
This is the outcome of a conference held at a place called Bad Homberg, to honour Gustave Leinert, the West German psychologist. A varied set of contributors were involved to speculate about the future of experimental psychology. But, as one of the editors points out in his own chapter, neither he nor any of the other contributors was bold enough to make firm guesses about what experimental psychology will actually be like in the year 2000, and there is very little by way of instructive or amusing crystal-gazing. The contributors tend either to push their own pet techniques or theories as the shape of things to come, or to express the usual pious hopes about psychology becoming more solidly scientific and more practically useful. However, the tone is generally subdued, and expectations for theoretical breakthroughs and new wonders of applied knowledge are both pretty low. This modesty is probably justified, but it does not make for very inspiring reading.

Parducci and Sarris begin by expressing their faith in the experimental method as 'the royal road to understanding', even though they expect travel down this road to be slow; Wertheimer reviews the history of experimental psychology; while Gergen opposes the belief in truth through method, and suggests that the time has already come when theories should replace experiments as the central purpose of academic psychologists. Few contributors really seem to expect anything to change very much, but both Bitterman and Kintsch note that striking alternatives of course have taken place within living memory: in particular, when Kintsch was a student in Europe in the '60s he never heard 'learning' mentioned; when he then went to America he found psychologists talking of little else; but his present students at Colorado hear as little about learning as he did in Vienna. No-one places bets about similarly radical changes of fashion in the future. H.J. Eysenck not surprisingly anticipates increased knowledge of the genetic causes of individual differences, but Strelau from Poland argues that it will simply become more obvious that the personality of the human individual is not determined by nature. Magnusson of Sweden emphasises the situational determinants of personality measures and Kuhl and Atkinson allow themselves to dream of a mobile and invisible computer that can travel around changing the natural lives of their human subjects for purely experimental purposes. Zimbardo predicts that all our lives will be changed by computers as an economic force, since 'automation will leave a generation or two unemployable', and recommends that social psychologists should therefore apply their skills to prevent or solve the dire social problems thus engendered.

Downing and Rickels, from Pennsylvania, find surprisingly little to say about future developments in therapeutic use of psycho-active drugs. Brengelmann claims that 44% of non-medical therapy in West Germany is behavioural therapy, as against 19% psychoanalysis, and does not look forward to any rapprochement between these two traditions, since he is 'unhappy about the therapeutic polypragmasis involved' - a phrase worth remembering, as he tells us the problem will continue to the end of the century. Edwards vigorously advocates that cognitive psychologists should finally abandon the concept of 'the generalized normal adult human mind', and do a taxonomic job on the great variety of cognitive tasks that are performed at the workplace.

All in all a mixed bag, not likely to attract a wide readership. Since it is a safe bet that there will be a lot of computers around in 2000 A.D., the absence of anything on Artificial Intelligence or Cognitive Science leaves a very big gap. According to Wertheimer, psychology has been experimental for just as long as all the other sciences anyway, but it is a sobering thought that by the year 2000 it will most certainly no longer be possible to blame any of its shortcomings on its youthfulness.

Stephen Walker

A MAD VOICE

Schizophrenia and Human Voice; Peter Barham; Blackwells; £19.50.

There has been a profound change in public attitudes to mental illness. There was a time when depression, complexes, and schizophrenia were the stuff of total stigma. A family with a mentally 'ill' relative concealed him, or her, in the proverbial attic. An unending stream of television and radio programmes, articles and features has made everyone aware that madness is not quite so much beyond the pale, now in our sensitive times.

Barham begins grippingly by setting out some of the more radical ideas that Maudsley put forward in a lecture in 1871. Were asylums such moral places? Might they not cause long term inmates to degenerate? Very properly, Barham acknowledges his debt to Scull's Museums of Madness but the material is still interesting. Promisingly, too, Barham sets out the views of Manfred Bleuler, son of the famous Eugène. Bleuler fils has carried out a long term study of schizophrenics and, contrary to Victorian ideas, found that the disease is not intractable. Perhaps a quarter recover totally; only 10 to 15% slide into total apathy.