

An extremely useful feature of this book is the "Reaction index" in the back, where reactions are listed by compound under the individual metals involved. This serves as a useful cross reference to part 2, which is organized according to class of reagent. The regular index is somewhat brief, but the table of contents is detailed and extremely useful. Extensive literature references are given, with many as late as 1967, although the literature review does not pretend to be exhaustive. The text is well written and appears to be relatively free of errors. At times, however, it degenerates into a succession of one-sentence reviews which are generally uncritical in nature. A great many structural formulas are included which make for ready assimilation of the material by chemists not particularly familiar with transition-metal complexes. This book will serve as a valuable introduction to the substance of current research in the reactions of transition-metal compounds and as a useful source of references to specific reactions.

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Confronting Suicide

Essays in Self-Destruction. EDWIN S. SHNEIDMAN, Ed. Science House, New York, 1967. xx + 554 pp. \$12.50.

It is estimated that at least one in every 100 Americans now living has tried to kill himself at one time or another. Suicide is a major public health problem in our country, ranking tenth among the causes of death of adults. It is condemned by the three great traditions of Roman law, English law, and Church law. Since a bent toward suicide exists in many of us, it may well be that the proscription mirrors an unconscious need to minimize its infectious aspects. Certainly it is one of those afflictions of man around which there has hung a curtain of fearful silence.

Essays in Self-Destruction is part of an encouraging trend in recent years to push aside that curtain. Its editor, one of the leading authorities on suicide, has assembled a worthy group of contributors, including not only psychologists, psychiatrists, and other clinicians but also philosophers, sociologists, and students of literature. The word "essays" in the title fairly characterizes

the mode of contribution, which is primarily contemplative, expository, and discursive rather than empirical or experimental. The book does not pretend to offer a comprehensive or detailed sweep of the subject, but the essays are wide-ranging and encompass not only suicidal behavior per se but the broad realm of the self-destroying and self-negating facets of human conduct.

The book is organized in four major sections. Part 1, Literary and Philosophic Essays, contains, for example, papers on the suicidal equivalents in Melville, suicides in Shakespeare, the Buddhist view of suicide, and death as a motive of philosophic thought. Part 2 consists of Sociological and Ethnographic Essays, among them papers on patterns of orientation toward death in American culture, on the problems of certification of suicidal death, and on suicide in Japanese adolescents. Part 3, Psychological and Psychiatric Essays, comprises most of the praxis of the book. It includes a paper dealing with the clinical experiences that led Freud to his various theoretical conclusions concerning suicide, a clinical and epidemiological study of a group of self-poisoned persons, papers on the theory and therapy of suicide and on the relation between destructive urges and sexual deviation, and an early study of suicides among New York City policemen. Part 4, Taxonomic and Forensic Essays, is devoted mainly to the problems of classification and theory building and includes, *inter alia*, a paper exploring the possibility of inhuman suicide and one calling attention to sleep as a possible avenue toward an understanding of suicidal behavior.

It is clear from these diverse contributions that we need to advance beyond the usual three-part taxonomy of threatened, attempted, and accomplished suicide. The fourfold categorization of death as natural, homicidal, accidental, and suicidal is also oversimplified. Why is shooting oneself to death "suicide," drinking oneself to death "natural," and provoking and accomplishing death by recklessness with an automobile "accidental"? Obviously to understand the dynamics of suicide requires a grasp of the individual's motivations and conceived role. In this regard the field is indebted to the editor and his colleagues Norman Farberow, Robert Litman, and Norman Tabachnick of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center for developing the procedure of "psychological autopsy" to elucidate the

intention of the dead person in relation to his own death.

Suicide represents a failure in social as well as individual growth. Society—family, school, church, industry—needs to examine its contributing role in self-chosen death. The *vis a tergo* for suicide cannot be completely explained within the framework of mental illness or intrapsychic loss of nerve. The prevention of self-annihilative tendencies will have to reckon not only with the individual's particular conflicts but also with the values of the culture in which he lives. We shall have to marshal social and philosophical resources along with those of medicine and psychology.

A major strength of the book is that in it suicide is perceived as part of the general realm of personality. This perspective provides us not only with increased insights for circumventing suicide but also with helpful clues to transforming "hollow men" into productive participants in society. The next steps forward in subjugating suicide will come when the stimulating questions and hypotheses emanating from these essays, clinical observations, and empirical beginnings are subjected to more systematic investigation. The Veterans Administration and the National Institute of Mental Health are to be commended for supporting many of the efforts reflected in the book.

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Success and Advantage

The Huxleys. RONALD W. CLARK. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1968. xvi + 398 pp., illus. \$8.95.

The eminence of the Huxleys is widely appreciated, but probably few people are aware of how many competent members this family now has on the scene. Backed by a family tree in the appendix the author shows that the Huxley *élan* extends far beyond T. H., Julian, and Aldous (who dominate the book), including as it does one Nobel laureate and several promising beginners at the writing game, in which the Huxleys have so excelled.

It is not easy to create a sense of unity when retelling a family history that extends over a century and a half. Ronald Clark brings it off by what, for