

BOOK REVIEW

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REFERENCE: Candilis P, Weinstock R, Martinez R. Forensic ethics and the expert witness, 1st ed. New York, NY: Springer, 2007, 216 pp.

Candilis, Weinstock, and Martinez, three professional ethicists and leaders in the field, author an important contribution outlining an ethical construct called “Robust Professionalism.” In their book, through rich case example of practical application of their ethical construct, the authors argue against the total separation of the role of the doctor who is bound by the Hippocratic oath to the absolute care of the patient and the legal expert who is obliged by society to further the pursuit of justice. This argument is a departure from previous ethical authors who argue for the role separation; that is, forensic expert should be committed to the advancement of justice, and virtually abandon many of the moral code that physician training has instilled, including abandoning concerns for the consequences for the evaluatee. The authors take a very different approach and present a richly nuanced argument for an integrated professional ethics. In this integrative approach, the expert witness is redefined as one who can balance professional with societal and personal codes.

The authors splendidly illustrate their ethical construct of “Robust Professionalism” with provocative cases from medicine, psychiatry, and law and present a common moral ground that

associates forensic ethics to larger concepts of morality and justice. Their exploration includes numerous ethical dilemmas forensic experts commonly encounter in the courtroom including questions concerning confidentiality, neutrality in testimony, and the relationship between the witness and the attorney. The authors thoroughly discuss the application of the principles of “robust professionalism” to the most debated areas, including competence to stand trial, the insanity defense, right-to-die, and death penalty cases. Although the book builds on a tradition of forensic ethics, it makes an original contribution to the field with analyses that can assist in resolving many forensic ethical dilemmas. A helpful review of standards of conduct from relevant professional organizations is presented and discussed.

This book is applicable for forensic psychologists, psychiatrists, scientific experts who testify, legal professionals, and those interested in ethical dilemmas and theories. Although the book emphasizes the forensic psychiatry expert, it has case examples and applicability to all forensic scientists. Anyone who serves as a forensic expert will find the book useful and relevant. This book should be required reading for those in forensic psychiatry fellowships and should be used as core text in ethical courses. A pleasure to read, for years to come this masterfully written book will shape the field of forensic ethics.

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