

Devettere, Raymond J. *Practical Decision Making in Health Care Ethics: Cases and Concepts*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000. 639 pp. Case and subject indexes.

This book is divided into two main parts. In the first part, Devettere claims to offer an alternative approach to health care ethics, using an ethics of personal well-being and fulfillment, that will be referred to henceforth as an ethics of the good. The first chapters provide a good summary of various ethical theories and concepts as Devettere justifies his use of an ethics of the good as a foundation for his ethical analysis of medical health issues. The rest of the book presents a very good discussion of a variety of medical health issues.

In outlining his concepts, Raymond Devettere is very deliberate in specifying that the foundation for his ethics of the good should be the premise for the study of the many cases involving issues in health care today. He distinguishes between an ethics of the good and the ethics of obligation and duty, which is much more commonly used in discussions of health care ethics.

In the first part of his book, Devettere explains how he hopes to retrieve from Aristotle and Aquinas the virtue ethics of the good in order to determine which actions are morally good or bad. According to Devettere, the use of prudential reasoning determines how one should act, given particular situations and circumstances. One must reason about what will achieve the good, not simply adopt a moral tradition of our predecessors, such as the ethics of obligation. This ethics of the good is a normative ethics, but normative only for what con-

tributes to the good life. Other ethics which involve obligation and duty are normative for other obligatory systems, such as the Ten Commandments, or natural law. These norms tell us what we are obligated to do. In the ethics of obligation, we use the principles to deduce what should be done, and act accordingly, regardless of whether our actions contribute to the good. Devettere claims that to use these norms is to be locked into a system where there is no flexibility for particular circumstances. We are thereby led to make excuses for why the laws and principles do not work in this or that particular circumstance. We then have to modify the principle in order to justify our action that contributes to the good in the particular circumstance.

Devettere points out that the norms for the ethics of the good are what contribute to a good life. We learn these norms from our parents, teachers, and from society. But where do our parents, teachers, and society as a whole learn these norms? Devettere claims that we are naturally oriented to the good. He points out that to lie, cheat, or murder is obviously not oriented toward the good. Because these behaviors do not lead to the good life of the individual or others, they are vices; only virtues lead to the good life. While Devettere claims that we are naturally oriented to the good, he does not adequately explain how this happens. What Devettere calls a natural orientation toward the good is actually derived from natural law in an ethics of obligation.

Devettere is so determined to distinguish his ethics of the good from an ethics of obligation that he often sounds as if there is no room for general principles in his ethics. However, Devettere actually allows the use of general principles in an ethics of ob-

ligation, but only secondarily the general principles reinforce the virtuous actions in an ethics of the good. Only Devettere's ethics of the good is basic and primary in determining actions that contribute to the good. While Devettere claims to retrieve the virtue-based ethics of Aquinas, he does not acknowledge the true importance that Aquinas gives to general principles, given the particular circumstances of a situation, in his virtue ethics. Aquinas recognizes that when we get closer to the particular circumstances of a situation we may make mistakes in using general principles, but he gives a primary role to the use of principles in his virtue ethics, whereas Devettere gives them a secondary role.

Devettere has provided a glossary of terms, which is a very helpful. There is also an index of all the cases used in the presentation of the different medical issues, as well as a subject index.

This second edition of Devettere's book has some important changes from the first edition. He has revised Chapter 2 in order to better clarify the presentation of his virtue-based ethics of prudential reasoning. Devettere has also added two chapters which present the issues of medical genetics and of managed care. Other chapters have been updated to reflect the latest developments in the debates over some of the issues presented.

The book provides a good summary of ethical theories and concepts, including moral reasoning and the virtues, especially prudence. Because of cases used as examples of the many health care issues described, this book also serves as a good reference for well-known groundbreaking cases that led to court decisions or establishment of procedures that today guide health care decisions. However, it is necessary to always look at Devettere's descriptions of health care issues through the lens of his ethics of the good, realizing that there is not necessarily a set of Christian principles which guide the ethical analysis of the cases in each chapter. With this caution, the book serves its stated purpose, to at least raise moral awareness about some

of the complex ethical issues in health care today.

Bro. Peter Rogers, O.P., Ph.D.
St. Albert Priory
Oakland, California

Diamond, Eugene F., M.D. *A Catholic Guide to Medical Ethics: Catholic Principles in Clinical Practice.* Palos Park, IL: Linacre Institute, 2001. 393 pp.

The discipline of bioethics suffers from the fact that most bioethicists have little or no scientific or medical training (like myself), and few physicians have enough philosophical knowledge to be able to make meaningful contributions to bioethical debate. *A Catholic Guide to Medical Ethics: Catholic Principles in Clinical Practice* by Eugene Diamond, M.D., is an explanation and defense of Catholic moral teaching regarding medical issues by a physician who has an excellent grasp of the principles involved. It is invaluable that a physician with his experience is absolutely convinced that practicing medicine while honoring the ethical teachings of the Church in no way compromises medical care. Physicians will surely find this a helpful guide to medical ethics since he speaks their language; laypeople will appreciate his mastery of medical facts, though access to a good medical dictionary will be necessary for most.

No issue in this book is treated abstractly; illustrations from lawsuits and actual clinical cases abound. Issues often not treated at all in secular bioethics books find a place here—such as the morality of boxing, the morality of sex education, and discrimination against Catholics by medical schools. Diamond has his finger on the pulse of life as actually lived and does not run from the hard questions.

Readers will find the book not only a defense of church principles but also a defense of Diamond's interpretation of those prin-