



Pseudoscience in Biological Psychiatry: Blaming the Body

Colin A. Ross, Alvin Pam

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Lately, it seems that not a day passes without the media proclaiming yet another sensational breakthrough in the search for the physical origins of mental illness. But beyond all the fanfare and media hype, is there a single shred of hard, empirical evidence to substantiate the existence of "a gene for alcoholism," or "the brain chemistry behind schizophrenia"? More to the point, in fact, is it scientifically sound to limit the search for the roots of mental illness to processes occurring within the body, while dismissing socioeconomic, familial, and experiential influences as, at best, mere "triggering mechanisms"? And, if not, what harm is being done by psychiatry's current obsession with these somatic chimeras? This groundbreaking book offers answers to those questions and more. While Dr. Ross and Professor Pam clearly assert from the outset that biological psychiatry "is dominated by a reductionist ideology which distorts and misrepresents much of its research," this is by no means a raw polemic voiced by an overzealous opposition. Instead, it is a reasoned discourse based on a clear-sighted and methodical examination of the professional literature. Contributors to this volume include distinguished researchers and clinicians from the fields of psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and psychopharmacology. Their common purpose in coming together was to alert the mental health community to the ideological blind spots and conceptual errors in the basic logic and methodology of biological psychiatry, to demonstrate the need for a more scientifically based psychiatric practice, and to suggest alternative approaches to understanding and treating mental illness. Readers will find their arguments stimulating, provocative, and highly persuasive. Among the cutting-edge issues they explore are: the historical origins of biological psychiatry; genetics and mental illness; the current state of psychiatric training; psychopharmacology and drug therapy; the public health, legal, and ethical implications of biological psychiatry; and the funding, power, and politics of research. This book is essential reading for all mental health professionals. It also has many important things to say to health care administrators, political analysts, and public policy-makers. Of related interest ...I NSANITY The Idea and Its Consequences Thomas Szasz In this provocative book, Dr. Thomas Szasz, one of the most celebrated and controversial psychiatric thinkers of our time, presents a carefully crafted, systematic analysis of the precise character and practical consequences of the idea of mental illness. His findings and opinions have captured the attention of organized psychiatry and given everyone concerned with the human condition a better understanding of this almost universally misunderstood "disease." 1990 (0-471-52534-0) 432 pp. CRUEL COMPASSION Psychiatric Control of Society's Unwanted Thomas Szasz Cruel Compassion is the capstone of Thomas Szasz's critique of psychiatric practices. Reexamining psychiatric interventions from a cultural-historical and political-economic perspective, Szasz demonstrates that the main problem that faces mental health policymakers today is adult dependency. He gives us a sobering look at some of our most cherished notions about our humane treatment of society's unwanted and about ourselves as a compassionate and democratic people. 1994 (0-471-01012-X) 260 pp.

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