across cultures and of genetic engineering appear (for no obvious reason) as appendices. There is no doubt that the book would be useful in providing students with an account of all these problems, and I will not take issue in a short review with any of the arguments used in their presentation. It is more appropriate, perhaps, to look briefly at the general approach and style of the book.

Having stated at the outset that medical ethics is part of applied moral philosophy the authors continue with some brief remarks on the historical background. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hume and Kant fly by in less than four pages, including Kant's view of ethics in eight lines. Is it worth doing at such speed? I suspect that students can do little with this survey other than quote from it, encouraging the view that a fleeting reference from secondary sources to the great thinkers of the past is an essential part of applied moral philosophy. The subsequent discussion of utilitarianism and virtue ethics seems more pertinent, though 'the greatest good for the greatest number' (page 4) is unfortunately, like its better known variant, a misleading way of introducing the former. From here we are taken, via the Hippocratic oath, to certain principles that we should keep in mind, those concerning non-maleficence and beneficence, autonomy, professional integrity and justice. I can see no theoretical objection to the use of principles of this kind, though the reference to the role of the underlying value of care in cases of conflict (page 12) is rather unclear. The practical problem is that the introduction of these terms at an early stage can have a stultifying effect on a student discussion that is happily proceeding in terms of harm, benefit, choice and fairness. I am not sure that the term 'techne' will help much either, especially when appearing from nowhere (page 15) with only the obscure expression 'skilled form of knowledge' by way of cursory explanation.

The above criticisms concern just the first chapter on the foundations of medical ethics. Not everyone will share them, and even those who do will find that the rest of the material is entirely worthwhile despite them. Here the relevant criticisms are those of style and are fairly minor. Sometimes the writing strays into a familiar academic wordiness ('healing process' for 'healing', 'family unit' for 'family', 'abortion procedures' for 'abortions') and occasionally into that of the more respectable leading article ('steps must be taken', 'sound and experienced opinion', 'widely recognized and respected') but although it doesn't sparkle, it is always thoroughly readable.

I noticed only two mistakes in this well produced book. There is a possibly confusing ambiguity in 'reduced opportunity costs' (page 77), since in the technical sense the opportunity costs increase. And in the discussion (page 135) of sexual misconduct in psychotherapy, an impeccably Freudian typo transforms 'therapist' into 'the rapist'.

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Ethical issues of molecular genetics in psychiatry


This volume contains papers presented and revised subsequent to discussion at a meeting to discuss the ethical issues arising from the application of molecular genetic technology to psychiatry, which was held in 1990 under the joint auspices of the World Health Organization and the IPSEN Foundation. The authors of the paper are drawn from a wide variety of disciplines, including psychiatry, genetics, religion and law. In the discussions of research techniques and the application of research findings to clinical issues, there is a presumption that the reader will be fully conversant with the relevant technical jargon and no attempt is made at translation for the lay reader or the genetically unsophisticated clinician. Although some of the papers such as that by Crow from London on the possibility of a single-gene locus for psychosis and intelligence contain little ethical discussion, they provide the material for an understanding of other discussions of the complex ethical issues emerging in this rapidly advancing area.

Some themes recur. There is repeated reference to the success first in identifying the genetic pattern of the Medelian dominant inheritance of Huntington's chorea and then in developing a test for the identification of carrier status. It is pointed out repeatedly that problems immediately flow from the fact that the test is not one giving total accuracy and that the handling of knowledge about carrier status imposes difficult ethical choices for a physician in possession of such information. However, such uncertainty of diagnosis and such difficulty over the handling of information in this relatively straightforward situation pales into insignificance beside the potential problems in terms of, for example, the appropriateness of termination of pregnancy or the control of the social exchange of information in respect of conditions such as schizophrenia, where a genetic cause is never likely to be more than an incomplete and partial explanation of the emergence of the condition and where it is unlikely that any certain predictions will be possible about the welfare of any individual carrying the relevant genes.

However, the problems attaching to the identification of the putative genetic substrate of the more common serious mental illnesses again face into the background when consideration is given to the possibilities for genetic control of the more minor variations of temperament, intelligence and behaviour. In a very penetrating paper on 'The use of prenatal diagnosis for psychiatric diseases' Mattei from Marseilles sounds powerful notes of caution in respect of colluding with the parental search for the 'ideal child'. She mentions her experience in studying fetal material for evidence of Down's syndrome and discovering not uncommonly the presence of an extra Y chromosome. Despite reassuring the parents about the frequency of the latter abnormality and the lack of any close association with socially deviant behaviour, it is her experience that most parents seek out information from less well informed sources and nearly always seek a termination of pregnancy. Discussions of such issues are linked to the lack of clear dividing lines in psychiatry between normal and abnormal and the inherent dangers of becoming involved in the practice of eugenics.

In discussion of therapeutic possibilities of the new genetic technologies the potential dangers of introducing genetic material whose total possible range of action is unknown are highlighted. However, of ethically
greater complexity is the possibility of introducing new genetic material into
germ cells with potential conse-
quences for untold future generations.

While this book is an excellent stimulant to the giving of careful con-
sideration to the use to which the rapidly proliferating knowledge in this
area could and should be put, it is short
on detailed discussion and argument
about how to resolve the issues which
its many authors recognize. However,
as a timely reminder of the problems,
soon to come it does excellent service.

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Teaching and
learning nursing
ethics

Edited by Ursula Gallagher and K M
84 pages, £8.99.

This is an extremely useful work. It
centres upon the findings of a postal
survey concerned with the teaching of
nursing ethics undertaken by the
Royal College of Nursing and the
Institute of Medical Ethics. The sur-
vey was used as the basis of the work
of a multidisciplinary working party
whose task it was to examine the
meaning of ethical issues for nursing
and to consider what is involved in the
teaching of ethics to nurses, midwives
and health visitors. The survey
involved 500 respondents from nurs-
ing education establishments.

The book opens with a chapter
which sets the background in terms
of the ‘meaning of ethics’ and the
main ethical principles which are the
concern of nursing ethics. The central
chapters of the book present the infor-
mation from the survey. The editors
are to be complimented upon achiev-
ing an extremely high return rate for
survey work – 98 per cent. The survey
included 147 centres of education,
identified through the National
Boards for Nursing, Midwifery and
Health Visiting. The findings are
summarised in a concise and helpful
way in the form of a short paragraph
or small table for each of the 17 ques-
tions. This allows the reader to come
quickly to grips with the findings.

The remaining chapters contain the
discussion and some of the working
party’s suggestions for nursing ethics
teaching. Particularly interesting is the
chapter on the reasons for teaching
nursing ethics, especially the discur-
sion of the question of whether teach-
ing of ethics should run through all of
the course or be flagged up as the
ethics component.

In all, this is a useful book and,
whilst it will be of particular interest
to those coming for the first time to the
question of how to teach nursing
ethics, it should not be overlooked by
the ‘old hands’ as it provides some
insightful discussion. The survey
provides us with a particularly
succinct and clear account of the
views of those charged with the task of
teaching ethics to nurses, midwives
and health visitors.

The uses of
philosophy

Mary Warnock, Oxford, Blackwell,

This wide-ranging collection of essays
originated in public lectures. Its
themes include the source and scope
of human duties; the relationship
between private morality, law and
public goods; children’s rights; policy-
making in the absence of moral
consensus; honesty in public life; stan-
ard-setting in broadcasting and in
general education; philosophy in the
school curriculum; the aims of educa-
tion; the place of moral instruction;
religious imagination; the contribu-
tion of memory to the maintenance of
personal continuity; the reality of
inner experience and its relation to
personal identity, and the greater
integration of the elderly through
acknowledgement of them as deliber-
ate agents.

The range is impressive. On many
topics Baroness Warnock speaks with
an authority born of her considerable
experience both as a participant in
public reflection on moral and social
issues, and as an educator. She also
writes as a professional philosopher
conscious of the theoretical complexi-
ties of the problems she addresses.
The latter aspect of her competence is
to the fore in only two or three of the
chapters (those on personal continuity
and inner experience, and, to a lesser
extent, that on religious imagination);
but elsewhere she explicitly acknow-
ledges philosophical difficulties, or
writes in ways that signal her aware-
ness of further complications.

It should be emphasised, however,
that this is not a collection of
philosophical papers. Even where
philosophical theory is operative, but
not dominant (as in the chapters
mentioned), its touch is light. This is
no criticism. On the contrary, it is the
very considerable merit of this book
that it is not, and does not present
itself as, exercises in ‘applied philoso-
phy’ of the sort now familiar. What we
are offered are informed, thoughtful,
modest (but not bland or uncontro-
versial) essays on issues of the first
importance. Although these are not
philosophical papers, they are essays
that only a philosopher could have
written, and they are a credit to the
British tradition of clearly focused and
carefully measured thinking.

Anyone setting about writing on a
moral problem would benefit from
reading Warnock’s introduction, in
which she would editors and publishers
considering submissions in the field of
philosophy and public policy. She
charts something of the recent history
of philosophers’ involvement in prac-
tical affairs and sets out what she
takes to be the proper role of
critical thinking. The methodology of
analysing claims and identifying the
assumptions, principles and attitudes
that underlie them, is adverted to and
effectively implemented throughout
the collection. Warnock’s technique
bears some relation to Rawls’ meth-
ods in political philosophy. She works
towards values and principles that
animate our intuitive judgements, and
brings them into contact with problem
cases and then moves to achieve some
degree of consistency. In effect she is
saying: ‘We favour this policy here
because we have a deep commitment
to the following value; that being so,
we cannot deny the pull of this or that
claim in these other cases’.

There are objections to this style of
argument. It is open to charges of
begging the question against other
standpoints, of being unduly conser-
vative of inherited principles, even
of being anti-philosophical. More to
the point, given that the issues are
controversial, there is the question of
the ownership and content of these
intuitions being articulated. Warnock
belongs within the tradition of liberal
utilitarianism – though more to the