

MAURITS G. T. KWEE (Ed.): *Psychotherapy, meditation and health—a cognitive-behavioural perspective*. East-West, London (1990). 319 pp. £18.95.

This book contains the proceedings of the First International Conference on Psychotherapy, Meditation and Health, held in March, 1990, in The Netherlands. Conference proceedings usually come out in print two or more years after the event, by which time much of the material is no longer new. This volume, however, was published to coincide with the conference. One can only guess at the amount of effort that the editor and the publishing office had to put into this in order to get the papers in advance, have them edited, proof-read, and so on. This is a tremendous feat.

Apart from this achievement, what does the book offer? Meditation is quite fashionable these days, and many mental health professionals and 'fringe' persons dabble in it with enthusiasm. All sorts of claims are being made for the efficacy of meditation as an answer to all sorts of problems. Clearly, what is needed is a sober and objective approach. Any other approach does a disservice both to the mental health field, and to meditation itself.

The volume that Maurits Kwee has offered is a mixture. Some chapters are cautious, systematic discussions of issues. Some are quite limited in scope, but impressive in thoroughness. Some are, by contrast, wide-ranging and ambitious. There are chapters that deal with Maharishi's Vedic psychology, Zen, Chi-Kung, Buddhist psychology and Sufism. The reader is given a sizeable array of offerings by authors who are clearly well-versed in their respective fields. If he reads from cover to cover, he will emerge with a lot of new knowledge, some new ideas and a mild sense of bewilderment. This last point is not meant to be a criticism. It reflects the diversity of the topics covered, and of the approaches.

The editor has tried hard to organise the book into a coherent whole. By dividing the book into sections, and writing perceptive introductions to each and a prologue and an epilogue, he has given editorial structure to what is otherwise a somewhat loose and wide-ranging book. It could not have been an easy task; but the editor emerges with credit.

The sub-title of the book may be somewhat inappropriate. The chapters do not all represent 'a cognitive-behavioural perspective'. Some chapters do, and do so very well. But there are others that do not. The study of meditation is not yet so well-defined as to merit the description of cognitive-behavioural. It is something that, hopefully, will happen in the future, and the present book will no doubt make a contribution to this process of definition and demarcation.

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Finally, are there chapters that deserve highlighting? Different chapters will appeal to different audiences, so any attempt to do so may be misleading. However, Deane Shapiro's extra-long chapter is a great treat. Readers from every orientation will enjoy reading it; and think about some of the points he makes.

The book has a pleasing cover, and is reasonably priced. Librarians will be sorry that there is no hardback edition.