

2-1-1978

[Book Review of] *Dealing with Dilemma: A Manual for Genetic Counselors* by Patricia T. Kelly

Robert Roger Lebel

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq>

 Part of the [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lebel, Robert Roger (1978) "[Book Review of] *Dealing with Dilemma: A Manual for Genetic Counselors* by Patricia T. Kelly," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 45: No. 1, Article 14.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol45/iss1/14>

In their eagerness to produce a work that will reflect what they describe as the "interdisciplinary character of medical ethics," the editors have perhaps gone totally overboard and substantially slighted the fact that medical ethics is, after all is said and done, a branch of ethics. The pamphlet advertising this text describes the three editors as "a physician/historian, a lawyer and an ethicist." The order of this listing is an excellent indication of the relative emphases in this work.

The "basic ethics" section of this book follows the alternative format that I mentioned earlier: selections from the classical writers. While this is probably not theoretically inferior to the single essay method, it clearly requires more from the instructor while not offering any significant compensating advantage.

In addition to sections on abortion, genetics, the delivery of medical care, euthanasia, and informed consent, the editors have chosen such topics as "Ethical Dimensions of the Physician-Patient Relationship Throughout History," "Regulation, Compulsion and Consumer Protection in Clinical Medicine and Public Health," "Truth-Telling in the Physician-Patient Relationship," and brief sections on "Population Policy" and "Fetal Experimentation." In general, (excluding the criticism given above) the articles chosen are excellent.

The advertisement sent to professors on behalf of *Ethics in Medicine* describes it as an invaluable reference work. It surely is that; no less than a third of the 103 selections in this work were new to me and all were interesting. If you want to have your library purchase a copy of a work on medical ethics this may well be the book. (Certainly only a library can afford the hardcover version at \$40 a copy.) Yet, it seems more important that a work intended as a textbook in medical ethics concentrate on ethics than that it contain articles that would pleasantly surprise the person who would teach such a course.

Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine, on the other hand, is clearly intended and well-suited for use in a medical ethics course. For those students who might not be sufficiently prepared for a course based on Gorovitz et al.'s outstanding *Moral Problems in Medicine*, this is probably the text of choice. The articles are easily comprehensible and highly provocative. Even the typical grade-oriented pre-medical student would be hard-pressed to maintain his total "What's in it for me?" attitude while reading such interesting material.

— Lewis Silverman

Dealing with Dilemma: A Manual for Genetic Counselors

Patricia T. Kelly

Springer-Verlag, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010, 1977. 143 pp., \$7.50.

The special medical services which come under the title "genetic counseling" have grown both in complexity and in demand over the last two decades. In the loosest sense, genetic counseling is as ancient as mothers- and fathers-in-law, who from time immemorial have pronounced judgment on the origin of good and bad traits in their grandchildren. But as a medical specialty, the discipline of clinical genetics came into existence rather suddenly at the end of the 1950's.

Academic human geneticists had begun systematically to open their doors for genetic consultations at least twenty years earlier, but the direct involvement of trained physicians and their particular modes of perception is quite recent.

Patricia T. Kelly is an experienced genetic counselor, having worked for years at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. Her experiences

and reflections are distilled in this remarkable little book. In this unimposing volume she describes the best of genetic counseling: how it should be done for maximum services to the families who seek this kind of assistance.

Kelly emphasizes the *process*, in particular certain phases of it which she (rightly) perceives to be of central importance. Thus, a large part of the book is devoted to the follow-up letter and follow-up visit. Chapter five is almost entirely given to a lengthy annotated transcript of the dialogue in such a visit — allowing the reader to reflect on the dynamics of interchange between counselor and family as the latter only gradually come to understand the full implications of what they have been told about their genetic condition.

The style of counseling (chapters seven and nine) is discussed with an eye toward contributions from the fields of crisis intervention and guidance. Kelly enunciates what is now fairly orthodox teaching: that it is best for the genetic counselor to always *fully* inform, *humanly* support, and *ruthlessly* avoid interposition of her own biases in the decision-making which belongs to the family and only to the family.

Dealing with Dilemma is probably the best discussion of the genetic counseling relationship that has yet come to print. It is highly recommended both for seasoned clinical geneticists (who will profit by reading it) and for neophytes (for whom it should be required reading in any relevant course of studies). Although her aim is directed toward the functioning of larger, more complex clinical operations, the individual practitioner will also find this book full of insight and challenge.

— Robert Roger Lebel, S.J.
Kennedy Fellow in Medicine, Law and Ethics
University of Wisconsin—Madison

This Curette for Hire

Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.

ACTA Foundation, 4848 N. Clark St., Chicago, Ill. 60640, 1977. 140 pp., \$3.95.

Although the title of this book by Doctor Diamond suggests it is yet another treatise on the abortion issue, its scope is very much broader. A look at the table of contents makes this evident and it is seen that it addresses many of the pressing and, indeed, burning issues in bio-ethics and social mores — fetal experimentation, contraceptive sterilization, infanticide, euthanasia, violence in society, informed consent, sex therapy and juvenile promiscuity. In addition to this sad litany of immorality and man's inhumanity, there are a couple of penetrating essays on justice in the fee structure and the alleged shortage of doctors.

It is Doctor Diamond's thesis that in recent times the physician has become a scapegoat, a modern folk villain responsible for escalating costs of health-care, and the target of unscrupulous malpractice lawyers no less than of the bureaucratic socialistic planners. He dates much of this malaise — the forced estrangement between the public and the medical profession — to the decade of the 1960's when the profession in the U.S. first began to show an official inclination to follow in the footsteps of the doctors in Hitler's Germany by abandoning its age-old prohibition against abortion. When the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association embraced the abortion philosophy, medicine became a killing profession as it had been prior to the