deficits. Thinking is an activity, not an ability; and is not to be identified with intelligence.

They have matched mongol, non-mongoloid imbeciles with one another and with normal children of like mental age. Subjects which have been considered and studied are visual perception, communication, thought and language, cross-modal, ‘coding’, recall and recognition, and other functions. Differences and similarities are reported and discussed.

With defectives of imbecile grade, sense training is needed. Their failure to develop speech is found to be not so much because they do not understand syntax, but that they do not know many words.

This is an authoritative work and is compulsory reading for those responsible for the care and education of severely subnormal personalities.


In spite of its title and the fact that Dr. Hobson is at present Chief of the Section of Education and Training in the W.H.O. Regional Office for Europe, this is not, in fact, an official document but was written by Dr. Hobson when he was Professor of Social and Industrial Medicine in Sheffield. Dr. Hobson has written brief, interesting, histories of the major plagues of mankind: the plague itself, typhus, malaria, the various poxes, cholera and other viruses, and tuberculosis, with additional chapters on ‘new maladies made by man’ (lung cancer, coronary heart disease, and the results of radioactive doses) and, for good measure, a chapter on the problems of inherited disease. Dr. Hobson tells us that thousands died every year of dysentery in the last century, tens of thousands from plague in the Middle Ages, and hundreds of thousands from smallpox in various countries until quite recently, and that literally millions are affected by a number of debilitating and often fatal conditions caused by viruses, bacteria, and other parasites. He describes some very pretty experiments carried out long before the experimental era. Captain Cook, for instance, did a beautiful controlled trial with lemon juice which was resoundingly successful, and he subsequently sailed three times round the world without a single case of scurvy amongst his crews.

There is a curious chapter on ‘Death Control’ which is really a discussion of the population explosion and the difficulties it is giving rise to in terms of food supplies. In this chapter he rather shyly refers to birth control, giving its history and the present difficult situation with regard to various religious objections. But, he says that one thing is certain, ‘unless birth rates are quickly reduced there will be a growth of world population on a faster scale than anything which has ever been seen before’. However, he says, nature usually finds an answer; by ‘nature’ he appears to mean that ‘widespread starvation could very soon occur on a wider scale than ever before’ and that the atomic bomb (is that natural?) would ‘certainly be more effective in destroying people than past wars have been’. He says, however, that in World War II the total European losses were about 15 million, which ‘was made good in less than 6 months’.

The final chapter deals with the future problems of which, of course, health education is much the most important.

This is a very readable book and useful to have on the shelf to refer to.


This is a typically comprehensive American book on a subject studied in detail in all its ramifications by 38 authors. Their whole approach is so different from ours in this country that it is difficult to evaluate. Nor do their allergens seem the same. The young patient appears to be in danger of suffering more from the allergist than from his own allergy. The only indoor pets he is allowed are ‘turtles, tropical fish, alligators and snakes’.

Only 38 pages out of 586 are given to asthma which in this country we would accept as the chief allergic disease; 21 pages are given to skin testing, 17 to moulds, and 34 to pollens. This perhaps reflects the difference between our two countries. The stress throughout is on investigation-al methods, and the role of infection and tension receive relatively little attention.

The book is well produced and as an example of American methodology makes interesting reading.