

ledge, which has been so well expounded and elaborated by Sir Peter Medawar. Knowledge here is seen as a building with a series of floors, one higher than the other. On the ground floor are the basic sciences. As we go up we come to biological, sociological, anthropological, and psychological levels, to name a few. Each level has its own laws, categories, language and new ideas which are not explicable in the language or conceptual resources of the level below. Biology cannot for example be interpreted in terms of chemistry. Higher levels of knowledge of the nature of man cannot be 'reduced' to the terms of lower level phenomena.

If Ray were to accept this model, he would respect each level for its own insights and interpretations and avoid a tendency to physicalistic imperialism in his use of such crucial words as 'know' and 'real'. His 'persuasive definitions', as C. L. Stevenson (2) would call them, suppress other insights into what can be known as mental events.

BRIAN LAKE.

Lingdale,
Weston Avenue,
Mount Hooton Road, Nottingham, NG7 4BA.

1. AYER, A. J. (1956). *The Problem of Knowledge*, Chapter 5, Section V. Pelican Original.
2. STEVENSON, C. L. (1938). 'Persuasive definitions', *Mind*, *xlvii*, July, 331-50.

FREUD AND PHILOSOPHY

DEAR SIR,

The version of psychoanalysis advocated by Paul Ricoeur in his book *Freud and Philosophy*, reviewed in your April number, pp. 455-7, is, if the reviewer's account is accurate, a version Freud would hardly have recognized. Ricoeur, we are told, holds that psychoanalysis should not be regarded as an observational science, that its whole matter is endopsychic and makes no contact with the external world, and that its theory is to be accepted as an integrated whole.

Admittedly, there are analysts who have despaired of developing psychoanalysis as an observational science and have taken refuge in this solipsistic version. Freud held other views. Time and again he emphasizes the very tentative status of his theories and recognizes that scientific theories, like other living things, are born, live, and die. He writes: '. . . a science erected on empirical interpretation . . . will gladly content itself with nebulous, scarcely imaginable basic concepts which it hopes (either) to apprehend more clearly in the course of its development or . . . to replace by others. For these ideas are not the foundation of science (which) is observation alone . . . but the top of the whole structure and

they can be replaced and discarded without damaging it ('On Narcissism', 1914)'.

In his *Autobiographical Study* (1925) he speaks in the same vein, referring blithely to the 'speculative superstructure of psycho-analysis, any portion of which can be abandoned or changed without loss or regret the moment its inadequacy has been proved.

In asserting that analysts have 'skirted the "agonizing revision" that is called for', your reviewer shows himself out of touch with research on the relation of personality development to family interaction, a field in which psychoanalysts have played and still play a leading part and which promises to reshape psychiatry as well as psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis is a theory of personality development. Because all development is the resultant of genome interacting with environment, it is necessary for psychoanalysis to pay as much attention to environment as to developing personality. In the past this has been an area of weakness, but it need not remain so. There are many analysts working, with others, to make this deficiency good, and some who are also attempting to reformulate theory in a form in keeping with modern biology and better suited to an observational science. One such attempt is the writer's *Attachment and Loss*, a three volume work now nearly two-thirds complete. If this fails, others may do better.

JOHN BOWLBY.

School of Family Psychiatry and Community Mental Health,
Tavistock Centre,
Belsize Lane,
London, NW3 5BA.

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- FREUD, S. Standard edition, vol. 14, p. 77.
— . Standard Edition, vol. 20, p. 32.

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DEAR SIR,

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B. M. BARRACLOUGH,
B. E. HEINE,
Editors.

MRC Clinical Psychiatry Unit,
Graylingwell Hospital,
Chichester, Sussex.