

medicine for non-medical layment. It takes both lawyers and others who are interested (and that should include many doctors) in detail through all the steps both before and during an action for what is loosely called 'medical negligence', and comments pithily on the various stages of this forensic obstacle race. Perhaps these quotations will give the flavour:

'Instructing an expert. This is the Beecher's Brook of your action. We could even say, a little unkindly, that it can be the *pons asinorum!* . . . You need an expert of the right specialty, who can write a thorough and intelligible report that can withstand cross-examination, who achieves a happy mean between seeking to exculpate a colleague and over-egging the plaintiff's pudding in an effort to come up with the goods, who is familiar with the requirements of litigation and appearing in court and who will make a good witness' (p 80).

' . . . the determining factor will be the judge's view as to whether justice dictates recovery [of damages, that is, rather than to health]. He will then find a legal peg on which to hang his decision. . . . The progress of law within a society is always from formalism to flexibility, albeit that in the common law tradition judicial activism is usually disguised by an artfully contrived appearance of deference to authority' (pp 172–173).

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Embryos and Ethics: The Warnock Report in Debate

Edited by Nigel M de S Cameron,
122 pages, Edinburgh, £5.90,
Rutherford House Books, 1987.

This collection of articles appears from internal evidence to originate in a conference at Rutherford House in Edinburgh, of which the editor is warden. One of the articles, by Dr Teresa Iglesias, has already appeared in this journal, and six others in *Ethics and Medicine*. It is therefore only in a rather specialised sense a new publication.

Nor is the reference in the subtitle to 'debate' entirely accurate. This is a highly partisan document, gathering together a variety of expressions of what

is essentially the same point of view, that human life begins at conception, and that research on the embryo must in consequence be ruled out. The editor's opening essay is entitled 'The Christian Stake in the Warnock Debate'; both the title and the essay convey the clear message that this point of view represents *the* Christian stance on the issues under discussion. In only one article, reviewing the churches' responses to the Warnock Report, is there a real attempt to describe and evaluate other points of view held within the churches. Incidentally, the author, Dr Isobel Grigor, is wrong in stating (p 85) that among the churches responding to the report 'there is unanimous rejection of third party donation on ethical grounds'. That may have been true of the Scottish churches: the Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility, by a majority, agreed with Warnock that "those engaging in AID are, in their own view, involved in a positive affirmation of the family" and hence AID may be regarded as an acceptable practice'.

There is a polemical piece by the late Professor Ian Donald. He characterises the report as a 'totally secular, irreligious type of report which would satisfy any atheist. . . one should not be deceived by its mellifluence'.

Despite these defects, however, *Embryos and Ethics* is valuable for the searching attention it gives to a number of central issues in this field. Two deserve special note. Richard Higginson's discussion of the ethics of experimentation on human subjects acknowledges that proxy consent may on occasion be necessary, and is in his view consistent with the main thrust of the ethical tradition. His opposition to experiments on embryos is based on the fact that avoidance of harm to the subject, an integral part of the ethical code of the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki, cannot possibly be honoured where the embryo is concerned. 'Such harm is not unlikely, insignificant, or insubstantial. It is harm with a capital H – wounding, malignant and deadly.' It is a weakness of those ethical analyses which relate the protection afforded to the embryo and fetus to the stages of embryonic and fetal development, that they blur the distinction between relative protection and absolute harm. It would be preferable to state clearly that improvements in the care of *some* embryos and fetuses are being sought at the expense of *others*.

In the contributions by the editor and Dr David Atkinson there is a helpful discussion of what is involved in

discerning moral significance in human beings. They are both clear that that significance does not derive from specifiable characteristics such as consciousness, rationality or the like, but from our common call to enter into relationship with God. To be made in the image of God is to be addressed by him, to be related to him. This is common to the human species and unique to it. As Dr Atkinson points out, Christians are 'obliged to make this fundamental discrimination' stigmatised as 'speciesism' by some philosophers.

The Warnock Report chose to bypass this fundamental debate. It can be criticised for doing so. But there remains an impasse in communication between those who, either explicitly or implicitly, endorse the understanding of what it is to be human just mentioned, and those who opt for a more instrumental view. This book is helpful in the way it clarifies some of the areas of dispute: something different, of a different temper, is needed if the extent of common ground is to be mapped and enlarged.

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The Use of Human Beings in Research

Edited by SF Spicker, I Alon, A de Vries, and H T Engelhardt, 291 pages,
Dordrecht, £43.00,
Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988.

One of the questions that I ask referees for the journal I edit is 'Has the author made an attempt to communicate to the non-specialist?' I fear that the answer in this case would be 'No'. Too much of this book reads as if it had been transcribed from a conversation between a collection of lawyers and sociologists called together to impress each other on the conference circuit.

This particular conference took place in September 1982 in Tel Aviv. I should have liked to have been there, for there is no doubt in my mind that I should have regarded these papers as a perfect excuse to make for the beach. The six years that have passed since the conference have not been spent polishing the prose.

The story of Daniel and his friends who only ate Kosher food yet looked healthier than the young men fattened up by Nebuchadnezzar is cited as the