In Memoriam

Raymond Duff is dead at the age of 76. He passed away the night spring turned into summer, June 21. He was a farmer's son from Maine who became a world-reknowned sociologist and professor of neonatology at Yale University. He taught sociology in the Sociology Department, and pediatrics at Yale's medical school for many years.

In the early '60s he was an active member of the group of researchers responsible for a new dimension in the perception of medicine—the dimension of social science. Studies like Hollingshead and Redlich's *Social Class and Mental Illness* and Duff and Hollingshead's *Sickness and Society* placed medicine within its social context and helped fashion a theory of medicine as a social science. He was a medical ethicist *avant le lettre* especially in his work, in the early '70s, on withdrawal of treatment and euthanasia for severely handicapped newborns.

He combined his knowledge as a researcher and his compassion for parents and babies, particularly when he discussed the unacceptability of a low quality of life for severely dependent and handicapped children. He developed the concept of a "moral community" to describe the parents and doctor working together and sharing responsibility for decisions about life and death for the newborn. I worked with him in his department at Yale University Medical Center, and can witness firsthand how he was a family doctor in the truest sense of the word. For him, decisionmaking was really a shared moral responsibility. He put this idea into practice.

His ideas about life and death were not always welcomed by his colleagues at that time. This often created tension and personal isolation. Even his critics, however, acknowledged his scientific and medical integrity. The focus of his work on newborns was on establishing an objective, scientific way to determine in advance, whenever possible, what the quality of life of a severly handicapped newborn might be. He was highly respected, becoming a full professor in 1978.

I am proud that I was his "promoter" when he was offered an Honorary Doctorate by the Medical School of the University of Utrecht in 1986. This honorary doctorate was given for his scientific evaluation of medical practice and his ongoing, critical, open, and unbiased evaluation of his own practical experience at Yale University Hospital. This lifelong commitment resulted in many impressive, thoughtful, and influential publications. Controversy was inescapable, since all of his lectures and publications were based on a keen scientific insight coupled with an ethical sense and a strong commitment to humanism. He contributed greatly to our perceptions of healthcare and to society as a whole.

Later that same year, 1986, he was hit by his first stroke. It immobilized him mentally as well as physically. As a result of several additional strokes, his life

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during the past ten years turned into one of increasing loneliness. To make matters worse, he was fully aware of his condition and this caused him intense suffering. His perception had always been that a severe handicap leading to dependency was worse than death. Ironically, that condition about which he wrote and contributed so much came to torture him as well. Although we will miss him and his sardonic humor, we may be glad that death took him and liberated him at last.

Jurrit Bergsma