and the language acquired by Washoe will never attain the level of the first grade student. Humans were created in the likeness of the Creator, not animals, and humans have a dominion over animals. They are to use animals wisely and lovingly, tending them and protecting. But they cannot be treated as equal with humans and if there is a problem of whose life to choose, then the lives of humans are always more precious than the lives of animals, however retarded the humans may be.

Reviewed by Adam Drozdak, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA 15282.


Fuller is Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Bradley University. He is the author of Religion and the Life Cycle and other books. During the late 1980s, Americans have shown a great interest in the New Age movement with its unconventional practices and beliefs, and many have found in it spiritual fulfillment and healing of the body. Fuller tries to show in this book that such alternative forms of healing and religion are nothing new in American culture. He claims that the belief in the importance of an individual’s rapport with the cosmos is characteristic of American unchurched religious life. He gives a sympathetic account of the history of alternative medicine which related to unorthodox religion, and provides interesting cultural and sociological interpretation.

In chapter one, “Introduction,” Fuller explains that religion and medicine were closely related in the human history. Only in the recent secularized Western society are medicine and religion separated. He observes that the persistence and popularity of unorthodox medical systems is due to their articulation of a different religious world view. According to their view, a higher energy could filter in and work upon a person’s body and personality. He notes that not every unorthodox medicine relates to a religious view, and that this book only surveys alternative medicine which relates to unchurched American religious life. This book also does not discuss “faith healing” within orthodox religion.

Chapter two, “Sectarian Healing and Protestant Perfectionism in the Nineteenth Century,” treats the development in the 1830s of Thomsonism (which held that all disease was caused by cold and could be cured by heat), homeopathy (principle of like is cured by like), hydrotherapy (philosophy of water cure), and Graham’s dietary regimens for disease prevention. Fuller claims that they represented a physiological Arminianism, that is, individuals could take control of their own physical and spiritual salvation. Graham’s Christian Health Movement led to the establishment of the Seventh Day Adventists and the founding of Kellogg and Post cereal companies.

He observes that these developments did not educe any metaphysical theory of healing.

Americans applied the ideological resources of two European “isms” to get the connection between metaphysical and physiological reality. The ideas of Swedenborgianism and mesmerism and their influence on America are explored in chapter three, “From Physic to Metaphysic: The Spiritualizing of Alternative Medicine.” These systems, which sprang up in the 1830s and ‘40s, proposed a connection between the physical and spiritual realms. They gave Americans opportunities to experience an ecstatic influx of divine spirit. Mesmer claimed that health can be achieved by supercharging one’s nerve system with a mysterious energy—animal magnetism. The process of mesmerizing brought a person into an intimate rapport with the cosmos. Swedenborg also claimed that there is an indwelling cosmic force which can be approached by inner adjustments. These metaphysical thinking gave birth in the 1880s to American religious philosophies such as New Thought and Christian Science.

The fourth chapter, “At the Fringes of Orthodoxy: Chiropractic and Osteopathic Medicine,” examines the emergence of these two unorthodox healing systems in the late nineteenth century. Fuller shows their indebtedness to mesmerism although they have gradually muted references to metaphysical concepts of disease.

The twentieth century’s concern with holistic approach to medicine is treated in the fifth chapter, “The Contemporary Scene: Images of the ‘Higher Self’ in Holistic and Psychic Healing Movement.” Fuller points out the underlying concept which recognizes the spiritual dimension of disease in diverse healing practices such as Ayurvedic medicine, Yoga, Shiatsu, rolfing, psychic healing, Therapeutic Touch, Alcoholics Anonymous, and New Age crystal healing.

In the last chapter, “Healing as an Initiatory Rite,” Fuller gives his interpretation of all these events in American history and argues that these groups are very effective in bringing the resource of religion into the healing process. He concludes very positively about the influence of these groups in fostering spirituality in their adherents. They offer people a more vivid experience of a sacred reality than do most organized religions. According to Fuller by emphasizing the transcendence of God, orthodox religion cannot help believers to have profound psychological connection with God. It also cannot retain intellectual assent because of the advent of modern science, biblical criticism, and comparative religion.

Overall this book provides an interesting history of alternative medicine which culminates in spiritual pantheism. Fuller has a good mastery of American religious life. However, the connection between the movements in the previous century and those of this century is not as strong as he has argued. A gap of seventy years is related to the phenomenal advance of the modern medicine. The resurgence of alternative medicine and unorthodox spirituality after the 1970s is more related to an impasse of the medical progress, revolutionary change in American
society, and the influx of Eastern religions and merchandise. His opinion about orthodox religion is also debatable.

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All existing ethical theories are, according to Flanagan, inadequate in not sufficiently stressing the psychological dimension of man. These theories are overly interested in social aspects, as though ethics were restricted only to the social dimension of man. But ethical investigations must not be divorced from psychology, meaning both philosophical and scientific psychology. The goal of this book is to trace links between ethics and psychology, and to discuss current ethical theories from the standpoint of their sensitivity to psychological issues.

The first part of the book is a long introduction to the problem of psychological realism. The author spends one chapter just defending the view that “each of us is a separate individual with a distinctive personal point of view” (p. 58) — and at least that much has to be acknowledged by any moral theory. This is a claim of minimal realism; the position of strong realism — which, for instance, wants to put a limit on impartiality — is indefensible.

Having stated that, the author formulates a meta-ethical principle of minimal realism according to which all prescriptions and ideals of any ethical theory have to take into account “the creatures like us.” They simply should not be detached from reality, in particular from psychological reality, and impose rules that are unrealizable by anyone. Theories claiming that psychology is irrelevant for ethics do not even deserve a serious discussion.

In Part Two, Flanagan discusses communitarian theory, which states that a proper social arrangement contributes to a proper development of persons. The author does not deny the reality of this contribution, but he indicates that there is a problem with determination of such proper social arrangements. Communitarians are right in indicating that there are social determinants of personality of concrete communities, but their generalizations are unsubstantiated.

Part Three begins with a long critique of the assumption that there is a deep structure in the moral psychology of Piaget and Kohlberg. There are a number of definite moral forms, and each person’s moral development goes through the same series of moral stages. Flanagan himself does not deny the existence of the deep structure, but he sees it as an insignificantly small piece of common ground between various moralities. For him “it seems simply unbelievable that there could be a single ideal moral competence and a universal and irreversible sequence of stages” (p. 195).

Next comes a lengthy discussion of the claim that moral ideals are gender-specific; for instance, the assumption that male moral reasoning is more rule-governed than is female reasoning. The claim of gender-specificity is all too simplistic and cannot be defended on either theoretical or empirical ground. It is an example of a formalistic approach to ethics, and “more contentful direction seems...like the right direction in which to move” (p. 252). And Flanagan moves in this direction himself in Part Four.

Following Fodor’s idea that the mind is divided into autonomous and encapsulated modules, Flanagan introduces a moral competence module, which possibly is divided into submodules. Also, dispositional modules, or traits, are customarily assumed to be stable in different situations. But situations very often reinforce certain traits and suppress the others. “Persons are ubiquitously in situations” (p. 260), and it is always reflected in the way the moral competence module and other dispositional modules affect human behavior.

Philosophical ethics may have a tendency to confine themselves to moral issues alone with an exclusion of context in which moral problems have to be solved. Psychological ethics may go in a similar direction by restricting the analysis of moral problems to man’s psyche. What Flanagan stresses throughout his book is the validity — and the need — for a psychological approach to moral problems without loss of sight of the fact that man is a part of a larger context, and this context has an impact upon the moral dimension of man. Moreover, the character ethics should not “make the mistake of ignoring the vast array of moral personalities, of failing to see that both good character and good action are realized in multiple ways, and of thinking of traits of character as more solid, unequivocal, and decontextualized than they are” (p. 332).

Reviewed by Adam Drozdek, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA 15282.


I liked this book. It’s succinct, lucid, interesting, timely, and scientific. It presents the latest research on the relationship between positive thinking and physical well-being. The research is organized around the topics of optimism and pessimism. The first topic discussed is the relationship between health and explanatory style (the way people explain unpleasant ambiguous experiences). After this, related lines of research are examined including dispositional optimism, hardiness, self-efficacy, social support, stress, coping, inhibited power motivation, type A behavior pattern, and bereavement. The conclusion is not unexpected: one’s thoughts and feelings indeed affect one’s mortality and morbidity.