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For almost ten years, real-time ultrasound has been used in many obstetrics departments. By means of an apparatus which has since become technologically outdated many doctors, technicians and expectant mothers had, at the time, the moving experience of being able to observe the living fetus. This seems to me to have been a psychological break-through. For the first time, the human eye pierced the ‘black box’ of the womb. For the first time, the living fetus could actually be seen by the people concerned with its development. Those who were present in obstetrics departments when this technique was first used soon realized how indispensable it was proving to be in providing a valid means of observation of the fetus and its health, in ascertaining its age and studying its morphology and growth. For many, systematic and regular use of real-time ultrasound throughout pregnancy has become an indispensable practice which reduces perinatal morbidity and mortality.

Over the last three years, the appearance of the multitransducer scanner has brought about substantial technical progress. At the same time, but quite independently of this, numerous studies on fetal breathing movements, fetal behavior and neonatal cardiology were published. I have organized this symposium in order to review these various contributions. It was a great pleasure for me to receive so many eminent specialists at Charleroi and I should like to extend my thanks to them once more.

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