Current Problems in Neuropsychiatry: Schizophrenia, Epilepsy, the Temporal Lobe

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Current Problems in Neuropsychiatry: Schizophrenia, Epilepsy, the Temporal Lobe

Edited by R. N. Herrington

Ashford, Kent, Headley Bros., Ltd, 1969, 184 pp, tbls, figs, $4.25

This is the published report of a symposium entitled, The Clinical Significance of the Temporal Lobe held under the auspices of the Glasgow Post-Graduate Medical Board in 1968. It reflects the neuropsychiatry and multidisciplinary tradition of British psychiatry with participants representing neuroanatomy, neuropathology, neurophysiology, neurology, neurosurgery, psychology, psychiatry and electroencephalography. The book includes chapters by such internationally known scientists and clinicians as: F. A. Simpson, “The Clinical Neurology of Temporal Lobe Disorders”; Dennis Hill and G. W. Fenton, “The Temporal Lobe: EEG and Disorders of Behavior”; Elliott Slater, “The Schizophrenia-like Illness of Epilepsy”; A.K.M. MacRae, “Criminal Responsibility and Epilepsy”; M. A. Faulkner, “The Surgical Treatment of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy,” to mention only five of the 18 participants. Most of the chapters are concise reviews of the literature which will be of particular value to the psychiatric resident or harassed clinician, but too brief for the serious student. However, the volume does provide a comprehensive bibliography of the significant literature up to 1968.

There is a 50-page review article by Kenneth Davison and Christopher R. Bagley entitled, Schizophrenic-like Psychosis Associated with Organic Disorders of the Central Nervous System. This is an exhaustive survey of the subject.
with 782 references. This section alone makes the book a worthwhile addition to one’s library. The other comprehensive review is that of Susan Iversen entitled, Studies of the Temporal Lobe in Monkeys and Baboons, which covers the experimental literature on temporal lobe lesions and their effect upon discrimination and learning. J. R. Smythies presents an interesting model to explain the functions of sensory cortex, hippocampus, amygdala, hypothalamus, and reticular formation in permanent memory storage, but otherwise, there are no broadly integrating theories correlating the observations of the disciplines represented at the symposium.

There are a number of important random observations. For instance, Kenneth Davison and Charles Bagley remind us that the controversy on the relationship between epilepsy and schizophrenia is purely semantic, dependent on different meanings assigned to the concepts of epilepsy and schizophrenia. The volume as a whole emphasizes the heterogeneity of the syndrome of schizophrenia, a fact that is overlooked by those proposing either the psychodynamic or the genetic mechanisms behind schizophrenic behavior. This reviewer would like to point out that the symptoms and course of illness that characterize episodic schizophrenic-like behavior associated with epilepsy as described in this volume is surprisingly similar to what we assume characterizes reactive schizophrenia. This suggests that the exogenous reactive syndrome supposedly resulting from a distorted transactional process in the family often may be just the opposite—i.e., behavior associated with excessive neuronal discharges within the central nervous system.

The book reveals that the neuropsychiatrist, like the psychoanalyst, may fail to embody the psychosomatic point of view. To illustrate, I quote from the chapter on “Temporal Lobe Epilepsy in Children,” by D. A. Pond:

"It is most important to limit the concept of temporal lobe epilepsy as far as possible because loose thinking in this field leads to diagnostic errors and a tendency to treat a family disturbance by anticonvulsants or on the other hand (and perhaps more effectively than in the reverse situation) to treat epileptic disorders with psychotherapy."

The academician may forget but the clinician does not, so he is willing to treat a family psychotherapeutically at the same time that one or more members are treated with anticonvulsants. The reviewer wonders why so many psychiatrists and neurologists are still unwilling to utilize simultaneously the best of somatic and psychologic regimens?

RUSSELL R. MONROE, MD

The World Biennial of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. Vol I

Edited by Silvano Arieti

New York, Basic Books, Inc, 1971, 622 pp, tbls, figs, $20.00

This is the first volume of a series of biennial publications, the purpose of which is to foster a wider understanding of psychiatry through the sharing of ideas and experiences of authors representing a variety of cultural traditions throughout the world.

The 24 chapters of the book are loosely divided into four sections; 1) psychiatric theory, 2) clinical contributions, 3) childhood and youth, 4) biologic studies. Perhaps the greatest merit of the book is that, unlike highly specialized publications, it covers a wide range of subject matter. The topics vary from the practical (consultation in child psychiatry) to the highly theoretic (Thermodynamic and Evolutionary Concepts in the Formal Structure of Freud’s Metapsychology); from purely analytic themes (psychodynamics of the depressive character) to biologic approaches (Advances in the Biology of Schizophrenia); from current problems (psychiatric consideration in cardiac transplantation) to time-honored issues like clinical methodology in psychiatry.