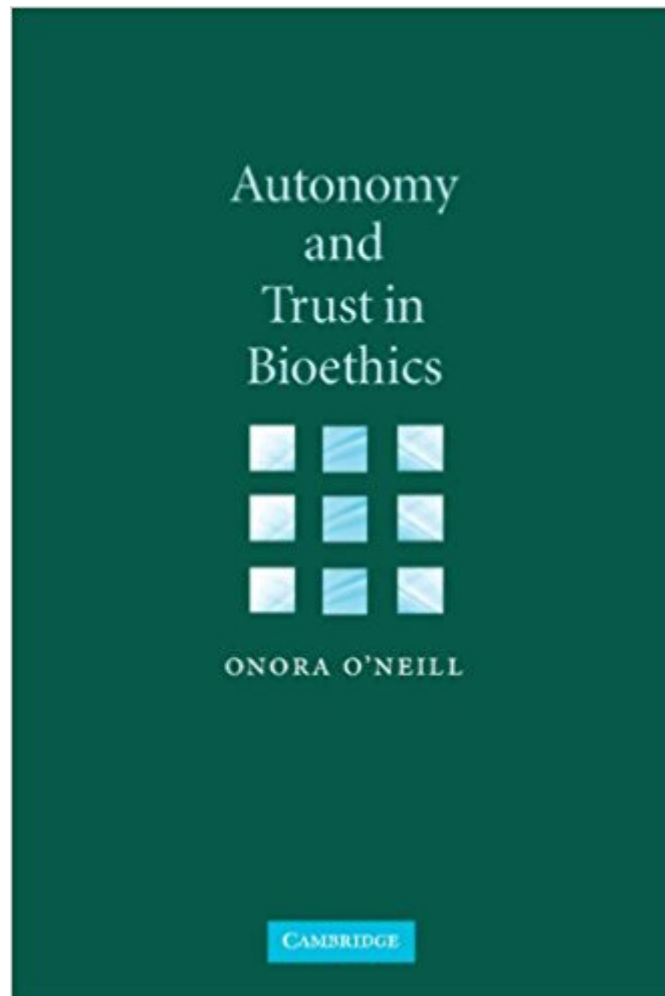




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Autonomy And Trust In Bioethics (Gifford Lectures)



Synopsis

Onora O'Neill suggests that the conceptions of individual autonomy (so widely relied on in bioethics) are philosophically and ethically inadequate; they undermine rather than support relationships based on trust. Her arguments are illustrated with issues raised by such practices as the use of genetic information by the police, research using human tissues, new reproductive technologies, and media practices for reporting on medicine, science and technology. The study appeals to a wide range of readers in ethics, bioethics and related disciplines.

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Customer Reviews

"This book provides an excellent analysis of misguided understandings of autonomy and trust. Recommended. All levels." Choice

In this important book, Onora O'Neill suggests that the conceptions of individual autonomy so widely relied on in bioethics are philosophically and ethically inadequate, and that they undermine rather than support relations of trust. Her arguments are illustrated with issues raised by practices such as the use of genetic information by the police, research using human tissues, uses of new reproductive technologies, and media practices for reporting on medicine, science and technology. Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics will appeal to a wide range of readers in ethics, bioethics and related disciplines.

great read...still digesting it. Not as dense as I would have expected.

A very good piece of criticism of some modern trends in bioethics from a distinguished moral philosopher. O'Neill highlights the inadequacies of the emphasis on individual autonomy that characterizes much writing on bioethics, particularly biomedical ethics. O'Neill points out multiple shortcomings of this approach, pointing multiple ways in which individual autonomy fails to provide a solid foundation for many aspects of bioethics. O'Neill argues as well that the emphasis on individual autonomy has contributed in subtle but important ways to erosion of trust in institutions. O'Neill argues for what she terms 'principled autonomy,' a Kantian argument that stresses duties along with rights. This is a fairly demanding position, as O'Neill intends, requiring a real commitment to performance, both at the institutional and individual levels, of crucial ethical duties. In this context, O'Neill discusses the variety of ways in which trust has been eroded and how some efforts to improve trustworthiness, such as increased auditing, professional oversight, and efforts at openness, may have inadvertently had opposite effects. She then reaches to standards stemming from her concepts of principled autonomy to suggest alternatives, including a reasonable proposal to improve media treatment of biotechnology issues.

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