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Book Reviews

Three Realms of Ethics: Individual, Institutional, Societal

John W. Glaser

Sheed & Ward, Kansas City, MO, 1994, 160 pp., \$17.95 (paperback)

IN *THREE REALMS OF ETHICS*, JACK Glaser identifies the need for many maps or guidelines for effective ethical decision making. He offers the book as a "partial map of ethics" based on the Catholic moral tradition of "benefi-

cence," which provides the grounding for all other principles.

The book is divided into four parts: (1) the development of a beneficence model of ethics; (2) the development of three concentric spheres of beneficence: individual, institutional, and societal; (3) conclusions that can be drawn from the first two sections; and (4) a series of cases to be used as tools for reflection and education.

The beneficence-based model begins with the premise of moral theologian J. Dewey that the "struggle . . . is between values each of which is an undoubted good in its place but which now gets in

each other's way." At an early age, conflicting values become the very fabric of our moral life. To place the model within Catholic tradition, Glaser distinguishes between two elements of charity: love as benevolence (wishing the best for one's neighbor) and love as beneficence (doing good). Although beneficent individuals are wholeheartedly directed toward doing good, they are limited by their finite nature. It is at this point—where good intentions meet limitations—that individuals wage the moral struggle of realizing human goods and avoiding evils and of choosing among goods. In this structure of ethics, beneficence is

BOOK BRIEFS

The Power of Open-Book Management: Releasing the True Potential of People's Minds, Hearts and Hands

John P. Schuster and Jill Carpenter, John Wiley & Sons, New York City, 1996, 288 pp., \$24.95

Open-book management, or business literacy, is a new approach to increase employee productivity and financial results. Simply, it involves teaching employees the financial basics and trusting them to make good decisions. This text offers advice on how to launch an open-book initiative, covering such topics as reward systems, communication, decision making, training, and accountability.

Engines of Empowerment: Using Information Technology to Create Healthy Communities and Challenge Public Policy

Nancy Milio, Health Administration Press, Chicago, 1996, 306 pp., \$36 (paperback)

Engines of Empowerment discusses how information technologies can be used

to deliver community health services and improve the national standard of living. Case studies illustrate the social and economic benefits of information technology, especially among disadvantaged groups. The book examines policies shaping the National Information Infrastructure and gives recommendations for a national policy on information technology that would encourage healthier communities.

The U.S. Health Workforce: Power, Politics, and Policy

Marian Osterweis, et al., editors, Association of Academic Health Centers, Washington, DC, 1996, 343 pp., \$25 (paperback)

This compilation of 28 papers examines the roles and responsibilities of such varied entities as the federal government, states, the healthcare market, the health professions, and educational institutions in shaping all the health professions. Two overview chapters address the conflict over whether the market or professional standards should determine the future roles of the health professions. A final section develops an

analytical framework for improving and coordinating the processes involved in healthcare work force policy making.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The Church Visible: The Ceremonial Life and Protocol of the Roman Catholic Church, James-Charles Noonan, Jr., Viking, New York City, 1996

Healthcare Marketing in Transition: Practical Answers to Pressing Questions, Terrence J. Rynne, Irwin Professional Publishing, Burr Ridge, IL, 1995

Medicaid Reform, Twentieth Century Fund Press, New York City, 1995

Pocket Guide to Managed Care, John La Puma and David Schiedermayer, McGraw Hill Healthcare Management Group, New York City, 1996

Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World, Robert A. Krieg, ed., Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1995

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BOOKS

grounded in benevolence, and the principle of proportionality aids in applying beneficence to specific situations.

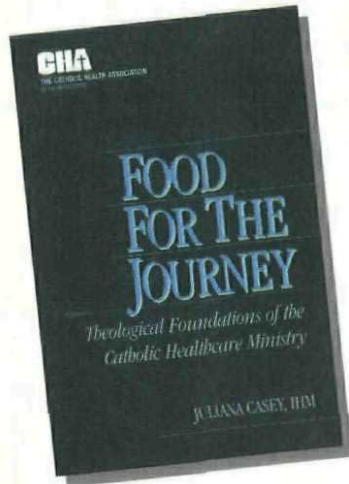
Glaser then develops a model for exploring beneficence in three realms: individual, institutional, and societal. The three realms are interdependent and help guide ethical decision making, but they differ in their principles, methodologies, and conclusions. Glaser clarifies the definitions and distinctions by applying the model to the issue of euthanasia. For instance, within the individual realm the question may be, "May I deliberately and actively end my own life?" But at the societal level, the more appropriate question might be, "Does patient autonomy include the right to physician-assisted death?"

Once we determine the level, or realm, in which a given issue fits, we can use that as the starting point and apply a set of questions that leads us into ethical reflection. Most significant in this approach is Glaser's characterization of the interrelationships in the three realms and the limits placed on a smaller sphere by the ethical character of a larger sphere. Acknowledging the highly individualistic character of today's culture, this method of ethical reflection could lead to a clearer understanding of the relationship of the individual to the common good.

The second part of this book features 51 cases designed to flesh out the theory presented in the first part. Each was chosen to facilitate ethical thinking about a given issue in terms of the individual, institutional, and societal realms. The issues range from whether mob money is acceptable, to the human genome project, to gay marriage.

Glaser's brief but stimulating work is a welcome addition to the field of ethical reflection. The inclusion of case studies will be especially helpful to the many who learn best by application and illustration.

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