

Teaching Bioethics, Cardiff, December 2009

Reflections on the Day

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**University of
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THE University of the Year 2008

John Bryant: Challenges of teaching environmental ethics (EE)

- what's your 'centric'?
- EE > Climate Change
 - Pollution
 - Environmental degradation
 - Over-exploitation of resources
 - Loss of biodiversity
 - Global climate change

Robin Attfield: Precaution, sustainability and Copenhagen (1)

- Importance of landmarks:
 - 1970s Club of Rome
 - *Mankind at the turning point*
 - 1987 Brundtland Report *Our Common Future*
 - 1992 Rio Summit
 - 1997 Kyoto (“grandfathering”)
 - 2009 Copenhagen

Robin Attfield: Precaution, sustainability and Copenhagen (2)

- Precautionary Principle
- sustainable DEVELOPMENT
v SUSTAINABLE development
- “Contraction and convergence”
- “Greenhouse development rights”
- Environmental ethics:
 - international
 - intergenerational
 - interspecies

Mark Huxham: Gate-crashing, star-gazing & mud-wrestling

- Ethics as welcome gate-crasher to liven up statistics lectures
- Science in the 3rd person as denial of responsibility?
- Holding 'contrary' views simultaneously?
- Existential angst as a learning outcome?
- Why do [students] care about the environment?
- Value of aesthetics and emotions
- Carbon footprint costs of environmental field trip

Kate Millar: Bioethics of food and the environment

- Bioethics > 'biomedical ethics' norm: more holistic
- Bioethics as a bridge between disciplines
- Bioethics as a skill-set for future professionals
- Ethics: Personal v Professional v Social?
- Mepham's ethical matrix
- 3 pillars: STS, ethics and philosophy
- Small group teaching: effectiveness v cost
- Bioethics teaching – many cogs to work well

Dónal O'Mathúna: Environmental aspects of nanotechnology

- Nanoparticle properties differ from both atomic level and larger scale
- Nanoparticles – attraction is altered properties...
... but safety regulations based on larger particles!
- Potential toxicity of carbon nanotubes
- Not just new particle = whole new approach
- Precautionary principle v testing as we go along?
- Longevity
- Who should decide? Public? Toxicity experts?

Chris Southgate: Nuclear power - the bright future?

- sorry – reproductive cloning not ethical

Swapshops

- **Roger Downie: Why conserve wildlife?**
Ethics intertwined with the practicalities
Code of conduct & research (& conservation) ethics
- **Mark Goodwin: Bioethics EVS and focus groups**
Interaction and engagement are not the same
Sequential development of thinking during activity
- **Iain Matthews: Articulating Values (Lifeboat)**
Importance of the *why* question. “How to argue”
Translocation experiments
- **Dónal O’Mathúna: Nanoethics and Science Fiction**
The value of story. Who needs nano?
Normal v Futuristic Nanotechnology

One final thing...

- Nuffield Council on Bioethics, online consultation on **biofuels** goes live on 21st December
- Would value contributions from you, your students and/or any other interested parties