

Book reviews

Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine

Arras J, Hunt, R, eds. Second edition. Palo Alto, Mayfield Publishing Company, 1983. \$18.95.

This second and much revised edition of a volume which first appeared in 1977 is a richly varied collection of predominantly American work in medical ethics. Contributors include political theorists, lawyers, journalists and theologians as well as doctors, nurses and philosophers. Their differing perspectives offer often conflicting views about many of the more important ethical issues in contemporary medicine. A healthy balance of viewpoints on particular issues and of medical specialisms, is achieved and the editors' detailed commentary both unifies and adds interest to the volume.

The editors' introductory essay, *Ethical Theory in the Medical Context*, provides the philosophical layman with some conceptual tools and offers an ethical framework in terms of which the discussions of ethical problems that follow may be considered. Two approaches, one basically act-utilitarian, the other basically Kantian, which focus on consequences and respect for persons respectively, are outlined.

Part one addresses questions about the ethical foundations of health care. Considerations of alternative models of the relationships between health-care professionals (basically doctors and nurses) and patients, are followed by contributions addressing themes such as autonomy and paternalism, consent, and truth-telling, which are of recurring and general importance throughout health care. Finally some possible conflicts of role and responsibilities are examined.

The remainder of the volume addresses some major issues with parts two, three, four and five focusing on abor-

tion, euthanasia and the care of the dying, experimentation on human subjects and human genetics respectively. Given the wealth of material that is already collected on these topics it is perhaps surprising that the editors should devote a whole section each to abortion and euthanasia, while subsuming issues such as resource allocation under the broad heading of Social Justice and Health Policy.

The format and scope of the volume are worthy of praise. It brings together problems from the bedside and problems about matters of policy in a coherent way. The editors' substantial introductions relate the positions adopted by authors of individual papers and consider their arguments, making frequent reference to the ethical approaches outlined in the introductory essay. Issues are introduced through short case-studies before being pursued in more reflective and theoretical papers; in this way the non-medical reader is frequently brought into immediate contact with the 'sharp end' of the issues. The juxtaposition of case-studies alongside theoretical papers offering often conflicting analyses helps to give much of the volume the flavour of a dialogue. An important feature is the challenge to the 'individualism' exemplified in medicine by codes such as the Hippocratic Oath with its emphasis on the good of the individual patient. Several sections in the parts on Experimentation on Human Subjects, and Social Justice and Health Policy, for example, focus on the conflict between the rights and welfare of individuals and the good of others. The editors invite the reader to consider the ethical significance of the psychological, social and economic context of medicine.

Perhaps it is because all of the contributions have been drawn only from previously published work that important areas have been omitted. For example, a consideration of the ethical implications of the affluent life style

and sophisticated medical facilities enjoyed by most people in the rich world while people in the Third World are deprived of basic medical care and even the bare essentials for human existence, would have been an important addition. Considerations of ethical issues in mental health are notably absent as are considerations of different conceptions of health and illness and the significance these have for the ways in which health care is organised, for example whether prevention or cure is emphasised. Despite such omissions, however, the volume is a useful source which, as a result of thoughtful editing, makes a considerable contribution to the development of a coherent conceptual and ethical map of the territory covered by journals such as the *Journal of Medical Ethics*. The detailed introductions to individual parts could stand on their own as introductions to many of the main areas of concern in the ethics of medicine. The lists of supplementary material and resources in bioethics, along with the introductory material before each part, compensate to some extent for the lack of an index. *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine* is to be thoroughly commended to teachers, practitioners and students of philosophy as well as of medicine and other health-care professions.

GAVIN J FAIRBAIRN
Child and Family Unit, Oldham and
District General Hospital

Science and Ethical Responsibility

Lakoff S A, ed. Massachusetts Addison-Wesley, 1980. £10.50

This book consists of the proceedings of the US Student Pugwash Conference held in 1979 in San Diego. An offshoot of the increasingly geriatric Pugwash

movement, Student Pugwash is an attempt to recruit the younger generation to an active involvement in science policy-making. The contributions, from young and old alike, are grouped within three major sections.

Science, Technology and Arms Control is a critique of SALT II and other attempts at arms control. Those with the fortitude to wade through this sea of acronyms will find an unremarkable range of opinions of a less than radical nature.

Biomedical Research and Applications may be of more interest to the readers of this journal. Jonas Salk starts this section with *Toward a New Epoch*, a rather nebulous discussion of 'the use of wisdom in the game of life'. Whither Bioethics by George Kieffer calls upon scientists to involve themselves in ethical discussions of a high order. Kieffer is critical of the way individual freedom, utilitarianism, and the view that 'failure to pursue good is, in effect, a form of doing harm', have been elevated to the status of moral principles to justify unfettered research in such contentious areas as recombinant DNA (genetic manipulation). Social Priorities in Biomedical Research describes how the 'moon-shot mentality' characteristic of, say, the American National Cancer Program has arisen in the vacuum created by the lack of a coherent health policy. Unfortunately, there is only limited discussion of the political implications of American health policy, and of the vested interests inherent in it. Allocations of Scarce Medical Resources, which also fails to consider political issues, is followed by both a critique and an unmitigated defence of recombinant DNA research. As one actively engaged in such research I was surprised to find myself more in sympathy with the former in which Stephen Reiss argues that self-regulatory processes have side-stepped the major issues by removing them from the realm of public discussion. The author is worried about the difficulty of regulating industrial research. It is more sinister, in my view, that both the British and the American Government have awarded defence contracts for recombinant DNA research. How will it be possible to open a laboratory, so funded, to public scrutiny? The defender of recombinant DNA research, who believes there to be no ethical principles that can lead to the regulation of basic research, suffers from an unfortunate misunderstanding of the technology, as he clearly demonstrates throughout his contribution. Clifford Grobstein concludes this section with a sober consid-

eration of the realities and potentialities of modern biomedical research. He cites several benefits such as a clearer understanding of the cellular basis of diseases such as cancer, the production of novel pharmaceuticals and the production of diagnostic tools. Some of these benefits are already with us. He ends with a discussion of the ethical implications of human embryo manipulation in which it is argued that scientists must set a dispassionate example to the other interested parties in this debate.

The final, and often interesting, section is Scientists and Political Issues. Several contributors discuss how scientists can play an active role in policy-making, or can act as 'whistle-blowers' to advise the public of potential or actual abuses of technology. The final contributions are given over to a discussion of social problems associated with specific aspects of modern technology.

On the whole this was a disappointing book. A number of important issues were raised, and most are as germane today as they were in 1979. Unfortunately many authors lacked sufficient perspective to do more than scrape the surface of the problems. A more radical approach to science policy-making is needed if real change is to occur.

KIM KAISER

*Cancer Research Campaign Group
Department of Biochemistry,
Imperial College, London*

Ethics and Animals

Miller H B, Williams W H, eds.
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There can be few subjects which lend themselves so well to genuine and understandable debate as the human treatment of other animals. The contributors to this collection of essays come from different occupations and disciplines and bring varied interests, priorities and levels of sophistication to the topic. The result is a very mixed bag indeed, but disappointingly, little effort is made to get down to real discussion. The fault, it must be said, lies chiefly with the philosophers whose obsessive preoccupation with the analysis of animal rights makes it impossible for them to pick up the large and important issues raised by some of the writers.

If the philosophers think this comment unfair, let them look at the statement of the repentant Roger Ulrich, quoted in Deborah Mayo's excellent article. Ulrich confesses that much of

his animal experimentation was motivated by the desire for money and status; his conversion was not a deliverance of the pure intellect in the shape of a theory of rights but a gradual insight into his own character and motives. This is a fertile area for philosophical as well as psychological investigation. Why is it so studiously ignored?

And there are other leads. Ask, as the animal liberationist Henry Spira does, 'Is another shampoo worth blinding rabbits to you?' Tell the Rumbaugh's story of Austin and Sherman, the chimps who became friends and queued at a vending machine to buy each other presents of peanut-butter sandwiches. (How long does it take to teach children such unselfish behaviour?). Examine, as James Rachels begins to do, the language of the animal experimenter. Ask why it is necessary to refer to screams of pain as 'distress vocalisations'. Point out that the use of the passive voice in reports actually *hides* the fact that the often terrible and pointless experiments were carried out on a living, sentient creature by an intelligent human being. The philosophers could both do their subject and make a genuine contribution to the creation of a better world by following such leads instead of devoting so much of their talent to the production of yet another dreary answer to the non-question of whether animals have rights.

However, many of the essays here are instructive and enjoyable. Gavin Daws's article on the trials of two men who freed some dolphins from a research centre is particularly amusing and thought-provoking and reveals an interesting gap in our conceptual and linguistic framework. Even if we agree with Judge Doi's exasperated ruling that dolphins are not persons, it seems an inadequate alternative to have to regard them merely as bits of property. The outcome is either too brutal or too sentimental, and leads us to ask what other possibilities there could be. There are also some endearing chinks in the philosophers' armour. I particularly enjoyed the bluff moral naivete of the sophisticated logician James 'We've-all-got-to-go-sometime' Cargile, who claims that eating pork may be wrong, 'for all I know' but hopes it isn't; and R G Frey uncomfortably trying to persuade us that it would be quite natural for someone to claim that Albert's wife has a duty to fix fried eggs for his breakfast if he likes them. (Well, she *married* him didn't she?) Doubt, Frey solemnly informs us, would creep in only if we tried to use this obvious truth to infer that Albert has a right to his fried eggs.