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EDITORIAL

An end of year ethical smorgasbord

This issue provides an end of year feast with something for everyone. Browning and Veit note how, since the presence of sentience in mammals, birds and cephalopods received official scientific recognition in the 2012 *Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness*, animal sentience has been legally recognized in the European Union, UK, New Zealand and parts of Australia. In their paper, they ‘analyze this shift towards recognition of sentience in the regulation and practice in the treatment of laboratory animals and its effects on animal welfare and use’.

Using a series of Feinberg-type cabin cases, Simkulet in his paper, intriguingly entitled *Abortion, Rights and Cabin Cases*, critiques Perry Hendricks’ ‘attempts to bypass discussion of rights, assuming that if he can show that some people have a right to use other’s bodies, then we ought to restrict abortion’, and argues that Hendricks’ restrictivist argument fails. Abortion is the most common (though not the only) clinical procedure where the law often specifies mechanisms for conscientious objection by healthcare professionals. Wibye makes the case for ‘a regulatory option for conscientious objection in health care that has yet to be systematically examined by ethicists and policymakers: granting a liberty to request exemption from prescribed work tasks without a companion guarantee that the request is accommodated’.

Retrospective reflections on UK legislative matters are the subject of the next two papers. Lee and Tham explore the opt-out policy on organ donation in Scotland, 18 months after its introduction and recommend ‘more research into organ donors’ psychological motivations to help governments and the healthcare profession obtain more organs for transplantation’. Wojtulewicz’s extensive analysis of the failed *Assisted Dying Bill [HL] 2021*, concludes that the essential source of disagreement lies outside of the arguments raised, and therefore any change in the law is not likely ‘to arise from political consensus’. This paper has already been cited by a UK Parliamentary publication even before its appearance in this issue. A new first for this journal.


The final paper by Hendricks and Seybold criticizes the still extant practice of unauthorized pelvic examinations (UPEs) on unconscious female patients by medical students as part of their training. They argue that ‘Since there are no morally significant differences between UPEs and other instances of digital penetration, UPEs are sexual assault’. It is surely time this practice was ended worldwide in the training of medical students.

Our final issue of 2022 concludes with the largest number of book reviews we have ever featured in any issue. They cover topics ranging from the familiar, such as the significance of the human embryo *in vitro* and the meaning of human dignity, to the unfamiliar such as embodied trauma and healing from a phenomenological perspective, generating posthumans viewed through a theological lens and *Curing Mad Truths*, a highly unusual proposal in the form of ‘road back to philosophical sanity is the *via antiqua*’.

Not only is this the end of year issue, is also an end of an era issue for me and the journal as it is my final one as Editor-in-Chief, a role which I initially took on in 2011. It has been a huge privilege to see the journal move from that time from a regular quarterly journal with a readership of a few thousand into what at the time of writing looks like being in six figures by the end of 2022. I could not have done this however without the full support of the core team of managing editor, Prof. Matt James, reviews editor, Dr Toni Saad and media editor, Dr Mark Tan, as well as our associate editors and board members. Paul Naish at Taylor and Francis has also given unflagging support from the very beginning of *The New Bioethics* becoming part of their portfolio. It has been a very rewarding journey but every one of those we take must have a terminus.

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