
The last decade has seen remarkable shifts in the often very secular environments that characterize health and social care provision, such that discussions about spirituality are becoming part of mainstream practice. This has given rise to a growing literature, some of which fails to differentiate religion and spirituality—as well as other efforts which are seemingly anti-religion in focus. This book, while written from a Christian perspective, is in the narrower middle ground, and as such, is a welcome addition.
In *Spirituality, Care and Ethics* Simon Robinson challenges health and social care providers to recognise how spirituality is already inherent in their work with service users, and not just another add-on which they need to incorporate. Robinson’s way of defining spirituality is consistent with notions of good practice which, as an educator, I hope my students might embrace. This involves:

1. Developing *awareness of and appreciation* of the other (including the self, the other person, the group, the environment and, where applicable, deity).

2. Developing the capacity to respond to the other. This involves putting spirituality into practice, *embodying spirituality* ....

3. Developing *ultimate life meaning* based upon awareness and appreciation of, and response to, the other. (p. 36)

For readers who have no experience of talking about spirituality in non-religious language, this way of defining it may seem quite odd. Nevertheless, leaving aside the secular language, the sentiment is not necessarily inconsistent with the Ignatian tenet of finding God in all things, which inherently requires an appreciation of the other.

For Robinson, the way into exploring spirituality is to consider a selection of ethical issues which many professionals encounter in their work. Each chapter situates theoretical and philosophical discussion, on topics including love, the virtues and justice, in the context of practice, with case examples. Connections are made between individuals who seem to have nothing in common, such as the Muslim, Christian and atheist students in a class who all felt that the way they worked was influenced by doctrine. Another example concerns two Christian siblings with quite disparate beliefs as to whether life-support should be continued for their terminally ill father. As such, this is a book for practitioners who are able to embrace the complexity of the human condition and to realise that simplistic solutions to ethical dilemmas are unlikely to be found. I would like to think that undergraduates training in health and social care might benefit from reading such a book, in which the focus is on a holistic approach to working rather than simply the technical competence of many textbooks. However, I suspect that Robinson’s carefully nuanced writing requires more practice experience to appreciate the richness of its ideas than most undergraduates can bring to it.

In summary, *Spirituality, Ethics and Care* is worth a look if you are an experienced health or social-care practitioner wanting to explore where spirituality fits with professional practice. While some readers might find this a delightful read, it is equally easy to imagine others who would be
annoyed or frustrated when Robinson’s approach does not meet their expectations.

Beth R. Crisp