A principle aim of The Institute for Human Values in Medicine since its founding has been to encourage the teaching of the humanistic disciplines pari passu with the education of health professionals. Currently there is an unprecedented interest in such teaching in the majority of medical centers of our country. If, however, these efforts are to be sustained and be genuinely effective in reshaping the education of the health professional, they must be based in strong intellectual foundations. Enthusiasm, which characterizes all new movements, has never proven sufficient unless it is accompanied by sound scholarship and an understanding of the conceptual issues at the juncture of the interacting disciplines.

One of the programs of the Institute for Human Values in Medicine, designed to secure the intellectual foundations of inter-disciplinary engagements has been the "dialogues" between medicine and selected disciplines. Scholars from medicine and from one of the humanistic disciplines have been brought together to define and discuss the conceptual issues at the intersecting boundaries of their respective fields. This volume reports on one of these "dialogues" involving the junctures of medicine and religion studies. This is a particularly significant encounter for our times. The questions of ends and purposes that medical progress generates in such abundance cannot be thoroughly examined without cognizance of their religious implications. Much of the teaching of bioethics occurs in predominant non-theological terms. This is surely
the starting point for a morally pluralistic and democratic society.

A strictly philosophical ethics is not sufficient for those members of the health professions who are religious believers. For them the conclusions of philosophical ethics must meet the additional tests of their belief systems. The challenge to reconcile faith and reason, and to fuse them in their lives is impelling in all major religious systems. For the conscientious health professional, nothing could be more important, or more urgent in daily decision-making.

Even the non-believer is impelled to take account of the religious dimension in the lives of patients and colleagues. One cannot, in a democratic and pluralistic society, work or live cooperatively with others without some perception of what religious values mean. When we enter the healing relationship such perceptions about the patient's belief systems become morally mandatory.

Professionals ultimately deal with action on behalf of other humans in need. They are obliged to act for the "good" of their patients. Their enterprise, therefore, almost always has moral overtones. The religious sources of morality deserve as much examination, discussion and consideration as the strictly philosophical or scientific. All humans must take a stand with respect to the transcendental. All make some act of belief or unbelief. Whatever that act may be, the reality of religion for humankind, especially for the sick, is undeniable.

It is recognition of this fact of the healing relationship that impelled ministers on medical campuses in the early 60's to begin to meet regularly. Out of their meetings in the later 60's, the Society for
Health and Human Values was born. Since its inception the Society has included an active section on campus ministry though the Society's mandate has been broadened to include all humanistic disciplines and concerns.

This volume reviews the contributions that religion, both as an academic discipline and as an activity of persons with specific belief commitments can make to the education of health professionals. For non-believers, the distinction between religion studies as a reasoned understanding of religious belief systems, and transferral of those beliefs into action as health professionals is important. While they may deny the latter, they ought to understand the former, the better to help their patients and to work with their believing colleagues. The volume, therefore, has significant things to say for all who are concerned for improving the moral and humanistic quality of the relationship of patients and health professionals.

The authors examine both sides of the relationships between medicine and religion studies - their importance to the health professions but also the contributions medicine and medical experiences can make to religion and humanistic studies as well. Through intensive interactions with the health professions the study and practice of all the humanities, and of religion studies in particular, are themselves enriched. Religion studies pursued in medical education can enhance effective and compassionate healing. Medicine on its part can enhance the minister's and theologian's perception of the human experience of illness and the urgencies of the physician's decisions. An intimate contact with the existential contexts within which theological principle must ultimately apply is essential to a proper theology of illness and healing.
This volume reports on one of five dialogue groups sponsored by The Institute on Human Values in Medicine. Each "dialogue" brought together a small group of scholars from medicine and the humanistic disciplines in five meetings held over a two-year period. The report of one of these groups, Nourishing the Humanistic in Medicine: Interactions with the Social Sciences has already been published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. Other dialogues were held in literature, history and the visual arts and each will be reported in various places over the next year or so.

Since 1971 the Institute has fostered the teaching of human values in schools of medicine, nursing and the other health professions. It has conducted resource visits to some fifty medical schools and health science centers, held regional conferences for groups of these schools, encouraged faculty development through its fellowship programs and through its publications which now number thirteen.\(^{(2)}\)

Through these vehicles the Institute has reached the majority of medical centers in this country and has played a significant role in the growing acceptance of the teaching of ethics, the humanities and human values as essential to a contemporary medical education. In the last decade, the number of schools teaching some aspect of human values was nine; today that number is in excess of one hundred. The Institute lays no claim to sole responsibility for this unprecedented growth but it has contributed effectively and significantly.

In this volume, The Institute on Human Values offers an assessment of the potentialities in a closer engagement of religion studies with
education and practice of the healing professions. That engagement is one of the earliest but as this volume illustrates, there are many new avenues to be explored. Like the other publications of the Institute, we hope this one will provide the stimulus to intellectual encounter and research without which the whole movement of the past decade will falter.

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President and Chairman of the Board
Institute on Human Values in Medicine

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REFERENCES


2) A list of these publications and copies can be obtained through the Institute for Human Values in Medicine. 6th Floor, 925 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107