Book Reviews of *Sex and Gender* edited by Mark F. Schwartz, Albert S. Moraczewski and James A. Monteleone -- *Bioethics and Belief* by John Mahoney

Catholic Physicians' Guild
that "He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom (that is, God's wisdom) is kept safe" (Proverbs 28:26).

St. Peter counted on his own determination when he told Jesus that he would never fall away, even if everyone else were to abandon Him (Matthew 26:33). But he denied Christ three times at the most critical time in history. There is also the parable of the self-sufficient farmer and the self-abasing tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). And this passage warns that he who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Mental health consists in knowing who God is, as revealed through Christ, and in trusting not yourself, but a God Who is intimately involved in every detail of your life every day and Who cannot only heal, but also transform the believer.

I myself was taught secular psychology, and my clinical experience, as well as my early practice, were strictly worldly. I've tried it both ways. When I first began treating patients according to Christian truth about two and a half years ago, I was astonished at the results. Patients have gotten well consistently, predictably, and quickly. Therapy is usually very brief. Many go back to church after an absence of years — and not as spectators, but as participants — as witnesses who have experienced the love of Christ and have become committed and surrendered to Him.

REFERENCES


1. Vitz, Paul C., Psychology as Religion.
3. Sifford, Darrell, "The 'wrong' person seeks therapy, psychologist says.
   Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan. 27, 1983.
4. Sifford, Darrell, "For many, religious conflicts are at the root of distress.

BOOK REVIEWS

Sex and Gender

and James A. Monteleone, M.D., Editors

The Pope John Center, St. Louis, Missouri, 1983, xvi + 386 pp., $19.95.

Sex and Gender is a compendium of scientific findings on the development of human sexuality, taken from animal and human studies, and a critical commentary by traditional Christian philosophers and theologians on the implicit and explicit ethical inferences of the scientist-contributors.

The contributors to this exchange between the scientific and theological communities are experts in their respective disciplines: sociology, psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, endocrinology, philosophy, and moral theology. Consequently, it is not a book for casual reading; it requires close attention, especially for those fields in which a reader's background is rather cursory. The scientific essays will be no problem for the physician or the reader with a fairly strong background in biological science. However, the conference originally was suggested by a number of bishops who expressed the need for a better comprehension of the scientific data on human sexuality. This readership, as well as any professional concerned with sexual development and sexual ethics, but lacking expertise in biological science, would have been helped by a "translation" of highly specific technical scientific terms and data into language more comprehensible to the "layman."

Some authors of the chapters of reflection on the scientists' essays do begin with a review of the scientific findings, which is of some help in this regard.

Because of the book's scope of academic disciplines, its critical review is a tall order. The scientific writers generally are measured and cautious in their scientific conclusions. But as Dominican Fathers Moraczewski and Ashley point out in the introduction and first chapter, some of the decisions and conclusions of the behavioral scientists, particularly the psychological normality of homosexual orientation, the moral neutrality of homosexual behavior, and sex reassignment surgery, are based not simply on research data, but upon nonempirical assumptions, and at times, on shaky logic. Father Ashley's chapter provides a succinct yet penetrating Catholic theological view of sexuality, and delineates the differing philosophic assumptions of the traditional moral theologian and the empirical researcher as represented in this volume.

Freed conceptualized human sexuality in terms of physical and psychological characteristics. But only in more recent times have researchers teased apart the many factors and functions — psychological and physiological, innate and acquired — which mutually interact in constituting an individual's developing sexuality.

The biological factors are genetic or chromosomal sex, gonadal sex, phenotypic sex (e.g., ambiguous genitalia), and, for want of a better term, "brain sex," that is, the genital hormonal masculinization or feminization of certain neural pathways in the brain and central nervous system which affect cognitive as well as sexual behavior. Psychological dimensions of sexuality ignore core gender identity, gender role, and sexual orientation, all of which develop postnatally.

February, 1985
The scientists grapple with the question, to what extent do genetic and prenatal factors on the one hand, and postnatal influences on the other, contribute to an individual's developing sexuality, and how are they mediated? This is the central thread among the scientists' conclusion, which John Bancroft, M.D., reviews and assesses as "informed speculation" (p. 104), is that the various factors interact in a complex, reciprocal manner, the exact nature of which is still unknown. Anita Ehrhardt, Ph.D., proposes a transactional model in which constitutional and learned factors continuously interact through adolescence in promoting statistically normal or deviant sexuality. The authors are in agreement that prenatal factors may dispose toward, but do not ordain the direction of psychic development. They favor the conclusion of researchers like John Money who sees the P.L.S. genetic and prenatal biochemical influences from postnatal environment (p. 312ff). They provide a summary of the general discussion among all participants. Some reviewers are puzzled by Father Moraczewski's conclusion that the scientific contributors, perhaps unwittingly, show that though science is "value-free," scientists rarely are. Among the scientists contributors only June Reinsch, Ph.D., sticks to her last and simply presents research findings. But as Marie Jahoda remarks in her treatise on concepts of mental health, scientists who deal with human persons cannot escape the "value dilemma." Putting it another way, Father John Harvey poses the pivotal issue: is our only source of knowledge about human sexuality empirical? (Cf. p. 344.) Science tells us what is. But whether what is is humanly appropriate is a philosophic question. Scientists surely may and must take philosophic positions, but these require assessment on philosophic grounds. The reflective essays by the philosopher and theologian controversially help the medical, psychological and pastoral therapist to sharpen this assessment.

Jeffrey Keefe, O.F.M.Conv., Ph.D.
St. Anthony-on-Hudson
Rensselaer, New York

Bioethics and Belief
by John Mahoney


For reasons that will be given later, I found it necessary, when reading this book, to put it aside several times so that I could walk about and cool off because of the irritation that it stirred. However, I must say that the volume I will focus on the issues of human fertility control, death and dying, the beginning of human life, medical research and experimentation, and the interrelationship between belief and medical science. In summarizing and commenting on the volume, I will focus on the issues of human fertility control, the beginning of human life, and human experimentation.

Under the heading of human fertility control, Mahoney includes a discussion of

February, 1985

Linacre Quarterly
what he terms positive interventions, namely those intended to bring new human life into being, and of what he terms negative interventions, which inhibit conception. Mahoney argues that artificial insemination by the husband and the use of in vitro fertilization to alleviate the infertility of a married couple who provide the gametic materials for the procedures are both morally acceptable. He claims that opposition to these medical interventions is based either on an excessively static understanding of human persons and of natural law or on a religiously based appeal to the “mystery” of marriage and procreation as willed and intended by God, an appeal that cannot stand up under critical scrutiny. He further asserts that “no answer appears to be forthcoming” to the question “why is it that only marital intercourse may be the context and cause of human procreation?” (p. 16). Although he expresses some grave concerns over the use of donor sperm and/or ova for either artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization, he in no way shuts the door to the possible moral rightness of such procedures. In addition, he sees no reason why married couples may not freeze and store, not only sperm and ova, but also embryos brought into being for future implantation and gestation. With respect to contraception, he acknowledges that the Church still claims that this is an intrinsically disordered activity, but he thinks that his position, one based primarily on a “frustrated faculty” type of argument (cf. p. 24ff), has little probative value and that it is quite reasonable for married couples to choose contraceptive and sterilizing means if there are serious reasons for avoiding pregnancies.

In his chapter on the beginnings of human life, Mahoney devotes considerable attention to an analysis of the 1974 Vatican Declaration on Abortion, a declaration which acknowledged the freedom of Catholics and others to speculate on the precise moment when a new human person comes into existence while insisting that, for practical purposes, one must regard human life from conception onwards with the utmost respect. Mahoney’s own position is that it is highly unlikely that there is, at the moment of ejaculation, a human being from the moment of fertilization on, that this position is supported both by scientific evidence and by philosophical reasoning. The scientific evidence he finds most pertinent is that the position of the Church that the beginning of human life is the “moment of conception,” a position that is certainly reasonable to choose the moment of fertilization as the most probable moment when a new human being is created. Similarly, in discussing artificial insemination by the husband and in vitro fertilization, he sees no reason why married couples may not freeze and store donor sperm and/or ova for either artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization, and intended by God, an appeal that cannot stand up under critical scrutiny. He further asserts, as noted earlier, that in discussing the question “why is it that only marital intercourse may be the context and cause of human procreation?” Despite this assertion, I submit that some weighty answers have already been advanced, and that Mahoney simply chooses to ignore them in his discussion of the subject.

Similarly, in his long discussion of the beginnings of human life, he builds on the same evidence (wombing and renovation) and philosophical argument (Duns Scotus) that numerous writers of the same persuasion have advanced in the past decade. But he completely fails to take into account the substantive answers that have been made both to the significance of this evidence and to the argument of Duns Scotus, answers set forth by such writers as Germain G. Gricez, Benedict Ashley, Francis Wade, Thomas Hilgers, Baruch Brody, and many others.

In sum, Mahoney provides no new arguments for the positions he adopts. His comments on contraception are simply well-enunciated comments. Haring, Curran, and others, tirelessly asserting that the teaching of the Church is rooted in a static, impersonal understanding of the natural law. Since this claim has been so devastatingly rebutted by the authors cited previously, it is incredible that Mahoney can think that repetition of the same stale arguments is sufficient to establish his position. Likewise, his arguments to justify in vitro fertilization and husband artificial fertilization merely repeat the formulations of the argument of Duns Scotus, answers set forth by McCormick, Curran, and others and the line of reasoning adopted by Haring, Curran, and others for the latter, without even attempting to take into account the counter-arguments advanced by the writers already noted. And the same is true for his discussion of the beginning of human life.

Although many of the positions taken by Mahoney are clearly contrary to the teaching of the Church (e.g., his views on in vitro fertilization, contraception, and the respect to be given human life from its conception), the work nonetheless carries an important message, one that we have learned from experience (e.g., the imputations given to Philip Keane’s Sexual Morality and subsequently removed at the request of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), imputations are no longer sure guides to the conformity of a book’s teaching to that of the Church. While the book is, as already noted, well written and, on the surface, sophisticated and urbane, I find it seriously deficient. Mahoney’s failure to consider strong counter-arguments to the positions he advances might lead readers to conclude that these are strong arguments to be made. This conclusion is definitively false, and in my opinion, it is simply not scholarly for Catholic authors like Mahoney to write as though these counter-arguments do not exist. He, and others like him, have the responsibility, if they wish to hold the views they do, to face their critics head on and answer their arguments. Mahoney, by failing to do so, does a disservice to scholarship and to his readers, at least in my judgment. His failure to do so surely makes his own efforts lose their appeal to credibility.