

thesis of the essays is contained in the preface; "Philosophical clarity . . . arises when we see that behind every scientific construction there lies the inexplicable". He suggests that philosophy "prevents us from being dazzled by what we know".

In an essay on 'Science and psychology' he says; "in psychology the real problems that confront us, and the experimental methods which are being increasingly elaborated, pass each other by". Elsewhere, while commending studying logic, ethics, and metaphysics along with psychology, he points out that any study of psychology must quickly lead to puzzlement about "the self", which immediately brings the student into the realms of logic. Such considerations lead him to say that whatever advances are made in psychiatry, it should not be forgotten that there is "a mystery about mental ill-health which makes it different from any disease of the body".

Early on, having quoted Claude Bernard, who once wrote that he did not "reject the use of statistics in medicine," but that he condemned "not trying to get beyond them", Drury suggests we bear these words in mind, "next time you find one more mass of statistical information in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*." Hence, "I sometimes wish it was a law that every scientific paper had to be allowed to mature for ten years in bond, like good whisky, before being allowed in print."

Drury was adamantly not against scientific medicine nor "biological" forms of psychiatric treatment – indeed, this was his life's work. Yet he believed that "good physical health, good mental health are not the absolute good for man."

DRURY, M. O'C. (1973) *The Danger of Words*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

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Blood-letting in bulimia nervosa

SIR: Parkin & Eagles (*Journal*, February 1993, 162, 246–248) concluded that the blood-letting described in the three case histories was a function of the patients' bulimia nervosa.

On reviewing the clinical data presented, it seems that in each case an additional diagnosis of borderline personality disorder could also have been made. The comorbidity of the two conditions has been noted in the literature (Mitchell *et al*, 1991), and in my experience. Furthermore, where there are co-

morbid conditions in terms of an eating disorder and personality disorder, the overall severity of psychopathology tends to be increased (Yates *et al*, 1989).

There may, in fact, be no causal link between bulimia nervosa and blood-letting *per se*, as suggested by the authors. In this regard, I would like to suggest that the blood-letting could be viewed as an indicator of severity of psychopathology in these patients. I do acknowledge, however, that such behaviour should be considered in anaemic bulimic patients with medical backgrounds.

MITCHELL, J. E., SPECKER, S. M. & DE ZWAAN, M. (1991) Comorbidity and medical complications of bulimia nervosa. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 52, 13–20.

YATES, W. R., SIELNI, B. & BOWERS, W. A. (1989) Clinical correlates of personality disorder in bulimia nervosa. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 8, 473–477.

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Neglect of anger in Western psychiatry

SIR: Having read Lee's letter (*Journal*, December 1992, 161, 864) commenting on the neglect of anger in Western psychiatry, and the seven emotions from the *Huang-ti-Nei-ching*, I cannot help but write to make some corrections on these issues. Firstly, most American psychiatric textbooks do include anger as an important area for consideration in the context of psychopathology (e.g. medea syndrome), diagnosis (e.g. impulse control disorders), management, and treatment. In clinical practice, anger and aggression are almost a *sine qua non* of psychodynamic psychotherapy. I would like to know if Dr Lee has other sources to substantiate his opinion that there is a neglect of anger in Western psychiatry. It would be of great interest to know what school of thought or system he uses to deal with anger in his psychiatric patients in Hong Kong. Is there an Oriental or Eastern psychiatry in Hong Kong?

Secondly, Dr Lee's source of quotation and understanding of the seven emotions invite correction and academic discourse. The word 'contemplation' could hardly be regarded as a psychological term to depict an emotion or a feeling. The eighth edition of the Concise Oxford dictionary's definition of the word 'contemplate' is "survey with the eyes or in the mind; regard as possible", and contemplation means a meditative state also. Contemplation is meant as a