

A Medical Dialectic: Ten Important Questions

David R. Haburchak, MD

| Valued Time | Meaningful Journey |
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| <p>To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.</p> <p>Solomon, Ecc 3:1-9, Pete Seeger, The Byrds (1965)</p> | <p><i>I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.</i></p> <p>Jesus the Christ, John 14:6</p> <p><i>For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain.</i></p> <p>St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, 1:21</p> |
| <p>1. What is natural law?</p> <p>As defined by John Finnis, laws entail obligations and apply to everyone. Science has shown that there are universal laws of physics, mathematics, biology, and economics that provide order, form, predictability, and logic. These laws are objective and external to us, recognized by reason and confirmed by empiric observation. In answer to skeptics Plato, then Aristotle, Abu Ya'qub al-Kindi (801-873), Averoes, and Aquinas claimed that 1) there are in nature and the nature of man objective obligations to others and self that do not change in time and space and 2) that these obligations can be identified by man's rational ability and 3) that man has free will to meet or refute these obligations. Natural law is the basis for what man ought to do to achieve good and</p> | <p>1. What is natural law?</p> <p>In the beginning, the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) out of their eternal relational love created from chaos a universe of stupendous beauty and order which exists according to natural and divinely revealed laws. As defined by John Finnis, laws entail obligations and apply to everyone. Science has shown that there are universal laws of physics, mathematics, biology, and economics that provide order, form, predictability, and logic. These laws are objective and external to us, recognized by reason and confirmed by empiric observation. In answer to skeptics Plato, then Aristotle, Abu Ya'qub al-Kindi (801-873), Averoes, and Aquinas claimed that 1) there are in nature and the nature of man objective obligations to others and self that do not change in time and space and 2) that these</p> |

avoid harm. Just as man falls to his death when he defies gravity, he forfeits good and earns evil by not following these obligations.

2. What is morality?

Natural law overlaps with the concept of morality, universal standards of good and evil. Prime among these universal standards are the dignity and rights of all human beings. Human dignity, as described by medical ethicist Leon Kass, includes two aspects: worth of being and flourishingly well living. The concept of human rights asserts that all human beings are entitled goods that permit recognition of their worth and as far as possible promote their flourishing. Human rights protect individuals so they can pursue their intentions in creating meaningful and valuable lives. Lists of basic goods have included life, knowledge, excellence in play and work, beauty, friendship, community, reasonableness, pleasure, creativity, and spirituality. These are universal goods to be upheld by the practical test of reciprocal altruism, applied positively by the *Golden Rule* or in the negative manner as per Hillel. Equality, fairness, respect, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness all follow. To cause or permit the loss of dignity or rights is evil.

obligations can be identified by man's rational ability and 3) that man has free will to meet or refute these obligations. Natural law is the basis for what man ought to do to achieve good and avoid harm. Additionally, the creator God has at times lovingly revealed specific laws, regulations, and commandments to his people, so that they flourish and prosper. As God is totally righteous, His natural law and divinely revealed law are completely compatible. Just as man falls to his death when he defies gravity, he forfeits good and earns evil by not following these obligations.

2. What is morality?

Law overlaps with the concept of morality, universal standards of good and evil in response to the creator God. Prime among these universal standards are the dignity and rights of all human beings, based on revelation that God created man in his own image, the *Imago Dei*. Human dignity, as described by medical ethicist Leon Kass, includes two aspects: worth of being and flourishingly well living. The concept of human rights asserts because of the *Imago Dei* all humans are entitled goods that permit recognition of their worth and as far as possible promote their flourishing. Human rights protect individuals so they can pursue their intentions in creating meaningful and valuable lives. Lists of basic goods have included life, knowledge, excellence in play and work, beauty, friendship, community, reasonableness, pleasure, creativity, and spirituality. These are universal goods to be upheld by the practical test of reciprocal altruism, applied positively by the *Golden Rule* or in the negative manner as per Hillel. Equality, fairness, respect, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness all follow. To cause or permit the loss of dignity or rights is evil.

3. What is Life?

Life is defined as the state which differentiates two forms of physical entities (consisting of matter) either exhibiting or lacking such dynamic (time related and changing) processes as metabolism, signaling, movement toward some self-related purpose (*telos*), using information, and which require net external resources to overcome entropy. Physical entities that lack life are typically inanimate, a-dynamic, non-communicative, but may exhibit one or more above properties, such as growing crystals, self-organizing systems, and current or future supercomputers. All physical entities are subject to natural laws regarding space-time and matter. Biology is the study of life forms and processes. The smallest contiguous form of life is an organism, which may be composed of one or more cells, typically highly organized both within cells and between cells, such as tissues, organs, and systems. Living beings change constantly over time through the building and tearing down of new cells according to internal information and the experience of the external environment, but remain identifiable by specific and usually enduring systemic attributes despite time and change.

Life begets life using information templates through reproduction of cells. Individual cells die when they become inanimate or a-dynamic. Organisms die when a sufficient number of critical cells die to produce an inevitable death of the remaining cells within a reasonably short period of time (conventionally minutes to a few hours). As living is a sequence of processes, so is dying a process occurring over time, arguably from the beginning of life of the first complete cell of an organism. The processes of living and dying both can be prolonged or shortened by actions or environments external to the organism.

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God created and providentially maintains life and non-life. Life begets life using information templates through reproduction of cells. Individual cells die when they become inanimate or a-dynamic. Organisms die when a sufficient number of critical cells die to produce an inevitable death of the remaining cells within a reasonably short period of time (conventionally minutes to a few hours). As living is a sequence of processes, so is dying a process occurring over time, arguably from the beginning of life of the first complete cell of an organism. The processes of living and dying both can be prolonged or shortened by actions or environments external to the organism.

4. What is a human being?

The dictionary defines a human being as a man, woman, or child of the species *Homo sapiens*, distinguished from other animals by its superior intelligence, intelligible speech, and erect posture. While adequate as a biological definition, it is morally and ethically insufficient, because it fails to endorse the relational, time dynamic, and individual characteristics that comprise the attributes, values, and existential worth that human beings recognize and attempt to uphold in themselves, their families, and all other human beings. This worth is always latent, incompletely expressed, but endowed with hope for improvement from the time of conception, and for many cultures beyond life itself. Human beings are *persons*, having a pre-history in their parents and clan, a biological-psycho-social-spiritual/existential unity over time, most often recognized in the moral consistency of their behaviors towards others and themselves. They are potentially and ideally autonomous, with bounded free-will and agency, exercised within time, space, and relationships. Human beings seek beauty and knowledge, construct and use tools, desire truth and justice, as well as attempt to integrate the past, present and future. All human beings are flawed in multiple dimensions, from the genetic and intracellular processes of life itself to the inadequately endowed family and social networks in which they live, resulting in disease, decay, and suffering. Human beings attempt to learn from, to understand, and to transmit the experience of their individual and collectively shared sufferings as well as successes to provide for a better future for themselves and others. Human beings comfort and seek remedy for all life that is diseased, but especially other humans who are incomplete or afflicted.

4. What is a human being?

*God created man in his own image,
In the image of God (betselem 'elohim) he created him;
Male and female he created them.
And God saw everything that he had made, and behold,
it was very good. Genesis 1*

The *Imago Dei* is the basis for human dignity and all that distinguishes man from other animals. The Hebrew word *tselem* means to chisel, as a statue, to resemble, or be a likeness. This image is a likeness of God's activities and powers noted earlier in *Genesis*. God exercises speech, reason, freedom in doing and making, and the powers of contemplation, judgment, and care. He has created individually and corporately according to a blueprint (Kilner) to reflect these and other Godly attributes of the unchanging representation of God in Jesus Christ, all for the glory of God. God gave man purpose and function that was to multiply and maintain what God had created to the ultimate goal (*telos*) of God's glory and man's joy. This dignity remains in man and is the basis for the morality, ethics, and rights in both natural and revealed law. Michael Horton argues that "the moral accountability before a holy God for how we treat each other and our sense of responsibility" is that aspect of the *Imago Dei* that is the unifying factor for all mankind.

Unfortunately, the first man and woman failed the test of the covenant between them and their creator. God gave man free-will to love and obey, and instead they succumbed to the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life to commit the original sin against the law of God. They broke the covenant, and brought upon themselves the curse of death, gained the knowledge of good and evil, and polluted all aspects of the creation and mankind. The magnificent *Imago Dei* itself persists, an as yet unfulfilled blueprint for all mankind which longs for truth, beauty, justice, and loving

relationships. Ever since, generation after generation, all men and women except one (God the Son who became man himself) have displayed symptoms, signs, and laboratory evidence of the diseases of sin: estrangement, shame, fear, self-deception, corruption of mind and body, vanity, and futility. Despite having the Image of God, all people sin against God and each other. Man sins because he is sinful and has the agency to sin. All sin seems to include deceit from self, others, and God. Despite the knowledge of good and evil, man can't by himself keep from sinning, despite his best efforts. Sin has produced and continues to produce suffering and death.

Despite their sinfulness and disease, all human beings have been given a measure of God's common grace in their *Imago Dei*. On their journey from birth to death, human beings attempt to learn from, to understand, and to transmit the experience of their individual and collectively shared sufferings as well as successes to provide for a better future for themselves and others. Human beings comfort and seek remedy for all life that is diseased, but especially other humans who are incomplete or afflicted.

5. How should human beings live?

According to Aristotle, humans act to maximize their own happiness or good. Ethics answers the question, how am I to act? Three primary ideas relate to ethics: 1) character of the person, 2) duty expected of the person, and 3) consequences of the action. Character consists of the quantity and integrity of a person's virtue. The cardinal virtues include courage, justice, prudence, and temperance. Virtues are primarily learned, and therefore taught, and become character through practice and habit. Virtue is usually necessary for persons to act ethically by recognizing duties such as 1) obligation to respect the dignity and rights of others as well as self, and 2) exercise specific responsibilities of competency, accountability, transparency, and use of power gained by position or trust of another person, especially a person in need or distress. While consequences of actions can't always be foreseen, they can be diligently anticipated, and should strive for the good of others and self. Moral and ethical ends never justify unethical means to achieve them. Unfortunately, as humans are flawed, and situations usually complex, decisions are often difficult and often reflect conflicting personal, interpersonal, and community values that constitute happiness for any one person.

5. How should human beings live?

Sinful man and creation needed a savior. As planned prior to the creation of the world, the Father sent the Son to the world to become a man at exactly the right time to redeem the world and save his chosen people from Sin and its effects and thereby establish and complete the fullness of His Creation-Kingdom. Fully God and fully man, yet without sin himself, Jesus was born of a virgin, led a blameless and exemplary life, demonstrating the love and power of God. On the cross Jesus suffered, died, and paid the penalty for sin and satisfied the Father's displeasure for all those who would repent and by faith follow Him as disciples, radically trusting Him as Lord and Savior. This event, validated by the bodily and glorious resurrection and appearances of Jesus at Easter, has literally changed the world. The good news is that Jesus has conquered sin, disease, death, and is accomplishing through the grace of the Holy Spirit the Kingdom of God on earth as intended and as it is in heaven. The Kingdom will culminate with Jesus' return in glory to judge the world and banish all evil, pain, and tears. Meanwhile, God's chosen called-out ones, the Church, endowed with special saving grace, are to live according to the truth of the good news and the way of Jesus. Many are called, but few are chosen to trust and obey, and make other disciples. Most of all disciples are to fanatically love each other and the broken, sin-filled and vulnerable of the world to build and make ready the Kingdom for the return of the King.

Ethics answers the question, how am I to act? When asked essentially the same question, Jesus responded, "You are to love the Lord with all of your heart, mind, body, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." The disciple's life is to follow the way of Jesus, growing into His character with courage, justice, prudence, temperance, but especially faith, hope, and love. Disciples have the duty and the discipline given by the Holy Spirit to imitate their master teacher and guide as they journey through life, at times on pilgrimage of worship, sometimes on militant love crusade against powers of darkness, always pressing

6. What are the goods that constitute a flourishing human life?

Besides the basic goods of life, knowledge, excellence in play and work, beauty, friendship, community, reasonableness, pleasure, creativity, and spirituality; persons seek meaning, purpose, and unconditional love and respect for their daily existence. As demonstrated by Viktor Frankl, if these goods can be maintained, even if only in part, they foster both hope and life even in the most inhumane of circumstances. Failure to achieve or maintain these goals either kills or signifies imminent death, whether because of disease, trauma, or starvation. The basic goods are integrated into a whole, and loss of one often is accompanied by or leads to loss of others, despite attempts at resilience or homeostasis. Activities that mar the dignity or rights of man prevent not only inhibit flourishing of man, but also destroy his or her meaning, purpose, and hope for love and respect.

Time and experience bring or unveil impoverishment, disease, aging, and frailty of intracellular, intercellular, and ecological networks that sustain flourishing life, thereby increasing failure, and ultimately death of all organisms,

forward and upward to the prize of being like Jesus and getting to know the breadth, width, and depth of His love. They bring the love of Christ to the poor, the sick, the vulnerable, the perplexed, those lost and traumatized by sin, disease, and evil. They seek justice, beauty, knowledge, and joy not for themselves, but for all people, sinners everyone. Gifts are given for good works and the strength to fight lingering sin, overcoming falls and traps. Jesus and the Holy Spirit never leave us on the journey. The consequences of the journey are meaning in life, living and suffering with Jesus, and building the Kingdom. All of the disciple's life has as its purpose to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

6. What are the goods that constitute a flourishing human life?

Besides the basic goods given as common grace to all men as part of their *Imago Dei*, the Holy Spirit gives to the faith-filled disciple who comes and trusts in Jesus' righteousness the once and for all assurance of salvation from punishment and death. Additionally for the joy of the believer and building of the Kingdom, the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of seeing the will and plan of God, service, teaching, encouraging, financial contributing, leadership, showing mercy, healing, and speaking and interpreting languages. These gifts are goods to be used not for selfish gain or pride, but for the building up of the church, the Body of Christ, to do the work of Christ on the earth to the glory of God's praise. Life exists in giving to others and being "used up" for God. This flourishing life is a life "lived by the Spirit" who gives joy, peace, love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. A flourishing life is a life lived more and more like and closer and closer to Christ. To live is Christ.

Despite disease, illness, suffering, and persecution, the band of brothers and sisters in Christ partake together the storms and travails of

including humans. The quality of a life at any given time is a personal assessment by that individual of the degree of his overall flourishing as measured by the sum of its components and the physical, social, psychological, economic, and spiritual resources available. External assessment of another's quality of life is suspect.

7. How should the span of life be depicted?

In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare reiterated the ancient idea of man as an actor on a stage in a play of 7 acts: the infant, the schoolboy, the lover, the soldier, justice, pantaloons, and oblivion. There are certain times and stages of life appropriate for specified roles, specified ways of flourishing, and specific expected limitations and pathologies. As the Teacher of Ecclesiastes says, there is a time for everything under heaven. Unfortunately, trauma or illness often comes out of season, foreshortening or tragically negating the usual narrative, leaving empty the hope of completeness of a life well lived. The natural attempt is to seek more time, but it may be only chasing after the wind to bring meaning to time running out.

the journey. They lighten each other's loads, share through loving actions, and "hallow" the Name of God: obeying, remembering, honoring, and proclaiming God's holiness, majesty, beauty, and love, even in the darkest and most painful places. They do this with tools of worship, hymns and praise music, reading and studying the Word of God, prayer, meditation, fasting, anointing, and communing together and with God in remembrance of Jesus' Last Supper. Brothers and Sisters in Christ lovingly share each other's joy and hope on the journey, fighting the good fight along the way. The quality of life and the meaning of life is the Life of the Body, eternally. Hope is the assurance of these unseen things, the anchor to the soul in troubled waters, always with Jesus in the boat.

7. How should the span of life be depicted?

Life is a journey, conquering territory and building the Kingdom: Banished from the garden wandering in the wilderness, crossing through the Red Sea, walking through the valley of the shadow of death, the narrow and the wide way, the narrow and wide gate, running away and swimming but caught by a fish, marching into the promised land, being taken on a chariot of fire; going up to Jerusalem, being lost and being found, sailing on tempest tossed seas, being shipwrecked, storming the gates of hell and entering the gates of heaven, Pilgrim's Progress, running the race before a cloud of witnesses, and finishing well. It is a journey of purpose, constant prayer, and perseverance, with a beginning at a new birth, always hopeful in the power and comfort of the Spirit and the Presence of Jesus. It is a journey through space where time is forever "now," since the eternal joy of His presence is the both the invisible means and the beatific end. Along the journey the original body returns to dust at death, and the soul-spirit of the disciple is taken by angels to be present forever with the Lord God of the heavens and the earth. At the Last Day, the day of the fulfillment of the Kingdom, the spirit of

8. What is suffering?

According to Eric Cassell, suffering is the realization of loss, especially the disintegration of personhood, of any or all parts of the flourishing whole. Suffering is different from, but often accompanied by pain. Suffering is associated with reduced quality of life and like the latter, is uniquely personal. It can be revealed to others, and often, in so doing is ameliorated by sharing. Such sharing is accomplished through the sympathetic, empathetic, and compassionate listening and actions of others and can result not only in alleviation, but sometimes even healing. Suffering occurs and is relieved over time, unfortunately the duration of which is indeterminate. Suffering can occur at any stage of life, but is particularly fond of its later stages. Suffering can kill, but it can also make one stronger, and spur its recipient to altruism and love of others who suffer. Thus suffering is

disciples will be joined once again by glorious, recognizable, but fully pure and untainted bodies once again radiantly displaying the Image of God as we will have become fully like Jesus. The unending journey persists for the saved in the joyful works prepared in the New Earth, celebrating and worshipping at the throne of God. The end of the temporary earthly journey begins at death, which marks the beginning of unending joy with the Lamb of God and the other saints in the Garden of the renewed earth. For the disciple, as Paul says, because of Jesus, death is certainly gain.

In God's wisdom, justice, and holy perfect and sovereign plan, those who do not accept by faith the promise of Christ will not be saved. Remaining in sin, without hope, and having not been clothed by faith in the blood –bought righteousness of Christ they will have no part of the Kingdom. They will be resurrected unto an eternal death, judged, banished and forever given retributive justice in Hell, a real totally amoral Godless place discussed frequently by Jesus. This destination where all hope must be abandoned has never been better depicted than in Dante's *Inferno*.

8. Why Suffering?

*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked will I depart;
The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;
May the name of the Lord be praised.* Job 1:21

Every single day, person, joy, and opportunity are a free gift from an all-powerful, sovereign, holy, righteous, loving God. So why does He allow suffering? Pain and sorrow are the conscious experiences of life in a broken world, and as it was for Job can be a testing allowed by God. Testing reveals our strength in the Lord, who is with us. As experienced by Job, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, and many saints, and even Jesus, suffering is the sensation of being abandoned or neglected by God. It is truly a dark night of the soul. Suffering is the conscious experience of incompleteness, being forsaken, and broken by sin in a sinful world. It is frequently experienced in the loneliness of

intimately associated with love or the lack of it. True love of another always produces suffering, not only through compassion ("suffer-with") but also the realization of the finitude of time and life. Suffering often calls upon its ally depression to accompany it, cognitively producing helplessness and emotionally producing sadness. Depression quenches hope and summons a living death.

sickness and disability. Suffering occurs when we forget God and forget that God is really with us and fully in control, always loving us as He has in the Fiery Furnace, the Lion's Den, and even in the Garden of Gethsemane. Suffering does not atone or expiate sin. The Father is not a sadist, and permits suffering to occur by natural law or allowing demonic forces a long leash, but he is always in control, always loving, having suffered the death of His beloved Son on a Roman Cross to redeem His creation. God allows suffering to produce an ultimate greater good.

God will often use suffering to bring the unrepentant to the Cross to deliver the saving grace of faith. At other times, He allows suffering to show His strength in weakness. Finally, He allows the church to practice obedience to His love commandments by having its members comfort and bring miraculous healing of the sick, in so doing become more and more like Christ the healer.

For the redeemed, suffering the consequences of a sinful world produces an intimacy with Christ in three different ways: 1) First of all suffering allows God to intimately shape and mold us in a crucible, purging us of dross, and preparing us for His work in the Kingdom (James 1:2-4). 2) God calls us to deny our own desires and adopt a life of humble, sacrificial service to others, especially in the church. Somehow we fill up in our own flesh what sufferings from sin that are yet to be applied to Christ's passion (Col 1:24). To be a disciple, with all of its intimacy, we take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23), and 3) the redeemed share the sufferings of Christ because He and those devoted to Him anger the world and its current prince of the air. All disciples can expect persecution (John 15:18, 2 Tim 3:12).

To withstand sufferings, the redeemed are given three encouragements: 1) God's Word emphasizes that we focus not on the present, but a much greater future (Romans 8:19-22), 2) the Holy Spirit is sent to be with us to comfort and help us bear our cross, often through the sympathy, empathy and compassion of other members of the church, or even angels (Romans 8:26-27), and 3) the Father's planned journey of our suffering always ultimately prospers His beloved (Romans 8:28).

9. What are the goals of Medicine?

Medicine (Greek, *Physike*) is first and foremost a moral enterprise devoted to the welfare of a human being. It ethically aspires to a personal healing relationship between a knowledgeable and certified physician/surgeon and a distressed person (mind and body) in the context of uncertainty. Medicine strives to relieve suffering. The physician and patient enter into a covenantal relationship in requiring obligations of skill, competency, and altruism on the part of the former, and willingness to engage and participate as fully as possible on the part of the latter. Together they attempt accurate diagnosis and prognosis, and establish a therapeutic regimen for the malady. It is an idealized relationship subject to, but at times quixotically attempting to overcome natural laws of finitude, inertia, entropy, uncertainty, and unintended consequences. Its ideals include beneficence (doing good), non-maleficence (avoiding harm, especially iatrogenic harm), recognizing patient autonomy in decisions, promoting flourishing quality of life, and promoting equity. Medicine is an art which uses the methods of science in collaboration with and usually supervising the colleagues from other professions and learned disciplines such as Nursing, Law, Pastoral Care, Pharmacy, Physical and Occupational Therapy, and others to attempt cure, assist in coping, and facilitate rehabilitation of individual sick or diseased persons. Men and women are called to practice medicine as a life-long service to the sick, profess their devotion by oath, and subject themselves to rigorously high ethical standards. They are broadly educated to be humanists and trained to and maintained at high levels of competency by a cadre of the Profession.

The time and efforts of Medicine's practitioners are increasingly subsumed by and confused with two alien endeavors, public health (*Hygiene*) and healthcare. Rather than focus on needs of individuals who are sick and diseased, public

Jesus the Son of God, blameless, suffered in every way we might ever suffer. As He has shown us the way, we thank him and praise him with gratitude in every circumstance.

9. What are the goals of Medicine?

Medicine (Greek, *Physike*) is first and foremost a moral enterprise devoted to the welfare of a human being. The task of medicine is to be God's normal means to bring about healing of mind and body of the sick, using natural law/science. God has and does still heal miraculously outside of natural laws of disease, but this is rare and for His, not our purposes, that His Glory and Kingdom be manifestly expanded.

Medicine ethically aspires to a personal healing relationship between a knowledgeable and certified physician/surgeon and a distressed person in the context of uncertainty. Medicine strives to relieve suffering through the common grace and special grace given by God to his agents. It is not the healthy, but the sick that need a physician. The physician and patient enter into a covenantal relationship obligating skill, competency, and altruism on the part of the former, and willingness to engage and participate as fully as possible on the part of the latter. Together they attempt accurate diagnosis and prognosis, and establish a therapeutic regimen for the malady. It is an idealized relationship, modeled after "the Great Physician (Jesus)," subject to sin, but at times quixotically attempting to overcome natural laws of finitude, inertia, entropy, uncertainty, and unintended consequences. Its ideals include beneficence (doing good), non-maleficence (avoiding harm, especially iatrogenic harm), recognizing patient autonomy in decisions, promoting flourishing quality of life, and promoting equity. Medicine is an art which uses the methods of science in collaboration with and usually supervising the colleagues from other professions and learned disciplines such as Nursing, Law, Pastoral Care, Pharmacy, Physical and Occupational Therapy, and others to attempt cure, assist in coping, and facilitate rehabilitation of individual sick or diseased persons. Men and women are called to practice medicine as a life-

health and healthcare attempt to apply economic, statistical, engineering, and business methods to populations to promote utopian concepts of wellness, health, happiness, and customer satisfaction by promoting cost-effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, standardization, and zero defects, often with capitalistic goals. Both the goals and the ethics of Medicine are frequently challenged by public health and healthcare. This should prompt continual reflection and revival of those professing to practice Medicine.

The medical care of individual patients also poses ethical challenges because of incomplete information; poor communication; complexity of illness, uncertainties of diagnosis, therapeutic efficacy, and prognosis; challenges to patient autonomy (especially lack of foresight, planning, or implementation of advanced directives as well as mental or cognitive deficits); conflict between and prioritization of goals (especially benefit versus cost and hazard to quality of life and/or equitable use of limited resources). Such ethical challenges are best handled through personal mentoring and guidance of the patient by a single knowledgeable and experienced primary care physician who has known and shared the patient and his or her life story for a significant period of time. The current lack of such physicians has caused great ethical and moral stress. Ethics committees can assist, but are no substitute for such a guide.

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10. How can a good death be achieved?

A good life is fulfilled in a good death. A good life is lived with the end in mind. When a bad life concludes well, is it usually rare and noteworthy. The fear of death causes procrastination in dealing with its inevitability and recognizing its approach, both for the individual, his family, and community, especially in this current era.

Dying is a personal, familial, and cultural process that takes time, increasingly protracted time, because of antibiotics and other medical and healthcare interventions. Such interventions can and often do inadvertently increase and prolong suffering. Time spent dying is rarely considered valuable except when the death is considered a good death. Good deaths have for millennia been those resulting quickly from heroic service (often not unexpectedly after prior good-byes) or after brief illness allowing adequate memories, preparation for saying goodbye and sharing last thoughts and moments in the presence of loved ones at home. A good death “wraps up” in meaning a good life. Sudden unexpected death, especially from trauma is almost universally considered tragic, especially because it gives no value or meaning. Deaths out of season, such as those of children, make disorder of time. Similarly, prolonged lingering deaths seem endless through their sequential robbery of attributes most cherished, dashing hopes like fine china upon a stone floor.

The patient, family, and even caregivers and physicians die together in stages made familiar by Kubler-Ross: 1) denial, 2) anger, 3) bargaining, 4) depression, and hopefully if possible 5) acceptance. Facing up and letting go of a dying loved one or patient can be difficult for all involved. This is especially so if there is a sense of personal duty to “do everything possible” to make the biology of life last as long as possible, even if the humanity in that life has completely faded. “Doing” without expected beneficence is simultaneously futile, maleficent, and wasteful of time and treasure. Stalling out by any of the participants (patient, family, culture, physician) in the first four stages of the dying process can lead

10. How can a good death be achieved?

A good life journey is fulfilled in a good death. A good life is lived with the end of the journey in mind, enjoying and suffering with the traveling companionship of God and God’s people along the way. The fear of the separation associated with dying often causes blindness to life’s mile markings and looming journey’s end. This makes it difficult to recognize its approach, especially in this current era.

Dying is a personal, familial, cultural and spiritual portion of life’s journey that increasingly seems like a lengthy detour. This is in part because of antibiotics and other medical and healthcare interventions prolonging the pilgrimage. Such interventions often inadvertently intensify suffering. A halt spent dying near the end of the journey is rarely considered meaningful except when the death is a good death. Good deaths have for millennia been those resulting quickly from heroic service (often not unexpectedly after prior good-byes) or after brief illness allowing adequate memories, preparation for saying goodbye and sharing last thoughts. A good death “wraps up” in meaning a good life. Sudden unexpected death, especially from trauma is almost universally considered tragic, especially because it gives no meaning. Deaths early in the journey, such as those of children, may seem more like lost potential than early joy with the Lord. Similarly, prolonged lingering deaths seem endless and meaningless through their sequential robbery of gifts that were once used for the Kingdom.

The patient, family, and even caregivers and physicians die together at stations made familiar by Kubler-Ross and even Job: 1) denial, 2) anger, 3) bargaining, 4) depression, and hopefully if possible 5) acceptance. Facing up and letting go of a dying loved one or patient can be difficult for all involved. This is especially so if there is a sense of personal duty to “do everything possible” to make the biology of life sputter on, even if the human spirit in that life has departed. Letting go can be hard as even Mary Magdalene had to be coaxed from her clinging to Jesus after the Resurrection. A good death requires a tearful release of a loved

to time of despair and increased suffering at the expense of time that might be more valuably used. Advanced directives can help, but more important is thoughtful discussion of how one wants to die when dark clouds appear on the horizon or should a catastrophe occur. As depicted in Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich*, physicians in particular can cause severe suffering by their failure to make prognosis and allow the patient to prepare. One of the most pathos filled statements is to sigh that "death was a blessing." Thoughtful and timely entry into hospice care can be the most important means of achieving a good death.

There is a time to live and a time to die. This is a natural law. The times are connected and integral to a flourishing human life. This is morality. The time spent dying should continue in some ways the distinctive goods of the time spent living. To not allow this would be destroying dignity and negating human rights and therefore unethical. Medicine's goal for a good death is allowing a time to do and say the things that can make parting such a sweet sorrow:

*I forgive you
Forgive me
Thank you
I love you
Good bye*

one into the hands of the Father. "Doing" without expected beneficence is simultaneously futile, maleficent, and wasteful. Stalling out by any of the participants (patient, family, culture, or physician) at any of the first four stations of the dying process can lead to despair. Advanced directives can help, but more important is thoughtful discussion of how one wants to die when dark clouds appear on the horizon or should a catastrophe occur. As depicted in Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich*, physicians in particular can cause severe suffering by their failure to make prognosis and allow the patient to prepare. Thoughtful and timely entry into hospice care can be the most important means of achieving a good death.

Before hospitals became healthcare centers, they were sacred places that offered *hospitality*, a place of respite on the journey of life. Hospices actually started first, adjacent to monasteries for care of lepers or pilgrims who were ill, injured, or tired on their way to The Holy Land. In our age, hospices have returned, whether at home, or in special locations. They can be places where the sick have been received as "lords," because of their soon joining with God the Father. At the places of a good death occurred warmth, worship, prayer, anointing with oil, laying on and holding hands, the giving of blessings to children, and the transmission of legacy. It was a place where the life of the saint could be poured out as a drink offering and laid down on an altar of praise. Most of all there was the celebration of life and the sending of the beloved's spirit across the river to a new joyous and eternal place, forever without sin, pain, loss, or tears awaiting fulfillment in the resurrection of the dying body.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true, "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? St. Paul: 1 Cor 15:54-55

Life is lived on a journey. This is a natural law. The journey's road is the path to a meaningful and flourishing human life. This is morality. The place of dying should connect in some way with the distinctive experiences of life's journey. To not

allow this would be destroying dignity and negating human rights and therefore unethical. Medicine's goal for a good death is providing a place, much like an airport chapel, to do and say the last things that can make parting such a sweet sorrow:

*I'm sorry
I'm grateful
I love you
Be strong and courageous!
See you later*