they are just freely posited and not deducible from anything else. But finally "as a practical antidote to this excess [of emphasis on the arbitrary nature of ethical imperatives] let us merely note the overwhelming unanimity that exists among people in all parts of the world with respect to the validating principles of ethics. I think humanity could agree without prompting that happiness, benevolence of fellow men, and peace are among them; and with that modicum of agreement ethics if conceived correctly as an empirical enterprize could go a long way" (p. 175). And there are other parallels: just as in physics no single observation counts decisively against a theory of some generality, similarly, in ethics no single man's experience is to be counted decisively; observations *en masse* would be weightier.

If the reader begins to yawn, his enthusiasm might be freshened by Margenau's evident admiration for the progress of science and his hopes for similar "progress" in ethics. But the progress he conceives of surely has nothing to do with any substantive question in ethics, and, in fact, seems almost designed to extinguish the very raising of any such question. These questions have to do with those "primary values" about which Margenau gives us his personal assurance there is an "overwhelming unanimity . . . among people in all parts of the world." Unfortunately these "primary values" are never defined in this book; it seems virtually certain that even the slightest attempt to define a single one would end once and for all that "overwhelming unanimity" that Margenau sees. If every other serious ethical thinker devotes a major portion of his attention to the clarification of various possibilities and various meanings of "happiness," Margenau, in the case of G. E. Moore, finds such effort "manicured verbosity" (p. 106); after all, he has world unanimity on his side, a side, moreover, that remains utterly undefined. But he has hopes that "modern sociology" may come to the rescue: "These qualities [happiness, self-fulfillment, and the rest] would then become measurable, and this would enhance the precision of their meaning" (p. 167).

What is one to think of such an ethics conceived of as an "empirical enterprize"? That the whole enterprize has nothing to do with any serious ethical question, I have already suggested. Serious ethical questions are precisely questions *about* those "primary values"; they do not presuppose answers, let alone answers to be derived from worldwide unanimity. Consequently, to be successful, the enterprize must beg the question of precisely what "happiness" is, under what terms "peace" is acceptable, the identity of the self that is to be "fulfilled," and how "benevolence" is to be understood—in short, the staple questions of serious ethical discussion. It is only *after* these things are stipulated or derived from worldwide unanimity, that the "enterprize" can get off the ground. And yet stipulating answers to these questions, or generalizing answers from worldwide unanimity, hardly seems to be a contribution to any man's ethical thinking. For Margenau all ethical questions are already solved; we know where we want to go, and the only question is how to get there. If that were the case, or if that ought to be the case, then, indeed, we should march forth to find the correct recipes. And those recipes could indeed be "validated" empirically. But if ethical questions are more serious business than that, it is hard to see what Margenau's theory (which, in outline, is dismissed in a paragraph of Kant's *Critique of Practical Judgment*) contributes, except to quench ethical questioning. There must be some primary questioning of what either "we" or the whole world take for granted as values, if ethics is to express any ethical man's situation. Once that questioning ceases, that is, once the freedom of man is denied, then indeed we can look for recipes for a preconceived "happiness" or "peace," and then indeed ethics might begin to look like an "empirical enterprize." What is left over is the question of whether this isn't the extinction of ethics rather than its proper method.

It would be pleasant to end this notice with some attention to the merits of the work, but unfortunately they escaped me. The symbol-rattling and the diagrams symbolize and diagram the obvious and conceal the genuinely problematical; the erudition is parochial; the argument winds through private quarrels with his colleagues—Northrup, Sheldon, and Blanshard; the book remains an elementary and confused effort.

WILLIAM EARLE
Philosophy Department,
Northwestern University

Inherited Differences

Molecular Biology: Genes and the Chemical Control of Living Cells. J. M. Barry. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964. x + 139 pp. Illus. Paper, $3.35.

In this time of such swift and controversial advancements in the field of molecular biology, the mere attempt to write a textbook is laudable. That such an attempt includes, in a very succinct way, most of the major ideas of the day and that these ideas are supported, in part, by experimental design and results is better yet. J. M. Barry has done this in just slightly more than 100 pages in *Molecular Biology: Genes and the Chemical Control of Living Cells.* The brevity, of course, necessitates some gaps, but, fortunately, most of these are relatively inconsequential. Since this book is one of a series in modern biology, it will hopefully be complemented by the volumes that follow.

It is refreshing to see the author of a textbook point out that Mendel's work was not really lost in an obscure journal at the time it was published. However, Barry could probably be a little more academic in presenting, to beginning students, a scientific approach to theory: for example, such statements as the following, ". . . the laws of nature prevent us from ever gaining enough precise information about them to predict accurately their future behavior" (p. 33), hardly befit a science text written at any level. Further, Barry's own opinions about what are the best and what are the poorest experiments should probably be qualified.

Today, in the field of molecular biology, it is dangerous to state what is correct and what *might* be correct. Barry has been extremely cautious in putting forward some theories and excessively incautious with others. This may be permissible when writing for other researchers in the field but not when writing for the beginning student.

The book is generally quite readable, with only occasional twists of syntax, and is a welcome addition to a hopefully continued series. I predict, however, that its "half-life" will be relatively short.

E. W. HANLY
Department of Genetics and Cytology,
University of Utah, Salt Lake City