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## Review of: The Ethics of Reproductive Technology (Kenneth D. Alpern ed., Oxford University Press 1992)

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**The Ethics of Reproductive Technology** (Kenneth D. Alpern ed., Oxford University Press 1992). Additional readings, glossary, introduction, notes, preface. LC 92-8252; ISBN 0-19-507435-1. [370 pp. Paper \$19.95. 200 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.]

This collection of essays by lawyers, physicians, philosophers (including Aristotle), scientists and theologians considers problems inherent in the ever-increasing technological options to aid human reproduction. The editor works toward their resolution by posing a variety of perspectives and by presenting competing interests and rights. Although this book does not resolve the problems encountered with use of reproductive technologies (RTs), it provides a good basis for understanding their range in several dimensions.

Beyond a broad overview, the book is divided into eight parts, each beginning with a brief introduction followed by at least two papers. Alpern begins by laying a framework for addressing topics later raised. These include not only ethical considerations, but also the physical, emotional and legal obstacles that infertile couples face, particularly when using RTs in an attempt to procreate.

The first section provides an important foundation. It outlines biological structures and processes required for unaided reproduction, common causes of infertility, major available RTs, and common emotional reactions of infertile couples.

The second and longest section, is entitled *Conflicting Perspectives: Issues, Positions, and Arguments*. Its papers present and debate current positions on RTs of particular note and consider the child's perspective. Next, three essays examine the meaning and significance of having children, with a list of common reasons,<sup>1</sup> and focus on reasons for wanting children to whom one is genetically related.

*Making and Selling Babies: Production and Commerce* contains an abridged version of a law review article and a paper with a theological slant. The fifth set of essays highlights the impact of RTs on women, individually and collectively.

<sup>1</sup> At 151.

A sixth set of papers focuses particularly on legal issues raised by RTs, initially centering on Constitutional law; later, on "surrogate motherhood" agreements. Insofar as Alpern implies in his initial overview that the term, "surrogate motherhood," is unfortunate and "may affect the meaning and implications of traditional concepts without our realizing it,"<sup>2</sup> it is somewhat surprising to find the term used here and throughout the book.

In a section entitled *Professional Responsibilities*, one essay urges that hospitals not admit surrogate mothers except, parenthetically, "those who arrive in labor or require services which only that hospital can provide."<sup>3</sup>

In the eighth and last section of his book, Alpern succinctly describes "just a small sampling of the troubling, often bizarre, disputes and conundrums"<sup>4</sup> leading to litigation and lucidly discusses their resolution. From their placement, it appears that he wishes readers to have an informed perspective before reading them. Two, involving parenting through contract, are treated in some detail: one where everyone wanted the child; one where no one did. A final paper briefly describes four controversies over the legal status of in vitro embryos.

Throughout, Alpern neutrally synthesizes arguments and counter-arguments, but he offers no conclusion as such. This would have been helpful even if readers must ultimately fashion their own. Nevertheless, he has assembled a single volume that presents widely differing aspects of and positions on a host of RT issues and has begun to establish a framework for treating them. Lawmakers, lawyers or anyone concerned with reproductive technologies should find this work highly useful.

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<sup>2</sup> At 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> At 312.

<sup>4</sup> At 325.

<sup>†</sup> Ms. Ferber received her B.L.S.(Molecular Biology) from Yale University and J.D. from Franklin Pierce Law Center. She has training in gene mapping, has been a Reproductive Health Educator and has served as a Board member of the NH Chapter of the March of Dimes. She practices law in Concord, NH.