A new chapter on trauma provides a fair-minded assessment of the arguments as to whether post-traumatic stress disorder is a *bona fide* psychiatric condition or a completely misguided attempt to medicalise human distress. The authors also consider whether this concept has been applied in an insensitive and inappropriate way to cultures other than the Western culture. In another thoughtful chapter, on the psychiatry of the elderly, Catherine Oppenheimer points out that the majority of the individuals making decisions about older people have not personally experienced old age and as a consequence, there is a danger that the voice of older people is misunderstood or, worse, ignored.

Less convincing is the chapter on the history of psychiatric ethics. It outlines a grand narrative of the progress of psychiatric thinking in which previous ages are chided for lacking the sophistication of our own. It is as if Foucault and other cultural historians whose work has challenged such self-congratulatory accounts had never written on the subject. This chapter tends to echo a feature of the volume, the tendency to privilege the psychiatric establishment's perspective and to give less room to dissenting opinions. For example, Steven Rose, who has criticised what he calls 'biological imperialism' and its propensity to explain human beings exclusively in terms of genes and brain function, is mentioned only once in the chapter on genetics. More seriously, what is entirely missing from this volume is the voice of the mentally ill. At a time when much greater attention is being paid to the views of those who experience psychiatric disorder, this is a strange omission. Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, there are enough interesting chapters to make the book worth reading.