obtained. Indeed, the most recent apparatus produces pictures significantly better than those illustrated in this atlas which is just published.

In this volume the theoretical background to CAT scans is described initially in general terms and subsequently with the full physical and mathematical analyses which are beyond the abilities of the reviewer to comprehend. There follows an atlas of sections taken through the entire skull and trunk and selected portions of the limbs. Each is presented together with a conventional slab radiograph of the same level, a line diagram to demonstrate the plane of section and sometimes a colour photograph of the same section. The atlas suffers from the drawback that only one picture is shown for each section and the 'window' or range of radio densities is arbitrarily chosen to illustrate particular points. In practice it is possible to vary this window so as to select the densities of organs of particular interest. For example, in the illustrations of the thorax and abdomen, the authors were obviously interested in the viscera, whereas the reviewer found the details of the vertebrae somewhat disappointing. However, it is possible to see the shape of the spinal canal and some details of the apophyseal joints so that it should be possible to use this technique as a tool to investigate spinal disease. There are some nice pictures showing the position of the odontoid peg in far greater detail than is possible by conventional radiology.

In the limbs there are transverse sections across the elbow, wrist, knee, and ankle. The normal joints are clearly seen but it remains to be determined whether this technique is useful for diagnosis and assessment in arthritis. It does seem likely that this method could be particularly helpful for assessing synovial cysts.

The scope of CAT scanning for studying various organs is considerably enhanced

by use of radiological contrast media. In the spine they allow delineation of the spinal cord and nerve roots. It is disappointing that there are no illustrations of the use of these media in this atlas. Moreover the authors have defied the international policy on computerised tomography, in which it has been accepted that sections would be shown as viewed from below, by illustrating them viewed from above.

This volume provides enough information to interest the reviewer into considering the possible applications of CAT scanning to rheumatology but insufficient to justify its purchase.

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A Dictionary of Medical Ethics and Practice. By William A. R. Thomson. (Pp. 264. £10.00.) Wright: Bristol. 1977. **Dictionary of Medical Ethics.** Edited by A. S. Duncan, G. R. Dunstan, and R. B. Welbourn. (Pp. 336. £4.90, paperback.) Darton, Longman and Todd: London. 1977.

Medical ethics is rapidly becoming a respectable subject both for the profession and the general public. The old view that ethics is the sole prerogative of professors of moral philosophy in ancient universities is no longer so commonly held. Perhaps, indeed, the pendulum is swinging too far; it seems to be generally hoped that the right answers will come from discussion and debate between as many different people as possible.

The time is therefore ripe for the appearance of dictionaries of medical ethics to give definitions and concise articles on the bewildering number of questions that now face us all. Neither volume is a 'dictionary' in the narrow sense of the word, but rather a synopsis, and neither confines itself to purely ethical issues, as the title of Dr Thomson's

book makes clear. They both cover a wide range of topics from community health councils to contraception and from terminal care to transcendental meditation.

Although the two books cover similar ground, they are different in a number of ways. The first is by a single author, the former editor of the *Practitioner*; the second is edited by three distinguished professors—and has 116 contributors. One has a unified basis for its ethical opinion and declares it; the other has a variety of bases and has intentionally avoided 'biased views', or is careful to give alternatives. A wealth of information is clearly presented, particularly on the legal side, and selected references for further reading after each article add to the value of the books.

Both can be strongly recommended and make very interesting reading. For the person looking for a description of the present situation in medical ethics, Professor Duncan and colleagues will be most helpful; but for the reader wanting the 'rights and wrongs' of ethics and the answer to the question 'What ought I to do?' Dr Thomson's book is more satisfying. The challenge of both dictionaries, in their different ways, is that we have asked questions, raised issues, and discussed examples for long enough. Although we must start with definitions of terms and problems, we must now decide what is to be the basis for our ethical decisions in Britain for the second half of the 20th century. The answer will not come from the highest common denominator of as many different opinions as possible. Is man merely a highly intelligent animal? To whom are we ultimately accountable for our ethical decisions? It is to the answers to such questions that Dr Thomson, more clearly than the three professors, points the way.

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