

types of disorder.

Behaviourally and psychodynamically informed treatments are discussed, though there is no reference to cognitive strategies. Details of family therapy are not discussed.

The book is easy to read and the chapters are short enough to finish at one sitting. The style is descriptive and discursive, rather than definitive. In general, the authors give an overview of a topic, and raise areas of debate in the field without embarking on a detailed academic discussion. In some sections, for instance the chapter on mental handicap, the discussion is rather limited.

I recommend this book to medical students and others who are seeking an introductory text to child psychiatry, a subject that can be bewilderingly nebulous, but is here laid out in an accessible and digestible manner.

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Horizons in Medicine, edited by Leszek K. Borysiewicz. Pp. 330, illustrated. Transmedica Europe, Tunbridge Wells, 1990. Hardback £20.00.

The 4 day annual Advanced Medicine Conference at the Royal College of Physicians much resembles school speech-days – the good, the great and the growing are assembled together for the approval and erudition of College Fellows.

Educationalists may be appalled at an education 'interface' which involves large numbers of ageing physicians listening to more than 40 talks of 20 minutes (plus 4 × 1 hour state-of-the-art lectures without subsequent questions). However, like the humble Seagull outboard it remains inexplicably popular. Nonetheless this educational equivalent of repeated blanket bombing does need supplementing with the written word.

The Conference reflects the interest and location of the organiser who subsequently edits the relevant *Horizons in Medicine*. This issue therefore has a distinctly Cambridge feel.

There were two predominantly clinical sections on respiratory medicine and cardiology; the 'special effects' slot was audiology. BSE of course was on everyone's mind last year and Richard Kimberlin's contribution was outstanding (basically: Watch this space in 3 years time and as soon as I know you'll know).

The book is an invaluable part of the Conference and is always an authoritative state-of-the-art or rather state of the science contribution. I think it would help if it was available a little less than a year after the meeting. One or two of the contributions took longer to read than the time allowed for the talk but on the whole there was not too much additional material inserted presumably due to Leszek Borysiewicz's editorial pen being mightier than the words of his contributors. The annual *Horizons in Medicine* is an essential acquisition for aspiring and established physicians.

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Ethical Practice in Clinical Medicine, William J. Ellos. Pp. 190. Routledge, London, New York, 1990. Hardback £30.00, paperback £8.99.

Medical ethics has become fashionable in the last two decades and there is no shortage of books on the topic. This addition to the corpus takes a relatively unconventional approach to the philosophical basis of medical ethics. Most texts have taken their philosophical foundations from Hippocrates and then from the deontological theories of Kant and the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill and their later apologists. In this book the author, a Jesuit priest, invites a return to virtue-based ethics deriving from Plato and Aristotle, via Aquinas, the 18th Century Scottish moral philosophers such as Hutcheson and Hume to the American pragmatists James, Dewey and Wilson to derive a contemporary bio-psycho-social model of medical ethics. In support of this 'radically pragmatic venture' the book seeks to combine the theory with the practice of medical ethics by using case studies woven into the text of these historical, philosophical perspectives. In this the author is only partially successful.

The book is said to be aimed at 'all students of medical ethics in philosophy and theology courses as well as medical students and practising physicians'. The author's views of medical students – an American perspective – is of highly intelligent, extremely competitive 'loners' who are perfectionists and workaholics. This may not translate exactly to the British scheme and the philosophical dissertations on the classical texts will be better appreciated by the philosophy and theological students than by their British medical student counterparts. The theories proposed are based on the platonic cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance rather than on the more familiar deontological or utilitarian fundamentals of respect for autonomy, beneficence and justice. A detailed exposition using these historical texts is juxtaposed in a seamless narrative with clinical vignettes derived from a Texan hospital in a way that sometimes invokes an 'anachronistic culture shock'. The case studies are provided by a faculty member who is a Ph.D. rather than an M.D. which may account for the relatively minor, though rather frequent and irritating, mistakes in the clinical details. Additionally, many of the ethical dilemmas teased out are related intrinsically to the American Health Care System.

The 'rounding clinical medical ethicist' being called by his beeper to wrestle with problems deriving from the Diagnostic Related Group Prospective Payment System may be a hint of things to come in the UK but as yet makes many of the problems seem remote from ordinary clinical practice. Despite these caveats, a theory is developed from a biological frame via sociobiological and genetic bases ('the morality of the gene') incorporating psychological and social components to provide a 'virtue synthesis' for medical ethical problems. The need for this is encompassed to the author's comment that 'with the rise of classical forms of deontology and utilitarianism a good deal of virtue ethics suffered an eclipse'. This book seeks to remedy this but will be of more relevance and