

edoc

Institutional Repository of the University of Basel
University Library
Schoenbeinstrasse 18-20
CH-4056 Basel, Switzerland
<http://edoc.unibas.ch/>

Year: 2013

[Rezension von] MacKellar, C, Jones, D.A. (eds.): 2012, Chimera's Children. Ethical, philosophical and religious perspectives on human nonhuman experimentation. London: Continuum. 215 pages. ISBN 978-1-4411-6984-0.

Wettlaufer, Lenke

Posted at edoc, University of Basel

Official URL: <http://edoc.unibas.ch/dok/A6263179>

Originally published as:

Wettlaufer, Lenke. (2013) [Rezension von] MacKellar, C, Jones, D.A. (eds.): 2012, Chimera's Children. Ethical, philosophical and religious perspectives on human nonhuman experimentation. London: Continuum. 215 pages. ISBN 978-1-4411-6984-0. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, Vol. 16. S. 321.

MacKellar, C, Jones, D.A. (eds.): 2012, *Chimera's Children. Ethical, philosophical and religious perspectives on human-nonhuman experimentation*. London: Continuum. 215 pages. ISBN 978-1-4411-6984-0. Price: £18.99.

MacKellar and Jones's *Chimera's Children* addresses a diversity of issues that are at stake in creating human-non human entities for research purposes. The book, commissioned by the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics, discusses legal, ethical, philosophical and religious aspects of the human-nonhuman barrier breach, from pragmatic concerns about safety to fundamental questions of human nature and human dignity. The book's editors view the issue with a broad perspective and illuminate the fundamentality of questions that arise when this kind of research is conducted: What is the moral status of the new biological entities? How much human must a human-nonhuman combination be for human legislation to apply? What defines humanity in the context of these new beings?

The volume is divided into three parts. The first part addresses the recent history of human-non-human combinations. The revealed attempt of the Soviet government to cross humans with apes and to create the ultimate soldier – insensitive to pain and indifferent about food – leaves the reader reconsidering the absurdity of related myths, science fiction literature and fantasy films. The comparison of regulations leads through international law of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union to national regulations of Argentina, Germany, Japan, Estonia, Switzerland, Canada, South Korea, Australia, France, the United States and the United Kingdom. The editors demonstrate that serious regulation gaps remain and emphasize the need for extensive consultation and reflexion to shape national legislation.

The second part describes successfully conducted and promising research procedures in a language which is easily comprehensible without advanced knowledge of natural sciences. Each of the practises is explained through an example that is analysed under the legal framework of the United Kingdom and surveyed under ethical aspects, clarifying what key issue is precisely at stake.

The third part of *Chimera's Children* discusses various cultural, worldview and ethical perspectives about the topic. The detailed part on ethical perspectives seeks to classify different arguments – either considering the creation of human-nonhuman entities intrinsically wrong, or viewing the combinations extrinsically wrong. The book, though, does neither explicitly introduce arguments in favour of human-nonhuman combinations, nor does it offer a concrete confrontation of the diverse argumentations. It will nonetheless inspire readers as a source of thoughts to draw their own conclusions.

Overall, *Chimera's Children* is a comprehensive contribution to the subject providing the reader with a diversified introduction to the specific ethical issues at stake when crossing the human-nonhuman boundaries. The book does not attempt to offer a detailed proposal, but rather presents the range of aspects that need to be taken into account when considering human-nonhuman combinations. In contrast to the approach of other works, the issue is not primarily understood in relation to the protection of the created creatures, but questions whether it is inherently unethical to create such entities in the first place. The book is indisputably reasonable in its principal call for a well-informed public dialogue and will serve as a central source for future scientific debate.

Lenke Schulze
Basel, Switzerland