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Psychiatry and Catholicism

by James H. VanderVeldt, O.F.M. and Robert P. Odenwald, M.D.

Fundamental Psychiatry

by John B. Cavanagh, M.D. and James B. McGoldrick, S.J.

Review Author: Francesco Parisi

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sionaries and their work. Of added interest to Filipino readers is the fact that Father Rively spent six years in the Philippines preparing for the priesthood. The one flaw that this reviewer noticed was that Father Rively seemed to criticize unnecessarily and at times unsympathetically the members of his crew. After all, they *were* inexperienced, and they were *not* dedicated priests as is Father Rively.

CHARLES E. WOLF

PSYCHIATRY AND CATHOLICISM. By James H. VanderVeldt, O.F.M. and Robert P. Odenwald, M.D. McGraw-Hill, New York. 1952. Pp. ix-433. \$6.00.

FUNDAMENTAL PSYCHIATRY. By John B. Cavanagh, M.D. and James B. McGoldrick, S.J. The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee. 1953. Pp. x-582. \$5.50.

The necessity for a better understanding of the human personality and its abnormal behavior must be felt by anyone who has the least insight into our modern world and its troubles, but more acutely by those whose profession brings them into contact with the personal troubles of a large number of people. That for the past half-century the reading public has bought up the vast flood of books and articles on Psychiatry, Mental Health and Psychology is sufficient indication of the urgency of these questions.

Parents, doctors, priests, lawyers, student-guides, social-workers and others who by reason of their office are confronted with "cases", turn to psychiatry for the help no other science seems to provide sufficiently. Yet if they read the works on psychiatry with minds sufficiently critical not to accept theories without reasonable proof nor to accept as fact what is put forward without sufficient evidence, they will be far from satisfied. There will arise in their own minds perplexity, even anxiety.

This perplexity regarding psychiatric theories and treatments is due to many questions which modern psychiatry raises but does not solve. Of these questions, the fundamental one is: What is personality? What ultimately is the human person? Psychiatry must take into account the whole human personality in order to correct its maladjustments and abnormalities. And yet, in order to have sufficient and sound knowledge of human personality and of the complex processes of its adjustment to reality, psychiatry must have much specialized information from many different fields of science, and it must coordinate all these elements into a balanced whole.

Physiology, pathology, psychology, ethics and the social sciences, moral and dogmatic theology—to mention only the main divisions—all deal with man and his activities. It is only through the proper coordination of all this specialized knowledge that one can understand what is going on in a distressed individual whose behaviour no longer matches his rational nature.

Psychiatry and Catholicism is a major contribution to this coordination of the various fields of knowledge which is necessary to a sound psychiatry.

Fr. VanderVeldt and Dr. Odenwald have ably demonstrated that between the factual evidence and the principles of Catholic philosophy and theology there is no real conflict. An unprejudiced reader will be convinced that modern psychiatry has as much need of the solid bases of Catholic doctrine for a thorough understanding of psychogenetic disturbances as Catholic psychologists and moralists have of psychiatry. Catholic doctrine has no quarrel with psychiatry and its clinical findings, but with the erroneous philosophies which lurk behind certain psychiatric theories.

The first two chapters of the book explain clearly the basic concepts of person and personality, of moral law, conscience and responsibility. This fundamental information on man, his environment, the laws of his adaptation to his environment, enables the reader to understand the nature of mental disorders and the importance of psychosomatic medicine, topics developed by the authors in subsequent chapters.

Probably the weakest section of the book—as it is also the weakest part of the science of psychiatry as a whole—is the chapter on organic treatment. It seems that a great deal more study is needed on the organic resonance of emotion.

In the chapters on counseling, depth therapy, psychoanalysis, existential analysis and psychotherapy, the main problems of the discussion are presented with considerable power of synthesis and clarity, and are evaluated coherently in the light of the principles laid down in the beginning of the work. As most Catholics, the authors distinguish sharply between Freudian philosophy and Freudian therapeutic technique. The first they condemn, the second they support. Is such procedure possible? Is it psychoanalytic treatment which actually cures the patient, or is it not rather that new emotional conditions account for improvement now and then?

The chapters on Religion and Psychiatry, and the Priest and Mental Health are written especially for priests and are surely valuable.

“Psychotherapy, the Clinical Psychologist, and Social

Worker" is written especially for non-psychiatric counseling, for parents and for educators.

The study of the various manifestations of mental diseases, both psychogenetic and physiogenetic, is presented with balanced competence. Some specific aspects of maladjustment such as homosexuality, frigidity and impotence are practical for pastoral consultation. The section on scrupulosity needs deeper study of the psychological origins and the mechanism of scruples.

Although this book is written for the general public and more especially for priests, I think that it will be very helpful also for specialists in dealing with patients.

In *Fundamental Psychiatry* Dr. Cavanagh, a practising psychiatrist, and Father McGoldrick, a teaching psychologist, offer a basic textbook in which the solid and classical elements of psychiatry are integrated with the principles of Catholic philosophy. The book ought to be useful not only for students of medicine but also for those preparing for the other professions.

Though sound principles of philosophy and objective medical findings are presented in this book, there is lacking a well worked out synthesis of the two. However, the book completes several phases of *Psychiatry and Catholicism*.

Chapter VII, "The Concept of Marginal Consciousness *vs.* the Repressed Unconscious of Freud", tries to point out more acceptable features of the Freudian doctrine and to distinguish them from the more objectionable elements. It attempts also to find a correlation and similarity between the fundamental concepts of Freudian metaphysic and Scholastic psychology, but in so doing it is somewhat artificial and inexact from the Freudian point of view.

The book contains a wealth of material—all the classifications of symptomatic psychiatry and the various somatotherapies, plus well chosen case-histories, and the data of rational and experimental psychology.

There is not much new in the book, except for the fact (and this in itself is a great advance) that the two sciences, psychiatry and psychology, have been put together in a textbook for class use.

FRANCESCO PARISI

NORMS FOR THE NOVEL. By Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. The America Press, New York. 1953. Pp. ix-180. \$2.00

This book is born of controversy. In 1943, Father Gardiner reviewed in the pages of *America* two novels which had