

competence of senior colleagues has been severely questioned. Against a background of patient consumerism, litigation and complaint, informed consent and the rationing of health care, or of truth, provide rich material for unusually strident public debate. Health workers now realise uneasily that there is a need to move from the conscientious complacency of yesterday to a preparedness for the complex dilemmas of tomorrow.

They need a concise, relevant, un pompous tool and the Education Department of Marie Curie Cancer Care is to be congratulated on providing it. This book sets out a brief, relevant outline curriculum for a multi-disciplinary audience, based firmly on virtue ethics and the case-conference approach. The discussions move beyond euthanasia and the persistent vegetative state to relationships and power, autonomy and the advance directive, and harm and benefit analysis. It combines guidance with flexibility. The cases selected for discussion would encourage specific topics to be discussed or local disturbing cases to be analyzed without scapegoating, and so to provide ongoing instruction at unit level.

This is too valuable an initiative to be restricted to hospice and palliative care, but hospice colleagues should be grateful for it. They may even allow a seditious bioethicist, lawyer or philosopher to contribute to their discussions, and help prepare them for tomorrow's world by using in the document's own words 'ethical theory to illuminate and add substance to the resolution of practical problems'.

PROFESSOR ERIC WILKES
*Trent Palliative Care Centre,
Little Common Lane, Abbey Lane
Sheffield S11 9NE.*

Examining doctors

Donald Gould, London, Faber and Faber, 1991, 148 pages, £12.99

This ambiguous title symbolises the struggle between the themes of this book. It does examine doctors with all their faults as well as reviewing the methods that the profession uses to regulate and to train them. It attempts to explore how society perceives the activity of the profession. The author bases his conclusions about the present state of the medical profession in the United Kingdom on his own experience and interviews with a small

sample of doctors who are drawn from a wide range of posts. The main problem of having one from each level in the profession (from the student through the junior staff to the chiefs of the medical hierarchy) is the clear lack of representativeness of these individuals. It is tempting to conclude that many of the doctors chosen would be those whose views would be most critical of the present state of medicine and possibly most in harmony with those of the author. For example, the general practitioner chosen is one who prides himself on his frugal prescribing. The junior doctor chosen is one who was in two minds whether to read medicine in the first place and now feels jaded about the profession.

Provided the reader does not accept this book as a representative study of the opinions of doctors at different stages in their careers, the book can be enjoyed as a very readable mixture of wit and ire. However, I worry that some of the conclusions will merely feed the growing prejudice that most doctors are either tired or jaded.

The author takes us through the evolution of health care in this country, which makes a very useful foundation for understanding the pressures on the contemporary doctor. He clearly illustrates the changing interaction between the patient and the doctor with time although his pointed substitution of 'customer', 'client' etc for the term 'patient' wears a bit thin with repetition. The present dilemma of the doctor struggling in the conflicting role as both the individual's healer and the system's manager is thoughtfully explored.

Second only to his vilification of organ transplantation, are the author's attacks on the medical education system, which he seems to perceive as having bred this brood of arrogant and self-defensive egotists. This book is very topical, with the author predicting a number of the changes in emphasis from hospital to primary care which have been highlighted by recent reports. However, he appears to have ignored some of the exciting developments in undergraduate education. Most medical schools, stimulated by the recent GMC recommendations, are focusing their teaching on rationing facts and spending more time on developing skills. He looks back in horror at his own medical education but in the same building today he could see a curriculum which embraces ethics, problem-solving, multidisciplinary management and palliative care as well as exciting ways of helping the student

to discover the essential building bricks in the basic medical sciences.

The author's anecdotes and wise analysis of the current problems are clearly the fruits of long experience. However, the book's overall rather negative tone may irritate the reader but as a source of subjects for argument this book is bound to be popular, especially with those in training. It challenges the current generation of doctors to defend their attitudes and to justify their roles as healing intermediaries in the world of developing science and changing needs.

GRAHAM CLAYDEN
*Paediatric unit, UMDS,
(St Thomas's campus),
Lambeth Palace Road
London SE1 7EH.*

Lives in the balance: the ethics of using animals in biomedical research

Edited by Jane A Smith and Kenneth M Boyd, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, 352 pages, £19.50

This volume, a report of a working party of the Institute of Medical Ethics, is the result of a three-year project of study undertaken by scholars gathered together from a wide variety of disciplines. The text seeks to analyse the major issues encountered by anyone involved or interested in the debate concerning the use of animals in biomedical research. As such, it covers a large range of areas and issues, from the degree to which the suffering of non-humans should be considered in the context of any moral conclusions we may arrive at concerning their use in experiments, to whether or not it is both desirable and justifiable to use animals in schools or at other levels of education. The volume also includes a brief consideration of philosophers' attitudes to animals, from Plato to Peter Singer.

Specific cases of experimentation are examined in detail, for example the use of monkeys in research into the treatment of human diabetes. Here the possible benefits of such experimentation are assessed. Questions of funding, experimental procedure, of the type of animal best suited to research goals, and the techniques used in the research itself are all examined and detailed. Given that the treatment of

diabetes is considered a worthwhile end by most humans (not least by those who are suffering from it) the working party concludes that such research is indeed worthwhile. However, costs may be reduced in terms of animal suffering if considerations of their needs in the laboratory environment are given necessary attention.

This case can serve as paradigmatic of the working party's approach. Thus, the perspective adopted involves considering the issues with a costs-and-benefits approach in mind. Broadly, one may say that the working party sees animal experimentation as a necessary but unfortunate course of action which must be accepted until alternative methods are found. In other words, certain specific differences between animals and humans are asserted 'from temporary (but by no means perpetual) necessity'.

Of course, total agreement on all aspects of detail is not reached by the working party. This is not surprising, given that eighteen individuals from diverse backgrounds are involved. What we are presented with, therefore, is an approach which is not wholly unified. Rather, we are faced with a volume which attempts to mediate between the interests not only of humans and animals, but also between the interests of humans who are themselves occasionally divided on the issues as a result of their own social interests, theoretical commitments and moral viewpoints. This makes the volume of special significance. For, however much one may feel the need to agree or disagree with its conclusions or specific points made, it is a book which will one day be of as much interest to future social theorists as to the present-day moral philosophers and scientists involved in the debate. In terms of its current value, one may say that the present study is useful reading for moral thinkers, research scientists and those concerned with the status of animals.

PETER SEDGWICK

University of Wales, College of Cardiff.

Animal experimentation: the moral issues

Edited by Robert M Baird and Stuart E Rosenbaum, New York, Prometheus Books, 1992, 182 pages, £9.50

Is it justifiable to use animals for scientific research? The difficulty of responding to this question with a simple 'yes' or 'no' is well illustrated by the variety of perspectives represented by these sixteen essays. In their introduction to the volume, Baird and Rosenbaum provide a perceptive and open-minded summary of the positions adopted by their contributors. The contributions themselves, as I have already hinted, often diverge considerably from one another. Robert B White's 'Beastly Questions', for example, presents a strongly emotive case for animal experimentation, achieved by way of reference to the human suffering that has been prevented as a result of its use. On the other side of the argument, Richard Ryder's essay, 'Speciesism', attempts to dissolve the assumed differences which are traditionally thought to separate humans from animals. According to Ryder, we are just (albeit 'very clever') animals. Recognition of this fact, moreover, should oblige us to conclude that if we are part of the same biological system, then why not accept the fact that we also share the same 'moral continuum'? Indeed, Ryder goes to the extreme of asserting that anyone who denies this view is guilty of 'as great a prejudice as racism'. For Carl Cohen, however, the view that 'speciesism' is akin to racism 'is worse than unsound; it is atrocious'. Cohen asserts that since animals can neither make nor respond to moral claims, it makes no sense to assume that they have any rights. As humans we have certain ethical obligations which should govern our treatment of animals, but all species are not equal and animal experimentation needs to be defended from this viewpoint. J A Gray, too, sees 'speciesism' as both necessary and justifiable. Tom Regan, in contrast, having found utilitarian arguments an insufficient basis for protecting animals, argues for a model of animal rights based upon a principle which holds all 'experiencing subjects of life' to have an 'inherent value'. Defining what one means by the term 'inherent value', however, is a problem for Mary Anne Warren. As she notes, the notion must either be grounded in some 'natural property' or be arbitrary and therefore unpersuasive. If it is the former, then that natural property itself would require definition and should be the starting point for a defence of animal rights, which

in turn begs the question as to the primacy of the concept of inherent value.

Two of Peter Singer's essays are included. In 'The Significance of Animal Suffering' he argues for an ethical principle which can be adopted for the purposes of minimizing human and non-human distress alike. If a thing can suffer, says Singer, we must assume that it deserves the same treatment as we would conventionally reserve for human beings. Hence, in arriving at a moral judgement the potential suffering of an animal must have the same weight in our deliberations as the potential suffering of a person. However, as William Timberlane asserts in reply to Singer, providing an adequate definition of suffering is a far from easy task.

Alan Freeman and Betty Mensch provide the closing piece for the volume. Their contribution constitutes an attempt to think beyond the contradictions and aporias which they see as dominating the debate. For Freeman and Mensch, what needs to be questioned is the dominance of western discourse, 'which may be characterized [as the discourse of] dualistic, analytic, [and] instrumental rationality'. The philosophical tradition inaugurated by the work of Bacon and Descartes is singled out here, their 'legacy pervades the modern psychology lab'. However, Freeman and Mensch do not arrive at a position which advocates the wholesale abandonment of animal experiments, in fact they resist any temptation to offer 'prescriptive norms'. Instead, a 'postmodern' practice is advocated. Freeman and Mensch, however, seem to have a rather ill-defined notion of what the term 'postmodern' means. For them, it is equated with a 'theological agenda' which hardly seems to reflect the work of those generally taken to be representative of postmodernism itself (that of Jean-François Lyotard, for instance). Nor, it follows, are they very conscious of the problems which beset anyone intent on following the postmodern trail.

In spite of such minor reservations, however, each piece (including those I have not had the space to mention) represents a useful and illuminating reflection on the problems. The basic positions and arguments are well represented, and this book can be commended to all those with an interest in the issues.

PETER R SEDGWICK
University of Wales, Cardiff.