

assisted suicide. The reader will find this book to be extensively referenced, and a good addition to the reading list of medical ethics courses.

Whatever else we are, we are creatures that exist in relationship with each other. After reading various examples of PAS from the Netherlands to Dr. Kevorkian and Oregon, one can make no argument that these acts were based on the love of another human being. Larson and Amundsen bring us to the fork in the road. Will we ultimately legislate our worth to be equivalent to that of an oyster, or will we embrace *imago Dei*?

Anne Daunt, Pharm. D.
St. Elizabeth's Medical Center
Boston, Massachusetts

Ruse, Michael. *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian?: The Relationship between Science and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 242 pp. Index.

In his epilogue, Michael Ruse writes: "Our limitations [as humans, in trying to understand the ultimate mysteries of the universe] do not make Christianity mandatory or even plausible, but necessitate a tolerance and appreciation of those who would go beyond science, even if we ourselves cannot follow" (219). This excerpt fairly well sums up Ruse's answer to the question he poses in the title of the book—"Can a Darwinian Be a Christian?" His answer is: Yes, a Darwinian can be a Christian if he wishes and, if he cannot personally accept Christianity, should at least respect those who can.

Ruse, professor of philosophy at Florida State University, is the author of a number of books on the philosophy of biology, particularly Darwinian evolutionary biology. He is a public defender *par excellence* of the teaching of evolution versus creationism in public schools. In 1981, he testified alongside Stephen Jay Gould as an expert witness for

the American Civil Liberties Union in their (successful) efforts to overturn an Arkansas law that would have allowed the teaching of "creation science" in public schools. He certainly is qualified to write this book.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, together with a prologue and an epilogue. In the first two chapters, Ruse outlines the fundamental tenets and the historical development of Darwinian evolutionary theory (ch. 1) and Christianity (ch. 2). In chapters 3–7, he moves into a discussion of topics ranging from human origins (ch. 3), the nature and evolution of humans (ch. 4), naturalism and miracles (ch. 5), the question of the intelligent design of nature (ch. 6), and the realities of human pain and suffering (ch. 7). After a brief detour in which he considers the likelihood of extraterrestrial beings (ch. 8), Ruse goes on to discuss Christian ethics (ch. 9), social Darwinism (ch. 10), sociobiology (ch. 11), and the issues of freedom and determinism (ch. 12).

In his tour through Darwinism and Christianity near the beginning of the book, Ruse demonstrates an impressive depth of knowledge of both topics. He describes Darwin's original thinking, discusses developments since Darwin, and gives us a flavor of the range of contemporary evolutionary thought, from Dawkins to Gould. In the chapter on Christianity, he takes us through the historical development of Christianity, from the time of Jesus to the early Christians to the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The discussion includes historical figures such as St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. Ruse compares and contrasts the beliefs of Catholics and Protestants, and discusses the "Christian liberalism" of today.

In chapter five, Ruse delves into the issue of miracles. He asks how miracles, which are ostensibly outside the law, can be compatible with Darwinian science, which is law-bound. He notes that many of today's liberal Christian theologians would take the "miracle-compatible-with-law" stance. He conjectures that miracles ranging from the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes to the raising of Lazarus can be explained by

“the enthusiasm of the moment,” and by “people’s hearts being filled with love.” He notes that, according to this thinking, “Lazarus and the ruler’s [Jairus’s] daughter were more than likely brought back from trances” (96). Indeed, for the liberal Christian, Ruse observes, “even the supreme miracle of the resurrection requires no law-breaking return from the dead.” Instead, the miracle could be explained by the disciples being “filled with great joy and hope” on and after the third day (96). Ruse writes that “this is not a position of desperation” and that the value of the position is that it “meshes with science.” But he also acknowledges that, for some people, “the whole point is that Jesus was well and truly dead, and then rose miraculously back to life” (97). The difficulty with Ruse’s style of presentation here—and this is seen throughout the book—is that it is hard to determine where an explication of others’ ideas ends and a statement of Ruse’s opinion begins. One is left with the question: “Exactly where does he stand on this issue?”

Chapter five is also marked by strenuous arguments against the philosopher and author Alvin Plantinga who, in a recent publication on methodological naturalism, argues that Christianity and Darwinism are incompatible because Darwinian science excludes the possibility of God and of miracles. He describes miracles as “science-stoppers.” Part of Ruse’s argument against Plantinga involves making a distinction between cosmic history (made of repeatable events) and salvation history (unique events). Yet, Ruse does not follow through on this line of argument. Left hanging is the intriguing issue of cosmic versus salvation history, and the question of whether the two can be separated from each other or, rather, are mysteriously two aspects of one reality.

In attempting to find compatibility between Darwinism and Christianity, Ruse focuses on the “survival of the fittest” or the “struggle for existence” aspects of Darwinism. Yet, sometimes associated with this model of natural selection is the notion of biological “progress.” And, sometimes (but not always) tied with biological progress is the notion of human social progress. It is this association

between strict Darwinism and social progress that is disturbing to some people, especially since it carries with it the assumption that some individuals or groups are less “fit” than others. In his chapter on “Social Darwinism,” Ruse writes that “far from Christianity’s posing problems for the social Darwinian, it plugs some significant gaps....” Christianity “meshes nicely” with social Darwinism (185). Ruse describes the natural-selection-driven world proposed by Ronald Fisher, “the greatest evolutionist of [the twentieth] century” (121): “Selection pushes populations to ever higher points of fitness.... The human task is to keep humans up and beyond their natural peak. Here the key is eugenical intervention in human breeding patterns” (185). Disappointingly, instead of vehemently denouncing Fisher’s eugenical intentions, Ruse writes: “You may not much care for these particular details, but as was so often the case, Fisher got the main picture right.” The reader may disagree with this assessment.

The task Ruse gives himself is, in a nutshell, to “convince” a particular brand of evolutionist, the sociobiologist Darwinian, that it is okay to be a Christian. To accomplish this, Ruse presents the Darwinian with a smorgasbord of different Christian belief systems from which he can select one that he likes best. Like a waiter at a French restaurant, Ruse explains the flavor and taste of each Christian dish, presents the different varieties, and makes recommendations about which combination the Darwinian patron might find most pleasing (the progressionist liberal Christian one?). There are two difficulties with this approach. First, one is left with the question of why his efforts are so narrowly focused on the sociobiologist Darwinian. A broader, more inclusive, embrace of evolutionary theory would have made his task much easier. Second, one must ask: is a smorgasbord approach really the best way to convince a person to be a Christian? Is not the decision to convert to Christianity invariably based on a personal call from Jesus? Does it not always involve a leap of faith?

Despite these difficulties, one must admire Ruse for the sheer volume of effort expended in accomplishing his task. One must marvel

at Ruse's knowledge of diverse topics within the different areas of Darwinian science, Western philosophy, and Christian thought. The issues Ruse grapples with in his book—the origins of humanity, whether or not the universe reflects intelligent design, evil in the world, free will—are monumentally difficult ones. The particular utility of this book is that it brings up many issues and stimulates the reader to learn more. The scientist reader is stimulated to learn more about Christianity, and the Christian reader is stimulated to learn more about science.

W. Malcolm Byrnes, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Howard University College of Medicine
Washington, D.C.

Ubel, Peter A., M.D. *Pricing Life: Why It's Time for Health Care Rationing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, A Bradford Book, 2001. 208 pp. Index.

In *Pricing Life*, Dr. Peter Ubel covers a considerable amount of ground in only 197 pages of text in this short but informative book which contains three sections and eleven chapters. The three major sections of the book are "Cost-Effectiveness and the Controversial Necessity of Health Care Rationing," "Cost-Effectiveness and Bedside Rationing: Do Two Wrongs Make a Right?", and "The Future of Cost-Effectiveness Analysis and Health Care Rationing."

Throughout the text, the author relies on his experience as a practicing physician in internal medicine at a VA hospital, his own research on clinician, patient, and community attitudes and values regarding health care, and his background in health economics and bioethics. The coalescence of these varied experiences leads to the following distillation: 1) Modern health care is expensive; 2) The demand for modern health care is limitless; 3)

Supply of health care cannot keep up with demand; 4) Therefore, health care must be rationed to some extent; 5) Although health care rationing currently exists in several forms, many physicians, patients, and ethicists are opposed absolutely to rationing; 6) We would be better off placing more emphasis on how to ration health care (for example, through cost-effective analysis) than in continuing the quasi-utopian debate on whether to ration health care. The arguments and examples put forth in support of the six points itemized above were compelling and logical.

As a clinical research scientist, I found the most interesting part of the book to be the clinical parables that illustrated the author's various points. These short stories were entertaining, informative, and illustrative. In contrast, the frequent use of simplified figures and graphs gave the short treatise an unnecessary textbook flavor. Also, the clarification of the diversity of meanings around the term "rationing" might have been improved if the author had defined it sooner rather than later, and then left it to the reader to sort out the other opinions. (Dr. Ubel defines health care rationing broadly as "anything that allows patients to go without beneficial medical services" [30].)

Although *Pricing Life* is a thoughtful, well-written discussion of this important issue, there are three matters that call for comment: a suggestion related to the role of technology, a discussion regarding community input, and a few omissions. First, regarding omissions, the elephant-in-the-living-room issue, that is, the disproportionate amount of the total national health care budget spent on the last ninety days of a patient's life, was not well addressed. Another omission vis-à-vis rationing was the lack of discussion regarding the frugality of mental health services not related to substance abuse. (The brevity of the text may have been a factor in this latter omission, as mental health is a conundrum in its own right.)

Although not explicitly stated, Dr. Ubel's characterization of technological advancements intimates that innovation necessarily increases the cost of medical care. There are many examples of the introduction of new