

covers service delivery (particularly worksite services and the use of television), methodology (a very useful discussion of treatment trials by Schlundt and Wilson), and a public health perspective. It would have been strengthened by the inclusion of reviews of family treatments, and of cognitive change techniques, but remains a very useful book for both practitioners and researchers and earns itself a place on their bookshelf.

Reference

Bennett, G. A. (1986). Behavior therapy for obesity: A quantitative review of the effects of selected treatment characteristics on outcome. *Behavior Therapy, 17*, 554-562.

Turning Inward: Progress in Understanding Meditation

Michael A. West (Ed.)

The Psychology of Meditation

Oxford, England: Clarendon Press,
1987. 252 pp. ISBN 0-19-852169-3.
\$65.00

Review by

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In my *Altered States of Consciousness* anthology, published in 1969, I argued that psychology ought to learn something about meditation. Meditation had been praised as a profound technique for improving one's life through history, yet a current psychological dictionary could only define meditation as "serious thought." To stimulate investigation, I reprinted two thirds of the English language literature on psychological research on meditation. That sounds impressive, until you realize that meant two of the three papers!

It is gratifying to see that there has

been an enormous increase in psychological studies of meditation. West notes that a recent bibliography (Jarrell, 1985) listed nearly 1,000 articles, and in the anthology under review, West does an excellent and stimulating job of reviewing this mass of literature.

I would like to believe that this enormous increase in meditation research came about because many psychologists logically saw the need to study a technique with so much potential to change a practitioner's worldview, but the history is different. The many studies are due, as West recognizes, to two factors: (a) the enormous number of Westerners who began to practice various forms of Eastern meditation and (b) the publication in *Science* of Keith Wallace's (1970) article, "Physiological Effects of Transcendental Meditation." The huge number of practitioners, many of them college students, created the need and Wallace's apparent finding of physiological changes in the direction of relaxation "legitimized" meditation for our scientific culture: If meditation affects physiology, it must be *real*, not just a strange superstition practiced by primitives!

Thus began the main thrust of meditation research: Will it reduce stress in Westerners? West's anthology shows that the answer is generally yes, although it is unclear that it reduces stress more than a comparable period of just resting.

There are excellent chapters on physiology, methodological considerations, Western and Eastern theoretical approaches, and clinical applications. West and others also show that the emphasis on stress reduction has largely been a sidetrack: The real potential of meditation for changing a person's worldview and life-style may be much greater, but this is still almost totally unresearched.

In Carrington's chapter on managing meditation in clinical practice, she succinctly and evocatively summarizes why meditation can be important to us:

In modern industrialized society the pace of our lives is determined largely by economic considerations rather than by the rhythms of human life or natural growing things and there is a dearth of spontaneously occurring quiet inner space into which we can retreat for refurbishing. It is well to remember therefore that it is people who live under these conditions of modern society who make up our clinical populations. Outside of the immediate tension-reducing effects of meditation there is another service which the professional performs when introducing this quieting experience into a patient's life. Since a leisurely stroll, a quiet prayer, or listening to the gentle patter of rain as a "change of

pace" are [sic] not possible for most people today during their waking hours, and even leisure time is often a time for prolonged sensory bombardment from things such as the ubiquitous television set, the average human being today seems to move from task to task with almost no time to sense his or her own "self" and to reaffirm the basic tenet "I exist." (p. 172)

This book is necessary reading for anyone who wants to do research on meditation and a good introduction for those who are simply curious. I highly recommend the book and, for those wanting more than merely intellectual knowledge, the practice of some form of basic meditation.

References

- Jarrell, H. R. (1985). *International meditation bibliography, 1950-1982*. London: Scarecrow Press.
Tart, C. T. (1969). *Altered states of consciousness: A book of readings*. New York: Wiley.
Wallace, K. (1970). Physiological effects of transcendental meditation. *Science, 167*, 1751-1754.