

tioning of these brain regions, both in normal children and in those with perceptual and cognitive dysfunction, such as developmental dyslexia. Physiologic methods for differentiating and analyzing the various forms and origins of mental subnormality and psychopathology would seem to be potential outgrowths of the analysis of these higher-order cerebral potentials. There is certainly no doubt that the possibilities for enhancing our understanding of the human brain through recording its electrical actions have barely begun to be exploited. For those who might find exciting and potentially rewarding opportunities for adding to our understanding of the neurological basis of human experience and behavior, these books provide a useful assessment of what has been done so far, as well as point to the vast areas of ignorance which remain to be explored.

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Irrelevance in the Lab

Drugs and the Public. NORMAN E. ZINBERG and JOHN A. ROBERTSON. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1972. 288 pp. Cloth, \$8.95; paper, \$2.95.

To the scientist who believes that conventional pharmacological research is the major route to knowledge about the human effects of the illicit drugs, this book will be unsettling. For those who firmly believe the criminal law is a necessary response to the illicit use of drugs, the authors—one a psychoanalyst, the other a lawyer—can only be viewed as new devils joining Professors Packer (*The Limits of the Criminal Sanction*), Kaplan (*Marijuana—The New Prohibition*), Grinspoon (*Marijuana Reconsidered*), and others in heresy.

Drugs and the Public is not a research report; it cites scientific evidence only illustratively. It is concerned mainly with how attitudes toward drugs and the institutional structure of the drug law function, that is, what purposes they serve, and what effects they have. The authors' method is one of interpretation and analysis. They conclude that existing public attitudes are functional but damaging and that the social cost of the product—the criminal law and its effects—is very high indeed.

Simultaneously critical, analytical, historical, and action-oriented, their essay ranges over broad territory, moving (sometimes too rapidly and occasionally erratically) from illustrations derived from interviews enhanced by psychoanalytic commentary to testable hypotheses (such as that psychedelic drug use is compatible with being of the television generation because television has taught new cognitive-sensory styles which make ego boundaries more permeable) to reasoning from temporal correlation (youthful hostility to the police occurs because of the marijuana law) to legal commentary to the advocacy of social policy on humane grounds and on economic grounds. If, in all of this, there be a beastie to berate, it is the National Institute of Mental Health, which is found wanting for giving priority to pharmacological rather than sociopsychopharmacological research. The accusation is gently made that NIMH has joined the press and the public in that unwarranted alarmism about drug use which, the authors hold, creates (certain) adverse drug reactions (through stigmatization and alienation). The reader who recognizes that NIMH bases its funding at least partly on peer review realizes that the system for selection of review committees and the processes whereby scientists develop their interests in and convictions about drugs are obscure and are, like other matters raised by Zinberg and Robertson, deserving of greater general understanding.

The authors ask, How much that is useful to social policy can we expect from scientific information as it is conventionally gathered in the drug field? They call traditional biological laboratory work "impeccable but irrelevant." Scientists ought to be spending more time thinking about person, set, and setting as determinants of drug response. (Pharmacologists used to call these variables "nonspecific," which is a sign of how little faith pharmacologists had—have?—in finding regularities there!) They also propose that it is time for a science of subjective states. (If that fine old introspectionist Titchener is listening in his grave, he will be applauding.) These issues are by no means minor. Defined by other workers in somewhat different ways, the general concerns of Zinberg and Robertson are already exerting pressure in current research on how drugs ought to be classified when the purpose is to anticipate the outcomes of personal and social styles of use rather than of medically controlled ones. Unlike some of their

colleagues, Zinberg and Robertson do not counsel postponing the revision of classification schemes (as in the U.S. Dangerous Substances Act, the British Misuse of Drugs Bill, or the proposed U.N. [Vienna] Convention on Psychotropic Drugs)—and of the basic law of which they are a part—until further studies are made. To the contrary, they warn that the call for "more research" may be a stall for time that only serves the status quo.

Their proposal for reform in social policy is a dramatic one based on their convictions, convictions that embrace moral and economic considerations. After reviewing alternatives, they recommend licensing. "We need a system that permits drug use but does not encourage it." The system they put forth "is based on automobile operator's licensing and would apply to *all* drugs, not just marijuana." They propose that licensing be done provisionally and revised as evaluation shows the need. Then if bad outcomes from the licensed use of particular drugs are demonstrable over the years, those drugs could be withdrawn without becoming a "symbolic issue"—that is, without embroiling drug users in the kind of total conflict with conventional society that becomes a vicious circle. Zinberg and Robertson do not wish John Q. Citizen (whose identity they conceal by a pseudonym, "Mr. Fry," because they present intimate psychoanalytic data about him!) to suffer anguish, or to be pushed into revolutionizing the drug law without a full awareness of the issues and of how his own attitudes and feelings affect the drug scene as a whole. They prefer that there be an informed consensus on the need for a radical initiative, and their book is intended to contribute to that end.

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Barriers and Achievements

The Life of Benjamin Banneker. SILVIO A. BEDINI. Scribner, New York, 1972. xviii, 434 pp. + plates. \$14.95.

Benjamin Banneker (1731–1806) impressed his contemporaries by accomplishments such as preparing an almanac and assisting Andrew Ellicott in the survey of Washington, D.C., without formal schooling and in spite of the barriers placed before any son and grandson of slaves. In the later years