criticisms which are at once rigorous and fair.

An introductory chapter outlines the issues both of personal morality and of public policy which lie behind the abortion debate. Sumner rightly identifies as the central problem whether and in what sense fetuses must be said to have a moral standing. He is well aware that it is far from easy to give a consistent and acceptable account of moral standing, and he wisely insists that any such account should be applicable to moral issues generally as well as to the particular range of problems with which he is concerned. This issue dominates the first four chapters of the book, and the clarity with which Sumner examines this question seems to me to be the principal merit of his book.

The second and third chapters set out, and in the end reject, both the liberal view that no fetuses have moral standing (or, in a weaker form, that no pre-viable fetus has moral standing), and the conservative view that all fetuses have full moral standing. He contends that the liberal view cannot convincingly explain why birth (or viability) should be such a significant point so far as acquisition of moral standing is concerned, and that the conservative view cannot make any better case for the significance of the moment of conception. In the course of his argument many other moral issues are discussed including the nature of moral rights; the various possible criteria for moral standing; the principle of double effect, and the relationship between the morality of abortion and the morality of self-defence.

Sumner concludes that the failure of both positions derives from their shared assumption that *all* fetuses must have the *same* moral standing. Accordingly, his own middle way is to explore the possibility of denying this assumption, adopting instead a principle of moral standing which might differentiate between fetuses at various stages of their development. He concludes that the possession of sentience is the most reasonable basis for the attribution of moral standing. On the basis of neurophysiology, he holds that fetuses possess sentience certainly by the end of the second trimester, and certainly not before the beginning of that trimester. Accordingly, the crucial range for differentiating between fetuses falls in the second trimester.

The remainder of the book contains a more technical discussion of moral theory generally. Though Sumner's intention here is to provide a general

theory which would ground his views on abortion, moral philosophers would find his discussion interesting and original in its own right. It is to be hoped that those who would seek to defend a more liberal or a more conservative position than Sumner's will emulate the honesty and dispassionate objectivity which he brings to a discussion in which these virtues are all too often lacking.

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Changing Patterns in Conception and Fertility

D F Roberts and R Chester
Academic Press, London,
£10.40 (\$25.00)

This book makes fascinating reading. It is composed of twelve chapters, written by leading authorities, being the edited text of their lectures given at the 16th Annual Symposium of the Eugenics Society, held in September 1979.

The first section relates to fertility in its demographic context, highlighting the different problems in South America and the West and providing some explanation for the changes that have occurred.

Three chapters on the control of fertility will prove particularly interesting and useful for all those working in the field of family planning. Not only are the changes in contraceptive practice described but the risk/benefit considerations of the various methods currently available are expertly summarised in the light of present knowledge.

Some hope for the near future for improvement in contraceptive measures is presented clearly and critically in a chapter by Dr Howard Jacob. The extreme difficulty of introducing new methods, however, is also emphasised. Not only do there seem to be psychological difficulties in accepting the principle of Man controlling his fertility, demonstrated by those who campaign against contemporary methods stressing only their negative aspects, but many bureaucratic and financial influences also impede progress. Meanwhile the population explosion continues.

The newly-developing field of early detection of congenital abnormalities by the use of ultrasound and other screening measures is presented in a most

encouraging manner: there is a real possibility that the numbers of seriously affected babies born may be reduced.

The chapter by Hawkins devoted to the effects of drugs in pregnancy and lactation is extremely comprehensive and helpful and provides a valuable guide for those clinicians who may need to prescribe under these conditions. An extensive list of references is included.

New problems encountered in contemporary society are faced in chapters on AID, teenage pregnancy, and the older parent. It is a pity, however, that no reference is made to the contraceptive problems of the older woman, nor any guidance given.

Well written, up-to-date and informative, this book is to be recommended for all clinicians working in any area of family planning (using the phrase in its widest sense to include infertility) as well as for demographers, social scientists and public health officials.

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Legal Issues in Medicine

Sheila A M McLean
Gower Publishing Company Ltd,
Aldershot, Hants
£13.50

This collection of essays, of which more are by lawyers than doctors, certainly adds to the debate on difficult ethical questions as was its editor's intention.

Some repetition was perhaps inevitable, but more stringent editing would have spared the reader being taken over the same ground and being referred at length to the same case on a number of occasions. The references at the end of each chapter are full and informative, but do not in my view excuse the lack of an index.

The book is wholly Scottish but this should not deter the reader whose knowledge of Scots law may be minimal. Distinctions are clearly stated and in any event the book is more concerned with principles than with details of legislation or procedure. There should then be an appeal to all interested in medico-legal and ethical matters, but the appeal will be stronger to the lawyer and the law student than to the doctor, reflecting the predominance of legal contributors.

Indeed the doctor is unlikely to find himself in agreement with many of the views expressed. Do doctors accept that they get preferential treatment in negligence actions? Or do they see themselves in a class of their own when it comes to contrasting the conditions under which they are required to work, and the standards they are required to achieve?

'It is', we read 'perhaps regrettable that the final step of prescribing treatment lies in the hands of the doctor . . .'. However, no alternative is put forward.

Much is said about the pharmaceutical industry, but only as regards its profits and the potential harm of its products. Tighter controls and strict liability are recommended and even, if one can conceive of it, 'Independent Government controlled centres'. How many doctors accept that research and development would flourish in such a monopolistic environment?

Doctors who read the chapter on medical progress and the law may be forgiven if they conclude that therapeutic progress for the patient and legal safety for the doctor are mutually incompatible concepts.

For me, the outstanding chapter was that by Professor Ferguson-Smith on medical genetics and the law, and further references to this subject served but to highlight the essential difference between the medical and the legal approach. In the former the needs and welfare of the patient are clearly dominant, whilst repeatedly, the legal contribution seems to place legal precedence ahead of all other considerations.

Printing errors are few, but contradictions, real or apparent, occur. On page 150 we are told 'Every year many children are born in the United Kingdom suffering from congenital defects but despite advances in medical science and technology it is often impossible to pin down the major cause of such disabilities'. Three pages later we learn that 'causation is therefore comparatively simple. . .'. Again, on page 164, on the subject of artificial insemination I read with surprise 'The doctor should say something about the donors, who they are. . .'. I had however, but to proceed to the next page to be reassured that 'The doctor will regard himself as being under an obligation not to reveal the donor's identity. . .'.

However, although there is much with which the doctor may disagree and much he may feel to have been given a one-sided presentation, this book demonstrates to him the view

of the academic lawyer, a view which cannot be dismissed, remote though it may seem from the clinician's daily round.

I would recommend then the purchase of the next edition or reprint when surely the typeface must be altered. In its present form the book imposes a severe strain on retinæ and resolution.

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Shaping Tomorrow

Home Division of the Methodist Church, London

£1.50 (plus 50p postage)

Public attitudes to the development of science and technology fluctuate. Two decades ago, with the marked rise in living standards and the glamour of landing men on the moon, it was one of relative euphoria. Today, in the midst of economic recession combined with inflation and the invention of smaller and more accurate nuclear weapons – which has made their use more likely – the public attitude has changed to one of foreboding that the development has got out of control. This report is a call for boldness in responsible risk-taking. In the first instance it is addressed to Christians, and part of it is an effort to provide a clear lay person's account of the Christian faith, how it can be held in a world of science and technology, and why it should encourage the taking of risks. The Church, it says, allowed the first Industrial Revolution to pass it by and is in danger of missing the boat again.

The report is an attempt at *haute vulgarisation* at the level of readers of quality newspapers, and it is very successful. It is the product of four working parties, who kept in touch with each other as they laboured for two and a half years. The first working party dealt with 'Technology of Living Things'. The main topics are human reproduction, including genetic engineering, and Man's relation to nature, with special reference to 'factory farming'. Readers of this journal are likely to need this section least. The second group dealt with 'Energy and material resources; the case of Nuclear Power'; the third with 'The Age of Electronics' (computers and microprocessors), and the fourth with 'The Social and Ethical Problems of Work and Unemployment in Technological Society', raising ques-

tions of work, wealth and rewards. There is a glossary of technical terms, a considerable bibliography, and sets of questions for discussion.

The level of technical competence is high, and it is a useful production because few people are at home in all four areas, and indeed it is not easy to be up to date in any of them. The report is moderately written and frequently draws attention to the possibility of other points of view. It is produced in magazine format (30 centimetres × 20), which makes it less easy than a book to keep on one's shelves; if it were a book it would be stocked by booksellers, but it is well worth the trouble of getting by post.

The names of thirty-eight collaborators are given. Of these only four are ordained and none is a moral theologian. No less than 12 come from the UK Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell and five more are employed by British Nuclear Fuels, so that it is not surprising that whereas on many issues the report raises questions but does not itself come down on one side, on nuclear fuel it comes to the firm conclusion that 'there are risks associated with the use of nuclear energy, as with everything else, but these have been very carefully evaluated, are not very big, and are not at all out of scale compared with risks of other energy sources and other ordinary hazards'. It passes too quickly over the dangers of the commercial fast breeder reactor and the permanent disposal of nuclear wastes, and it minimises other sources of energy (except coal) without drawing attention to the small amount of resources devoted to research on them as compared with nuclear energy. Nothing is said as to where work on nuclear fusion has reached.

No economist or sociologist is mentioned among the 38 names quoted. In view of this the chapter on work and unemployment is surprisingly good in its general direction but it needs to come to grips more precisely with the problems of the transition of an advanced industrial society to a service society. Also, questions of the relationship of the relatively wealthy to the poor countries crop up from time to time but are not integrated into the main discussion. There is no trace of the 'small is beautiful' point of view; I am sceptical of much of it, but it does call for evaluation.

There was only one trade unionist in this strong scientific and professional team, so it is with a smile that I read that 'relentless pressure from organised labour' made employers pay out more