

pose, especially for people at the periphery of cell biology. The author also identifies areas where data are insufficient or conflicting and on the whole succeeds in delineating the extent of our factual knowledge of cell reproduction and its regulation.

It is, however, a pity that Prescott did not see fit to elevate his book from the level of a review of the current literature by incorporating some of the insights accruing from his over 20 years' experience with work on the cell cycle. Such a treatment of the subject would have made for a more interesting book and could have extended the useful life of the volume significantly beyond that of the majority of the papers reviewed.

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## Atomic Physics

**Atoms and Molecules in Electric Fields.** NILS RYDE. Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm, 1976. iv, 456 pp., illus. Sw. kr. 315.

In this book Nils Ryde presents a unique survey of the spectroscopy of free atoms and molecules in electric fields. He discusses the characteristic difficulties of spectroscopic investigation of electric fields in sufficient detail to make clear why the use of spectroscopy to investigate magnetic fields has always been easier. It is no accident that Stark's discovery of the splitting of spectral lines in an electric field came so much later than Zeeman's work on the splitting of spectral lines in magnetic fields.

Ryde reviews the most fruitful experimental techniques for investigating the behavior of atoms and molecules in electric fields, from Stark's original work with canal rays to the more recent methods of optical double resonance, level crossing, and laser spectroscopy. Although he mentions the peculiarities of the Stark effect in rapidly oscillating fields, he is concerned mainly with the Stark effect in static electric fields.

The theory of the Stark effect is discussed with regard to both hydrogenic and nonhydrogenic atoms. A nice review of the use of parabolic coordinates is used to discuss the Stark effect in hydrogen. Field ionization is mentioned briefly, but much of the recent work on the ionization of Rydberg states by static or oscillating electric fields was completed too late to be included in the book. The theory of the Stark effect in molecules is also reviewed.

Approximately half the book is devoted to a thorough discussion of the literature on the Stark effect in atoms and atomic ions. Simple molecules are discussed in much less detail, with sufficient references to allow the reader to fill in the details from the original articles.

The numerous applications of the Stark effect in chemistry, plasma diagnostics, and astrophysics are mentioned, but they are not discussed in detail. The discussion of excitation mechanisms for the investigation of canal rays makes a fascinating story, and, on reading about some of the early experimental designs, one cannot help wondering if this or that Stark apparatus would have lapsed if appropriate mirrors had been provided.

One of the most valuable parts of the book is the extensive bibliography, which includes references to Stark's original publications in 1914 and also to articles published just before the book went to press in 1976.

The printing and proofreading of the book are excellent, and the tables and figures are instructive and well chosen. The book would be a valuable addition to any scientific or technical library.

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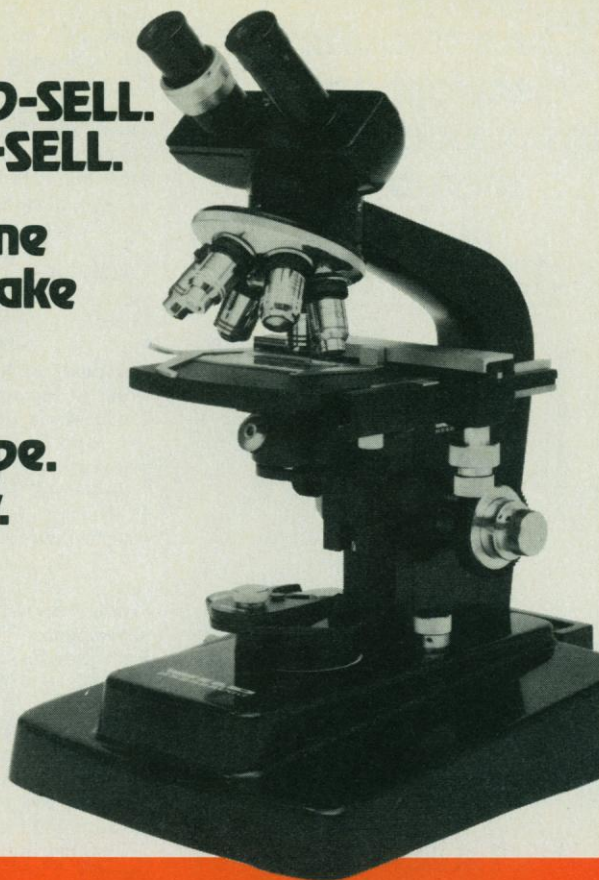
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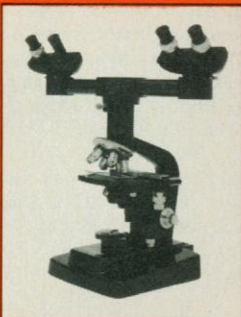
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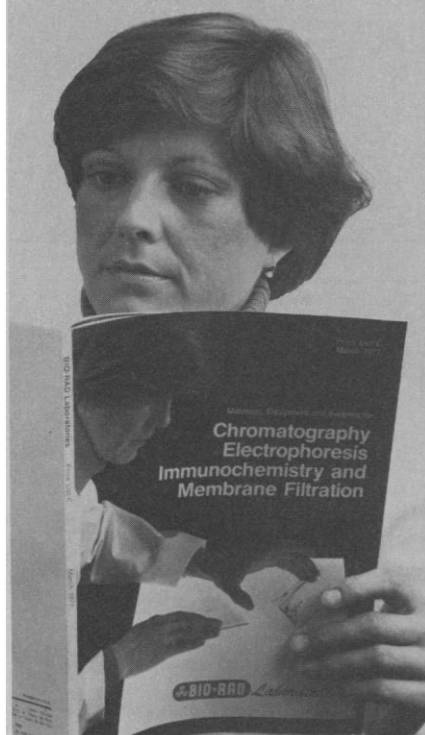
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