

Book Reviews

R. M. JURJEVICH, *The hoax of Freudism. A study of brainwashing the American professionals and laymen*, Philadelphia, Dorrance, 1974, 8vo, pp. xi, 528, \$10.50.

No one can deny the influence that Freudian analysis has had on twentieth-century psychiatry. Its widespread acceptance suggests that it is an entirely valid and acceptable form of treatment in mental disorders. Nevertheless, there are many sceptics, and a book attacking the “. . . gigantic cultural swindle of American people . . .” is of importance to the historian who wishes to evaluate the major concepts in the evolution of medicine.

The author, a clinical psychologist, has gathered together the criticisms of psychiatrists and others. He believes that when Freud's theories and their application to therapy are subjected to close examination they do not measure up to scientific standards; he even maintains that Freud always found what he was looking for in a patient, and, in the case of sexuality, badgered him until its influence was eventually admitted. He therefore compares Freudian arguments and techniques with those of the magician-priest, the Inquisitor and the modern brain-washer. Concerning the last of these the author writes, “. . . Freudian claims are built on pretences and specious reasoning and they end in a process that greatly resembles brainwashing in its essential feature . . .” Thus it employs totalitarian persuasion techniques, suggestion, pre-conceptions, hypnotic reinforcement, speculation, scientifically unreliable evidence, and antidemocratic approaches; it is accepted as a pseudo-religion, but has harmful effects and encourages irresponsibility. Dr. Jurjevich's book presents a welter of well-documented evidence supporting his thesis. Three further volumes extending his attack on Freudism are in preparation.

However, this attack can be criticized for using the very arguments the author levels against psycho-analysis. For example, at times he presents unscientific material and there seems to be an over-riding antagonism and bias throughout. Moreover, from the historical point of view a cogent comment can be made. The influence of psycho-analysis today is comparable with that of phrenology in the first half of the nineteenth century. Both appear to be pseudo-sciences, each with a vast following of medical men and laymen, and each has been brought into disrepute by the over-enthusiastic labours of the founders' followers. However, the basic idea underlying phrenology was the localization of function on the surface of the cerebrum. Gall was correct in this, but for totally incorrect reasons, his theory being based on data that were not scientifically valid. Thus before dismissing psycho-analysis entirely, we should remember phrenology and make sure that we are not overlooking some fundamental psychiatric concept, and throwing out the baby along with the brain-washings!

ARI KIEV (editor), *Magic, faith and healing. Studies in primitive psychiatry today*, New York and London, The Free Press [Collier Macmillan], 1974, [1964], 8vo, pp. xvii, 475, £1.75 (paperback).

The original of this paperback version appeared in 1964 and reviews of it were published in, *J. Hist. Behav. Sci.*, 1966, 2: 178–179, *The New Republic*, 8 January 1966, 154: 32–33 and elsewhere. It is a collection of nineteen essays, dealing with eight cultural areas or races, with undue prominence, however, given to Africans and

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North American Indians. They deal with the psychiatric aspects of various types of primitive medicine. Unfortunately, as in all composite works, the contributions are variable in quality and some have only scanty documentation. Nevertheless, on the whole, the material is valuable and well worth studying. As the editor points out, the handling of the mentally disturbed in Haiti as seen in the healer-patient relationship seems to have a lot in common with the relations of the Western psychiatrist with his patient. Primitive attitudes to disease and death provide insights valuable even for the sophisticated and "developed" physician. The comparative nature of these studies is also of great interest, how different cultures will interpret and handle identical situations and events associated with sickness, especially with that of the mind. The outstanding importance of illness as a social phenomenon is also revealed clearly in the various cultures dealt with. And this is especially true in the case of psychiatric disorders, again providing salutary insights into our own practices.

There is, therefore, a great deal of material in this book which will be of interest to the modern psychiatrist and general physician, as well as to the medical historian concerned with primitive medicine, and to the social anthropologist.

BARBARA G. MEYERHOFF, *Peyote hunt. The sacred journey of the Huichol Indians*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. 285, illus., £8.20.

The Huichols are few in number and they inhabit an inaccessible part of Mexico. However, in recent years they have become better known because of their religious use of peyote, the main alkaloid of which is mescaline, and for their paintings made of coloured wool yarn. Peyote and the resultant hallucinogenic state, however, comprise only one constituent of their ritual complex. To the Huichols the plant is a divine gift, and the visions it produces are personal and of the inmost self only; peyote can thus be likened to the wine of communion.

In this fascinating book Professor Meyerhoff relates her friendship with a Huichol shaman-priest who told her the detailed secrets of his community's symbolism, myth, and ritual, so that they could be recorded and preserved. Each year the Indians undertake a hunt for peyote and the author gives a vivid account, supported by illustrations, of her experiences on one of these expeditions, travelling several hundred miles to a site thought to be their original homeland, where they gather sufficient peyote for the ensuing year's ceremonies.

There is also a general ethnographical and historical discussion of the culture of these Indians. For the anthropologist, Professor Meyerhoff's book will be an important addition to the study of the role of symbols in social and cultural processes. For the historian of medicine the interest lies in the controlled ingestion of a hallucinogenic drug and the vital part it plays in the culture of a simple people. The book is especially relevant to the present-day problem of drug abuse. As suggested recently by Brian Inglis, alteration of drug habits demands changes in society, and we have a lot to learn from primitive natives like the Huichols who practise and enjoy the episodic exhibition of a habit-forming substance.