

Saturday Review

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BIG CITY SCHOOLS II PITTSBURGH: THE VIRTUES OF CANDOR

By Peter Schrag

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Sex in the Laboratory

An Analysis of Human Sexual Response, edited by Ruth and Edward Brecher (Little, Brown. 318 pp. Hardbound, \$5.95. Signet. Paperback, 75¢), *Understanding the Sexual Response in Humans: Containing a Critical Review of the Masters-Johnson Research*, by Allan Fromme, Ph.D. (Pocket Books. 79 pp. Paperback, \$1), and *What You Should Know About Human Sexual Response*, by Julius Fast (Berkley Medallion. 167 pp. Paperback, 75¢), provide in layman's English a skeleton key to a unique study in medical history. George Krupp, M.D., who is past president of the Nassau Neuropsychiatric Society, is a practicing psychoanalyst in Rockville Centre, New York.

By GEORGE KRUPP

THERE has never been a society or a culture, primitive or advanced, that has not been profoundly concerned with the sexual relationships of man and woman. At times, as in the Victorian era, this interest expressed itself by "protesting too much": its very denial of the value and importance of sex was a reflection of a deep though fearful concern.

At other times, as today, the concern is openly evident and graphically expressed. There are those who believe that it is too open, too graphic, too clinical—in a phrase, that we are too intent on studying man as an animal instead of as a human being.

Few psychoanalysts, if any, would agree; I certainly do not. The body/soul division is an artificial one. Human sexuality is not something separate, a part of man's "animal" nature, whatever that may be, and love is not part of his "spiritual" nature, whatever that may be (the recent book by Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*, gives us astonishing images of love and loyalty among animals). Nowhere in the Socratic injunction to "know thyself" is there a postscript that says "except in the sexual function, because it's too embarrassing." The physiology of sex is not only a suitable subject of study; medically and psychoanalytically it is an essential subject.

THE most recent study, and one that is unique in medical history, is the work of William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson of the Reproductive Biology Research Foundation in St. Louis. Their findings were published under the title *Human Sexual Response*. This work could only have been undertaken in our day. Without the modern instruments used in the laboratory, the scientific observations of physiological changes would have been impossible. Without the enlightened social attitudes required by researchers and participants alike, the experiments would not have taken place. Without the present freedom of public discussion, the Masters-Johnson study could not be properly evaluated and disseminated.

Most authorities agree that the study has already yielded important new information and new therapeutic tools which will immeasurably improve the medical training of the American physi-

cian. It may also help him in coping with the sexual problems of his patients, particularly frigidity in females and impotence in males. In addition it gives him more reliable knowledge about sterility, contraception, sex during pregnancy and during the later years of life, and the physiology of sexual activity in individuals with heart disease.

Of what value to the general public is the work of Dr. Masters and Mrs. Johnson? One answer has been given by Dr. Mary S. Calderone, executive director of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), who said: "The Masters-Johnson research, I am convinced, can help society take a giant step toward the day when human sexuality . . . can be openly and freely taught—to the children and young people who need such insight so desperately, and to their parents who need it even more."

OF more immediate and specific importance is the fact that *Human Sexual Response* has finally discredited, once and for all, several myths that have long been part of the American folklore of sex. These include the fallacy that sexual prowess is related to the size of the organ, the fallacy that sexual activity must discontinue with old age, the fallacy that the woman experiences two different types of orgasm (vaginal and clitoral), and the fallacy that the female is limited to a single orgasm, which produces satiety.

Unfortunately, *Human Sexual Response* was written in such esoteric language that even physicians must make a considerable effort to understand what is being said. (Surely this is the most unread book ever to appear on the best-seller list!) As a result, three books have appeared whose goal it is to translate the Masters-Johnson research into layman's English. Two are available in paperback only: *What You Should Know About Human Sexual Response*, by Julius Fast, and *Understanding the Sexual Response in Humans*, by Allan Fromme. The third book, *An Analysis of Human Sexual Response*, edited by Ruth and Edward Brecher, is available both in paperback and hard cover.

Of the three, the best is that of the Brechers. They have put together the most complete and authoritative treatment of the subject. Not only do they present excellent coverage of the Masters-Johnson study, but they have brought other material to bear on the subject. This includes an anthropologist's report on sexual patterns in a Southwest Pacific society, an excellent essay on frigidity, discussions of marriage counseling with the sexually maladjusted, an analysis of the sex problems of the aging, and—as evidence of the Brechers' laudable objectivity—a psychi-



also help him in coping with problems of his patients, parity in females and impotence. In addition it gives him knowledge about sterility, timing pregnancy and late years of life, and the sexual activity in individual disease.

Due to the general public's interest, Dr. Masters and Mrs. Johnson has been given by Dr. Derone, executive director of Information and Education in the United States (SIECUS). The Masters-Johnson study, convinced, can help society step toward the day when "sexuality . . . can be openly and honestly discussed to the children and young people who need such insight so that they can relate to their parents who need it."

Immediate and specific in the fact that *Human Sexual Response* is finally discredited, once several myths that have long been a part of the American folklore are dispelled: the fallacy that sexual activity ceases with old age, the fallacy that the female woman experiences two types of orgasm (vaginal and clitoral) and the fallacy that the female has a single orgasm, which produces a "high."

Human Sexual Response is such an esoteric book that even physicians must make a considerable effort to understand it. (Surely this is the best book ever to appear on the shelves!) As a result, three books have been written whose goal it is to translate the Masters-Johnson research into plain English. Two are available in paperback: *What You Should Know About Sexual Response*, by Judith S. Masters and Virginia Johnson, and *Understanding the Sexual Response of Humans*, by Allan Fromme. The third book, *An Analysis of Human Sexual Response*, edited by Ruth S. Masters and John H. Brecher, is available both in paperback and hard cover.

In my opinion, the best is that of the Brechers. They have put together the best and most authoritative treatment of the subject. Not only do they give excellent coverage of the Masters-Johnson study, but they have gathered together material to bear on the subject. This includes an anthropological study on sexual patterns in a Pacific society, an excellent discussion of the rigidity of marriage, a discussion of the relationship between the sexually maladjusted and the sex problems of the young, and—as evidence of the study's laudable objectivity—a psych-

iatrist's highly controversial critique of the experiments.

Mr. and Mrs. Brecher give an interesting account of the background of the sex research project. Their calm, sensible treatment of several aspects of the study may do a great deal to dispel the almost involuntary revulsion experienced by most people when they first learn of the nature of the experiments. Much has been made, for example, of the fact that Dr. Masters and Mrs. Johnson observed and measured the physiological responses during sex relations of men and women who had not previously known one another. The reason for this, the Brechers explain, is that consistent physiological response patterns had been discovered when married couples were the subjects—but this left the question of whether the uniform responses were simply the result of long familiarity and mutual accommodation. The only way to test the reliability of these findings was to determine if similar patterns would occur with couples who were not married and did not know each other. As soon as the answer became clear (the same patterns were found), this particular study ended.

LIKE the Brechers, author Julius Fast uses the Masters-Johnson study as a springboard for an extensive commentary on the general subject of sex. In doing this, he draws heavily on cross-cultural references and refers occasionally to appropriate studies of animal behavior. Fast, editor of the *Ob-Gyn Observer*, succeeds in explaining and amplifying the Masters-Johnson research with exactness and simplicity. His clarity of language and his relaxed style of writing make the book an excellent one for people who lack much of a background in the field. In addition, Fast continually raises questions which he believes Masters and Johnson have not yet answered, or when he believes their emphasis has been misplaced or misdirected (as, for example, in their efforts to correlate clitoral size with female sexual adequacy).

Psychoanalyst Allan Fromme is more critical than Fast or the Brechers in his treatment of the Masters-Johnson study, and his views are based primarily on his experience as a clinician. He says, for instance, that "the people chosen by Masters and Johnson for their research were more highly sexually oriented or driven than the population at large." But Masters and Johnson were well aware that their 694 subjects were not representative of the population at large; they themselves are explicit on the point and state clearly that their findings are meant to be indicative, not definitive. Because of research requirements, their sample was purposely weighted in being of above-average intelligence and a higher

socio-economic background. This was done for two reasons. One was to enlist the help of people who would not only understand the nature of the study and the reason behind it, but who could also express themselves articulately. The other was the availability of this type of individual, since the study was carried out in an academic community.

Fromme also says the study "tells us not at all how deep and powerful an influence sex is on our behavior." But Johnson and Masters never intended to answer the psychological questions Fromme poses. Scientific research must have rigorous standards to follow in order to insure that the methodology tests the hypothesis it sets out to test, not something else. Masters and Johnson focused their study entirely on "defining and describing the gross physical changes which develop during the human male's and female's sexual response cycles." To this extent, their study is valid. To disagree with them on this point, as Fromme does, is to shift the conceptual framework in the research hypothesis. The fact that their work is reliable—repeated studies produced similar results—is enhanced by their use of accepted techniques of measuring physiologic responses.

At another point Fromme takes issue with the finding of a difference between men and women in the time of sexual response. He says that the difference may be important in the prize ring or at a track meet, but "twenty-five seconds hardly seems to matter when making love." This biological difference in response to stimulation, however, may be important in recognizing some of the subsequent emotional reactions which are different in men and women—or it may not be. But Fromme is correct,

in my opinion, in pointing out that it "might be ill-advised to toss aside the old admonitions about patience."

Fromme's book, though somewhat limited, is provocative and well worth reading as the expression of another viewpoint.

All three authors—Fromme, Fast, and the Brechers—make evident their respect for the objectivity and dedication of Dr. Masters and Mrs. Johnson in their scientific quest of the truth about human sexuality. All three authors—if Fromme to a lesser extent—acknowledge that Dr. Masters and Mrs. Johnson are certainly aware that the source of the human sexual urge is both psychological and physical, as is every emotion. But in *Human Sexual Response* they wrote only about what they set out to measure: the human body's reaction to sex. What they showed was that the response was physiologically the same whether through self-stimulation or with homosexual or heterosexual relations. In addition, as Fast notes, "the crux of Masters and Johnson's work on women's ability to respond to orgasm seems to boil down to the fact that all women are capable of having an orgasm."

Knowledge of this kind is vitally important for the further investigation of psychological components. In the long run these findings will confirm and add to psychoanalytic theory. Undoubtedly they and others in the future will be able to deal more fully with the emotions of sexual response: not only the various fantasies but love, tenderness, affection, and morality. Such an approach, it may be hoped, will come from Dr. Masters and Mrs. Johnson, who are clearly pioneering in that part of the study of man which has been, for an unconscionably long time, the dark side of the moon.

Leslie Aumaire

By Harold Witt

FEW in my school understood Leslie Aumaire, who plucked and penciled his eyebrows and dyed his hair and dared the difference it takes to be a dancer—in that night dark of my school not many cared for any attempt at art if we didn't have to and wouldn't go near the edge where his feet veered.

We booed him offstage that time he came dancing on with a painted face, in a tight ridiculous costume, after which I don't think he ever came back—for us Swan Lake was someplace on the moon and Leslie, if not a fairy, at least a freak—who else would whirl with girls all afternoon

when bullshouldered helmeted heroes cleated the field? I never found out what happened to Leslie Aumaire—snickered from school, he may have left for the city and danced into crime or into the limelight there—but few of us stopped to remember, and less to pity a boy who practiced what we could only desire.