

greater complexity is the possibility of introducing new genetic material into germ cells with potential consequences for untold future generations.

While this book is an excellent stimulant to the giving of careful consideration 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 Boyd, London, Scutari Press, 1991, 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 survey 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 nursing 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 information from the survey. The editors are to be complimented upon achieving 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 questions. 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 discussion of the question of whether teaching 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.

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The uses of philosophy

Mary Warnock, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, 243 pages, £11.95.

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; standard-setting in broadcasting and in general education; philosophy in the school curriculum; the aims of education; the place of moral instruction; religious imagination; the contribution 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 deliberative 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 complexities 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 acknowledges philosophical difficulties, or writes in ways that signal her awareness 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 philosophy' of the sort now familiar. What we are offered are informed, thoughtful, modest (but not bland or uncontroversial) 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, 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 practical 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's methods in political philosophy. She works towards values and principles that animate our intuitive judgements, 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 conservative 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 the intuitions being articulated. Warnock belongs within the tradition of liberal utilitarianism – though more to the

eighteenth than to the nineteenth and twentieth century varieties. Morality originates in sentiments of approbation, and at the centre of this field of affectionate approval is human well-being. Politics is a matter of compromise made possible by widespread but imperfect agreements in judgement. Medical practice, social policy and education are about promoting and protecting the interests of human kind. Regular readers of the JME will engage most directly with the first 100 pages in which Warnock's liberal, humanist, intuitionistic welfareism is directed towards questions of life, death, experimentation and paternalism; but there is much to enjoy, and to be informed by, in later chapters.

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Christian ethics in health care

John Wilkinson, Edinburgh, Handsel Press, 1988, £27.50

The appearance in 1994 in the JME of a review of a book published in 1988 is not due to dillitarness on the part of the reviewer but to an editorial decision that it ought to be noticed; rightly so, because it is a substantial achievement, not to be overlooked because it is specifically written for Christian doctors, nurses and other health care professionals. Its author is a graduate of Edinburgh University in both divinity and medicine. He spent 30 years in medical missionary work in Kenya and then, before retirement, was a community medicine specialist for the Lothian Health Authority. The sub-title tells us that this is a source book, and indeed it is more likely to be used for reference than continuous reading. There are three parts. The first two are relatively brief, 'Christian ethics in outline' and 'Health care ethics in history'. The rest of the book, from page 163, deals with a range of issues in health care: those concerned with the beginning and end of life; with experiments on human subjects and the question of consent; with the allocation of health care resources; with relations between health care professionals and with the public, and with AIDS.

Wilkinson remarks that writing a book on these issues is like trying to

hit a moving target; but he was up-to-date in 1988, as the extensive references to American and UK medical literature show, and I do not think things have changed very much since then, so that the book will be useful for several more years. The pros and cons of most issues are given, and not just Wilkinson's own stance. There is a robust realism in his approach to the allocation of resources and to questions of relationships within the health care professions.

In Christian theology and ethics the author is not quite so expert as he is in medicine but, more important, his stance is clearly 'evangelical'. This shows particularly in the bibliography and in the attitude to the Bible. However, there are a number of references to Roman Catholic sources and teaching, and these are clear and up-to-date (including the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983). As to the Bible, Wilkinson is inclined to move too simply from the text to current problems, as from the feeding of the 5,000 to resource allocation, or in the attitude to homosexuality. He is no fundamentalist but he is prone to be literal in his use of texts, as in the case of the Fall. Also he makes the common evangelical assumption that if one's character is right and good so will be one's conduct (page 164). But the concern of the book for accurate information and diagnosis shows that in practice he sees that more than good motives are needed.

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Creation and abortion: a study in moral and legal philosophy

F M Kamm, 227 pages, New York, 1992, Oxford University Press, £25.00 hc, £8.95 pc

The pro-life argument that abortion is immoral says that a human fetus has the same moral standing as a human adult and that abortion, by killing the fetus, violates its right to life. A pro-choice response can either deny that the fetus has moral standing or argue that even if it does have standing, abortion does not violate its rights.

Common though it is, the first response is hard to make decisive. There are strong arguments against the view that moral standing is acquired at conception, but there seem also to be persuasive arguments against other proposed cutoff points, such as the start of brain activity, viability, and birth. Hence the attractiveness for a pro-choice position of the second response: show that even if the fetus does have rights, abortion is not wrong.

This line was first taken in Judith Thomson's 'A defense of abortion' (1). Thomson compared having an unwanted pregnancy to being kidnapped by a Society of Music Lovers and forcibly attached to a famous but ailing violinist. The violinist needs to use one's kidneys for nine months; otherwise he will die. He is innocent and has a right to life. Yet surely, Thomson argued, one is morally permitted to unplug oneself from him. Similarly, a woman is often permitted to abort a fetus.

Striking though it is, Thomson's analogy has several flaws. The violinist may be innocent, but he is the beneficiary of other people's guilty action. In unplugging him, one merely foresees but does not intend his death. Arguably, one also merely allows him to die, rather than killing him.

F M Kamm is aware of these and other difficulties with Thomson's analogy. But she believes that a position like Thomson's can be shown to be reasonable, if not incontrovertibly true. Doing so is the task of her brilliant but difficult book *Creation and Abortion*.

Kamm begins by discussing non-abortion cases of bodily attachment, such as that of the famous violinist. She argues that one is permitted intentionally to kill the violinist – not just unplug him – if that is necessary to avoid something as serious as the invasion of one's bodily integrity. A main reason is that killing the violinist deprives him only of a life that depends on one's support; that is, killing does not harm him relative to his position before attachment.

Kamm then extends this argument to abortion cases, distinguishing pregnancies due to rape, voluntary pregnancies, and pregnancies that were foreseen but not intended. But here she finds a difficulty: the extended argument implies that a woman who has an abortion after getting pregnant as a summer project – just to see what it is like – does nothing wrong. The woman's fetus is