BOOK REVIEWS

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Class in Suburbia, by William M. Dobriner. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963. 166 pp. $1.95.

THIS book attempts to explore two questions: "How much of suburban life styles, behavior, and social structure are due to the unique ecological position of suburbs within the metropolitan area?" "How much is really another subtle manifestation of social class?"

In Part I of his book, Dobriner discusses some of the studies and generalizations that have been made about suburbs, about class structure in our society, and about the forces that have given rise to suburban growth. In discussing "class," extensive use is made of the Hollingshead and Redlich study of New Haven, published in 1958.

Part II of the book gives interesting historical vignettes of Levittown, the "mass-produced suburb," and of "Old Harbor" an "invaded village." There is a more sociologically formal and statistical discussion of metropolitan areas, the "strip cities," in a brief appendix.

The essential points made by Dobriner are: 1) that many generalizations about suburbia were made on the basis of selected upper-middle-class suburbs selectively studied in time; 2) suburbs are becoming increasingly urban and heterogeneous; 3) class and ethnic similarities between urbanites and suburbanites are more important than ecologically determined differences.

In brief, suburbanities have different life styles because of greater dependence on the automobile for transportation; more gardening and home-owner do-it-yourselfism because they have the gardens and homes to do it with; more over the back fence contacts because there are back fences and visibility; and, greater ease in child-rearing because children out-of-doors can be seen more easily. He finds no evidence of suburban "political conversions, religious re-awakenings, status climbing, attitudes toward education, basic family structure" that significantly distinguish the suburbanite from his class brother in the city.

These points are well made, though they no longer seem particularly novel. Additionally, many upper-middle-class residential suburbs still exist and suffer from an intensification of certain features of middle-class culture out of sheer geographical concentration and greater visibility. For example, I do not believe middle-class competition for grades in New York City high schools is nearly as great for children or parents as it is in Scarsdale.

For social workers who work in suburbia, such differences are very important as are the ramifications of the different life styles. The extent to which

parents become chauffeurs for their offspring, the limitation in the child's independent mobility, the ineluctable struggle over who will have the car once children turn 16, develop substantial and unique intra-familial pressures and programmatic problems, to say the least. Greater "visibility" does create pressure for greater conformity and does limit the choices available to adults and children. Though this latter may not significantly distinguish the suburb from the smaller rural community of any time or place, it creates a new element in the life of the formerly urban, now increasingly suburban Jewish population.

Dobriner sees the conflict between Catholics and Jews in Levittown on the question of educational expenditures as reflective of class phenomena, with the Catholic "conservatism" in opposing so-called "frills" representing a "working-class" attitude and Jewish "liberalism" a function of their "middle-class" status. Such a generalization could profit from more extensive study and analysis.

Dobriner's writing is often turgid. The fact that suburbs are beginning to develop their own smaller ghettos and that city and suburb merge into each other takes many lines, in the best sociologicalese, to state.

Obvious, belabored and derivative as his thesis may be, it is worth stating and would make a fine brief article. One might almost guess that the justification for book-length publication is to provide a soft-covered supplemental reading for an elementary course in urban sociology.

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Immigrants on the Threshold, by Judith T. Shuval. Atherton Press, Division of Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1963. 216 pp. $6.75.

SINCE the end of World War II, social workers and community planners have tended more and more to utilize the findings of social scientists in their day-to-day work. While the Jewish communities in the United States have always depended on research to chart their direction and goals, recently there has developed a more effective working relationship between the social work practitioners and social scientists.

This book contributes such interdisciplinary wisdom to some of the central social problems faced by the young State of Israel. Applying the new and ingenious methods of attitude studies developed by Dr. Louis Guttman, many of them first used by the American Army during World War II, Dr. Shuval conducted a systematic study of immigrants in transit camps (*ma'abarot*) in Israel, during 1949–50, the first year after the declaration of the State. The results of that study, presented in modest and readable form, cannot fail to add considerable insight into the attitudes of various ethnic groups among the immigrants.

One thousand eight hundred and sixty-six immigrants — 773 European and 1,093 from the Middle East and North Africa—were studied by questionnaire and interviews with respect to their response to strain, the significance of their ideological background to adjustment in the new environment, potential acculturation to the new country, and their orientation to a future occupation and their life in Israel.

One of the most interesting findings for Israelis is the positive orientation to Israel of the non-European immigrants and its significance for the ultimate integration of this major group of immigrants, coming as they have from countries whose cultural levels was well

below that of their new home. According to Dr. Shuval, this positive attitude flows from strong religious feeling, messianic in quality. Moreover, it is expected that this special feeling may enable them to meet the strain of the most difficult period for all immigrants—the first months—and look to the future with optimism and with a minimum of disappointment at what they have found on their arrival.

This positive attitude of the non-European immigrants did not derive from a Zionist point of view, Dr. Shuval found, as contrasted to the support Zionism gave the Europeans. While European non-Zionists show a greater discouragement and pessimism the longer they stay in the transit camp, Jews from Moslem countries continue to be optimistic that they will eventually improve their economic situation. Their aspirations, as measured by the occupation they would wish for their eldest son, tends to be more modest, which probably reflects the rigid social situation in their countries of origin. They were more apathetic than the Europeans and less affected by the difficulties they had to meet in the first year in the transit camps.

It is significant that the findings of this 14-year-old study are available only at this late date because of lack of funds for its completion. Moreover, further studies based on these data are delayed for the same reason, depriving Israel of the benefits of one of its few sources of empirically derived facts about immigrants and their integration.

The complete integration of over 1,200,000 immigrants from all corners of the world is the long-term job ahead in Israel. Since 1948, Israel has given emphasis to the development of agriculture and, in more recent years, to industrial expansion. Central to its further economic development is the full utilization of its human resources. Greater understanding of the character of its new population, particularly from the more exotic parts of the world, will be essential to meet this challenge effectively. Better-financed social science studies could be an important instrument to this end.

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The Vital Balance: The Life Process in Mental Health and Illness, by Karl Menninger, M.D., with *Martin Mayman, Ph.D. and Paul* Pruyser, Ph.D. The Viking Press, New York, 1963. 509 pp. $10.00.

The Vital Balance is a decidedly personal book for a psychiatric document, directed to a wide audience, freely mingling dicta on life and on psychiatry. It is a rich mixture of ideas from a restless, searching mind, but a crowded mixture, burdened with its own abundance. Its main purpose, intensely pursued, is to present a unified concept of mental illness rooted in Menninger's view of the central issues of human life, personal and social. This is summarized as follows:

Psychiatric ailments are disturbances in adaptation, arising in struggles with living. The psychiatric patient and the healthy man are engaged in the same struggle; their ways of adaptation are fundamentally the same. The ego is the great organizing and equilibrating principle in human adaptation and the critical structure in psychological health and disease. With its multifarious enabling and defensive qualities, it establishes a flexible, dynamic balance in response to the enduring, ever-shifting pressures (and conflicts) from within and without. This balance provides the

sense of organization (subjective and objective) to human life, the sense of health and constructive purpose.

Egos cannot, perforce, be without organization (i.e. totally disorganized) except at point of death, self-inflicted. They do, in their diversity, enjoy stronger or weaker organization. The ego contends endlessly with the natural human proclivity for destructive aggression. When the life struggles mount, and conflicts strain a person's familiar equilibrium, destructive urges come forth, disguised or overt. This produces some measure of disorganization or, more precisely, a retreat to a new, more elaborate, more "expensive," less constructive, less effective, symptomatic equilibrium. The new equilibrium always contains a dynamic, struggling concession to the imperatives of the aggression, thereby preventing an equilibrium yet worse. Organization and disorganization are sides to the same coin. "Illness and recovery are but two aspects of the same process."

Menninger insists that there are no distinct psychologic diseases comparable to organic diseases. He eschews all conventional labels. Psychological ailments usually serve their purpose and pass. They are equilibratory states. Their causal elements have been elucidated by psychoanalysis. This is important but secondary. Cases vary with all the diversity that is humanly possible; this too is secondary. Primary is the fact that all people will vary in their ego organization along a continuum from health to disorder and from benign disorder to malignant. The healthy man can neutralize his destructive impulses in the service of constructive living. The sick man is one whose ego must expend great energy managing unneutralized aggression as it struggles to absorb and accommodate to the issues of life and maintain equilibrium. On this basis, Menninger erects a system of diagnosis (more properly evaluation) consisting of five stages or orders of illness, representing five stages of ego organization, from the benign to the malignant. He finds a place for all current diagnoses in one of these stages or another.

This system of evaluation is crucial to Menninger's unitary concept of health and disease, and to the embracing theme of his book. For him, psychiatric illnesses simply recapitulate what he finds to be the basic issue in human life—the moral issue—the endless struggle between the forces of destructiveness and constructiveness, between good and evil, and the ever moving equilibrium that results. Sickness and aggression are largely the same for him. He abhors aggression and says so. He abhors it in the sickness per se. He abhors it equally in the pejorative (his favorite word) labels used by professionals and laymen to stigmatize the sick.

Menninger devotes the remainder of the book, and its most eloquent passages, to the subject of values in psychiatric practice. For him, the psychiatrist is not a neutral person. He is aligned with the forces of recovery against the destructive forces that perpetuate illness. His act is a moral act. Psychiatry has one surpassing meaning: one person (the psychiatrist) helps another in trouble. He may employ scientific methods but, more significantly perhaps, he provides "transitional love", encourages faith and instills hope.

The subject of values receives the serious treatment it deserves in this book. Yet, Menninger declines to include values as an integral part of his scientific psychology. Love, faith and hope are elaborated in a striking chapter entitled, *The Intangibles.* But are they more intangible than any other aspect of human motivation and behavior? It is in this regard that Menninger relinquished

his finest opportunity, in the opinion of this reviewer. For he truly comprehends the role of values in the psychiatric process. His understanding here provides a more significant contribution than does his system of diagnosis. The latter is important mainly as it elucidates the former. His contribution would have been enlarged, had he elevated values from the realm of the prescientific to a proper place in psychological theory. For value judgments are an ubiquitous ego function in patient and therapist alike and, potentially, among its most effective instruments in adaptation.

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A Reader for Parents, edited by the Child Study Association of America. Introduction and Comment by Anna W. M. Wolf, W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., New York, 1963. $8.95. 463 pp.

It has long been known to some social work educators that fiction can illuminate the human being as he should be understood by workers in the helping professions. At the Wurzweiler School of Social Work, literature is used in the Growth and Behavior courses to expose students to vicarious experiencing of other human beings and to facilitate insight into their own growth and development as social workers. Dr. Rosa Wessel of the University of Pennsylvania has said that in reading the novel one seeks oneself.

Anna Wolf has collected a "Selection of Creative Literature About Childhood" into a balanced, readable volume, to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Child Study Association of America. A wide range of stories and selections from novels and autobiographies, from books and magazines, provide parent-readers with characters, events and situations about the growing-up process, and about parent-child relations upon which to project their feelings, so that they might find themselves. Mrs. Wolf says: "Perhaps the selections in this book will serve parents as a source of refreshment, helping them to see their children anew. And children have a wonderful way of responding to a fresh vision of them."

The readings are divided into five sections, each introduced by a brief, pointed discussion on the stage of growth to be presented, and on the relevancy of the literary selections for the understanding of the importance of the relationships between parents and children.

Let no one be deceived by these apparently simple presentations written by Mrs. Wolf. Each of the five introductions profoundly plumb depth of feeling and demonstrate great knowledge. They form the basis for considering *A Reader For Parents* as a new addition to our professional literature.

The broad range of Jewish communal workers are engaged in relationships which demand an understanding and empathy for the person seeking their help. Creative literature can aid us to heighten our sensitivity to others for an "I-Thou" experience.

Personnel responsible for staff training will want to give serious consideration to this reader as a source-book.

Unhappily, the price of this book will limit its availability to many families. It certainly prevents this teacher from using it as a required text for students

whose finances are already taxed by the cost of social work education. One can only hope that the price will be reduced or that an inexpensive paperback issue will soon become available. Meanwhile, all social agencies and public libraries should procure copies for use by their staff members and by the general public.

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