The moral status of suicide
SIR: Oyebode's article (Psychiatric Bulletin, 20, 85–89) was both stimulating and interesting. I would like to state some aspects of Buddhist philosophy relating to life, death and suicide. In Buddhist philosophy, referring to Gautama Siddharta and his teachings that go back more than 2500 years, life is sacred not because it was "God" who created it. It is sacred because life is the culmination of all the "right forces" happening in the "right manner" and at the "right times". The other associated notion is of the present life as just one in a series of many. The cause and effect – do good and prosper and do evil and suffer, is somewhat of a theme here. Kill yourself once, leads on to kill yourself again and again in the lives to come. This teaching bears no resemblance to the idea that 'God' is the creator. The 'crime' of taking one's own life is with oneself – nobody else is involved. It is not against the state, humanity or even religion. Life is not an end in itself – it is a means towards the end, Nirvana. The concept that 'one is the master of one's own destiny', appears to have a powerful impact on those who practise Buddhist philosophy.

F. K. M. ZAW, Birmingham Children's Hospital Trust, Ladywood, Birmingham B16 8ET

Whose journal is it anyway?
SIR: Rather than stacking a journal unread on the shelf, can I remind readers of the possibility of donating journals and books to needy libraries overseas. Book Aid International support mainly African libraries. They are pleased to receive a few years' collection of a journal, or an annual commitment as a delayed subscription. Transport can often be arranged via the local rotary club. The address to contact is: Book Aid International, Tel: 0171 733 3577; Fax: 0171 978 8006; Email: Ha@gn.apc.org.

A. GRAY, 42 Wyche Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 4EG