

This volume is invaluable for scholars of Wojtyła, particularly those interested in his moral philosophy and bioethics. Seifert successfully demonstrates that if one follows Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II, it is never acceptable to separate the fundamental moral options with outward-directed actions. If this divide is maintained, the result will likely echo the errors of both Manicheism and utilitarianism, as seen in the practices of proponents of both consequentialist and purely teleological ethics, particularly within medical practices (pp. 179-194).

While future readers might initially find the depth of the book daunting, they will ultimately find it rewarding due to its practical implications for addressing contemporary moral issues. In this book, Seifert synthesizes the philosophies of thinkers like Dietrich von Hildebrand and Josef Pieper with the thoughts of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II, concurrently offering a critical response to the work of scholars such as Josef Fuchs, Jonathan Harrison, and Franz Böckle. This positions the reader for a more profound engagement with the primary texts written by Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II.

Blaise D. Ringor

Manlangit, Jerry Reb. MHA, Ph.D. *Fundamental Concepts, Principles, and Issues in BIOETHICS*. Rev. Ed. 2020. pp. 629. ISBN-13:979-868-039-900-2.

In all candor, in this book, “Fundamental Concepts, Principles, and Issues in Bioethics,” the author Fr. Manlangit, worked for the advocacy of the dignity reposed in the great mystery and gift of human life. This is therefore a humble tribute to human life and its nobility. “Greater love no man has than to lay his life for his friends,” (*Jn. 15:13*) is a quote from the Sacred Scriptures that ushers an opening salvo to warn readers that it is not just any secular book but is anchored primarily on faith and morals.

In the extant discussions in the book, the author has masterfully delivered its promise of tackling the core and essential concepts, principles, and issues in Bioethics spread throughout its 629 pages of well-researched, extensively discoursed, and impactful discussion. There is no better way to explain the invaluable contribution of this book to readers from various fields and disciplines, than by quoting pertinent portions of its foreword and acknowledgments. As very succinctly put by the author, “the readers will find useful the rich and intelligent discussions of bioethical concepts, principles, and perennial and current issues and dilemmas that usually confront health practitioners in educational, health and research works.”

Further, as the author accurately predicted, “those who encounter problems in these works on a daily basis will find many enlightening and clarifying insightful views proffered, together with the rich case studies well illustrated herein and which are considered to be paramount in making ethical decisions in health care.”

Presentation-wise, the book was well organized, and the discussions were concise but complete. The topics were relevantly segregated, but, when necessary, were effortlessly harmonized with each other. Each chapter starts with a quotation from the Sacred Scriptures as the author carefully selected to “add a spiritual dimension to a highly rational discussion.”

Moreover, at the end of each chapter, the author provided case studies “to illustrate the application of concepts and principles in practice and to demonstrate how they can be used in the concrete situation in life sciences.” These cases and relevant questions posted will allow the reader to assess his or her understanding of bioethics and properly discern with great care.

The concepts, principles, cases, and issues presented in the book are relevant, provocative, and timely. Bioethics per se is a significant subject matter. As the author stated, “this discipline is important, not only to put the right order and direction in the practice of an ethical profession but also to recognize the society’s awareness of its significance to those who seek holistic medical care.” The book’s Prologue stressed its central advocacy in favor of the dignity of human life, highlighting the encyclical letter *Evangelium Vitae* of saint Pope John Paul II who strongly denounced an appalling global conspiracy against human life. The ensuing twenty-eight (28) chapters progressively discussed the “basic foundational framework for understanding the more complicated topics.” The first 7 chapters “will introduce initially the reader to important concepts in Bioethics, while the next chapters (8 to 27) will deal with the important principles and attendant issues of bioethics.” It was truly helpful that the book started Chapters 1, 2, and 3 by introducing bioethics in the health professions, the fundamental concepts involved therein, and how it relates to the health professions. The reader, regardless of background (in my case, even a lawyer), will gain a good grasp of bioethics and slowly build a foundational understanding of the same, concerning the health professions and health care management. The book then proceeds to pique the readers’ minds by discussing the concepts of freedom (Chapter 3), human dignity (Chapter 5), as well as life, health, and disease (Chapter 6). The foundational chapters culminate with a general discussion of the principles of bioethics, softly easing the readers into the more complicated, complex, and intricate discussion of the specific principles in the succeeding chapters. After building a solid foundation, the book piles up layer after layer of immense knowledge and thought-provoking disquisition on the realm of bioethics, by discussing the principles of human dignity (Chapter 8), stewardship and creativity (Chapter 9), totality and integrity of the human person (Chapter 10), double effect (Chapter 11), legitimate cooperation (Chapter 12), guides to human organ donation and transplantation (Chapter 13), the autonomy of patients (Chapter 14), truth-telling and professional communication (Chapter 15), confidentiality and privacy (Chapter 16), justice in the allocation of health care resources (Chapter 17), subsidiarity or solidarity (Chapter 18), guide to research on human subjects (Chapter 19), professional relationship in health care (Chapter 20), moral discernment (Chapter 21), rights, human rights and patients’ rights (Chapter 21), and human creative sexuality (Chapter 24).

The book expertly discussed the controversial and divisive topic of abortion and its ethical dimension (Chapter 23), with the author convincingly and meritoriously advancing the arguments promoting the dignity of human life and successfully debunking the pro-abortion arguments including their varied euphemisms. The book took a clear stand and set a solid line between good (life) and evil (abortion). Thereafter, the often unhappy and sensitive topic of death was decisively discussed by covering the bioethics of death and dying (Chapter 25) and the bioethics of suffering and the mystery of death (Chapter 26). The book’s penultimate chapter rightfully discussed the medical dimensions and virtues of health professionals (Chapter 27) to put into context and practice the various concepts and principles discussed in the last 26 chapters.

Finally, the ultimate chapter discussed the bioethics committee (Chapter 28) as if calling the readers to action and inspiring them to serve. This chapter explains the role and function of the bioethics committee – “to serve as a forum where ethical dilemmas (or issues) on decision making can be addressed.”

The book closed with a masterfully written Epilogue. True to the promise of the author in its early pages, the book is presented in a manner that ensures that it provides a “spiritual dimension to a highly rational discussion and engagement as an integral part of the underlying advocacy of this book”.

The Epilogue synthesized the concepts, principles, and issues presented in the book, and how they applied to health care, health professions, and health professionals. It emphasized its earlier statement that “a doctor without ethics is just a technician, but with ethics, he becomes properly called a physician,” and stressed that “bioethics is the lamp through which we see the path ahead and recognize the signposts.”

The author sharply ended his disquisition with the last word of exhortation and caution, culminating with a discussion of the 3 general motivations through which man pursues his chosen action – there is an economic need that he wants to fulfill (Marxist view), related to fulfilling a sexual need (Freudian type), and those he knows have eternal value (Christ’s teaching). He emphasized that “it is therefore imperative that he must pursue every dimension of his life to achieve fuller satisfaction.” The author left an appropriate word of caution that “it was not the purpose of the book to give a regimented canon of bioethical principles that everyone should follow hook, line, and sinker... this book intends only to give the readers an informed guide that should help clarify their ethical choices or decisions, especially in their professional lives.”

In closing, the author gave a piece of advice that is relevant to every human being – “there is no life as the life of an ethical person, personally, socially or professionally.” In sum, the book relevantly presented and discussed the fundamental concepts, principles, and issues in Bioethics in an orderly and properly synthesized manner. The discussion and cases presented were well organized and thought-provoking and would guide not just healthcare professionals but also non-healthcare professionals like the reviewer in their quest for an ethical life. It will make the reader assess his values and beliefs, which while on its face value may not be incorrect, but in the grand scheme of things, may ultimately be a wrong approach. The author expertly bridged the gaps and filled the vacuum enabling ordinary readers to understand bioethics and challenging them to live an ethical and morally sound life. The author was also able to evoke spiritual guidance leading to a Christian-like interpretation of rational thoughts.

This book is close to perfection and must be seen on the table of anyone who wants to see the marvelous truth reposed in Ethics of Life.

Marian Joanne Co-Pua, DCL

