

Briefly Noted

Partly Cloudy: Ethics in War, Espionage, Covert Action, and Interrogation, David L. Perry (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 266 pp., \$40 paper.

“In some situations,” writes David L. Perry, “when sufficient time is available before a decision must be made, people of integrity—warriors and spies included—will need to draw upon a range of moral emotions. In other instances, though, split-second decisions will not permit [such] sophisticated analysis.” *Partly Cloudy: Ethics in War, Espionage, Covert Action, and Interrogation*, the sixth volume in the Scarecrow Professional Intelligence Education Series (SPIES), introduces the reader to a range of ethical issues faced by U.S. military and intelligence personnel. Drawn from Perry’s doctoral dissertation, university lectures, and academic discussions, this collection of essays sheds light on the complexity of our moral choices and the difficulty, especially in war, of navigating the ethical principles that bind us.

Perry, director of the Vann Center for Ethics at Davidson College and a former professor of ethics at the U.S. Army War College, makes his central thesis clear throughout—namely, that “good ethical decision making cannot be reduced to a short checklist or model,” and that clarity in ethics is sometimes impossible. Such chapters as “Comparative Religious Perspectives on War,” “Espionage,” and “Covert Action” use practical as well as theoretical examples drawn from moral philosophy and intelligence studies, as well as presenting the author’s own thinking about military ethics and the just war tradition. Clearly written and accessible, the book offers a thoughtful introduction for those entering the intelligence profession or those simply wishing to develop and sharpen their ethical reasoning skills.