Dr Trevor Stammers, Co-Director of CBET, chaired the seventh programme at this year’s annual Cambridge Consortium for Bioethics Education, the seventh day. Trevor Stammers made short presentations based on his recent controversial article in The Journal of Medical Ethics on consequentialist objection in healthcare and elsewhere. He argued that medicine’s tendency to reduce ethics to questions about what constitutes human freedom and setting the devaluing of the art of medicine is an international network of working groups. These groups are composed of people from institutions around the world working together to develop bioethics education in their countries. The final session of the Consortium focused on short reports on the varied activities of the Working Groups. As chair of the Working Group, Matt shared some potential future ideas the working group is considering. It was clear from the feedback sessions that diversity between bioethics and other disciplines is something that makes the network unique and at its core there remains a steadfast commitment to break out of the bioethics ‘silo’ and build fresh and collaborative links with other disciplines.

**Euthanasia and assisted suicide: lessons from Belgium**

A new book stemming from a conference held at St Mary’s has recently been published by Cambridge University Press. Edited by Prof David Jones and Calum Mackellar, both members of staff at CBET, and Prof Chris Gastmans from Lauven University, Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Lessons from Belgium explores in depth what the effects have been in Belgium of the legalisation of doctors ending patients’ lives or assisting them to do so.

The book reports that monitoring of cases in Belgium is far from optimal with just 16 members of the euthanasia commission overseeing thousands of euthanasia cases, the numbers of which have risen sharply since 2002 when euthanasia was legalised. The authors express concern that more and more cases of euthanasia of those not specifically requesting it are being carried out as well as an increasing numbers of cases being of patients with psychiatric illness or of those just “ried of life.” They quote a leading palliative care doctor sympathetic to euthanasia, who warned in 2013 that “once the barrier of human dignity and our common humanity is an international network of working groups. These groups are composed of people from institutions around the world working together to develop bioethics education in their countries. The final session of the Consortium focused on short reports on the varied activities of the Working Groups. As chair of the Working Group, Matt shared some potential future ideas the working group is considering. It was clear from the feedback sessions that diversity between bioethics and other disciplines is something that makes the network unique and at its core there remains a steadfast commitment to break out of the bioethics ‘silo’ and build fresh and collaborative links with other disciplines.

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The New Bioethics

It has been extremely encouraging to see the development of The New Bioethics Journal unfold since its arrival at St Mary’s in 2010. Working with the production team at Taylor and Francis, Dr Trevor Stammers (Editor in Chief) and Matt James (Managing Editor) have seen publication grow from two to three editions per year and an expanding readership from all corners of the globe. The current issue (23:3) is the first issue that carries more than one paper from the United States. This is a very welcome development and reflects the increasing American readership of the journal.

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The journal has always been listed by the Philosopher’s Index but this year saw the journal accepted onto the Norwegian registry and the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). The latter is a particular achievement as being listed on ESCI is seen as a mark of the journal’s reach and discoverability as it is part of Web of Science, an online subscription-based scientific citation indexing service providing access to multiple databases that reference cross-disciplinary research, allowing for in-depth exploration of specialised sub-fields within an academic or scientific discipline. Commenting on the journal’s success, Dr Trevor Stammers said: “In a climate of many journals competing for both publication and reader’s attention, it is hugely rewarding to see such steady growth of The New Bioethics over the last few years. This would not have been possible without the ongoing support of the CBET staff team”.

In 2018 a special issue of the journal will address the fast developing area of genome editing and will include papers by some leading experts in the field from around the world. You can subscribe to the journal, at https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/yntb23/ current.

Dying gracefully

On 11th-13th May 2017 CBET hosted an art exhibition in the Waldegrave Drawing Room at St Mary’s. While art may not initially be associated with CBET’s work, this was an important public engagement event. Art has long been a catalyst for debate and discussion, as can be seen in the gallery below which is drawn from the Waldegrave Drawing Room exhibition.

The Research Centre for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, sponsored by the generosity of the Qatar Foundation and the generosity of the Catholic Church, focuses on genomic editing at their conference entitled “The Sceptical Challenge to Islamic Ethics” during the first week of April. I was privileged to be one of a small number of participants from Europe and was fascinated by the large overlap of the ethical issues discussed in both papers and in those of my Islamic colleagues.

Genome editing in adults with specific disabilities and organ and tissue banks is an ethical issue that should be addressed in current discussions. I was able to welcome and meet with the delegation of attendees from the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation in Ukraine by mitochondrial manipulation of a donor egg and embryo respectively.

The conference proceedings will be published in due course but my abiding memory of this conference will be of one realised that Muslim healthcare professionals, philosophers and religious scholars wrestled every bit as much as Christians to raise the issue presented by genomic revolution which will only accelerate over the next few decades.

There is much to be gained by working together where possible on ethical solutions and even where this is not possible, to at least better understand the other’s viewpoint as to why we differ.