Introduction by the Editors

This supplement includes a collection of 20 papers, selected from a larger number presented at the symposium on 'Diagnosis in Psychiatry' which took place within the framework of the Second World Basque Congress. British, North American, French, German, Spanish, and Latin-American specialists participated in this meeting, whose brief was to examine the concept of diagnosis from a multidisciplinary perspective. Contributions were chosen for their topical interest and geographical representativeness: limitations of space unfortunately precluded the inclusion of some other excellent contributions.

The concept of diagnosis, which served as the organising basis for the meeting, was that of categories and rules which govern integration of information with regard to clinical conditions. Since such information is to be found in fields as wide apart as clinical observation, neurobiology, psychodynamic theory, and sociocultural processes, the dialogue of specialists from all these areas should constitute a promising heuristic approach to this problem.

The papers included here represent three clear perspectives on the problem of diagnosis. The nosological section contains contributions dealing both with descriptive psychopathology and taxonomic organisation, and among them stand out those by Professors Cooper, Gelder, Mezzich, and Strömgren. The biological section samples the various ways in which biochemical and neurophysiological research can throw light on diagnostic understanding and classification, such as the work by groups led by Professor Dávila and Friedhoff. The psychosocial section includes papers coming from psychoanalytical, epidemiological, and institutional perspectives, and shows how these can also illuminate nosological thinking; of particular interest is the contribution of Professor Rojas Marcos, reflecting his role in the administration of New York City hospitals.

Interest in the part played by diagnosis in the practice of psychiatry is currently well alight and we hope that this multidisciplinary collection of papers will keep the fire going.

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https://doi.org/10.1192/S0007125000295688 Published online by Cambridge University Press