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## **BOOK REVIEW**

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Post, Stephen G. 2000. *Ethical Issues from Diagnosis to Dying: The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer Disease*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

This is a second edition of a comprehensive presentation of the problems and moral challenges associated with caring for person with Alzheimer Disease, a terminal dementia. Although still a slim volume, it includes a new chapter on the ethics of artificial nutrition and hydration as well as a full presentation of the Fairhill Guidelines including new material on cognitive-enhancing drugs. Other chapters include a review of the moral challenges families face, the underpinnings of family care giving, enhancing the well-being of person with AD which includes Kitwood and Briden's twelve indicators, current knowledge about the genetics of AD, the hospice philosophy of care for advanced stage dementia, as well as a discussion of the "right" to a natural death. There is an extensive bibliography and comprehensive index.

Although the author does not speak for the Alzheimer's Association, since 1995 he has led a national ethics education initiative with more than seventy chapters of the association. He says everything in this book is inspired by its activities. The author emphasizes the need for humane treatment of the person with dementia from diagnosis to death. This, he believes, is the ethical care giving option because persons with Alzheimer Disease (AD) are "... not non-persons; rather they have become the weakest among us and...are worthy of care"(pp.128). The author's approach in writing the book is "...in the tradition of Aristotle's practical reasoning and consistent with so-called grounded theories of knowledge"(pp. 127). He succeeds through his interpretation and presentation of the thoughts and opinions from among the AD constituency thus increasing the reader's knowledge of methods to confront the moral and ethical challenges these individuals tackle on a daily basis.

Post leads the reader to see how the "... hypercognitivist value system that shapes personhood theories of ethics is an example of how our culture's criteria of rationality and productivity bind us to other ways of thinking about the meaning of humanity and the nature of humane care." He coins the term *incompatibility hypothesis* to describe his concern that our health care system, which fails to provide appropriate comfort care for the dying or demented and fosters assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia, is not compatible with the improvement or further development of the systems that could to provide appropriate humane care. The author believes this is because our "... rationalist ethics succeeds in going beyond the narrow bounds of class...it includes only the intelligent in the community"(pp.128). Society is in danger of separating those individuals with dementia from the rest of society as though they had a "plague."

This reviewer believes Post's *Ethical Issues from Diagnosis to Dying* The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer Disease could be a text option and provide a basis for much discussion within the context of any course on ethics, particularly those concerned with long-term care and/or medical issues.