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Craig's "Health Care as a Social Good: Religious Values and American Democracy" (Book Review)

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Health Care as a Social Good: Religious Values and American Democracy,
by David M. Craig, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014.
237 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 9781626160774

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David Craig, a religious studies professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, aimed this book beyond his discipline. This reviewer classifies this book as a scholarly work based on Craig's presentation of arguments, his reworking of previously published scholarly articles for three of the chapters, and his large number of citations. Craig's goal is to present three religious metaviews as legitimate viewpoints in the United States' health care debate as he builds towards a "moral basis for a progressive vision of health care as a social good." (p. 8). Craig's early chapters address the three metaviews: health care as private benefit, as a public right, and as a social good. Craig ends with how his vision of health care as a social good is enacted in the Affordable Care Act (ACA or Obamacare).

Craig's writing is clear and he does well presenting the three metaviews as ways to move past "capitalist" and "socialist" labels. Craig convincingly portrayed his idea of health care as a social good as coherent with Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant orthopraxy. The weakness of this book is timing. Craig conducted his fieldwork and interviews in 2005 thru 2008, and all but two of his sources dates before 2013. Craig presents a good discussion, but it seems dated as ACA's significant changes (e.g., health insurance exchanges, requirement to have health insurance, and no limits for pre-existing conditions) went into effect in 2014.

This work is useful for graduates and exceptional upper level undergraduates (such as honors thesis students) to present a religious, but not theological, view of health care. For undergraduates, it might be confusing as it assumes ACA has successfully put everyone into insurance pools, and missed the debate on what health care should be in the United States since 2012.