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AIDS: Crisis in Professional Ethics

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AIDS: Crisis in Professional Ethics

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(chap. 9). Critical holism is also postmodernist and phenomenological: the distinction between subjective and objective is replaced by a “fusion” of fact and value; a sense of “fittingness” between a situation and morally appropriate behavior is affirmed. Both fusion and fittingness are found in one’s original experience of the world (pp. 111–17). The justification of moral principles and other judgments of value lies in a worldview composed of belief and value systems and conditioned by language and culture. Although they may vary, some worldviews are more correct than others; they can be evaluated in terms of consistency and whether or not they are dishonest, self-serving, or “based on beliefs that are adopted in questionable ways” (p. 103). Marietta argues that the correct or “adequate” worldview must include moral recognition of the biosphere.

J. C.


The editors of this volume clearly intended to make it relevant to the current debate over health care policy in the United States. The book addresses such practical political issues as the rationing of health care services, the Clinton health care proposal, and the use of sin taxes to generate revenue for government health care programs. One theoretical article provides a critique of hypothetical choice models (like Norman Daniels’s) for distributive justice in health care. Other articles address the inappropriateness of biomedical models for analyzing socially based problems in public health and the tendency for children (who are unable to represent themselves in political debate) to be unjustly overlooked in discussions and decisions about health care policy. Notably absent is an examination of another constituency whose members may be unable to represent themselves adequately in public debate—persons who suffer from chronic mental illness.

One great virtue of this book is the understanding of the intricacies of the American health care system that the reader is likely to glean from its pages. This alone makes it valuable reading for specialists in health care ethics and for others with an interest in health care policy; the book could also serve as a text for an appropriate graduate-level course in medical ethics or public health.

T. M.


This valuable collection of eleven new essays explores a variety of issues in the professions—including medicine but also nursing, dentistry, teaching, business, university administration, counseling, law, clergy, and journalism. Many essays focus on (1) the professional responsibilities to provide services to HIV-positive individuals, (2) the rights of HIV-positive professionals and
other workers to pursue their careers, (3) the privacy of professionals and clients, and (4) the virtues of professionals in overcoming bigotry as they serve the public. Perhaps more attention might have been given to the fourth issue, given its centrality to all the other issues. Yet throughout, the essays are insightful and thought provoking. In addition to being a pioneering study of moral issues concerning AIDS, the volume illustrates a wide range of approaches, thereby providing a touchstone for thinking about applied philosophy. The contributors, all of whom are well informed and sensitive to specific contexts, include some of the best philosophers working in applied ethics today, together with representatives from several other professions. This is a significant philosophical contribution and an ideal text.

M. W. M.


This collection of eighteen articles and documents, supplemented by concise and helpful introductions and three additional articles by the editors, provides a useful case study textbook for courses in business ethics or engineering ethics. The editors followed the same approach in THE DC-10 Case: A Study in Applied Ethics, Business, and Technology published by SUNY Press in 1992. The initial one-third of the book focuses directly on the details of the Pinto fuel system controversy, reproducing Mark Dowie’s 1977 “Pinto Madness” article from Mother Jones, portions of Lee Strobel’s Reckless Homicide? Ford’s Pinto Trial (South Bend, Ind.: And Books, 1980), and documents from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The remaining two-thirds of the book deals with four ethical issues arising from the Pinto case: the use of cost-benefit analysis in decisions concerning safety, the obligation of professionals to blow the whistle, product liability law as a way of dealing with unsafe designs, and justification for the governmental regulation of business. These four sections include articles familiar to persons teaching applied ethics, such as Steven Kelman’s critique of cost-benefit analysis, Richard De George’s defense of non-whistle-blowing by Pinto engineers, George Brenkert’s justification of strict product liability, and Alasdair MacIntyre’s presentation of government regulation as a substitute for morality. The editors’ writing is clear, informed, and nondoctrinaire. The selection of items is judicious, with sufficient references to direct students to additional material. The book is recommended as an excellent supplemental text that presents important ethical issues in the context of a major real-world controversy.

N. R. L.


This anthology contains twelve essays of diverse quality on similarly diverse subjects. Wueste’s introduction, his own contribution, and that of Serena Stier