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Books Received

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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ethics. For him ethical statements are neither true nor false, and can thus be neither verified nor falsified. Rather they are prescriptions that can be validated by values. But the values validating them are ultimately matters of human choice, for we can never know that what we value is truly, really, valuable. His values, fortunately, are different from those of Attila the Hun and Hitler; but they are surely not those of a Christian. Human life, for him, is valuable, and individual human beings are valuable, but only so long as they serve the highest value: the survival of human culture.

It has not been possible, in this short review, to do full justice to Brody's book. He poses serious and difficult questions that need to be given intelligent and carefully thought out answers by all who accept the sanctity of human life and believe that what our actions have to tell us about ourselves is more important than what they succeed in accomplishing (although we can by no means ignore their consequences). His book may infuriate at times, and the medical decisions (e.g. abortion of "defective" fetuses, killing dying patients with kindness, sperm shopping in A.I.D., etc.) his theory validates are surely wrong, but the arguments he develops need to be taken seriously and the challenge he presents met forthrightly.

—William E. May, Associate Professor of Moral Theology
The Catholic University of America

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Human Values in Medical Education. John R. Ellis, M.D. Society for Health and Human Values, 1976. 28 p., no price given.


Current Literature


Although society has had a legitimate concern about aggression among XYY and XXY men, there is no evidence that such individuals are especially aggressive. The elevated crime rate may be related to low intelligence. Since this group does not contribute particularly to the problem of aggressive crime, identification would not ameliorate the situation.


The traditional role of family and physician in reaching a decision on the prolongation of life is threatened by the court decision in the Karen Ann Quinlan case. Law must remain open to the service of persons but overemphasis on its role in human affairs will produce grave imbalances. "The Quinlan case never should have gotten to the courts. Obsolete homicide laws and corrosive malpractice atmosphere got it