weakness, however, for a person unfamiliar with the field might find a number of passages fairly difficult to follow. For this reason, I think that a short summary could usefully have been appended to certain chapters, notably chapter 5, but Bancroft deserves every credit for having pulled together in a coherent way the therapy literature in that most thorny area of clinical intervention, deviant sexual behaviour.

RONALD C LYLE

The Ethics of Foetal Research

By Paul Ramsey. (Pp 104, cloth £4.00, paperback £1.50). Yale University Press 1975.

Paul Ramsey presents a complicated review of the ethical documents relating to fetal research produced in America by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Institute of Health and compares these with the regulations drawn up in Great Britain under an advisory group chaired by Sir John Peel. He outlines types of fetal research now being done and examines their potential benefits. He follows the history of the way in which these reports came into being and some of the controversies which surrounded them. He then applies some ethical questions to various sections of the reports.

Without having the complete text of the reports the result is somewhat confusing. One may even find his approach to the subject lacking in any logical formulation. However, this book is of great importance to those who are considering the problem of the abortion laws and the difficulties which these present for the whole question of fetal research. The fact that this area has needed examination would seem to have flowed from the new legal situation on abortion. If the fetus is no longer deemed human, and has already been condemned, then what is to prevent it being used for research? As Paul Ramsey himself says, 'Far from abortion settling the question of fetal research, it could be that sober reflection on the use of the human fetus in research could unsettle the abortion issue.' All the committees considering this problem were faced with the fundamental problem of defining the legal status

of the fetus, 'an entity too alive to be dead, not mature enough to be a viable baby, yet human enough to be specially protectable'. As the author points out, they sought for their ethical norms 'all appropriate procedures providing protection for children as subjects in bio-medical research'. At no time was this problem viewed in the light of the examination of the ethics in regard to a corpse, still less to that of an animal. In America Congress reviewed the problem under its policy for 'the protection of human subjects' and was referred to the Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioural Research.

The research itself included the question of such procedures as seeing what damage various illnesses that the mother might have would do to the fetus, bearing in mind that the fetus was already condemned to death, and examining the possibility of trial resuscitation measures on an almost viable fetus which might later be of value to other spontaneous abortions. In the latter case the problem arose as to what might be done if such resuscitation measures began to have a positive effect. It seemed that at that point, just when measures were having a beneficial effect on the fetus, they would have to be stopped as the fetus had already been condemned to death. As will be seen from these two examples the book is not really intended for those with a delicate stomach. At the same time this work should not escape the notice of those who are concerned at this present time in the debate on abortion. Paul Ramsey asks whether some of the motivation for such research has not in itself grown within the healing professions out of a sense of guilt: 'The wastage of unborn lives needs redemption; something must be saved from it. The research gains promise not only benefits; they can also rectify and do at least something to redeem the destruction we are collectively causing in pursuit of other social and personal goods.' It is perhaps this motivation which is behind the recommendations of the Human Embryology and Development and Study Section of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to the effect that 'planned scientific studies of the human fetus must be encouraged and that acceptable formats

and safeguards must be found'. While such comments have been made in respect of criminals who are awaiting execution, where some of their redemption might be brought about by permitting themselves to be used experimentally, the innocent fetus can hardly be in need of such redemption nor give consent to it.

The moral and ethical examination which this book gives to the whole subject seems most acceptable, and asks for study by those who might be involved in this form of research. To others it may be of some interest and to all who are concerned with the way in which moral decisions are created and enter into the law of the land this book may well be a revelation.

LOUIS MARTEAU