Sexual Morality: A Natural Law Approach to Intimate Relationships. By John J. Piderit. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 299 pp. \$35.95. ISBN: 978-0-199793-28-0.

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This is an excellent book written “especially for young adults who want to improve the likelihood of a long-lasting marriage relationship and who are disturbed, challenged, or unpersuaded by the casual attitudes some of their peers have toward sexual intimacy” (xviii). Piderit takes a natural law approach to morality, that is, he uses a consistent “framework in which reasons for acting one way or another are made plausible” (xiv). He acknowledges that reason exists within a culture but points out that reason has a capacity to rise above the culture and critique it (xv). All human persons in all cultures pursue in various ways, some values which Piderit calls fundamental values. These include life, knowledge, beauty, friendship (marriage is a particularly profound form of friendship), playfulness, religion, and practical reasonableness (chap. 10). Our participation in these values leads to human satisfaction and fulfillment. Our striving for these goods corresponds to our nature which Piderit understands in the light of both a scientific evolutionary perspective and a Christian understanding of God’s revelation. In his view, humans have a natural aptitude for excellence (6–8).

Piderit considers many human actions to be natural, good, and acceptable; some to be exemplary; and a few to be corrosive with regard to our participating in the fundamental values. Among other things, he affirms that “reasonable people can come to see” that good restraints “help us to be more fully human, more deeply satisfied, and flourishing more fully in all our relationships” (29). His natural law approach to morality is grounded in Thomas Aquinas’s approach to morality, including the theme that God’s grace builds on nature, and is influenced by contemporary authors such as John Finnis and Alasdair MacIntyre. In terms of understanding the practices, hopes, disappointments, and aspirations of college students, he is informed by studies such as *Sex and the Soul* by Donna Freitas, which among other things exposes the hookup culture. He also thinks and writes in the light of his own many years of experience as a college professor, administrator, and priest. Among other things, he has helped many young

couples prepare for marriage and has presided at their weddings.

The main text of this book is written without footnotes or endnotes, but at the end of the book Piderit gives more information about his sources and comments on them. The book has three main parts: Part I. The Framework, Part II. Avoiding Corrosive Actions and Promoting Friendship, and Part III. Moral Skills and Religious Practice. Parts I and II focus “on what moral norms can be derived from thinking clearly about human fulfillment, without recourse to the Bible or Christian teaching.” Part III “highlights the moral benefits that Christian commitment and practice confer on our goals and our ability to attain those goals” (38). In part I, using nonreligious moral reasoning, he explains why only the fundamental human values lead to genuine human flourishing. In part II, he explores types of human friendship that sometimes lead to sexual intimacy. In his view, “sex should promote friendship at its deepest level, not undermine it” (xiv). Among specific topics which he treats are sexual activity outside of marriage, unmarried cohabitation, contraceptives and children, and homosexuality. Although he often explores these topics in a fresh and insightful way, his moral conclusions are in line with Catholic teaching. The moral skills he treats in part III are self-control, knowledge of self and others, ability to make and keep commitments, and management of memory and imagination. Regarding these, he points out how many regular life activities tend to train us in these. He also makes the case that good religious practices including reading and listening to the Bible, weekly receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, worshipping with a religious community, and praying conversationally with Christ often result in the development of a higher level of moral skills (chap. 29).

This book is very readable and should be accessible to a fairly wide audience. The author proceeds in a step-by-step logical order. He explains theoretical points clearly and often illustrates points with good examples. Interspersed throughout the book are short chapters involving conversations related to the topics just covered between “Dave and Maria,” a young couple seriously considering marriage. These treat the topics in a personal and engaging way that reinforces their relevance. As someone who has taught university students and others for more than thirty years about sex, love, and marriage from a Christian perspective, I highly recommend this book. I would recommend it especially for unmarried university students, both Christian and non-Christian, but it will also be of great

value to many others including teachers, professors, campus ministers, Christian pastors, parents, and married people. This book contains not only good theory

and well-argued moral conclusions but also much practical advice and wisdom.

Sedation at the End of Life: An Interdisciplinary Approach. Edited by Pauline Taboada. Philosophy and Medicine 116. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, 2015. xviii + 175 pp. ISBN 978-94-017-9105-2.

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Sedation at the end of life has become an increasingly common practice over the past two decades. Its use as a therapeutic tool at the end of life should be considered something to use only as a last resort to control intractable symptoms refractory to all other available means of management. For some, the term “palliative sedation” (PS) has become synonymous with “terminal sedation” (and considered a disguised form of euthanasia), which highlights the essence of the ethical and moral controversies that surround its use. Pauline Taboada as editor of *Sedation at the End of Life: An Interdisciplinary Approach* does a thorough and scholarly job of bringing together internationally renowned palliative care specialists, bioethicists, philosophers, lawyers, and theologians to address this controversial paradigm of end-of-life care from a Catholic perspective. Each chapter is authored independently yet interwoven by the editors overarching goal to create a comprehensive whole dealing with sedation at the end of life.

Taboada’s preface and epilogue form the book-ends for this work comprised of ten chapters that deal with the essential facets and controversies that need to be considered in the use of sedation at the end of life. Catholic teaching on the inviolability and dignity of every human life combined with the vulnerability of the dying patient is the basic starting point of all the contributors. She stated *leitmotiv* in her preface and challenge to all the contributors is embodied in the following “seven relevant ethical questions”:

1. “Whether there is an ethically sound difference between Palliative Sedation (PS) and euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.
2. Whether the principle of double effect can be appropriately applied to justify the use of sedation in some cases at the end-of-life.

3. Whether PS might be ethically acceptable in the case of patients that are not imminently dying (agony).
4. Whether decisions to limit medically assisted nutrition and hydration are essentially linked to PS or whether they should be regarded as independent issues.
5. Whether sedation is an adequate response to “existential suffering.”
6. Whether sedation could ever be used in the case of patients who are not able to give their informed consent (e.g., patients with cognitive impairment of diverse origins, etc.).
7. Whether clinical guidelines for the use of PS are desirable to orient health care professionals, patients, and relatives in the adequate use of sedation at the end-of-life.” (vi–vii)

Following her introduction in the preface, Taboada authors the first chapter (“Sedation at the End-of-life, Clinical Realities, Trends and Current Debate”) wherein she presents two clinical cases that set the stage for all that follows. Both are real cases and draw the reader to the bedside, which is where one needs to begin to have the proper context for the use of PS in caring for patients at the end of life. These two cases—one an appropriate use of PS and the other clearly euthanasia under the guise of relieving “existential suffering”—provide a backdrop to the debates that follow in subsequent chapters. She then systematically defines terms, concepts, and definitions with extensive references to the pertinent literature.

The expanding use of PS for psychospiritual or existential suffering led to the euthanizing of the patient in Taboada’s second clinical case. In a secular culture which places autonomy ahead of all else euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide is not considered wrong, and the principle of double effect has no application or meaning. A major theme addressed by the contributing authors elucidates how our Catholic moral tradition can be integrated with integrity to avoid imprudent use and abuses of PS.

While there is unavoidable overlap in the extensive discussion of the principle of double effect as it applies to PS, each author brings a unique and worthy perspective. Taboada has carefully selected