support her claim. Throughout the book there are far too many
tendentious assertions in this vein without support or explanation, and
a tendency to use quotation instead of argument.

My second criticism is that
implications of concepts discussed are not really brought out. For
example: a particular kind of individualism is criticised for being
'possessive'. But can any kind of individualism avoid being possessive
in some measure, even if only of its own ideas and beliefs? (But in many
ways I thought the chapter on the individual and the community the
best in the book.) Again, if freedom is
to be defined as 'consciousness,
moral awareness and the capacity to
choose between actions and enter
into beliefs' (p 95), can anything
impair it, even the gross inequalities
which are said to damage it? These
and others like them are of course
large questions. I would not expect a
full scale discussion of them but
would have welcomed an ac-
knowledgement that they do arise
from any attempt to analyse the
concepts discussed in this book.

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Ethics in Nursing Practice and
Education
(American Nurses’ Association) 1980
65 pp $4.50.

A nurse in the 1980s may be
confronted with a variety of complex
issues, for which the custom and
practice of the past is no longer
sufficient guide. Technical progress has created dilemmas which did not
previously exist on the one hand,
and on the other there is diversity of
opinion where once there was a
consensus. In addition, the nurse is
also assuming an ever expanding
erole, especially when functioning as
an independent practitioner away
from the hierarchical hospital
structure. The need for some kind of
comprehensive text, like that of the
British Medical Association's Hand-
book of Medical Ethics is indisputable.
Any attempt to fill this gap must be
welcomed.

This collection of seven papers
from the American Nurses’ Asso-
ciation sets out to consider two
main areas, that of nursing practice
and of nursing education. In the
former the approach is mainly
academic and tends to avoid coming
to grips in a specific way with partic-
ular issues. There is some over-
lapping in the different papers, par-
icularly in discussing a definition of
ethics. It has also to be remembered
that the training and context of
practice of health care in America is
at considerable variance with our
own in Britain, not least in the matter
of private funding. For any nurse
seeking guidance, the Royal College
of Nurses’ Code of Professional
Conduct is likely to prove as helpful.

The papers in the Education
section are much more specific, and
recognise the need for including a
course of ethics in a nursing cur-
riculum. The third paper, 'A
Bioethical Program for Baccalaureate
Nursing Students', gives an outline
of the sort of approach that might be
used in such a course. This is not only
excellent as a model in this subject
but is also valuable as an approach
for teaching in any subject.

The British Medical Association’s
Handbook covers a whole range of
issues thoroughly and sensitively;
but only a page or so is devoted to
nurses, and that in the context of
their relationship to doctors. While
the RCN has gone some way to
meeting the need for a treatment of
the special problems of nurses with
such booklets as Guidelines on
Confidentiality there is still a lack of
a comprehensive British work on the
subject.

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Muted Consent
Jan Wojcik. Purdue University,
Indiana, USA, 1978. 164 pp $3.35.

This volume is one of a series on
science, technology and human
values from the Purdue University,
West Lafayette, Indiana, USA. The
author hopes that the book will be
used as a 'primer in the language of
medical ethics'. The book, in seven
chapters, looks at various topics in
medical ethics. Each chapter begins
with three fictional case histories
which illustrate the problems
analysed in each chapter. The debate
is clear and well illustrated with a
number of references to contem-
porary commentators. The treatment
of the material is mainly theoretical
and philosophical. The quality of the

case material is reduced by the fact
that cases are hypothetical and the
final outcome is not given. Often
the complexity of cases illustrates
the many principles that co-exist in
considering case material. This book
isolates the major stances taken in
debate on the issues covered.

It seems unclear if the book is
intended for doctors, medical
students, nurses, philosophers,
thelogians or the general public.
The cases and the discussion suffer
very much from bias towards the
United States. Indeed the involve-
ment of the courts of law both civil
and criminal is very different in the
two countries and the arguments
thus suffer. Certainly some of the
language is more suited to the
philosopher than the medical student
or young doctor trying to make sense
of the dilemmas which face him.

The basic theme of the book is
that all ethical problems have an
involvement with altered consent in
some form or another. Even if one
cannot go the whole way with this
interesting thesis it undoubtedly
emphasises a very important mes-
 sage. Consent in its widest sense is
essential for good ethical doctoring.
However, in some areas the problem
is not merely of consent but who can
give valid consent. Can the mother
give consent for the death of her
child or fetus? We accept that the
parents must be involved in de-
cisions about their baby especially if
it is suffering from a serious con-
genital malformation. In the area of
death and dying can the patient give
valid consent in a situation where he
is denied any real alternative? One
chapter explores at considerable
length the technical aspects of death.
Other aspects receive less attention,
in particular the development of the
hospice movement in this country.
The chapter on resource allocation
is clear and I enjoyed reading it very
much. Again it has a US bias
emphasising the close involvement of
the law courts.

I cannot advise any medical
student to buy this book or even
suggest it as a primer, but, for those
interested in medical ethics this is a
valuable source book. The references
are extensive and the arguments of
the various commentators are well
summarised. A book for the library
rather than for the private collec-

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