

 **BOOK NOTE**

VICTOR, GEORGE. *The Riddle of Autism*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., 1983. Pp. xv + 335. \$29.95.

For several years I have been privileged to work in an informal consultative way with the finest treatment facility for autistic persons in this country, the Behavior Research Institute (BRI). Like Victor, I have been puzzled by the etiology of autism. And like Victor and most people I know who treat autistic persons, I have come to believe that there is a strong biological component to this condition.

Victor searches the writings of parents of autistic children as well as the scientific literature for clues to just what autism is and how it develops. His consideration of cultural variables (e.g., abandonment of infants as in Moses in the bulrushes has been associated with the development of greatness in the child) and his unerring focus on the functional meaning of the bizarre and disturbing behaviors of autistic persons make for a thorough and thought-provoking book.

The only disappointment is that Victor does not consider the results of successful treatment of autistic behaviors as clues to the nature of autism. Data gathered at BRI and other treatment sites provide confirmation for some of Victor's ideas and further food for thought.

Victor's book is well worth reading for the fact that he places autism firmly in the complex fabric of the culture. He uncovers no easy answers and he does direct the reader toward a broader set of variables than generally considered when dealing with abnormal behavior patterns. (*Donna M. Cone, Rhode Island State Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals*)