Book Reviews

Oosthuizen, G.C.; Shapiro, H.A.; Straus, S.A. (eds.): Genetics and Society. Cape Town: Oxford University Press 1980. 200 pp. Hard bound £11.50.

The publication of this symposium, held at Durban-Westville, Natal, S. Africa, in July 1979, is an important guide 'to accompany the scientists along the new trail they are blazing,' (Schoch p. 2). The scientists foresee a greater capacity to create and to cure in applying genetic technology. Lawyers and theologians are proverbially conservative in their medico-legal and ethical prudence when it comes to absorb the new issues facing man. Who is to blame when society is not friendly to a 'rent-a-uterus' business for the implantation of a test-tube embryo? The scientist who realizes his societal responsibility should contemplate on the voices of Roman Catholic, Islamic, Judaic, Zoroastrian, Buddist, Hindu, Anglican and Protestant viewpoints, set out in part three of this book (Religious and Ethical Aspects). Nothing is mentioned concerning black people's religions and morals.

Part one (Medical and Scientific Aspects) presents a brief introduction for the non-geneticist. Part two (Legal and Sociological Aspects) clearly shows 'the lagging behind developments in medicine' from the lawyer who wants 'a ringside seat at the trial of that case, which predictably will come, sooner or later' (Strauss p. 68). It is inherent to the law that the process of legislation should always develop in step with public opinion. In the field of genetic manipulation particularly, public opinion is still underdeveloped: people still gasp without comprehension at the sensational information in daily's and weekly's. It is regrettable that only one sociologist participated in this symposium for he contributed forceful opinions. Society will only come to grips on these issues when the rights of hyperindividualism are weighted against the good for the society and the human species.

The reading of this book is strongly advised for all genetic counsellors and those interested in the ethical issues surrounding genetic engineering. The contributions of Franklin on Judaism, of Van Loon on Buddism and of Desai on the Hindu point of view present original contemplations that may broaden our own moral ideas.

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Hafez, E.S.E. (ed.): Reproduction in Farm Animals. Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger 1980. 627 pp., 285 figs., 121 tabs. Hard bound $31.00.

A book of this title could appeal to the geneticist as a source of information on genetic variation in reproductive processes and as a basic text for information of the processes themselves. On the first count it is a disappointment; the appetite is whetted by an introduction which includes an outline of the variation among mammals but genetic variation is rarely mentioned from then on and receives only four entries in the index of some 3,000. Further, current hypotheses are presented without regard to the possibility that they are sometimes based on the study of a single population in a single environment and that they might be limited to that situation.

As a source of up to date information the book contains many excellent chapters but they are spoilt in their combination to a single text by extensive overlap and some inconsistency amongst them. Diagramatic representations of ovarian follicles and of the feedback relationships between the gonads and their trophic hormones are presented many times. Chapters on Functional Anatomy of Female Reproduction, Endocrinology of Reproduction, Neuroendocrinology of Reproduction, Reproductive Life Cycles and Folliculogenesis, Egg Maturation and Ovulation for example have much in common and even overlap further with the species chapters later on. Both the chapter on Induction and Synchronisation of Ovulation and that on Embryo Transfer include sections on superovulation. (Sadly neither give an adequate consideration of the genetic implications of these and other 'aids to reproduction'). An inconsistency is the use of the synonyms Gn-RH and LH-RH; more seriously the theca and granulosa cells are given very different steroidogenic roles in chapters 3 and 5.

A useful book then for the scholar who wishes to compare and contrast views and go back to original work, but the excellence of the individual chapters is marred by their combination. The edited combination of specialist chapters might be an ideal, but if the present text makes any one case it is for the place of the single author(s) text.

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