

women who kill. The perspective offered is narrow in some parts, and the topics covered are limited. Those that are considered, however, are generally explored thoroughly.

Overall, I do not feel that this is a useful book for trainees, unless they have a particular interest in the psychodynamic understanding of violent, disturbed women. Even with that interest, the reader, particularly if a trainee, should be aware of the controversial nature of some of the views presented and the significance of material omitted.

Motz states that her aim had been to present a range of cases of female violence and to offer a model for understanding these cases. I believe that she has achieved this, and, if one is aware of the book's limitations, one will not be disappointed. Issues relating to female violence and allied service developments are extremely topical at this time, and there is increasing interest in the psychopathology of women who offend. To a certain extent, this book has missed the opportunity offered by such interest but it still gives a fascinating, although limited, insight into women's mental health.

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### Prophets, Cults and Madness

By Anthony Stevens & John Price.  
London: Duckworth. 2000. 246 pp. £18.00  
(hb). ISBN 0 7156 2940 9

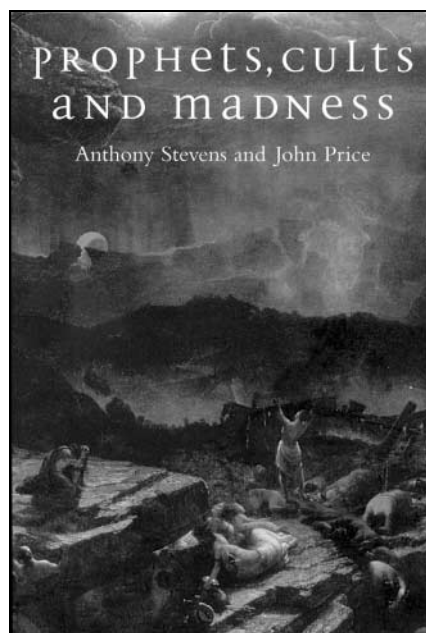
Ultra-Darwinists think that anything biological that exists must be advantageous to the survival of an organism or at least to the propagation of its genes, or at the very least must once have been so. And this, of course, includes anything 'psychobiological'. This Panglossian viewpoint none the less imposes a duty on its adherents to demonstrate the alleged advantage. And with a little ingenuity it can usually be done. Even if you do not believe, as Stevens & Price do, that psychology and psychiatry have been revolutionised in the past decade by the advent of evolutionism, and that as a result we now 'have a pretty good idea' why people become depressed, phobic, jealous and sadomasochistic, their attempt

to explain the 'survival' of schizophrenia is a *tour de force*.

Incomplete penetrance and phenotypic plasticity allow the existence of the famous *formes frustes* of schizophrenia. So the same nasty genes that determine the negative symptoms – lethargy, emotional blunting and suchlike – can, in certain circumstances (note the environment creeping in), turn the positive symptoms – hallucinations and delusions – into creative innovation and charismatic leadership.

Stevens & Price do not argue that biblical prophets or modern cult leaders such as David Koresh of the Branch Davidians had schizophrenia: only that they were 'schizophrenicish'. Such people often arise in situations of economic hardship or social instability and tend to attract the downcast and the disaffected. They preach with apocalyptic vision and succeed in commanding extraordinary loyalty from their followers, even to the point of sexual slavery and human self-sacrifice. Moreover, the force of their personal conviction, however bizarre, becomes the focus for a breakaway society to be formed. They may provide the impetus for a revitalisation of culture. Therefore, unlike those categorised as having schizophrenia, they have a higher than average chance of spreading their genes.

But if, as Stevens & Price tell us, the prophecies of cult leaders are rarely innovative and usually consist of an amalgam of preexisting religious clichés, it is difficult to see how they could revitalise anything. I begin to get lost. Certainly I have failed to

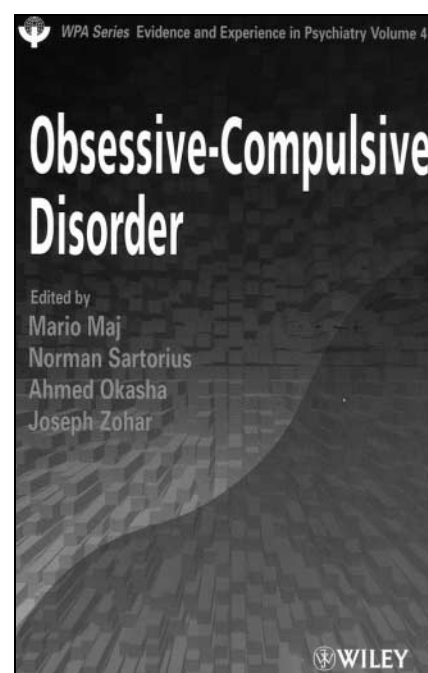


do justice to the authors' scholarship, their synthesis of the relevant literature and their nicely written text. I do recommend you read the book for yourself.

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### Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Edited by Mario Maj, Norman Sartorius, Ahmed Okasha & Joseph Zohar. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2000. 308 pp. £60.00 (hb). ISBN 0 471 87163 X



This book is part of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) series on *Evidence and Experience in Psychiatry*. Two years ago the WPA undertook to produce a review of areas of psychiatry in which there have been significant advances of knowledge, with the view that bringing together worldwide experts to review the current research evidence would result in further improvements in the provision of care. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is one of the chosen areas. Over the past 20 years there has been a burgeoning interest in OCD, resulting from the recognition that it is not the extremely rare disorder it was once thought to be. Indeed, it has a worldwide prevalence of about 2% in the adult population, making it the fourth most common psychiatric disorder.

The book consists of six review chapters, written by international experts in OCD. Each review is followed by commentaries written by other experts in the field. A strength of these commentaries is that the authors often add to the reviews by describing further research or current practice in their own countries. This enables the reader to gain a truly worldwide perspective on some of the issues.

The first chapter, on diagnosis, summarises important aspects such as demographic features, classification and a typical course of the disorder and outlines the various assessment tools that are available. The following two chapters, on treatment, provide compelling evidence for the efficacy of both the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and cognitive-behavioural therapy involving exposure and response prevention (E/RP). We are reminded that the challenge is both to ensure the wider provision of these effective treatments and also to remain aware of newer techniques under evaluation (such as the integrating of greater cognitive components for those patients reluctant to participate in E/RP or who have predominantly obsessional ruminations).

The chapter on the impact of OCD in children and adolescents is a very useful inclusion. Findings from retrospective

studies have shown that 30–50% of adult patients with OCD had the onset of their symptoms during childhood or adolescence. Although the long-term outcome of childhood-onset OCD remains uncertain, there is increasing evidence that treatments similar to those used with adult patients may substantially help children to resume a normal developmental trajectory.

A chapter on the economics of OCD really only draws our attention to the paucity of work in this area. However, in our current climate of scarce resources, it reminds clinicians that there is already clear evidence for the cost-effectiveness of current therapeutic interventions for OCD, given the huge emotional and financial burden that the disorder places on society.

It is Hollander & Rosen's review of obsessive-compulsive spectrum disorders (OCSs) that generates the most varied discussion. They construe OCSs on a compulsive-impulsive dimension. Obsessive-compulsive disorder is therefore linked with a whole range of other disorders, such as pathological gambling, disorders where there is an exaggerated preoccupation with appearance, weight or bodily sensations, and neurological disorders with repetitive behaviours (e.g. Tourette syndrome and Sydenham's chorea). The authors propose that further confirmation for links with

these disorders is their preferential response to SSRIs and behavioural therapy. On the whole, the commentators agree that there is value in the notion of a spectrum of disorders but there is a good deal of argument about the extent of disorders included. For example, with regard to the hypothesis of the preferential response to SSRIs, some reviewers point out that not all the disorders included respond to SSRIs in the same way and that, using this rubric, additional disorders such as anxiety and depression, could be included, which do respond favourably.

In my opinion, the editors have succeeded in putting together a book that reviews the current state of thinking in OCD. Each chapter review is concise and well-written, summarising current research findings and clinical practice and pinpointing areas for future research. The only problem with books of this nature is that they quite quickly become out of date but I would recommend this text as an excellent starting point for any health professional or policy-maker interested in finding out more about this disorder.

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