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Sir: Dr Philpot is right to describe my account of 
Stravinsky’s musical output in the 1940s as ‘misleading’ in that I should have made it clearer 
that it was not so much the quantity as the quality of his work which disappointed many of 
his admirers: much of it was, by comparison with 
his earlier achievements, relatively lightweight and conventional.

That Robert Craft’s attitude towards Stravinsky 
was ambivalent is hardly surprising. However, as 
Stravinsky’s close collaborator and friend he 
remains, apart from Stravinsky himself, the 
crucial source of information about Stravinsky’s 
life and works after 1948. Dr Philpot claims that 
there is no evidence from contemporary memoirs 
that Stravinsky was depressed, although in the 
very memoir quoted by Dr Philpot, Craft (1992) 
makes several references to the crisis in Stra-
vinsky’s career and to Stravinsky’s distress about 
the lack of originality in his work in the late 1940s 
and early 1950s. It was for this reason, according 
to Craft, that he let himself be persuaded to study 
the serial composers, Schoenberg and Webern. 
This view has been endorsed by the Stravinsky 
expert, Walsh (1993), who is preparing a biogra-
phy of the composer.

Dr Philpot wonders what de Falla, Satie and 
Nijinsky may have to do with Stravinsky’s mental 
state at this time, although this is clearly 
explained in my article. Aware of the psychologi-
cal vulnerability of these artistic colleagues, 
whom he had known personally, Stravinsky, 
himself notoriously hypochondriacal, may have 
been fascinated by the figure of the mad musician 
in the Bedlam scene of Hogarth’s Rake’s Progress 
because he feared that he might lose not only his 
creativity, but his sanity.

It is unfortunate for Dr Philpot that his eagerness 
to score some superficially smart points reveals an 
equally superficial acquaintance with the con-
tents, both of my article and the relevant sources. 
Perhaps the final moral of his letter is that only 
well-informed criticism is convincing and that 
polemics are no substitute for perusal.

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The dilemma of psychiatrists 
in training
Sir: I was interested to read the letter from Dr de 
Vries et al (Psychiatric Bulletin. January 1996, 
20. 53) concerning the place of examinations in 
the training of entrants to psychiatry. It is not the 
first time that the view has been expressed that 
examinations are a hindrance rather than an 
asset in this procedure.

I believe that your correspondents do the College a 
dis-service in emphasising the place of the examinations for the MRCPsych and ignoring the very 
considerable attention that the College has given to 
stressing the importance of satisfactory clinical 
experience, of supervision in clinical work and a 
range of formal teaching activities. In this context the 
examinations mark the completion of a comprehen-
sic and planned period of training. After all, most 
trainees who have undergone approved training 
have little difficulty in satisfying the examiners.

An important feature of the examinations for 
Membership of the College and the training which 
precedes them is that they are the same for all 
entrants to our profession no matter which 
branch of psychiatry they subsequently enter. 
Specialist training at senior registrar level (soon 
to be specialist registrar) does not involve further 
examinations but is along the lines described by 
your correspondents. I believe that this generic 
training common to all psychiatrists has been a 
major factor in the success of the training 
schemes overseen by the College and by the 
JCHFT. How else, but by an examination could 
future specialists be encouraged to study the 
subject more broadly in their early years.

I believe that there is some truth in your 
correspondents’ assertion that the examinations 
for MRCPsych have done little to encourage the 
teaching of research or to foster it among 
trainees. Changes are planned in the MRCPsych 
examinations which will go some way to meeting 
this deficiency. Details of these changes will be 
announced in due course. Readers will see from 
the recently published Curriculum for the 
Examinations that research methodology is an 
area of knowledge required of candidates.

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