

## Alcoholism: A Good Beginning

Ralph E. Tarter and A. Arthur Sugeran (Eds.)

*Alcoholism: Interdisciplinary Approaches to an Enduring Problem.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1976. Pp. xvi + 857. \$27.50 cloth; \$13.50 paper.

Reviewed by MARC A. SCHUCKIT

The editors of the book under review are both at The Carrier Clinic and Foundation (Belle Mead, N.J.) and at Rutgers Medical School. Ralph E. Tarter is Research Psychologist at the Clinic, and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Psychiatry (Psychology) and a member of the Contributing Faculty of the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers. A PhD of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, he was previously Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of British Columbia, and also at the Center for Alcohol-Related Studies of the Oklahoma Medical Center. Tarter contributed a chapter to *D. V. S. Sanker's Mental Health in Children*, Vol. 2. A. Arthur Sugeran is Director of Research at the Foundation, Medical Director at the Clinic, and Clinical Associate Professor in the Rutgers College of Medicine and Dentistry. An MD of Dublin University and Med DSc of the State University of New York, he was previously Chief of the Section of Investigative Psychiatry, New Jersey Bureau of Research in Neurology and Psychiatry. Sugeran's research interests include psychopharmacology, schizophrenia, and alcoholism.

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THIS edited text of 22 chapters attempts to present a comprehensive discussion of causes, manifestations, and treatment of alcoholism. *Alcoholism: Interdisciplinary Approaches to an Enduring Problem* comes closer to fulfilling this impossible task than any other text yet to appear. Most chapters are clearly written and well referenced making them relevant to both researchers and clinicians. The topics are diverse, and, while not covering "all of alcoholism," they are a good place to start reviewing. Such a text is needed in the field.

The book has three basic divisions. The first group of chapters includes an entertaining and informative discussion of the history of the concept of alcoholism and a good superficial overview (there wasn't space to go into greater depth) of models and theories. The third chapter in this section attempts to deal with the very tacky problem of definitional issues on alcoholism—while it reviews most theories in a critical manner, it does not arrive at a clear, objectively defined set of diagnostic criteria. This chapter also suffers from the lack of an attempt to correlate diagnosis with outcome; it just presents labeling as a descriptive device. The section comes off as a good source of background material and a stimulus to thinking.

The second section, which is entitled "Processes in Alcoholism," is quite diverse, and generally excellent. It contains three subthemes, which might best have been separated out. The first group of chapters includes first-rate overviews of alcohol's effect on the hepatic system and the metabolism of alcohol, the adverse effects of alcohol on the brain and nervous system, a discussion of the genetics of alcoholism, and alcohol's effects on sleep patterns and psychophysiological functioning of

the body. This group of chapters is ideal for anyone wishing an introduction into these areas, as they are clearly written and well referenced. However, the reader will have to look elsewhere for overviews of important related topics such as alcohol's effect on the cardiovascular, blood, and reproductive systems. Once again, while not complete, the subsection is a fine place to begin thinking about alcohol-related physiology and pathology.

THE remaining two subsections in section 2 are also good. Three chapters discuss personality theories and alcoholism, organic deficits encountered in alcoholics, and cognitive styles. In addition, there is a superb chapter on behavioral and motivational factors in alcoholism. These topics will be of special interest to psychologists just entering the alcoholism field.

The final subsection could be entitled social/epidemiologic studies in alcoholism and covers cultural theories, some data on the female alcoholic, and a fine epidemiologic review of drinking problems. The epidemiology of drinking practices and problems is complete and clearly presented. The cultural discussions are also interesting and help to balance the earlier genetic information. However, this introductory and review text might have benefited from a broader discussion of some special alcohol problems in other subgroups in addition to women (e.g., the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities). The discussion on women was well done.

The third section of the text, on treatment, is the most deficient. This book is not a good place for someone to begin an overview of treatment approaches to alcoholism, as the chapter on psychotherapy is poorly referenced and too narrow in scope to have accomplished the goals of the text as a whole. A chapter on Alcoholics Anonymous is somewhat better and does give the reader a good introduction to this group, but it could have been broader in scope and more intensively referenced. The brief overviews of community programs and family therapy were not as informative as they might have been for either researchers or clinicians,

and only the overview of behavioral approaches and the pharmacological reviews were of uniformly good quality. Except for these two chapters it would be difficult for the clinician to read these series of six chapters and come away with an understanding of the present "state of the art" in alcoholism therapy, and the researcher will be disappointed by the lack of rigorous thinking and the paucity of references in this section.

**D**ESPITE these problems, the text as a whole is a fine introduction into the alcoholism field and could be used either as a standard reference source for courses given to paraprofessionals who are just entering the field or by practitioners or researchers who wish to bone up on some of the physiologic processes involved in alcoholism. The editors selected a fine set of authors, and in general made good choices in narrowing the range of possible topics to those 22 chapters included in the text. With some reservations, this book is recommended.

## Readings in a New Academic Industry

James M. Humber and Robert F. Almeder (Eds.).  
*Biomedical Ethics and the Law*.  
New York: Plenum Press, 1976.  
Pp. xi + 541. \$19.50.

Reviewed by ALAN WERTHEIMER

*The two coeditors are both Associate Professors of Philosophy at Georgia State University in Atlanta. James M. Humber is a PhD of SUNY Buffalo. He is coauthor of a chapter in T. L. Beauchamp's Philosophical Problems of Causation. Robert F. Almeder is a PhD of the University of Pennsylvania. He was previously at SUNY Oswego.*

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**T**HIS collection of essays on biomedical ethics is divided into five sections: "Abortion," "Mental Illness," "Human Experimentation," "Human Genetics," and "Dying." Approximately one-half of the authors are professional philosophers, approximately one-third of the authors are physicians, and the remaining authors are a mixture of lawyers, theologians, a judge, and some of unspecified academic affiliation. Whether or not it makes sense to refer to bioethics as an autonomous discipline (a problem raised in a most useful introductory essay by Daniel Callahan), two facts about this collection of essays stand out: (1) it is a rather large collection (30 essays) and the editors have provided useful and extensive bibliographies with each section; (2) almost all of the essays and most of the items cited in the bibliographies have been published since 1970. I say that these facts stand out because it is clear that bioethics has become a major, if not *the* major academic growth industry of the 1970s. Interdisciplinary courses in bioethics are springing up everywhere, a new first-rate academic journal (*The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*) has appeared, and, of course, doctoral dissertations are now being written on such subjects.

I shall leave it to the sociologists of knowledge to investigate the causes of this development. The fact of the development is clear. The impact of the efforts of philosophers to deal with such problems is, however, somewhat less clear. Whether or not their belief is defensible, one cannot escape the impression that physicians and lawyers (or legislators) do not believe that professional philosophers can be of much assistance to them. Their analyses are often thought to be provocative, challenging, and thoughtful—and perhaps that is as it should be at this stage of the game. But will such analyses ever

be regarded as more than that? The jury is still out.

**T**HE intended audience of this collection is not entirely clear. Although it goes without saying that any such collection contains articles of uneven quality, this is an impressive collection. The editors' introductory remarks would not be of much assistance to undergraduate students, but I would think that the collection is nevertheless accessible to a group of upper-level undergraduates. There is a noticeable asymmetry among the kinds of problems discussed in this collection. The section on abortion, for example, focuses on an interesting moral and legal issue, but abortion is hardly an interesting *medical* problem. In addition, several selections have been reprinted in several places. The section on mental illness is less concerned with problems of medical practice than with whether or not mental disorders are problems of medical practice at all. This section would seem to be of the most interest to psychologists, but there is not much new here, although Macklin's piece, "Mental Health and Mental Illness: Some Problems of Definition and Concept Formation," will help psychologists to go beyond the arguments of Szasz and the attacks upon him.

The section on human experimentation is perhaps the most interesting and most important. Beecher's "Ethics and Clinical Research" not only provides a fascinating catalogue of morally troublesome experimental situations, but offers a provocative remedy. Beecher suggests that just as the exclusionary evidence rule in criminal cases precludes the introduction of evidence that is illegally obtained, medical findings that have been improperly obtained, however valid, should not be accepted for publication. Fletcher's analysis of patient consent to medical research points out that traditional notions of consent lose their viability in the medical context in which patients are vulnerable and apt to place considerable faith in medical authorities. There may be no satisfactory resolution to the problem. Although the potential benefits of systematic experimentation are

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Editors

ALCOHOLISM:

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TO AN ENDURING PROBLEM

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Reviewed by

Marc A. Schuckit, M.D.

This edited text of twenty-two chapters attempts to present a comprehensive discussion of causes, manifestations, and treatment of alcoholism. Alcoholism: Interdisciplinary Approaches to an Enduring Problem comes closer to fulfilling this impossible task than any other text yet to appear. Most chapters are clearly written and well referenced making them relevant to both researchers and clinicians. The topics are diverse, and, while not covering "all of alcoholism," they are a good place to start reviewing. Such a text is needed in the field.

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Schuckit, M. Alcoholism and sociopathy -- Diagnostic Confusion. Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 1973, 34, 157-164.

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