AUTOGENIC TRAINING—A Psychophysiologic Approach in Psychotherapy—Johannes H. Schultz, M.D., and Wolfgang Luthe, M.D. Grune & Stratton, New York, 1959. 289 pages, $9.50.

This book is the first presentation of the psychotherapeutic method of J. H. Schultz to the English-speaking reader. Autogenic training, the technique of autosuggestion which is the subject of the book, was developed during the first quarter of this century. In 1932 Schultz first formulated the procedure and its applications in his work "Das Autogene Training," from which several German editions were thereafter published. The technique of autogenic training was derived from the development of hypnotic procedures and, although it has characteristics that make it a unique technique of psychotherapy, it has to be historically considered in connection with hypnosis.

It is on the basis of some experiences reported by patients in light hypnotic state that the psychotherapeutic technique considered here was originated. Schultz observed that the general relaxation preceding deep hypnosis was consistently accompanied by some somatic sensations reported by the patients. Heaviness and warmth of the extremities were among these sensations. He then thought that the systematic suggestion of some of these feelings in the patients might by itself result in somatic and vegetative relaxation that could be of psychotherapeutic value. The scientific naiveté of this rationale, whereby a mere correlational link is attributed connotations of causality, was, however, no impediment for the elaboration of an actually successful method. And the reason for this success cannot be ascertained, since the physiological mechanisms involved in the use of the method remain obscure.

It is surprising that not until the present time has the method been published in the English language, for autogenic training has been widely used for the last 25 years in many continental clinics, particularly for the treatment of psychosomatic disorders.

The method consists, essentially, of a progressive series of exercises practiced by the patient, at first under the supervision of the therapist and later by himself alone, but always under the direct or indirect guidance of the therapist, who plays a role which could be qualified as pedagogic. The aim of the exercises is the achievement of mental and bodily relaxation, and this aim is reached by following successive "physiological" steps. The steps are attained by means of hetero- or autosuggestion of local changes in the subject's muscular and visceral systems. The fundamental steps are heaviness and warmth of extremities, regularization of heart and respiration, warmth in the abdomen and coolness of the forehead. Verbal formulae, on which the patient has to concentrate mentally, help him to bring about not only the changes suggested but also the experience of them. In addition to the mentioned steps, which constitute the basis of the so-called "standard exercises," the technique makes use of other exercises to fit the particular therapeutic needs of each patient. Various "meditative" exercises, "organ-specific" exercises, and "intentional formulae" can thus be utilized as complementary procedures. Autogenic training is used in the treatment of a great variety of neurotic, functional and characterologic disorders, ranging from psychosomatic syndromes of practically any organ or system to habit disorders and drug addiction.

In contrast with hypnosis, the method calls for an active participation of the patient in the therapeutic process. The authors suggest that an advantage of the method is the fact that the procedure minimizes the dependence of the patient on the therapist. In this respect, although this dependence is less than in other types of psychotherapy, its importance in the successful application of the method cannot be belittled. Furthermore, it is the opinion of many psychiatrists, the reviewer among them, that autogenic training is very effective when used in conjunction with other forms of therapy. This does not apply to the treatment of all cases, but it is particularly true when deep conflicts play a role in the pathogenesis of a given syndrome. The authors also note that the method helps to make unconscious material more readily available. A logical conclusion from this would be that autogenic training is valuable as an auxiliary method for psychoanalysis. And this seems to be the case in the opinion of many.

The book is clear, as is the method itself, and is rich in well described case material. In the last part of the book there is a description of a series of extremely interesting observations of autonomic changes occurring during the standard exercises of autogenic training. The last chapter, on "theory," is the weakest in the book, although it is perhaps the best that could be written under its heading. The difficulty in explaining satisfactorily the neurophysiological mechanisms involved in autogenic exercises is admitted by the authors. The neurophysiological arguments tentatively proposed are based primarily on the investigations of W. R. Hess on the hypothalamus and also those on the reticular structures of the brain stem. Although the hypotheses are well formulated, the experimental evidence supporting them is poor. It is not the first time in which a good therapy has been found for psychiatric disorders on the basis of little more than empirical evidence. And yet, this does not imply the negation of the proven value of the method.

A very good book. It should be in the library of the psychotherapist.

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MEANING OF POISON, THE—Lloyd G. Stevenson, M.D., Professor of the History of Medicine, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, McGill University. Logan Clendening Lectures on the History and Philosophy of Medicine—Seventh Series. University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, Kansas, 1959. 53 pages, $2.00.

The title of this book of lectures is as misleading as a movie title. Actually, there are two unrelated topics discussed. To quote from the statement on the jacket: "The seventh series of the Logan Clendening Lectures on the History and Philosophy of Medicine deals with two aspects of the meaning of 'poison'—'poison as a pathogen in the very broad sense' and 'poison as a tool of research in physiology and pharmacology.' 'Poison, Infection and Contagion' traces the history of the ideas the words represent; 'Hellish Oorali' tells the story of curare."

In a rather hodge-podge but interesting way the author has traced the concept of poisoning from ancient and Biblical writings; he has shown how words with multiple meaning have been mistranslated and how words meaning anger or rage have often a second meaning of poison or venom. A modern example is the French word *rage* which means not only fury or anger, but also hydrophobia. Poison has often been associated with arrows, not only among modern aboriginal races, but also in classical mythology. Dr. Stevenson shows that our word "toxicology" is derived from the Greek word "toxon," meaning "bow" or the adjective "toxikon," meaning "pertaining to a bow." Much of the remainder of the first chapter is devoted to the development of the concept of infection and of the confusion of infectious agents with poisons and poisonous emanations.

The second chapter is a very sketchy history of curare, containing many bits of information not previously known to the reviewer. The discussion of poisons, especially curare, as a research tool is too general and leaves the reader wondering just how the tool is used and what is learned by use of the tool.

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