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# REVIEWS

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Philip A. Rolnick, ed., *Explorations in Ethics*. Greensboro, NC: Greensboro College Press, 1998. Pp. xix + 231. ISBN: 0-9667374-0-7.

This collection of essays revolves around the Ethics Across the Curriculum program at Greensboro College, a United Methodist affiliated liberal arts institution located in Greensboro, NC. These essays, originally produced in faculty training seminars, represent the first fruits of the program, which began in 1995. The contributions, which come from Greensboro College faculty and scholars who have been guest lecturers for the program, have been arranged into three sections. The first contains an introductory article that asks and answers the question, “What is Ethics?” The second section of the book contains a range of perspectives on Christian ethics, with essays that focus on love, ethics in Methodism, the Golden Rule and covenant. These essays represent the disciplines of Biblical Studies, Theology, Philosophy and Theological Ethics, respectively. The final section of the book contains essays written by faculty members from “across the curriculum.” Disciplines represented in this section include Economics, Education, English, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages and History.

As is true with any collection of essays, the authors present a considerable variety of perspectives. On the whole, however, it is fair to say that this book has more affinities to virtue or character ethics than to either deontological or teleological orientations. Over half of the essays explicitly touch on themes associated with character ethics. Rolnick offers an extended and approving discussion of Aristotelian excellence (5ff). Rolnick, Tatum and McCoy all suggest that love is the central Christian “virtue.” Wattles argues that the Golden Rule is a valuable tool for moral formation. Rolnick and McCoy stress the fact that character/ethics is formed in community with others rather than in isolation from others. Crane offers a character study and McElveen sheds historical light on the virtues thought necessary for a ruler.

*Ethics Across the Curriculum* clearly also represents post-modern and post-critical sensibilities. It is post-modern in the sense that the essays are polyphonic. As noted

above, there are indeed thematic affinities between many of the essays, but no single, unified expression emerges from the work. In fact, contrasting perspectives are allowed to sit side by side (e.g. Cheatham and Hebert). Another way in which the book is post-modern is its emphasis on the particular. Thus essayists tend to begin with a particular religious tradition (Methodist for Langford and Tatum), a particular case in medical ethics (Sasser), a specified historical periods (McElveen) or a biography (Crane). The essays are post-critical, as well, in that they simply do not celebrate the particular, but try to learn from it. Nor do many of the essayists give up on shared standards of conduct, the existence of truth and the possibilities of doing ethics (see Keck, Rolnick and McCoy, in particular).

Aside from the range of perspectives, discussion questions add to the book’s utility for the classroom. Of course, some essays are stronger and more self-critical than others. In some, the connection between the topic and “ethics” is explicit, at other times the connection is unstated or left to be inferred. The main drawback to the book, as I see it, is that the conversation did not include representatives from the natural sciences or political science. That, however, is largely a function of the pool of faculty who participated in the original seminars. Overall, the book ably demonstrates the multi-disciplinary, “liberal arts” character of ethics. It will be useful for illustrating the problems and possibilities of holding discussions of ethics across the curriculum.

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## Polanyi Society Membership

*Tradition and Discovery* is distributed to members of the Polanyi Society. This periodical supercedes a newsletter and earlier mini-journal published (with some gaps) by the Polanyi Society since the mid seventies. The Polanyi Society has members in thirteen different countries though most live in North America and the United Kingdom. The Society includes those formerly affiliated with the Polanyi group centered in the United Kingdom which published *Convivium: The United Kingdom Review of Post-critical Thought*. There are normally three issues of *TAD* each year.

Annual membership in the Polanyi Society is \$25 (\$10 for students) beginning in the fall of 2002. The membership cycle follows the academic year; subscriptions are due September 1 to Phil Mullins, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507 (fax: 816-271-5680, e-mail: mullins@mwsc.edu). Please make checks payable to the Polanyi Society. Dues can be paid by credit card by providing the card holder's name as it appears on the card, the card number and expiration date. Changes of address and inquiries should be sent to Mullins. New members should provide the following subscription information: complete mailing address, telephone (work and home), e-mail address and/or fax number. Institutional members should identify a department to contact for billing. The Polanyi Society attempts to maintain a data base identifying persons interested in or working with Polanyi's philosophical writing. New members can contribute to this effort by writing a short description of their particular interests in Polanyi's work and any publications and /or theses/ dissertations related to Polanyi's thought. Please provide complete bibliographic information. Those renewing membership are invited to include information on recent work.