

dilemmas that general practitioners are frequently faced with, it admirably fulfils the task. The discussions of cases are enlightening, and will contribute to raising the quality of debate about ethical issues in general practice.

The book's introduction includes the sentence:

'Family physicians should become accustomed to considering the ethical aspects of their practice as routinely as they consider the biomedical, psychological and social dimensions'.

This book is a worthy contribution to that campaign and should help raise the ethical consciousness of general practitioners.

It deserves to be widely read.

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## The Human/Animal Connection

Randall L Eaton, editor, 90 A4 pages, \$20, Sierra Nevada College Press and the journal *Carnivore: Interfacing Biology, Anthropology and Environmental Studies*, 1985.

This excellent collection of essays provides the reader with 'something new and something old' in the way we see the other animals that share this planet with us.

Randall Eaton, who edits the work, captures the essence of all the essays in his opening paragraph:

'The threat of global war and the equally dismal ecological problems have one origin: humanity . . . . As the dominant species, every one of our global problems comes back to human greed or selfishness, soluble only by greater co-operation'.

In discussing how man came to be the most competitively successful species that ever lived, Dr Eaton discusses one or two novel hypotheses. For example, that virtually the whole of human culture owes its existence to 'man the hunter'. Thus early man's imitation of the animal to deceive it when being hunted provided us with the faculties by which we make and transmit culture. Weapons were among the first musical instruments and song originates, not only from imitating animal sounds, but from using voice to announce one's presence in advance. Dance, drama and

mime also have a common origin in the imitation of animals' movements.

Gary Snyder, in his essay, 'Poetry and the Magic of Animals', comments on the 'wildness' of animals:

'A relationship with an animal that has been domesticated is very different from meeting with a being that is a complete subject, fully free, self-managing, self-complete, self-aware'.

Charles Cameron, a poet rather than a scientist, takes us back in time to retell the stories of the North American Redman, that great family of many tribes who were at one with all living forces and who knew and accepted the oneness of all life.

Dr Michael Fox, a veterinarian and good friend, in his *Duty and the Beast*, also makes reference to the Redman in writing of the present plight of the animal kingdom, which is a symptom of what the Hopi Indians called 'Koyaanasquatsi', or 'life out of balance'. In discussing what we are doing to our environment and what we do to animals, he refers to the growing world-wide animal welfare and animal rights movement which, he says, is:

'A revolutionary force that uses reason and emotion – love (as respect for the sanctity and dignity of all life) – to bring about the peaceful transformation of society'.

Dr Fox also echoes the Indian view that all things on earth are related. The choice, he says, for man, between extinction and continuation, between suicide and adoration, rests and depends upon our acceptance of the fact that all life is one family.

Dr Paul Shepard takes the reader along a path of philosophical thought on the agony of our planet.

Dr Eaton, a scientist, as are most of the contributors, takes a view which perhaps sums up the ethos of this most interesting and worthwhile study by quoting Konrad Lorenz:

'To understand an animal, one must first love it. To a non-scientist such a declaration might not deserve more than casual notice, but for a scientist to tell other scientists that love is an essential ingredient for understanding an animal or anything else for that matter is to commit the sin of subjectivism'.

To which Dr Eaton adds:

'Certainly this great myth of Western

man we call science does not permit love, if for no other reason than the fact that it is immeasurable'.

My only criticisms of this book are that A4 size is not the most convenient and the style of presentation, with most pages being in two columns, was, I found, awkward. The inserted quotes from many sources through the ages add considerably to the interest of this fascinating book.

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## Health, the Politician's Dilemma

George Teeling Smith, 22 pages, London, £1.00, Office of Health Economics, 1986.

This paperback outlines, in a few pages, the difficulties of meeting demands in the National Health Service in a climate of resource shortage but steady advance in medical care. The United Kingdom has tumbled down the world rankings for health expenditure per head of population and as a percentage of gross national product, hospital waiting lists have escalated and treatment rates fall short of those performed by our European neighbours.

Several of the contributors to today's widening discrepancy between health service demand and resource are inadequately discussed. The dilemma is self-perpetuating. As doctors become more successful at both preventing and treating disease, we live longer and our opportunities for expending health resources are extended. Improvements in education, together with changing attitudes have increased the expectations of the public, which further fuels demand.

Three approaches to improving the level of services which do not necessitate a corresponding increase in resource are proposed: improved efficiency by the creation of an 'internal market' within the National Health Service; the allocation of available resource to 'maximum utility' for the population; and the attraction of alternative funds, whether they be from private sources or medical charities. Teeling Smith heralds these solutions as 'new ideas', but they are, in fact very familiar. With regard to tightening-up efficiency, the author does not discuss

the use and the perpetuation of use of ineffective drugs and procedures.

The premise that 'nothing should undermine the basic principle that first class health care should be available free of charge and provided at the tax payer's expense for all those genuinely in need' is emphasised, but present behaviour seems to be taking this goal further and further away. Throughout the world and under all kinds of systems, some degree of rationing of health services exists, whether it be overtly by depth of purse or discreetly by availability.

This paperback is well written and the standard of illustrations and tabular information is extremely high, as we have now come to expect from OHE publications. It does not outline all options for resolving the dilemma. In particular, the alternatives to expenditure on health service are not discussed, for example the returns with regard to the nation's health would perhaps be greater if housing standards were drastically improved. Anyone seeking a fresh approach to the dilemma will not find one here, but the author did declare that he simply intended to open the debate.

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## The Dilemma of Abortion

Edwin Kenyon, 283 pages, London  
£6.50, Faber and Faber Limited, 1986.

Those of us concerned with seeing patients about having an abortion may well agree with Dr Kenyon's theme that the laws involved greatly need tidying up, but we all probably feel apprehensive about the outcome of any attempt at new legislation. The curious mixture of politics, moral philosophy and clinical considerations, dominated for some by powerful religious forces, may so affect the legislative process at any of several stages that we could be landed with a legal framework in which the care we feel our patients need would be very difficult to provide. Those who remember the time before David Steel's Abortion Act of 1967 became law will not easily forget the shady stratagems to which patients and their doctors had to resort in order that abortions could be done cleanly and properly. We also remember, as Dr Kenyon indicates, the

three or four cases of septic abortion admitted each night to an average city gynaecological unit, some going on to the renal unit and some to the post-mortem room.

Legal change is a dilemma, motives for which vary and there are so many areas of dilemma laid out in this well-produced and easily read account. One of the problems for an author is to define his profile of attitudes towards the various aspects of abortion because so much of the work is incapable of objective observation or description. Religious hard-liners would dispute the simplest fact produced by a liberal moderate. Dr Kenyon's position emerges as one who cares more for individuals than for generalisations. He does not inevitably recommend that an abortion be carried out whenever requested, but is more concerned with a policy of least harm. Therein lies the dilemma of a woman's free choice. It seems certain that she should have choice of adviser but perhaps the adviser – if his value to the patient is to be real – must equally be free to advise against the treatment. Careful weighing of the probabilities might lead to the opinion that worse harm would follow an abortion than from continuing with the pregnancy.

Dr Kenyon gives a very clear view of why abortion services should be efficient and effectively available to all potential users and he points out the unfair biases within the National Health Service (NHS) against women, particularly geographically. There are also, shamefully, biases in the NHS against safe completion of the procedure. Health service managers are frequently too preoccupied with other issues, or too cynical, to see that a good service is provided, although Cochrane demonstrated years ago the high cost-effectiveness of an abortion service.

The *Dilemma of Abortion* is admirably clear and full of interest for every reader, not merely for professionals. The present writer sees the book as free from prejudice, but that may just be one man's meat. A particularly instructive section describes the history of attitudes to abortion in various major religions: it may be a surprise to some that the Catholic ban may only have started in 1869. It seems amazing that a form of Christianity can contribute to the massive evil of the 'unofficial' abortions in South America at the present time by continuing to outlaw safe abortion policies in medical care.

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## Bioethics and Belief

John Mahoney, 127 pages, London,  
£3.95, Sheed and Ward, 1984.

The burgeoning literature on medical ethics tends to be dominated by secular philosophers like Jonathan Glover and Peter Singer. Roman Catholic theologians have tended to operate in their own, quite different, moral world, at least in Britain. This book by a leading Jesuit moral theologian goes some way to redress the balance. It originated as a set of lectures at the Catholic chaplaincy at Glasgow University; but the fact that it is primarily addressed to a Roman Catholic audience in no way diminishes its interest. As Professor Mahoney points out, Catholic moral teaching is almost entirely based on a natural law tradition – that is, on the consideration by human reason of the structures of nature, and the moral guidelines they suggest. His concern is to probe some of the structures, as they are illuminated by recent medical advances, and to develop the Catholic tradition of moral thought in this new light.

The main chapter of the book is devoted to a consideration of the beginning of human life. He outlines the traditional Catholic teaching on ensoulment, and at first seems to accept the view that the human soul is a 'simple spiritual substance', endowed with innate capacities, which must have a discrete beginning, not a gradual genesis. It is consequently of great importance to say just when this beginning is, if the human being is to have full rights to life from that moment. His own suggestion, following important elements of the tradition, is that the soul can be said to originate only when there is some degree of development in physical nature which allows it to exist. That is, he thinks, at the beginning of cell-differentiation, perhaps at about 14 days (though he does not give a precise number). The arguments which lead him to this conclusion are, partly, the great wastage of embryos at early stages, but mainly the possibility of twinning or splitting at an early stage of embryogenesis. But he is also influenced by Rahner (and perhaps Teilhard) to propose the view that personal being 'wells up' from matter by a developmental process, 'without invoking additional and almost miraculous intervention on the part of God', page 81. It seems to follow that very early abortion and experimentation on embryos for