Preface

Can the Western tradition of individualism be reconciled with the principle of equity in health policy? How do our present institutions reinforce particular conceptions of health and illness and how might these conceptions change or be changed? What are alternative roles for the state in coping with issues of health policy? How are contemporary health systems and issues of health policy likely to be perceived in the future?

This book has its origins in the work of a group of scholars who tackled these questions at a seminar in Megève, France, in the Winter of 1979. They came from different disciplinary backgrounds; they did not all share the same political persuasions; and the systems with which they were familiar were in some ways quite different. More important than these apparent differences, however, they all came from Western industrialized nations and wanted to learn from one another.

Although the chapters of this book reflect our discussions in Megève, each is an independent contribution. An earlier version of this book was published in French under the title La santé rationnée? La fin d’un mirage (Paris: Economica, 1981).

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