

fect, a remarkable prediction of general relativity not yet experimentally tested. According to it, an inertial frame, say, at the Earth's north pole is "dragged along" by the Earth's rotation and therefore rotates (very slowly!) with respect to the distant stars. LAGEOS is an experiment that directly addresses Wheeler's discussion on the meaning of inertia.

The book has its limits. The technical theoretical part is sometimes too simplified, and the exposition is sometimes weak. Some topics are treated in a not very convincing manner. Hawking's black hole radiation, to mention one example, is derived in a surprisingly vague fashion, without even a mention that more solid derivations exist. Altogether, the book does not have the flamboyant richness of the textbook by Misner, Thorne, and Wheeler himself, the magic concision of Landau's, the elegance and sophistication of Wald's, or the concreteness and unorthodox genius of Weinberg's. But it has plenty of useful resources and ideas and it is enjoyable. It covers, sometimes with distinctive originality, topics not easily found in other textbooks. Its charm lies in the interweaving of Wheeler's speculative quest for the physical origin of inertia with Ciufolini's experimental craft. In such interweaving lies the magic of an extraordinarily beautiful science: the science of the shape of space-time.

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## Responding to AIDS

**AIDS and the Public Debate.** Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. CAROLINE HANNAWAY, VICTORIA A. HARDEN, and JOHN PARASCANDOLA, Eds. IOS Press, Burke, VA, and Ohmsha, Tokyo, 1995. viii, 216 pp., illus. \$70 or £60 or Dfl 160 or DM143 or ¥8900.

In this volume the editors have gathered a group of essays many of whose authors were key players in the early days of the epidemic: C. Everett Koop, the U.S. Surgeon General under President Reagan; Anthony Fauci of the National Cancer Institute; James Curran of the Centers for Disease Control; and Mark Smith of the Kaiser Foundation (who was an intern and resident in San Francisco as the first cases of AIDS were turning up). Other contributors include the scholar James Harvey Young writing of the experience of the FDA in securing faster approval of experimental drug treatments for the symptoms of AIDS,

June Osborn writing of her experience in leading the National Commission on AIDS formed during the Bush Administration, and Ruth M. Kulstad, formerly of *Science*, writing of the early days when papers on HIV began to be sent to the journal and of the challenge of finding competent reviewers to evaluate the submissions. Two other authors, Allan Brandt and Richard Goldstein, comment on the impact of HIV and AIDS on American society. There are also papers on AIDS in Haiti, the United Kingdom, France, and Uganda.

The contribution by Koop is wonderful and insightful. Koop shows why he was such a phenomenon in Washington, a conservative physician who had difficulty winning Senate confirmation and who went on to battle the ideologues of the Reagan revolution. Only very rarely meeting with Reagan, he only had one (short) substantive conversation about AIDS with the president, and in only one press conference did Reagan seem to be directly following Koop's leadership. Koop professes mystification as to the bureaucratic politics of AIDS. Perhaps this is because, for him, his duties as Surgeon General were simply an extension of his duties as a physician: to protect and preserve life and to do so in an atmosphere of scientific truth-telling. Nonetheless, he remains a social conservative; excerpts from one week's diary he includes to show how the issue of AIDS took over his work life detail a crowded schedule of meetings with officials, experts, gay and lesbian advocates, and others, all focused on AIDS, and mentions in passing addressing a group of conservative Christians and talking about "loving the sinner" and hating the sin.

Curran's contribution, though less personal and candid, is also very valuable. Curran was a leading epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control when the AIDS epidemic began. Curran begins his story with a strange comment about how he will try to stick to "the facts" as admonished by the historians. He expresses admiration for Koop and for his objectivity and his refusal to act the way the newspapers expected him to. Similarly, he has praise for Admiral James Watkins and his commission on AIDS, which produced a report that resisted ideological twists. Curran details the early work of physicians and epidemiologists, primarily in New York and California, as they puzzled over the strange reports of a deadly pneumonia among young men and a surprising number of cases of Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare cancer that was turning up among gay men. The story of how rapidly the CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and state agencies began to zero in on the virus is one of the most exciting stories in modern public health.

Other contributions are equally interest-

ing. Victoria Harden's discussion of the increased funding in the NIH for AIDS and the impact of AIDS on how clinical trials were conducted (experimental drugs were made available on a "parallel track" to potential beneficiaries who were not participants in the official trials) provides much factual background bearing on a very controversial topic. The essay by Ruth Kulstad is one of the most exciting in the book. Much of modern medicine and public health turns on public discussion and debate among scientists and other experts, and much rides on the quality and timeliness of that debate. *Science* and other leading scientific journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* played a key role in the early days of AIDS.

Fauci's contribution includes an interesting reflection on the interaction of society, politics, and science, focusing on the rise of constituency activism on the part of gays and the transformation of that approach from one of confrontation to one of wary co-optation. As a result of a process that Fauci characterizes as "enlightening and on the whole positive and productive," activists now serve on federal advisory boards and the procedures for approval of new drugs to treat HIV and AIDS have been greatly modified to accommodate the objections of the activist community.

These are the strengths of the volume. The weaknesses stem from its origins. Apparently it is the proceedings of a meeting, but there is little discussion of the purpose of the meeting or of the rationale underlying the distribution of topics. It may be that the focus was intended to be on official or establishment participants who had not told their story, but if so it is surprising that, apart from a few leaders in the federal government, no officials from either New York or California are included. Nor is there any representation of the early experience of clinicians except for Mark Smith's contribution, and his story is part of an assessment of the impact of AIDS on the minority community. There are no contributors from the activist community.

Despite these weaknesses, I found the book exciting reading. Beginning in 1988 I myself spent some time as an official of the New York State Department of Health, and I saw how exciting public health can be, whether in contending with the AIDS epidemic or in fighting for universal health care. Many of these papers convey a sense of this too-little-appreciated sector of public service and how often it is filled with drama, conflict, accomplishment, and failure.

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