

Reviews of Books

Die Faschisierung des bürgerlichen Subjekts

Die Ideologie der gesunden Normalität und die Ausrottungspolitik im deutschen Faschismus. Materialanalysen. Wolfgang Fritz Haug. West Berlin: Argument-Verlag. 1986. Pp 216. DM18.50. ISBN 3-886190803

Dangerous Sexualities

Medico-moral Politics in England since 1830. Frank Mort. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1987. Pp 280. £7.95. ISBN 0-710208561.

THE WHO siren song "Health for All by the Year 2000" has a sting in its refrain: those who will not make it will be held responsible for their fate. The epigram of the ancients, *Faber quisque fortunae suae* (everyone is the architect of his own fate) has been medicalised into "Everyone should be responsible for his health". The irresponsibility of becoming sick is implicit in the doctrine, preached by health propagandists, that cancer and ischaemic heart disease are preventable if a correct lifestyle is adhered to.

In an important book, W. F. Haug reminds us that the same ideology, *Gesundheit ist Pflicht* (Health is duty), was the basis of Nazi health policy; it was preceded by the shift from traditional caring/curing to prevention and health promotion. The glorification of health (which was equated with beauty) and the inculcation of the sick were eagerly supported by the medical profession; the extermination of "unworthy" life by the profession was a natural outcome. As the seeds of this ideology germinate in the substratum of orthodox medical teaching, only unflagging vigilance and application of the strongest herbicides can prevent a new blossoming. It would be a tragic mistake to believe that this was a specifically German phenomenon. In Vichy France, 40 000 mental patients were starved to death by French psychiatrists who acted on their own initiative and with impeccable utilitarian motives. From the beginning of the century, forced sterilisation of various "undesirables" has been practised in the USA. More recently, President Reagan called for compulsory urine testing for drugs among the employees of federal agencies. There are uncanny similarities between some of today's health promoters and the Nazi health educators in their preoccupation with national health, national diet, lifestyles, and prohibitionist exhortations about the evils of drink, smoke, and sex. In Nazi Germany, alcohol was seen as the cause of national degeneracy; the Royal College of Physicians has just published an anti-alcohol booklet with the title *A Great and Growing Evil*. Haug quotes an early German source on smoking as a cause of a "flabby face and weakening of the intellect"; the *British Medical Journal* published last year photographs of smokers' physiognomies—like Lombroso's gallery of criminals, their faces were supposed to betray their vice. It may come as a surprise that holistic medicine, homeopathy, naturopathy, and paracelsian claptrap were officially promulgated by Nazi leaders. Cervical screening by colposcopy was introduced by E. Wirths in Auschwitz.

Frank Mort looks through foucaultian glasses at the involvement of British medicine in struggle for power. After the emergence of public health doctors as medical police at the time of cholera epidemics, doctors played an important role in control of prostitution, but suffered a temporary setback in so far as they had their power eroded by

philanthropic, puritanic, and suffragette groups. By the end of the 19th century the medical profession had re-established its dominant role as an institution of social control, especially in the area of sexuality, for civilisation was believed to be under the threat of syphilisation. Mort uses the term sexuality in its wider sense, including sexual "immorality" of the working class, the place of women in society, heredity, and racial degeneration. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler spoke of syphilis as resulting from moral and racial degeneration, repeating what was taught by the medical profession in England and elsewhere. Syphilis scare has now been replaced by AIDS panic. We have heard demands for compulsory screening and witnessed victimisation of homosexuals, blacks, and the "promiscuous". In the words of Gore Vidal, "One can understand those paranoids who think that AIDS was deliberately cooked up in a laboratory, for the idea of the plague is endlessly useful, transforming the society-persecutor into society-protector: urine samples here, blood samples there. Come along. Sick behind the fence. Keep moving." Haug and Mort provide us with an historical perspective for doctors' participation in the process of dehumanisation of "them".

At present, public health medicine is not governed by any ethical code. Haug's and Mort's materials (and there are many others) should be widely discussed and medical students should be encouraged to participate in such discussions, lest the year 2000 turn out to be a nasty surprise, unhealthy for all.

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Paediatric Emergency Medicine

Edited by Frank E. Ehrlich, Fred J. Heldrich, and J. J. Tepas III. Frederick, MD: Aspen. 1987. Pp 569. \$88. ISBN 0-871892987.

MUCH of paediatrics is acute. There are many good large textbooks on general paediatrics, but there is a definite need for an authoritative textbook specifically on emergencies. It could be used on the wards but also in accident and emergency departments, where many medical staff have had little or no previous paediatric experience. This book seeks to fulfil the need. It covers the range of medical emergencies and also has short concise chapters on trauma, outlining some very sound principles. There are clear interesting accounts in particular of thoracic injuries, inhaled foreign bodies, ventriculoperitoneal shunt infections, poisonings, burns and scalds (including a very good short section on non-accidental burns), and ingested foreign bodies and caustic substances. It was especially pleasing to note a good section on psychiatric emergencies. Some professionals do not see these as genuine emergencies but they can present severe management problems to the junior doctor on the spot.

The other sections of the book were more disappointing. The section on central nervous system infections has some valuable information, but presentation is poor and the information is difficult to extract. The chapter on cardiovascular disease is little different from other lists of cardiovascular abnormalities in children and does not seem particularly slanted towards emergencies. The section on central nervous system injuries suffers from a lack of detail