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the past does have something to say to the future and to close one's mind to the past is as short-sighted as to close it to the future. I am afraid that one is in serious danger of doing this when, as the author seems to do, he puts moral science almost totally at the mercy of progress in the physical sciences.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Patient as Person: Explorations in Medical Ethics

*By Paul Ramsey, New Haven: Yale
University Press, 1971. Pp. xxii+283. \$10.00.*

Rarely does the New York Times, Book Review Section consider a serious, scholarly book on Medical Ethics. On February 14, 1971 Paul Ramsey's new book was reviewed in this prestigious format by Michael Novak. The review was exceedingly laudatory of both the book and its author. Since both Ramsey and Novak are eastern establishment ethicists and partners in several commissions and committees and often funded or seeking funds from the same sources, one might question the objectiveness of the review. However, having been present at many of the discussions which were aimed at delineating the problems handled and knowing Paul

Ramsey and his scholarly and human approach and carefully having read *Patient as Person* I am happy to reinforce much of the praise found in the previous review. Since this review is aimed at a far more sophisticated audience than the average Times reader, I will attempt a more specific review than that previously written.

Paul Ramsey has donated an impressive array of books and original articles to the ethical field. Among the list there does not exist even one which an author might be happy to omit from his bibliography or which he might secretly hope no one will ever look up. The Ramsey corpus is

scholarly and creative, carefully thought out and philosophically consistent. One can with safety predict that future theses will be written on the ethics of Paul Ramsey. Many do not agree with the Ramsey approach or the presuppositions on which his ethics is based and many certainly do not agree with his solutions. Nevertheless, he can not be ignored by any serious ethician.

To prepare this book and to polish the series of lectures which were published under the title *Fabricated Man*, Yale Press, 1970, Dr. Ramsey spent two six month periods as a Kennedy supported Visiting Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Georgetown University School of Medicine. His title was Professor of Genetic Ethics. A wide experience was arranged in the various disciplines. Paul Ramsey worked in the center of a large teaching hospital and experienced modern medicine first hand. He spent long hours in discussions with specialists in each of the critical areas. His questions were deep and probing and all who were privileged to present material and discuss implications were amazed at his grasp of the problems and insight into their ramifications. The medical school faculty profited greatly from his presence.

The book which resulted from this and other experiences is a must for anyone interested in the field of medical ethics. The most sensitive areas of medical practice are handled clearly; traditional approaches from Catholic, Protestant and Jewish viewpoints are presented in a critical manner and applied to the modern situation. Contemporary law and medical practice and the writings of medical experts are examined and the Ramsey approach and solution offered. The book is pure

Ramsey, thoughtful, searching carefully logical and filled with a deep reverence for life and man and unashamedly Christian.

Ramsey's starting point is the biblical norm of fidelity to covenant and, relying on Karl Barth, he states that covenant fidelity is the inner meaning and purpose of our creation as human beings. Canons of loyalty govern every man's relations with his fellow man. A covenant exists between men which is specialized according to the relationship; a covenant between patient and physician, well and ill, living and dying, researcher and "subject". For Ramsey an examination of how one is faithful to this covenant is the basic ethical question. Modern science and medicine seems to have overawed most men and, worst of all, many scientists and physicians. Since what can be done, probably will be done, since valuable knowledge seems attainable only by questionable experimentation, many so called ethicians seem to be rushing to canonize what will be or already is. Not Ramsey, he is willing to defend each man's dignity and privacy, to demand fidelity in the face of scientific pressure.

The first chapter deals with consent and is perhaps the best chapter in the book. There is no problem in general medical practice which is more often met and in medical experimentation using human "volunteers" the problem is, of course, of constant concern. The medical profession has demanded that in all patient-physician relationships there be a "reasonably free and adequately informed consent" to any procedure or examination performed. In the normal doctor-patient relationship this free and informed consent is present by the fact of the contract entered into. You will be my doctor and I will be your patient. All actions

will be taken on behalf of the patient and anything done which is not aimed at helping this patient, violates the contract (covenant) and redress may be attained by legal suit (malpractice). The truly difficult problems of consent are those which deal with experimentation.

Early in the chapter the contribution of situation ethics is presented and discussed. (Ramsey is one of the chief opponents of situation ethics and will generally excoriate the approach and its proponents whenever the chance arises).

Ramsey then approaches consent as a covenant between men. Informed consent being the cardinal canon of loyalty joining men together in medical practice and investigation. Paraphrasing Reinhold Niebuhr's defense of democracy Ramsey says "Man's capacity to become joint adventurers in a common cause makes the consensual relationship possible; man's propensity to overreach his joint adventurer even in a good cause makes consent necessary". This covenant between doctor and patient is emphasized to an even greater degree by the belief that no man is good enough to experiment on another without his consent and no man is good enough to cure another without his consent. The requirement of consent is essential so that no man shall be degraded and treated as a thing or as an animal in order that good medical knowledge may come of it.

The drive toward research and the good to be obtained from it, is pushing medical researchers toward an emphasis on the ultimate good, advancement of knowledge and benefit to many in the future. This push on many levels causes the covenant between investigator and subject to be disregarded.

In a very small, word of mouth, survey which I took among first and second year medical students, the basic ideas of informed consent were praised but in cases the drive was generally toward obtaining the result. The ultimate purpose was to serve mankind better in the future but the use of the subject as solely, just that, was frightening.

After a general discussion of consent Ramsey presents several cases mainly concerned with experimentation with the young. Most of the case material in the book are factual although some hypothetical cases are used as illustrative material. In the chapter on consent, cases are used of experimentation on aborted fetal material. Such cases are of extreme importance in the present abortion controversy which is not treated as such in the book. The most telling case and the one best suited for sharpening the principles and solutions needed is the true case involving the use of institutionalized retarded children in a New England resident care facility. Again the presentation of the pros and cons of such a situation are fairly put forward. Ramsey clearly and with great precision of thought finally develops his own ethical position and solution.

Chapters on determining death, on (only) caring for the dying, on transplant (living and cadaver donors), kidney and heart, and triage (delivery of medical services) follow. Besides the chapter on consent, the chapter on care of the dying and the delivery of sparse medical resources are in my estimation the best, however, there are nuggets not to be missed in the other chapters.

I am obviously enthusiastic about this book and hope that medical men

will take the time to ponder the principles presented. Certainly this book is an absolute necessity for anyone interested in medical ethics regardless of what their position might be.

Ramsey's style is sometimes difficult and the cases presented, while they add greatly to the interest and basic understanding of the work, will probably have an effect of dating the presentation. No doubt other, lesser ethicists, will update the cases but hopefully they will not lose the Ramsey spirit.

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