

INFLUENZA INFECTION AND MANIC PSYCHOSIS

DEAR SIR,

Dr. R. B. Schwartz, in his paper 'Manic Psychosis in Connection with Q-Fever' (*Journal*, February 1974, 140-3), criticized our suggestion of a direct and specific relationship between influenza A infection and manic psychosis in the patient we described.

We argued in favour of a definite intervening pathological process, and against the vague concept of non-specific 'stress' producing a 'functional' disorder. The latter proposition, while convenient (like the term 'idiopathic') does not seem of clinical or scientific value. Our hypothesis was that some aspect of viral activity had caused minimal brain damage, and that this had been manifested as the phenomena of mania. This is not incompatible with the multifactorial model which Schwartz proposed for our patient and his own. We supposed that the viral infection was a necessary, but not a sufficient, cause and that the patient we described would not have developed a manic illness at that time had she not contracted influenza. In our patient there was clinical evidence to support the view that minimal brain damage was the mediating factor linking the infection with her mental state.

We agree that serological investigation is of limited value and that more precise knowledge of what is happening at a neurological level is needed.

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R. D. LAING ON 'POST-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE'

DEAR SIR,

The above approach (*Journal*, 1974, 124, 252-9), is most helpful and revitalizing, but may I make the following comments with a view to keeping its value in realistic perspective?

1. The scientific method and its resulting body of 'knowledge' (i.e. of not yet disproved but experimentally 'disprovable' hypotheses) give us the only objectively reliable criterion we have to guide us. So whether we could ever hope to do without science, even in 'I-Thou' relationships exclusively, is very doubtful, however important 'trust' and other vitally necessary moral and ethical values may be.

2. Dr. Dyer refers to a 'precritical perceptiveness',

which is claimed to be inevitably blunted when the stage of adult and scientific reasoning supervenes, i.e. he seems to agree with R. D. Laing that in this way one's genuine authenticity and creativity are almost certainly lost. Yet, important though this caveat may be educationally, presumably a balance between conflicting requirements on all these dimensions must be realistically and flexibly struck, not only for individual and social maturity but also for actual survival. Thus R. Cattell in *A New Morality from Science—Beyondism* (Pergamon Press, 1973) stresses the compelling evolutionary need to consider inter-relatedly all these factors and whenever possible to validate relevant ideas empirically and scientifically.

3. The 'figure-ground' concept lends itself to myriads of applications *in profundo* and *in extenso*, where relationships are concerned. Yet, does it help with the vital task of each of us in maintaining and developing a keen sense of dynamic, individual and participating identity, despite the kaleidoscopic variations of relationships and the complexities of the universe?

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A NEW CHAIR OF PSYCHOLOGY

DEAR SIR,

In October 1974, Professor Peter Venables will begin the task of organizing Britain's latest Department of Psychology, here in the University of York. His arrival is awaited eagerly by the departments of Biology, Education and Social Science, all of whom look forward to future collaboration; and his appointment has been welcomed by colleagues in York's four psychiatric hospitals in view of Professor Venables' distinguished record of research on schizophrenia and other clinical topics.

He arrives, however, at a time of quite exceptional financial stringency. This is felt most acutely in the difficulty of creating adequate library resources, almost from scratch. A particularly costly item is the provision of complete runs of relevant psychological and psychiatric journals, for the past 12 to 15 years.

May I appeal to any members of our College who possess such series of journals (not necessarily complete) to consider donating them to this new Department? We shall, of course, be glad to meet the cost of transportation and to acknowledge the origin of any such donation in a fitting manner.

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