

a functional alternative for the maintenance of peace and the settlement of disputes. Where one commune merges into the next without clear geographical or linguistic boundaries, as in much of the African savanna, then associations, if they appear, take the form of age-sets, which cross-cut widely dispersed groups.

Bradfield has drawn upon a training in history, medicine, and anthropology in writing this book. He has spent nine years on what is very evidently a labor of love. His central argument is generally familiar to anthropologists, who have long noted the importance of cross-cutting ties in the maintenance of social order and discussed both age-sets and secret fraternities in these terms. His explanation of the distribution of secret societies as against age-sets is more novel and is worth further exploration. Throughout the two volumes he throws out a great many stimulating suggestions. Unfortunately the format of *A Natural History of Associations*, with its massive ethnographic apparatus and numerous digressions, is likely to limit the number of his readers. Anthropologists will have to plow through too much familiar territory in following his argument. Others are likely to be more interested in his conclusions than in the ethnographic evidence. A short article summarizing his findings, and substituting a referral to his sources for lengthy summaries, would have much to recommend it.

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Psychopharmacology

Lithium. Its Role in Psychiatric Research and Treatment. SAMUEL GERSHON and BARON SHOPSIN, Eds. Plenum, New York, 1973. xii, 358 pp., illus. \$19.50.

Considerable information has accumulated about the clinical uses of lithium, but we are still far from understanding how the drug produces its effects. The state of affairs is clearly reflected in this book. The chapters dealing with clinical issues are fairly readable, and the reader can relate them to one another and develop themes. In contrast, in the chapters dealing with the basic chemistry, biochemistry, or pharmacology of lithium he will find himself, like the authors of each of these chapters, assimilating

facts and struggling to make a synthesis but ultimately being frustrated in the attempt.

The chapters on the treatment of the manic patient, by Schou and by Goodwin and Ebert, are quite good. Relevant literature is cited, personal anecdotal material and idiosyncratic terminology are kept to a minimum. Dosage schedules are clearly outlined, and the question of whether or not to use a major tranquilizer in conjunction with lithium is clearly dealt with. Similarly, the chapter by Gershon and Shopsin dealing with toxicology is quite good, and taken in conjunction with the chapter on lithium teratology, by Weinstein and Goldfield, will give the practicing psychiatrist needed knowledge as to problems he may encounter when using the lithium ion in treatment.

These chapters along with references cited by many of the other authors, in particular Fieve, indicate that the majority, perhaps 80 percent, of manic patients can be effectively treated with lithium and that in cases of repeated episodes lithium has prophylactic value. Its value in other psychiatric disorders is less clear, and plainly more investigation is required. A number of the authors review research which has been done with the use of lithium in a whole spectrum of psychiatric disorders. One type of disorder (other than mania) in which it now appears that lithium may well be of benefit is severe depression, particularly in patients of the bipolar type. What is needed, as Mendels notes in his chapter, is a method by which the depressed patient who will respond to lithium may be identified either biochemically or clinically. Certainly further substance is given to this argument by findings which have emerged since the publication of this book indicating that unipolar depressed patients may be maintained equally well prophylactically on either lithium or one of the more commonly used tricyclic antidepressant drugs. The value of lithium for treating pathological aggressive states also appears to deserve more investigation.

When we move to chapters dealing with the modes of action of this agent it becomes very clear that we are on uncertain ground. The studies as reported are somewhat reminiscent of earlier studies with the major tranquilizers; that is, lithium seems to do many things, but seldom does the magnitude of the action compare with the magnitude of its effect upon a severe

psychopathological state, mania. Furthermore, as is pointed out by several of the authors, particularly the Smalls, too often there is a discrepancy between results obtained in animal or test-tube studies and the results of clinical investigations. Frequently the basic investigator will use doses that surely must be toxic; hence the relevance of his results to the drug's effect in human patients remains uncertain. It is to be hoped that future studies will throw more light on the mode of action of lithium at the cellular level as it may specifically relate to the correction of whatever biological fault is involved in manic and perhaps depressive states.

For those who are interested in the history of science, it should be noted that the path from the introduction of lithium to its general acceptance as a treatment for manic states was stormy and was the subject of many controversies within those invisible colleges where such matters are often adjudicated. This background is not explicitly covered in the introductory chapter dealing with historical material, but as one reads various chapters, in particular the closing chapter by Fieve, one senses the struggles that went on.

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Depressive Disorders

Depression. Theory and Research. JOSEPH BECKER. Winston, Washington, D.C., 1974 (distributor, Halsted [Wiley], New York). xii, 240 pp. \$12.50. Series in Clinical Psychology.

Traditionally a distinction has been made between disorders in which organic defect may be defined and those in which function is impaired without apparent structural change. Those in the latter category frequently have been labeled psychogenic.

While in many branches of medicine it has been possible for all practical purposes to ignore this split, any consideration of psychopathology necessarily brings it into sharp focus. Concepts of etiology have become muddled with pragmatic treatments and the need for accuracy in description of the behavioral dysfunction under consideration. Two camps, one addressing psychosocial factors and another concerned primarily with the

biological underpinnings of the disorder, have developed that, at best, form an uneasy alliance and, at worst, engage in open warfare. It has not been a productive situation.

Of late, advances in our understanding of the psychological, social, and biological factors underlying psychopathology offer hope for a truce, particularly concerning depressive illness. Hence Becker's comprehensive book outlining current theory and research in depression is timely. Depressive disorders stand out from other psychopathological syndromes by virtue of their relative clarity of definition. Indeed, they may well serve the investigator as a "model" of madness. The opportunity to integrate many complex variables has touched the field with the excitement of advance. One suspects that it is this excitement that triggered Becker to undertake his extensive review of current knowledge and, further, to appeal to fellow social scientists to join the psychiatric world in an investigation of depression as an important and ubiquitous phenomenon.

Although relatively short, the book provides a background for all aspects of the burgeoning field, reporting with great accuracy and in considerable detail many of the key studies of recent years. It is highly recommended both as an introduction and as a source book.

The volume's one drawback is held in common with other efforts to review such broad fields. Attempting to avoid bias, Becker at times endangers the interest of his reader by providing a list of investigations without providing an underlying conceptual frame. In the name of theoretical neutrality he steers between depression as "primarily a psychophysiologic reaction" and depression as "a disease entity with a specific biological substrate." An early chapter offering a theoretical integration of these two viewpoints would have been valuable and would have assisted in conveying to the uninitiated some of the excitement and opportunity offered by a broad knowledge of the field.

It is hoped, however, that this occasionally arid climate will not discourage those who enjoy prospecting, for there is considerable gold to be found in this short volume.

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