

the courageous and imaginative middle-aged psychiatrist screened recently as normotensive.

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Biological Psychiatry. 1981. Edited by C. PERRIS, G. STRUWE and B. JANSSON. Amsterdam: Elsevier. 1982. Pp 1327. \$198.00, Dfl. 425.

This book is very long and very expensive but it is not dull. It begins with five comprehensive and elegant lectures written by senior psychiatrists from Scotland, France, Spain, Germany and the USA and these are followed by over three hundred and fifty papers with an authorship which is indeed worldwide although almost all of them are written in English.

While in the past few years psychiatric research has advanced rapidly the gains have not been so great that one could expect so large a number of original and worthwhile contributions to be produced in the three years since the previous Congress of Biological Psychiatry. Thus it is scarcely surprising that a number of the papers are of limited value. These are offset however by many which are of interest. As these contributions were initially intended as oral presentations they tend to be written in a rather positive and unequivocal style. Reference to the literature is of necessity far from complete and in some papers at least the omissions in this respect do not seem to be entirely even handed. There is no doubt that some of these papers would have encountered difficulties with the editors of standard psychiatric journals but the optimistic style in which the results are presented certainly contributes to the readability of the volume. Other assets of this book include the extremely wide range of subjects studied and the novel slant to familiar topics which is provided for those whose reading is dominated by British and North American work by the inclusion of so many authors from continental Europe. The topics covered include all major current themes in biological research and range from electron microscopic studies of the effect of LSD on frog retina to drug abuse as a criminal defence. It is difficult to select contributions for special mention but I recollect with interest the section on environmental exposure to neurotoxic agents and psychiatric disease, the paper on peptides and mental retardation and the brief and stylish Parisian note on the use of placebos in therapeutic trials.

The worthwhile studies described in this volume will be published in standard journals and with the probable exception of the opening lectures the contents will date rapidly. In view of the very substantial price I doubt if many would consider it a sensible purchase but I can recommend this as an interesting and

enjoyable book for those who do not have to pay for it.

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The Mask of Shame. By LEON WURMSER. London: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1981. Pp 345. £17.50, \$31.25.

The author of this interesting if slightly uneven book rightly points out that shame is a neglected topic. Psychoanalysts have been preoccupied with guilt and have not always sufficiently differentiated it from shame. It is true that clinical material to do with shame has been extensively studied under other headings, especially in the area of narcissism and self-esteem; however the subject is such an important one that a review of this kind is timely and stimulates a new look.

The author suggests that shame results from a failure to live up to the expectation first of an external person but subsequently of internalized objects. It is chiefly concerned with concepts like weakness, defectiveness, dirtiness, badness, loss of control and sexual misdeeds, especially masturbation. The experience of being watched by internal or external figures is very important and a sense of shame can spread to other people in the family, colleagues, associates and the whole ethnic group one belongs to. Shame has many useful adaptive functions, and the author emphasises the way privacy and intimacy are protected by the experiencing of shame. One could add that the same goes for honesty and decency and this is clear in the chapter on "Shamelessness" where it becomes clear that to feel no shame opens one to every kind of depravity.

The author discusses defences against shame and emphasises the way people obsessed with shame cover themselves in a mask or false self, hence the title of the book. He also attempts a structural analysis which I think is not entirely successful, and many of the literary quotations and clinical fragments were not as relevant as they might be. It seemed to me that the author did not fully explore the relation of shame to sexuality, and his discussion of the Eden myth which I think must be central to an understanding of shame, is not entirely convincing. It seems to me that shame is connected with the feeling not only of weakness, dirtiness, defectiveness or inadequacy, but with a sense of badness or wrongness which I think can often be linked with sexual embarrassment, especially with embarrassment about perversion and perverse phantasies. I think these are often prominent in borderline patients, and it may be that shame is more important