

Journal of Psychiatry should see fit to publish a comparatively favourable review of the book by W. H. Masters and V. E. Johnson entitled *Human Sexual Response* (*Journal*, February, 1968, p. 259). Concerning the ethical aspect of the experiments described, each of us must decide for himself. To me they represent such a degradation of the human spirit as to alarm me for the future of our cultural heritage.

Concerning the uselessness of the results obtained there should be no hesitation. Your reviewer describes the object of the enquiry as an investigation into "what physical reactions develop as the human male and female respond to effectual sexual stimulation, and why do men and women behave as they do when responding?" Experiments in which prostitutes are encouraged to masturbate in public, and paid volunteers to copulate before observers cannot answer these questions. (Do these questions really need to be asked?) Normal coitus is an expression of love between two human beings, and privacy and respect for each other is of its essence.

The authors claim that the participants in their experiments only differed from the general population in having a "basic interest in and desire for effectiveness in sexual performance". This is manifestly untrue. The "general population" share this interest but have more sense and decency than to volunteer for such exhibitions.

Most of us know that intercourse can and does become a more joyous and wonderful experience, but this comes from a life shared together with increasing love and loyalty to each other. A preoccupation with physiological details is one way of stultifying this natural development and remaining at an adolescent stage.

I do not know whether your reviewer or the authors of the book will consider this letter worth answering. But if they do, I would ask them before replying to read, and ponder, two sonnets of Shakespeare's: one begins with the line:

"The expense of spirit in a waste of shame."

The other:

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments."

In these matters the poets are better teachers than physiologists.

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DEAR SIR,

In his letter about my review of *Human Sexual Response*, Dr. Drury complains that the results reported in the book are useless. It could indeed be argued that they

have little immediate value in psychiatric practice, but is this not a narrow yardstick of merit in research? Dr. Masters and Mrs. Johnson have, with sensitive regard to technical difficulties and to ethical objections by others, established a method of studying human sexual function which complements (or transcends) those of personal introspection and anecdotal inquiry. The text of their book makes it clear that the authors were well aware of sampling problems and of the fact that these were not fully solved.

Relevant psychological studies are needed to make the reported observations more useful to the psychiatrist. In the meantime, the anatomical and physiological findings already available are likely to be of direct value to doctors who have to advise patients on such matters as the optimum mechanical conditions for impregnation, or the risks of sexual activity during pregnancy or by hypertensive men. These are prosaic questions, but they need to be answered, and the poets cannot help us with them. The contents of *Human Sexual Response* appear to me as technological advances, which like the now respected Kinsey Report can do our cultural heritage no harm.

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PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES FOR THE DEAF

DEAR SIR,

Following Dr. Denmark's letter in your last issue I wish to apologise for the serious omission I made in not mentioning his clinic. I think it is the only unit in the country which is treating deaf psychiatric patients, and I know Dr. Denmark has been pioneering this work for many years.

It seems impossible to impress the Ministry of Health with the importance of this aspect of psychiatry, although there are many potentially employable and treatable patients who are languishing for lack of treatment facilities.

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NATURE, NURTURE OR JUST HAPPENINGS

DEAR SIR,

Whatever else one may think of the complex scene of contemporary psychiatry, one has had a glimpse of