. Künsebeck, Hannover

R.J. Rubin (ed.) Bibliotherapy Sourcebook


This book is a complete anthology on the subject of bibliotherapy and represents an optimal complement to Rubin’s ‘Bibliotherapy Textbook’. Articles are from worldwide sources and reflect the interdisciplinary nature of bibliotherapy with contributions from librarians, teachers, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, counsellors and members of other groups currently involved in its practice. A general introduction defines and explains bibliotherapy, while each section is preceded by an introduction indicating the significance of individual articles. Other features include suggestions for further reading, a bibliography of monographs, a list of organizations and an index.

Certainly, this book may also be suitable to facilitate the application of bibliotherapy in the field of psychological medicine.

H. Freyberger, Hannover