

BOOK REVIEWS

Practicing Medicine and Ethics: Integrating Wisdom, Conscience, and Goals of Care

Lauris Christopher Kaldjian. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

ISBN 978-1107012165. 276 PAGES, CLOTH, \$103.00.

How refreshing to encounter a book on medical ethics which begins by proclaiming the need for physicians to have wisdom and integrity. Here we have an author who takes seriously the impossibility of separating medical practice from one's deeply held convictions. This book is an academic study of the place of individual beliefs of the physician in shared decision making with patients. The author is trained in medicine as well as ethics and, as such, is admirably equipped to tackle the issues raised at the interface of clinical medicine and ethical decision making. In this book he aims to locate these topics within a framework of practical wisdom.

The first section of the book sets the scene. The author's arguments are based on the premise that medicine is an innately moral practice, the moral value and physical embodiment of human beings making ethics and science inseparable as the physician takes on the role of healer. Furthermore, the patient's value as a person obligates the physician to act in the best interests of the patient within a relationship of trust. Healthcare practitioners are challenged as they seek to reconcile their own personal beliefs with professional medical ethics. At the same time they face potential ethical conflicts with their patients, and all this needs to be done without relinquishing their role as patient advocate. Clinicians will be familiar with the need to develop goals of care for individual patients before it is possible to determine how such outcomes will be achieved. Virtue ethics with its "*telos*" (end or goal) of action is presented as an appropriate model for ethical decision making. The author suggests that healthcare professionals require the virtue of practical wisdom in order to balance diverse factors such as patient beliefs, therapeutic burdens and benefits, and financial costs in the task of pursuing the internal goods of medicine. The current tendency to focus on the means of medicine (such as tests and treatments) to frame decision making is criticized as decisions may end up reflecting what is available or convenient rather than what the patient values. Furthermore such an approach renders the physician a technician rather than a trusted advisor. By adopting practical wisdom, teleological thinking can be navigated in a pluralistic culture, and doctors can fulfill their socially appointed role without compromising their or their patient's moral integrity.

The author then spends time examining how conscience has been understood throughout history. This concept is examined regarding its relation to reason, its fallibility and its authority, and the individual responsibility to form and inform one's conscience. Conscience is seen as a way of understanding what matters most in the moral life and is equated with the idea of integrity, or "integration" of one's values, actions, and identity. The primacy of physician integrity is emphasized. Conscience is considered within the utilitarian matrix of modern medicine and criticisms of conscientious objection for being "self-indulgent" are challenged. This leads to a discussion of the interplay of personal ethics with professional practice, examining some current professional statements on conscientious objection to illustrate problems which have resulted from trying to separate conscience into personal and professional parts.

The third section reiterates the importance of moral integrity for healthcare professionals in a pluralistic culture. Kaldjian argues that in our practice of medicine we are all influenced by our foundational beliefs, whether religious or philosophical, and that there is no meaningful distinction between the two. This is because all moral frameworks have

the same function, that is, to help the individual determine what is real and what is good. However, in a morally pluralistic setting it is not clear to what extent physicians may act on foundational beliefs within their professional practice and the place of religious beliefs in influencing public policy is debated.

Physician unwillingness to provide a service requested by a patient is often framed as an example of a doctor imposing their beliefs on the patient, and thereby violating patient autonomy. An alternative view is offered—that it may be an opportunity for bilateral respect for moral agency between doctor and patient. The positive work of conscience is also noted, by which conscientious physicians are compelled to actions that complement beliefs, even if it involves self-sacrifice, in ways that sustain the traditional ends of medicine such as comforting the sick.

Those opposing conscientious objection often invoke the principle of patient autonomy as an overriding ethical principle, but by considering topical ethical debates, Kaldjian shows that, in fact, it is not only conscience that is being judged in these situations. While in contentious issues such as abortion, patient autonomy is regularly valued above protection of conscience. In other scenarios, such as patient requests for futile care, patient autonomy is routinely overruled. In the latter situation, this is often done on the grounds that futility judgments involve medical, not moral evaluation. However, as argued above, the medical and the ethical cannot be separated and such claims are questionable. In short, Kaldjian sees moral integrity as a core requirement for healthcare professionals, when integrity and conscience are understood as meaning consistency between what one believes and what one does. Therefore he suggests that discussions about conscience need to be separated from assessments of specific clinical contexts, and conscience seen for what it really is—"the final and best assessment of what (the physician) believes is right, even if that assessment may in fact be wrong" (108).

The myth of secular neutrality is rejected, and a critique of why we need to take personal convictions of healthcare practitioners seriously is welcome in a community discussion which at times loses sight of the dangers of trying to separate a professional from their most deeply held views and the benefits of having healthcare professionals of integrity. Kaldjian points out that a world without diversity of opinion is one in which constructive critique of medical practice will be stifled to the disadvantage of all.

This is a timely contribution in view of debates regarding the place of conscientious objection in medicine and the challenges of moral pluralism. Instead of a tired recitation of principles, this account explores alternative ethical theories within which to approach shared decision making and grapples with the non-commensurability of medical outcomes between which clinicians are expected to choose. It reinforces the need to encourage conscience in healthcare in order to remind ourselves that clinical decision making is, and ought to be, a moral process by which patients, in all their complexity, are able to define their personal life goals and work towards them.

The book is constructed in such a way that each chapter examines a component of the framework which is described in the final chapter. It is conveniently provided with summaries at the end of the first nine chapters, which allow the reader to proceed quickly through the book if desired. It is an excellent volume that will be of interest not only to medical practitioners, but also to those involved across the provision of healthcare—administrators and policy-makers, as well as educators in ethics and philosophy of medicine. Readers will gain increased insight into the need to integrate one's beliefs into all areas of life and how to achieve this while learning how to argue for its necessity in the public square.

Reviewed by Megan Best, PhD, MD, who is a post-doctoral Research Fellow in psycho-oncology and ethics at the University of Sydney, and Research Associate at the Institute for Ethics & Society at The University of Notre Dame, Australia.

Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion

Os Guinness. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

ISBN 978-0830836994. 270 PAGES, CLOTH, \$22.00.

Every time period presents unique challenges to the call that Christians have in the Great Commission; the present is no different. The present world can be described as pluralistic and post-Christian, and the means by which Christians must bear witness to those who have not heard the gospel reflects this reality. There was a time when the use of a tool such as a tract or a formulaic method of presenting the gospel was an effective means of bringing the unsaved to Christ. At that time, the work of pre-evangelism had already been done and all that was necessary was to present the gospel in a neatly wrapped package. However, the task today often requires a more thoughtful approach of persuasion to move another to embrace the gospel. The Christian worldview, which once undergirded the way of life for many believers and unbelievers alike, has largely been silenced, leaving many without any understanding of what it really means. The result has been the loss of the Christian message amongst a cacophony of other ideas, leaving many with a secular worldview. Apologetics and persuasion have taken new relevance in bringing the gospel to those who are not interested.

Apologetics has often been viewed as a relic of the past with no role in evangelism. *Fool's Talk* is a work of apologetics, one that understands that many do not understand the Christian message, are closed to it, and therefore, must be persuaded in a thoughtful manner. Guinness has written this book to address “the abandonment of evangelism, the divorce between evangelism, apologetics and discipleship, and the failure to appreciate true human diversity” (17). He takes the reader on the journey of an unbeliever from unbelief through conversion to discipleship, describing an approach to the use of persuasion in this process. The call is one that requires thoughtfulness and reason while understanding that everyone’s conversion is different, both in the time and route taken. Gentle persuasion is the order of the day, as Guinness instructs the reader to challenge the thinking of those to whom they speak of these things. He recognizes that just as we are all unique, we all move through the stages from unbelief to conversion differently. The commonality is that it involves reasoning and thinking about what it is that we really believe and the consequences thereof. Many times there are inconsistencies that are only revealed when truly questioned and it is this questioning that raises doubts and opens one to the message of the gospel.

Fool's Talk is not a book about bioethics *per se*, but the “art of Christian persuasion,” as Guinness describes it, can be moved into the arena of bioethical discourse. The approach to apologetics he describes is not one of argumentation and debate; rather it is one of calm reasoning. There are many times when reasoning is more effective than debate at changing someone’s perspective, and that is really what it is about—bringing those alongside to see things from the perspective given to us by our Creator.

Reviewed by Jeffrey G. Betcher, MD, FRCPC, MA (Bioethics), who is clinical assistant professor at the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan and is Department Head and Medical Director of Critical Care at the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture

Mark A. Yarhouse. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015.

ISBN 978-0-8308-2859-3. 191 PAGES, PAPER, \$20.00.

Gender Dysphoria is a complex phenomenon wherein an individual experiences varying degrees of distress over a perceived incongruence between one's sense of gender and one's biological sex. Though this phenomenon remains relatively rare, it has received considerable attention in recent cultural skirmishes over public restroom use and locker room etiquette. While the more radical forms of identity politics seem bent on deconstructing gender altogether, many Christians preemptively denounce Gender Dysphoria as a euphemism for sinful behavior, which precludes the possibility of healing and redemption. But the phenomenon of Gender Dysphoria, notes Mark Yarhouse, is considerably more complex. Yarhouse, a Christian professor of psychology and clinical psychologist who specializes in issues of sexual identity, serves as a trustworthy guide in helping Christians make sense of the numerous complexities surrounding Gender Dysphoria.

In *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, Yarhouse deftly weaves the scientific, theological, clinical, and pastoral aspects of this phenomenon into a clear, compelling, and compassionate narrative, bringing a welcome measure of clarity to a labyrinthine issue. By framing Gender Dysphoria within the biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification, he supplies a theological grounding for a nuanced treatment that resists both blanket condemnations and simplistic solutions. Indeed, Yarhouse expresses a humble appreciation for the manifold ambiguities surrounding this condition, offering an appropriately measured yet well-informed discussion of the manifold etiological theories of this condition currently competing for hermeneutical supremacy. By drawing on his years of clinical experience, he repeatedly points out that many who experience Gender Dysphoria struggle to manage a deep and sustained mismatch between their sense of gender and their God-given biology, rightly challenging the notion that Gender Dysphoria always entails a willful rejection of one's God-given body. Sadly, these individuals often find themselves precariously situated between a church that is quick to condemn and a culture increasingly set on exploring—if not celebrating—gender fluidity. For these individuals, Yarhouse serves as a balm to the tortured soul.

Perhaps the most illuminating aspects of Yarhouse's work concern the three frameworks through which he interprets Gender Dysphoria: the *integrity*, *disability*, and *diversity* frameworks. The *integrity* framework views sex, gender, and gender identity as sacred, as part of God's good creation, and tends to view Gender Dysphoria as a denial of one's essential createdness as male or female, while the *disability* framework interprets this dysphoria as the product of living in a fallen world, as a condition not of one's choosing. Finally, the *diversity* framework celebrates gender fluidity as a rightful expression of human diversity, or, in its more radical form, hegemonically aims at deconstructing gender altogether. Yarhouse consistently examines Gender Dysphoria through these three focal lenses with a critical, circumspect eye, noting the strengths and shortcomings of each perspective, especially in isolation from the others. He creates a thick Christian account of this condition that includes its numerous potential causes (Chapter 3), phenomenology and prevalence (Chapter 4), and prevention and treatment (Chapter 5). Moreover, he peppers his interpretation of Gender Dysphoria with several insightful and often heart-breaking accounts by those wrestling with their sense of gender identity, revealing the deep, raw, and soul-torturing pain that attends these struggles.

Though Yarhouse is hesitant to offer up any one “solution” to Gender Dysphoria, he consistently argues for the least invasive method of managing the stress of this condition, acknowledging that some individuals might need to pursue surgery as a last ditch effort to preserve one's very existence, and perhaps a measure of peace. Yarhouse strikes the perfect tone with this work. It is informative and irenic, practical and poignant, pastoral

without being preachy. This book is highly recommended for parents and pastors alike, and most especially for those who struggle with Gender Dysphoria and are looking for hope.

Reviewed by Todd T. W. Daly, PhD (Theological Ethics), Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at Urbana Theological Seminary and an Associate Fellow at the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity in Deerfield, IL. Dr. Daly also serves on the Ethics Committee at Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, IL, USA.

In Search of Moral Knowledge: Overcoming the Fact-Value Dichotomy

R. Scott Smith. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014.

ISBN: 978-0830840380. 361 PAGES, PAPER, \$35.00.

How have we come to lose a common body of moral truths that can provide a shared basis for social order? Do moral truths and moral knowledge exist independently of our humanly contrived constructs? Epistemologically, does a fact-value dichotomy really exist? These three questions shape the book, *In Search of Moral Knowledge: Overcoming the Fact-Value Dichotomy* by R. Scott Smith, as he explores the history and current dilemma in moral thought and seeks to provide a metaphysical and epistemological solution.

Smith begins by approaching the first question historically, examining a variety of moral theories and moral theorists chronologically through the lenses of metaphysics and epistemology, maintaining that one's metaphysics and epistemology are foundational to one's moral thinking. He traces our journey in moral theorizing from moral realism to moral knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon subject to interpretation.

A detour is taken as Smith digresses on the topic of naturalism and its relationship to knowledge and reality. Epistemological problems occur because of an ontological commitment to the non-existence of essences (153). This commitment permits no direct access to reality, but renders it a mere phenomenon of personally interpreted sensory data. If this is so, naturalism can give us neither knowledge, nor "facts," thereby invalidating the fact side of the fact-value dichotomy. Later, using a cumulative case approach, Smith argues that we can and do have moral and religious knowledge thereby invalidating the "value" side of the dichotomy. Therefore, this dichotomy must be rejected.

After examining and reevaluating the positions of MacIntyre and Hauerwas, Smith advances his own theory "to see whether we can have moral knowledge" (18). The epistemology he establishes requires a realist ontology that includes the existence of immaterial substances, properties that are universal, and the existence of essences (substance dualism and property dualism) which he then applies to ethics. Given that ontology, Smith maintains that we can have knowledge of moral truths that are metaphysically real (abstract, universal, and objective) and grounded in the character of the Christian God.

Smith's argument is methodical and his critiques are balanced, acknowledging both the strengths and weaknesses of various theoretical positions. He does, however, begin and end his argumentation from a particularist position: that there are moral truths we can know. Additionally, his epistemological theory is contingent on intuitionism as well as an appeal to the social and human necessity of moral virtues. Finally, his conclusion—that we can have knowledge of moral truths that are metaphysically real and grounded in the character of the Christian God—requires a particularist knowledge and understanding of God that others may not share. As such, his conclusion may be persuasive to those who share his metaphysical and epistemological perspective but will probably not persuade those who do not.

While Smith's writing is candid and punctuated with personal observations, some of his argumentation is deeply philosophical, making it too esoteric for a general lay audience. However, his survey and evaluation of the history of moral thought—not simply moral issues—as well as his proposed solution to our current moral dilemma will be a valuable tool and an enlightening challenge for students of philosophy and/or ethics.

Reviewed by Susan M. Haack, MD, MA (Bioethics), MDiv, FACOG, recently retired from consultative gynecology at Hess Memorial Hospital and Mile Bluff Medical Center in Mauston, Wisconsin, USA.

Rational Faith: A Philosopher's Defense of Christianity

Stephen T. Davis. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.

ISBN 9780830844746. 190 PAGES, PAPER, \$16.00.

Stephen Davis directs his message to Christian academics, especially Christian college students. His goal in *Rational Faith* is to address some of the academic/philosophical difficulties and challenges to Christianity awaiting these students. “My hope is that this book can be of help to people in both groups” (11, see also 174). I believe the author has succeeded in some ways, while coming up short in others.

Davis does a great job wading through the various topics that could be addressed and narrowing them down to an important few. He begins with the notion of objective truth, arguing that apart from its existence, ordinary life as well as academic endeavors would be futile. His understanding of truth is a realist view—for something to be true (e.g., a proposition) it must correspond to reality. In responding to criticisms of this view, he offers his own critique of postmodernism and relativism. He then presents a moral argument for the existence of God—what he calls the *genocide* argument (25). By his own admission, however, the argument falls short of proving the Christian God. Rather, it promotes a vague idea of theism.

He continues to argue for this notion of theism by stipulating, “The word *God* means a unique, all-powerful, all-knowing and loving Creator” (29). The problem is that he never justifies to the reader why he or she should accept his stipulated definition. Davis then offers two “objective” arguments for God’s existence: 1) the kind of world we live in and 2) a version of the generic cosmological argument. He concludes his second chapter stating that both theists and atheists can be rational. In other words, if his arguments are successful, “then belief in God . . . is rational” (46).

However, it is chapter 3 that undercuts Davis’ argument, which propounds to be a defense of Christianity or the idea that *Christianity is rational*. Davis begins this chapter with a strong claim, “The Gospels in the New Testament are reliable” (50). He then trivializes the authority of the Bible by denying inerrancy. He writes, “The Bible contains discrepancies and inconsistencies that I am not able to harmonize sensibly. Accordingly, I do not hold that the Bible is inerrant, as that term is often understood” (50). Yet he continues to insist that the Bible is reliable. This view is contradictory and confusing, impossible to apply consistently. Which parts of Scripture are reliable and trustworthy? Which parts are in error? By what human standard does the Christian judge the Scriptures and come to reliable conclusions as to the trustworthy parts?

In chapters 4-8, Davis explores the resurrection, the evolution of life, the nature of religious belief (belief in God), the uniqueness of Christianity, and the problem of evil. Chapter 9 addresses the question of whether a person can truly be happy apart from God and in conclusion offers an interesting argument, which posits that a conversion experience adds an element of rationality to faith. Davis acknowledges the importance of worldview thinking, but continues to weaken his arguments by maintaining a generic notion of theism and a confusing notion of biblical authority and reliability.

The author maintains a classical or evidential approach to apologetics, yet two of his strongest arguments are “Kantian” (i.e., presuppositional)—specifically, his discussion of the principle of sufficient reason (34) and the idea that “hope” depends on the existence of God (159). Overall, the book attempts to do more than space allows. Many of the arguments are incomplete and the reader must consult the footnotes for further sources to fill in the blanks. While the book contains some helpful information, it needs to be supplemented in order to equip Christian students to “Make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

Reviewed by Michael G Muñoz, D.Bioethics, MA (Bioethics), MA (Religion), MEd, who worked in fire fighting for over 30 years, is adjunct faculty at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, AZ, and serves on the Disaster Clinical Advisory Committee for Spokane, WA.

The Ethics of Transplants: Why Careless Thought Costs Lives

Janet Radcliffe Richards. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012.

ISBN-13: 978-0199575558, 278 PAGES, CLOTH, \$29.95.

During WWII, the British populace was warned, “careless talk costs lives.” Similarly, feminist Oxford philosopher Janet Richards warns that “careless thought costs lives” in the world of organ transplantation. She contends that the overwhelming need for human organs for transplantation should be met by 1) recognizing that organs are the property of the humans who possess them, 2) allowing a market for organs, and 3) accepting as dead certain persons in a “penumbral state” in order that their organs can be harvested. Throughout the text, Richards marshals her arguments to schematically and explicitly counter the worldview of others, and slowly, somewhat subtly, unfolds her own.

Richards argues that if individuals can give away something (altruistic organ donation), then that something is their property and they should also be able, by law, to sell said property. Thus, she makes the case for a market in human organs. Further, she mentions that many people who agree would insist on a public body as the purchasing agent so that the purchased organs would then be impartially allocated. Despite her pains to say that her book is not about policy, throughout her book Richards offers possible policy decisions that would enact her views, including the formal adoption of organs as legal property and “doing everything we can to increase donation by means of nudges at the edges of the present law” (215).

This book envisions a world where a utilitarian statist view holds sway. Those living in need of organs should benefit from the organs of others, either through a market of consenting persons, or through the procurement of organs from those whom society deems as dead. The dead could include terminally unconscious persons whose “own interests as living beings have already ended” (216). Society—not medical professionals—would decide what medics will do and the way in which their acquired skills will be used. Moreover, a secular society “should not allow religious views to influence the question of when death should be declared” (251). Apparently, only the statist view is allowed.

Written to provide clear thinking about issues involved in human organ transplantation, it appears that this book is a reaction to the various policies and persons the author has encountered in her work. Richards complains that the “direct judgment of wrongness” of organ selling corrupts the arguments regarding possible organ markets. Even “transplant professionals,” with whom she worked to formulate policies allowing incentives for kidney donation, produced policies with restrictions (which Richards feels are unjustified) regarding payment. It seems that perhaps Richards is confronting the two potent aspects of the law—boundary and tutor—when she encounters certain members of society who intuit that human beings are worth more than their component parts. While the current majority on either side of the “Pond” thankfully does not hold Richards’ views, the reader

of this work will be challenged to come to terms with his/her own view. This, in itself, is a service.

Reviewed by D. Joy Riley, MD, MA (Bioethics), who serves as the Executive Director of the Tennessee Center for Bioethics and Culture in Brentwood, TN, USA.

