Humanity at the Heart of Practice

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A Study of Ethics for Health-Care Students and Practitioners

By

Beverly J. Whelton

and Jane Neuenschwander

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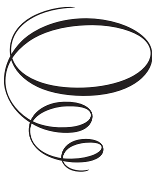

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Introduction to the Text

Every semester, some students suffer the loss of a friend or family. This is a heartbreaking reality. Sometimes students will talk about their family's need to decide whether or not to take the friend or family member off life support. This is a complex decision. Questions include: Is there a designated health care agent and is there a written document of the person's wishes, often called a living will? Is there estranged family? Are there family members living far away? How long until they can arrive? What was the person's health prior to this event? What are the religious perspectives of the person and the family? In this difficult scenario, sometimes family members are confident and peaceful; sometimes they are anxious and irritable, but it is always a sad time. In the midst of this sorrow, life and death decisions must be made.

A Difficult Situation

An example of such a difficult situation was in the news in December 2013 following a California court decision to extend life support for Jahi McMath. The 13 year old girl hemorrhaged after tonsillectomy surgery and went into cardiac arrest. She was resuscitated and put on a ventilator for life support. Three days later she was assessed as brain dead; having no central nervous system function.[1] Thus far, no one has recovered from brain death, so in all fifty states brain dead is dead. The person can be legally taken off of life support and their donated organs transplanted. Jahi's family did not accept this assessment. It is quite natural for her family to think of her as still alive. They could see her chest rise and fall with mechanical ventilation. Cardiac rhythm has been restored so the body has warmth. But, there is no detectable brain activity.

Jahi's mother, Nailah Winkfeld, believed death occurred when the heart and lungs no longer functioned, and prior to 1968, this was the standard of death. There became a serious clash between medical and parental perspectives. Since Jahi had been declared dead and physicians do not treat the dead, she could no longer stay in the hospital. Her body was

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[1] (December 30) http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-25552818 (accessed January 1, 2014).

to be turned over to the coroner and a death certificate prepared. Ms. Winkfeld refused to allow the ventilator to be turned off. As a compromise, Jahi's mother was convinced to accept the issuance of a death certificate in order to have her daughter turned over to her care on a ventilator. Now, with a death certificate, no medical facility could admit the child for care.[2] With the help of financial donors, her mother transferred the girl on the ventilator in a private jet to New Jersey; the only state in the United States of America which allows a parent to overrule this diagnosis on religious grounds. For a long time Jahi's exact location was not disclosed. On June 22, 2018, four and a half years later, Jahi died from complications of another surgery.[3]

Humans are Concerned with Good and Evil

Humans are the only beings in the world who are concerned with what ought to be done. Humans perceive the impact of another human’s action as good or evil, moral or immoral. Health care is humans caring for other vulnerable humans and ethics evaluates the way humans treat each other so it is natural that this book about ethical decision making in health care uses humanity as its organizing structure.

Perceptions of the situation and what ought to be done are closely tied to one’s values. These assessments and accurate expressions of the situation require self-knowledge, knowledge of the circumstances, inner strength, courage, and wisdom. There are issues of informed consent, surrogate decision makers, and distinctions between killing and letting die. These and other related issues, like the meaning of life and death, will be discussed in this text. In the First Section, we begin with the consideration of values and good reasoning. Philosophy is concerned with what can be known through the power of human reason, so we need to consider what it is to know, to grasp concepts and to use good reasoning to make arguments. In Section Two we discuss what it is to be a being in the world, which means we look at nature and then human nature. Section Three

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[2] http://blackdoctor.org/484482/family-of-jahi-mcmath-say-she-is-healthy-as-beautiful-as-ever/2/ and
http://www.nj.com/somerset/index.ssf/2016/01/family_of_brain_dead_girl_sue_to_change_death_cert.html

[3] http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-jahi-mcmath-dies-20180628-story.html and “Jahi McMath's mother says she has 'no regrets' for keeping daughter on ventilator for years” by Samuel Chamberlain | Fox News.
http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/07/03/jahi-mcmaths-mother-says-has-no-regrets-for-keeping-daughter-on-ventilator-for-years.html

considers persons, the professional and the patient. That will conclude the foundational content. Section Four moves to making good ethical choices and theoretical rules proposed by some philosophers to evaluate what the good choice is. Section Five provides issues at the beginning and end of life and concerns related to health care as a business. Although we will see examples of ethical concerns throughout the text the last three chapters seek to make clear some of the most challenging decisions.

Through the work of this course you will be able to (1) make decisions in moral situations by the application of principles of philosophical ethics, (2) understand the foundations of the philosophical principles you find compatible with your personal informal moral development, and (3) resolve ethical dilemmas into their essential components using a provided framework to make clear the conflicting values, policies, or principles to move to a principle-based solution. In order to communicate with fellow students, faculty and clinicians, you need the vocabulary of ethical conversations. Within this text, important terms appear in bold and are provided in the glossary.

SECTION ONE:

VALUES AND PRACTICAL REASONING

CHAPTER 1

VALUES

Objectives

Upon completion of Chapter One, you will be able to:

1. Describe the role of values in personal and community life.
2. Describe the role of values in ethical decisions.
3. Identify your core values and the principles that follow from them.

Introduction

If you are an undergraduate health-care student or clinical practitioner this book was written for you. It does not assume that you have already studied philosophy but uses philosophy for insight and instruction in making decisions in difficult situations. Philosophical activities assist in the development of clear thinking and careful decision making. Careful decisions lend to peaceful living, although sometimes the best we can do is reduce the tensions we have to live with. Being human is practically synonymous with seeking to be happy. Philosophy is a discipline that seeks to find the way to human happiness through understanding the world, especially human life. To a great extent, happiness is being at peace with your decisions.

You may be thinking, "*I do not care about some universal ideal called human happiness or what ancient philosophers have said about being happy. I just want to make decisions that keep me out of trouble. In fact, I never even think about my decisions. I just follow what I am told to do. I presume it is legal or I would not have been asked to do it.*" This book is very much opposed to this position. As a clinical practitioner, you must question. You are responsible for what you do and for doing the proper action within your health-care situation. This means that you must pay attention to the particulars of the situation and know what the reasonably intelligent practitioner would do.

Ethical Decisions are Similar to Clinical Decisions

Some ethical situations are not as clear as the clinical circumstances calling for decisions. Ethical decisions are similar to clinical decisions, though, in that one must know circumstances and principles that guide actions and apply a decision-making strategy to determine the action to be done. Ethical situations contain clinical information, but the decision is whether or not a particular action is the right or good in these particular circumstances. In both clinical and ethical decisions, the conclusion is whether or not the situation is a case of a known principle. In both cases, there can be a difference of opinion as to what ought to be done, but especially in questions of ethics because of differing positions on what is good for humanity based on one's values.

Community Values

In July 2002, the people of Quecreek, Pennsylvania, and the United States as a whole, focused attention and hundreds of thousands of dollars to rescue nine miners trapped 200 feet underground.[4] And yet, if one miner had needed a liver transplant it would likely not have been covered by his health insurance. How does this make sense? We are, thus, led to a deeply philosophical question, "What is justice and how can we have a just society?"

The scientist paleontologist in Australia, Dr. Michael Archer dreamed of restoring the extinct Tasmanian Tiger from alcohol preserved DNA fragments harvested from a one-hundred-year old museum specimen.[5] Other scientists strive to clone extinct dinosaurs[6] or prepare a cell that will replicate the constructed DNA.[7] Whether or not these projects are reasonable scientifically is one question. Ethically, one has to ask if this is a reasonable use of human resources and if these kinds of scientific activities ought to be done. Is it the case that something ought to be done, just because it can be done? Are there moral limits to be placed on science as a kind of human endeavor? Is it right to try to use dinosaur DNA to

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[4] http://old.post-gazette.com/localnews/20020730money0730p3.asp. (last accessed July 30, 2018).

[5] http://www.petermaas.nl/extinct/speciesinfo/tasmaniantiger.htm. (last accessed July 30, 2015).

[6] http://weeklyworldnews.com/headlines/27557/scientists-clone-dinosaur/ (last accessed July 30, 2018).

[7] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/03/magazine/craig-venters-bugs-might-save-the-world.html?pagewanted=all#4. (last accessed July 30, 2018).

make new life if the funds were available? Aren't we morally free to use our money the way we choose? Is there a moral obligation involved in how we use our money? Ought the money to be reserved for a clear human benefit? Would it make a difference if the creature brought back to life was human? To a great extent, these are questions of meaning and value. An individual's answer depends on what he or she values.

Personal Values

Knowing your values, ethical principles, and clear reasoning can be especially important when you are working in a situation containing moral or ethical tensions. These tensions can occur when there is an emotional pull between right and wrong, or between two goods that cannot both be acquired, or two evils or discomforts that cannot be avoided. Knowledge and insight also help your decision-making in situations of ethical tension and in the stress of living with difficult decisions.

Ethical Dilemmas

These are situations in which arguments can be posed for doing two different things. There may be a conflict of values, policies, or principles so that one must determine priorities among them. A person can only do one of the two possible actions and once you have acted you cannot go back and undo what was done.

The most important skill you will gain from studies in philosophical ethics is to make principle-based decisions in complex situations that challenge you to ask, "What is the good that ought to be done?" In order to do this, we will consider personal and community values, the meaning of human life, the human good, individual and corporate virtue, principles from codes of practice, a just society, and the processes of ethical-decision making. Complex situations often have values, codes, and principles in conflict. The hallmark of an ethical dilemma is that once an action is taken, you cannot go back and make another decision. Dilemmas are resolved by careful identification and discarding of irrelevant details, analysis and selection of relevant content, determination of priorities, and identification of relevant principles and policies that support moral decisions and actions. Sometimes, what seems to be an ethical dilemma is actually a lack of communication and information. Then, once those involved know the particulars of the situation and the options, the action to be taken becomes clear, and the dilemma dissolves.

Management Decisions

When managers set a course of action they usually also set a time to evaluate that course of action, which is quite different from an ethical dilemma where one cannot reverse the action taken. If leadership is not satisfied with outcomes, the manager's program can be reversed, or one can alter the course of action. This is not so with health-care dilemmas. Someone might have already died, or the information is now known and cannot again be hidden. Again, you cannot undo what has been done. For example, if you, as the respiratory therapist, remove a patient from the ventilator as a terminal weaning, and the patient dies, you cannot go back and say, "No, I will not participate in this process." You already did. On reflection, you may think about whether or not this is an activity in which you would participate in the future, but you cannot undo your involvement or the current situation. As a clinician in healthcare, you will come to recognize an ethical dilemma, as distinguished from management, communication, and social problems, to name a few.

Common Moral Decisions

Unlike ethical dilemmas, daily moral decisions require little thought. Prior development and training from childhood prepares us to match situations and principles of acting well. However, in the resolution of ethical dilemmas, you need awareness of your values and foundation principles. Knowing yourself allows you to preserve your conscience while not imposing your views on other persons. Thus, your work begins with discovering your own values and principles that operationalize these values.

Seeking the Principle-based Action

Ethical inquiry and the quest for principle-based action take us to the beginnings of recorded Western thought. In Athens, Greece some 2300 years ago, Plato documented the arguments of his mentor, Socrates, in the dialogue play, *The Euthyphro.*[8] Euthyphro planned to take his father to court because Euthyphro's servant died, bound in a ditch, for killing the father's slave in a drunken fight. Euthyphro argued that the Greek gods

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[8] The *Euthyphro* and *Apology* are in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato,* E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, editors. Princeton University Press, 1961, tenth printing, 1980.

would expect him to try his father for murder even though it violated Greek social norms or values. Since Euthyphro acted as if he knew what the proper action was, Socrates challenged him to provide the principles of just or right action. Although it is asked as a question, Socrates implied right action is not right because the community or a god says it is right. There is something in the behavior itself that makes it the right thing to do in a particular situation. Socrates is saying there are principles that can be known and applied.

Equality is a Principle

An early indication of equality among humans is found in Euthyphro's speech justifying his action. He argues the status of the person killed and one's relationship to the person who killed does not matter. A human death is a human death. The only question was whether or not it was justified. This was counter intuitive for a culture that had slaves, indentured servants, and other people in prejudiced positions (8b-c).

In *The Apology,*[9] Socrates argues that one must be free to ask questions, and to be a faithful citizen, a person is to challenge and to think for oneself. He would say students must be allowed to question interventions and challenge procedures. People must reflect on what they are doing, and have done, to discern the good and proper human action. This is what it is to be human. All of this questioning begins with oneself. Socrates' famous maxim from the conclusion of his defense in *The Apology* is, "The unexamined life is not worth living." (38a)

This text will return to consider principles and discovering principle-based actions, however at this time; we need to consider values and their impact on one's moral perceptions and selection of what is important. As soon as one evaluates the outcome of a decision, one's values become apparent. One's values point to acceptable outcomes from interventions and what is seen as an ethical principle for use in decision making. While we are free to determine our actions and to ask for respect for our conscience positions in support of our views, we need to be careful about sitting in judgment of another person's values. Nevertheless, it is necessary to discern when values and personal decisions can lead to benefit or harm. It is easy to say decisions leading to harm are not ethical, and they do not promote the human good. Yet we value many

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[9] The *Euthyphro* and *Apology* are in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato,* E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, editors. Princeton University Press, 1961, tenth printing, 1980.

interventions that lead to both healing and harm. One example is the cures possible with chemotherapy. An oncologist spoke to me after a lecture once, and he was quite concerned. He firmly asserted that there was nothing he did that did not cause harm, but he did not like the implications that he was unethical. His hope was that the good of a potential cure outweighed the harm.

While health-care professionals may have opportunities to help people in crisis clarify their values, the professionals are not the ones to determine what the other person ought to value; neither should they impose their values. The professionals will clarify and inform but respect the other person's decision. But, this does not mean professionals assist in behaviors against their conscience or allow actions they know are harmful to the patient and other persons.

Later in this text, we will look at the foundations of some principles in order to strengthen our understanding and decision-making capacities. When there are different principles supporting different answers in the same situation, it is helpful to understand the origins and meaning of the principles in order to make a careful decision by prioritizing relevant principles. Since there are differences in ethical principles and your principles are selected from your values, it is helpful to begin a study of ethics with an understanding of yourself.

These few short paragraphs have suggested that to be an ethical practitioner it is important to know yourself and know your patients. You need to know yourself to avoid imposing your values on others. You need to know the patients' values in order to represent their needs and advocate for them. Additionally, it is very important to be aware of the values within your place of employment so you properly represent your employer. You need to know what you value and the principles you hold dear, so you can choose to work in an environment where people value what you value or at least respect your values. You have a conscience that needs to be respected, but you have an obligation to choose work in an environment whose mission and goals are at peace with your conscience.

Finally, when you come to know your patients, you enter their world and are better able to understand the meaning of what they say. Respecting your patients does not require that you affirm their life choices, but you need to see each patient as a fellow person, with a right to his or her values and personal choices. To enter the world of another, one must be aware of cultural, social, and religious preferences and expectations. Respect for the individual requires that one act in culturally sensitive ways. This awareness allows your actions, treatment instructions, and health information to be relevant and, thus, more effective.

Conversation Starters:

1. Support your reasoning that we, as a community, should or should not fund speculative scientific projects.
2. Describe examples of projects you would want the community to fund. Provide support for your projects.
3. What evidence is there that humans share common capacities requiring common treatment of people throughout the world?

Reflection Submissions:

1. Can one's cultural heritage lead to immoral actions? Provide an example where culture provides positive guidance then provide an example of culture not leading positively. By what standard (standards) did you make this evaluation?
2. Write a reflection sharing your ideas and experiences of situations in which values made a difference. Explain why you say what you say about the situations. Share your understanding of the connections between values and actions.

Outline for Chapter 1: Values

A. Introduction
B. Ethical Decisions are Similar to Clinical Decisions
C. Community Values
D. Personal Values
    1. Ethical dilemmas
    2. Management decisions
    3. Common moral decisions
E. Seeking the Principle-based Action
    1. Equality is a principle

Terminology for Chapter 1

Moral or ethical tensions
Dilemmas

CHAPTER 2

PRACTICAL REASONING

Objectives

Upon completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Distinguish between deductive and inductive reasoning; speculative and practical reasoning.
2. Apply the practical syllogism in resolving select ethical questions.
3. Use the normative ideals of Principlism: Nonmalfeasance, Beneficence, Autonomy and Justice as first premises in the practical syllogism.
4. Recognize the role in arguments of the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction.

Introduction to Arguments

While you can decide what ought to be done intuitively, based on how you feel, this is not as trustworthy as expressing reasons using language. Feelings are important indicators, but they are just indicators and not a solid base for decisions unless supported by reason. Developing sentences, expressing thoughts and feeling in words clarifies one's thinking. When you develop statements of values, beliefs, positions, principles and circumstances, you can form an **argument** that can then be thoughtfully evaluated for the support provided the conclusion. This support is by formal argument, which will be covered in Chapter Three. Assertions or affirmative sentences are **propositions.**[10] These propositions are claims that may be evaluated as true or false and offered as **premises** in support of another claim, the **conclusion** that an action ought to be done or not done.

Nuclear medicine students develop their skills through working with

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[10] Watson, J.C. and Arp, R. Critical *Thinking: An Introduction to Reasoning Well*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011, p. 34.

clinical preceptors in the hospital. It is my understanding that in some departments experienced practitioners give a slightly larger dose than in the protocol to increase absorption and decrease waiting time, so more patients can be processed in the allotted time. In this way, the department is on time and earns more money for the hospital. Some students experience ethical tension as they must decide if they ought to follow this practice and even if they ought to report this variance to a hospital administrator. It is a common practice but in violation of policy and may endanger the patient as it delivers a slightly higher dose of radiation.

An argument for compliance with this practice includes the propositions that it is common practice, experienced technicians do this, processing more patients makes the department look good and makes more money for the hospital. Each of these points is a propositions stated as a premise for the conclusion that the student ought to follow the same practice. This is an **inductive** argument. Each proposed reason provides more evidence that strengthens the case concluding to the behavior. On the other hand, the value of following policy and protecting patients from radiation argue **deductively** from general statements to the conclusion that the student ought not to give larger doses of radioactive dye.

Coming to Know Concepts

Before further considering principles and forming ethical propositions, it will be helpful to consider how we come to know our world on the conceptual or universal level. This involves ideas in our mind, and how these ideas (concepts) are related to what exists outside of the mind. From our experiences of the world, the intellect grasps similarities across items or settings. Through this capacity to grasp similarities and differences the intellect forms concepts. **Concepts** are general ideas. They cross time and place and are formed in the intellect as we experience individuals. When we think and talk and study we use concepts. They are also called **universals** because they leave aside the uniqueness of individuals to express what is common to the set of particular individuals that can be experienced. Concepts (universals) are expressed in words, that is, terms that can then be used to label other items of the same kind. On the simplest level, the sentences we speak use concepts expressed as nouns, adjectives, quantifiers, logical connections and so on. With the sentence, "The baby is hungry," the nouns 'baby' and 'hunger' are concepts formed in the intellect from experience of the world outside of the mind and labeled with the terms "baby" and "hunger." "The" is a quantifier indicating one, and "is" provides the logical connection. In this case "is" expresses the state of

being or condition of the baby being hungry. The word “is” logically joins the subject and the predicate of the sentence. Logical concepts are drawn from the structure of the world but do not exist as items in the world as a baby does. One needs to be alert to the way words direct us to both concepts in thought and particulars in the world of experience outside the mind. The extra-mental reality of babies like, Betty and Joe, give rise to the concept that is then labeled with the term “baby.” This labeled concept can then be used whenever such a being is experienced. This process allows us to know and to accurately speak about this world in which we live when the concept is accurately identified and labeled.

Mathematical Concepts in Measurement

When we measure blood pressure and other physical parameters these measurements are accurate within the capacity of our instruments and our ability to observe. Measurement is a way of increasing accuracy. The numerical properties can be separated from the physical. Blood pressures or blood sugars can be considered separate from the person with these readings. These measurements can then be compared to a chart of average readings and what they indicate, or they could be collected to graph this person’s data as an indication of their bodily function. Errors can be reduced by repeated measurements and there is little debate about the meaning of the data.

Non-mathematical Concepts

With non-mathematical concepts, it is easy to misunderstand or misinterpret each other. Some ways we misunderstand are by faulty hearing, being distracted or by using the wrong word for a concept. We may also misunderstand another person when we think we already know what the other person means. Additionally, we interpret experiences differently because of our differing backgrounds but especially when anxiety or illness alters perception. With our tendencies to misinterpret, it is critical to confirm what the vulnerable person is meaning to communicate. As professional practitioners, we have an obligation to enter the patient’s understanding, to ask and attend to their perception.

Concepts Build Arguments

The previous paragraphs have discussed the formation of concepts; mathematical and non-mathematical are drawn from the world of

experience and imagination. Concepts can be formed into sentences having subject and predicate. The predicate is what is being asserted of the subject, it is thus making a claim that can be tested as true or false. These sentences asserted as propositional statements are the foundations of arguments. As provided above, an **argument** is a set of propositional claims, one claim is the **conclusion** being asserted, and the others are **premises** providing support for the conclusion. These propositional claims are the tools of communication useful in resolving ethical tensions and dilemmas. A syllogism is a set of three claims. The conclusion attributes the predicate content of the subject because of the relationships between terms within the two premises. A valid syllogistic argument follows the algebraic formula A=B; B=C; therefore A=C. B is called the middle term and connects A and C. The classic example is All men are mortal (capable of dying), Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal. Being human is the common term that connects Socrates to mortality. If it is true that all humans are mortal (using more contemporary language) and if Socrates is a human and not your street name, then Socrates is Mortal.

Two Ancient Laws of Thought

There are two ancient principles in philosophy that impact reasoning and our work in ethics, the **principle of identity** and the **principle of non-contradiction**. According to Aristotle, the principle of identity says, "Whatever is is."[11] Expressed in this way the principle of identity is a **tautology,** that is, it cannot be false. It just is, but written this way, it tells us almost nothing. In another more important sense, the principle of identity is fulfilled when we accurately identify an object (or person) as the kind of being it is. The principle of non-contradiction says the same thing cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect. Let's clarify these a bit further.

The Principle of Identity

There is an expression that says, "If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is a duck."[12] This list of attributes, used to indicate the object in question, is helpful but insufficient. This is especially clear in today's world of technology. It is possible to have a mechanical

[11] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 4.
[12] *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, 2nd ed.* Copyright © Cambridge University Press 2006.

duck which does each of these and yet is not the living being referred to with the term ‘duck’. The principle of identity requires that the terms be used in a **univocal** way; the meaning is the same each time it is used.

The living duck and the mechanical duck share the term, duck, but the term has two different meanings. In this case the use of “duck” is **equivocal**. This change in meaning gives rise to the term **equivocation**. When the meaning of a term changes within an argument resulting in equivocation, there is no argument. The set of claims may be asserted as an argument, but the premises cannot support the conclusion.

Earlier it was said that the principle of identity cannot be false, it is just the assertion of what is, like the universal statement, “All trees are trees.” Nevertheless, the grasp of a new concept is accurate or inaccurate; complete or incomplete, not true or false. This search for an organism is often the concern of scientists, like searching for the cause of AIDS or capillaries providing for circulation or shadows observed on the moon showing there are mountains on the moon. If one’s grasp is complete, statements using the concept are more likely to be true. In addition to the discovery of new beings, there are times when it is essential to identify something as what it is. One example is when it is questioned if all beings with human DNA are human.

The Principle of Non-contradiction

The other ancient principle helpful in ethical argumentation is the principle of non-contradiction. “The same thing cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same respect.”[13] Something either is or it is not. For example, you cannot be in class in West Virginia and on the beach in Florida. Either you are here or you are not here. Nevertheless, you could be in class physically and in Florida mentally. These are two different respects. Also, you could be in class today and in Florida over semester break. These are two different times. Our electronic devices allow us to be on different continents at the same time, but not in the same respect.

The useful meaning of the principle of non-contradiction is seen in an example from Chapter One where the DNA from the Tasmanian tiger can only be DNA from the Tasmanian tiger. It cannot also be canine DNA. It is either Tasmanian or it is not. It cannot be Tasmanian and canine, or Tasmanian and not Tasmanian. One has to question, though, if having the preserved inert materials of DNA are sufficient to say we have the DNA. The dynamic living force of life and function is missing. In Chapter Three,

[13] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 4.

we will look further at the matter/form unity of living beings. Keep in mind the question, "If having the material or the form of something means we have that item?"

Being Philosophical

Science is concerned with asserting hypotheses, testing, measurement, generalizations and supportable explanations. Caring for patients is an interpersonal process that can be deep and filled with meaning and feelings. Trying to understand patient care through research, based in measurement, seems incomplete and somehow shallow. Yet articles focused on description, opinion and ideas also seem insufficient. Contemporary research in health care uses both quantitative and qualitative methods determined by the question being asked.

From the time of Galileo to Isaac Newton, a hundred years later, there was a change in scientific inquiry away from verbal explanation and logical proofs to mathematical explanations and mathematical proofs. The history of science provides a time when questions were answered through understanding of concepts and argumentation. Interesting for our discussion, this tendency to question and the desire for answers is what it means to be **philosophical.** So, most of us are philosophical because we question. We all have a set of beliefs, a philosophy of life that guides the decisions we make. Philosophers openly ask what they believe and why they accept those beliefs or positions. They look for support for holding a certain position. What follows, in terms of behavior (actions done), if done thoughtfully is because one holds particular views.

In Chapter One, you were asked to consider what you hold as core values. When these values were united to the principles that follow from them you identified what could be your core beliefs. This is a good time for you to consider why certain values are important to you, and the actions you would take based on these beliefs.

Philosophers use experience, knowledge, careful thought, and the principles of reason (logic) to answer questions in a way similar to how contemporary scientists follow the logic of the scientific method, experiments, and mathematical analysis to answer research questions. In everyday life, we often ask questions about what something is, how it works, what we ought to do, how to get something done, or how to avoid being in trouble. Philosophers ask questions like, "What is it to be human? How ought humans to be treated? Are humans really free to choose their actions? If so, how do we know they are free? What evidence indicates we are free? What is the impact on personal and community living if we are

free? Or, if we are not free, why do we feel like we are free?" Most of us consider these things a mystery, if we think about them at all. These questions are important because if we are to hold people accountable for their behavior, they must have been free to choose the action.

Metaphysic as a Division of Philosophy

Have you ever tried to figure out what is common to all that exists? The question itself tells us that existence is what is shared as common to all. This answer derived from the question may seem trivial. It is a tautology, but it is not trivial. There are reasons to consider the meaning of existence and the good of existence. The deepest thoughts are very simple, even profound. **Metaphysics** is the division of philosophy that searches into the origins and principles of existence. Some other questions that metaphysics considers include: (1) what can be known of existence within available evidence and human reason, (2) and what, if anything, can be known of highest being. This being is usually what is referred to when we say "God."

The Philosophy of Nature

The study of change or motion, common to all of nature, falls within the philosophy of nature. **Natural philosophy** is distinct from metaphysics in that it studies the changeable natural world, rather than all that exists or immaterial being. Specific sciences, like biology, chemistry and politics seek to understand their particular aspect of nature, be that the living cell, elements, or social structures. **Ethics,** as a natural discipline, is the study of the human person, as an individual acting within community. It is inquiry into how one ought to be treated and how one ought to act toward others.

Mathematics Used by Philosophers

Mathematics is reasoning with numbers and figures separate from material existent things. Since numbers and figures are abstracted from matter and idealized in the mind, results generated through purely mathematical operations are necessary and certain. In other words, the results are what they must be. For example, two plus two is four whether you abstracted the two from apples, cats, light years, or people. The formulae are persistent. Think of it! The Pythagorean Theorem is just as valid today as it was 2500 years ago.

Ethics is a Study of Proper Human Action

Metaphysics, natural philosophy, and mathematics are the three major divisions of philosophy, or knowledge. These were identified by Aristotle, the classical Greek philosopher and student of Plato. A significant impact follows from viewing ethics as a study of human action within the classical study of nature. This leads one to look within humanity itself for principles and causes of moral action [14](actions toward the human good). One impact of seeking principles within the nature of humans is found in the ways of nature. Nature acts for an end generally and for the most part. So, when principles are identified in nature, they are not absolutes like one might find in mathematics. Neither are they universally applicable as one might find with metaphysical principles of being, but they can still provide strong guidance within the complex circumstances of our lives in the world of change. These principles are stabilities that guide peaceful, happy living. Ethical principles are always applied within a context but not as arbitrary, blind rules. To say principles are used within a context does not mean that if a particular situation is an exception to the principle the principle is dissolved leaving us with no standards.

There is a need to know the principles and situations. One must carefully evaluate the fit between circumstances and principles. It does not damage the principle to make an exception, but it will probably make it more likely that we act contrary to that rule at a later time. In future chapters, we will consider principles, some of which are proposed as absolutes and some of which admit of exception. For our purposes, we need to be aware that ethics involves the careful identification, evaluation, and application of moral principles and rules of personal and professional conduct. All moral conduct is between persons within specific settings, that is, within a context. Principles can be proposed, examined, and discussed in an academic setting, but ethical (professional) and moral (personal) actions operationalize principles in particular, individual situations.

The Logic of Practical Reasoning

There is an identifiable pattern of reasoning that can be made explicit in the study of ethics. When known, it can be helpful in analyzing and

[14] It is not unusual to use ethical and moral interchangeably. Nonetheless, ethics most often refers to the study of moral behavior. Moral more often refers to personal codes, while ethical refers to professional standards and the actions of professionals.

responding to situations with ethical tensions. This is the logic of **practical reasoning**. A simple example is seen in the potential loss of a wallet belonging to the person walking in front of you. The wallet falls; you see the wallet and pick it up. Without hesitation, you tap the person on the shoulder and return his wallet. You may or may not have thought about keeping the wallet, but you did not keep it. We can infer that you saw keeping the wallet as a case of stealing because you could know whose property it was. As a child, you may have been taught that it is wrong to steal; stealing being defined as taking property with an identifiable owner and you are not that owner. The applicable principle or **moral maxim** is that, "One ought not to steal." The 'ought' is characteristic of a moral maxim. Practical reasoning inserts a moral principle within a situation requiring a decision of how one ought to act. The person seeking to do the right thing looks for a match between a known maxim and the circumstances with which he or she is being confronted.

Informally, practical reasoning depends on one's upbringing as the source of principles. When there is a maxim one learned in childhood, like do not steal, do not lie, etc., practical reasoning is simply a match, identification between the circumstances and the maxim. Keeping the wallet, in our example, would violate the known maxim or standard of behavior. Health-care practitioners add their disciplinary Code of Ethics and employment policies to their personal standards.

Study of Informal Logic

The discipline of Logic includes both this practical reasoning and more abstract forms of inductive and deductive reasoning. Logic is the tool of the intellect that prepares the mind for clear systematic thinking and for analyzing arguments. We now can state more formally from Watson and Arp, an **argument** is a set of statements or **claims**. One statement is the **conclusion**. The others are supporting content called **premises**. In uncomplicated situations of practical reasoning, the conclusion is that this is a case of a known maxim or principle. The maxim becomes the guide of what ought to be done. This reasoning is familiar within the clinical context as one's assessment concludes that the presenting situation is a case of a particular condition or diagnosis, which then prescribes the actions of the clinician. More complex situations require the development of arguments for what ought to be done. These arguments may be from principle to the situation in a **deductive** reasoning process or they may argue i**nductively** from known cases. Grounded on prior principles from divine commands or philosophical analysis, deductive arguments assert

"what ought to be done." Based on experience, inductive arguments are more probabilistic, resulting in what probably ought to be done, but allowing for unknown circumstances that could change the asserted conclusion.

An Example of Deductive Practical Reasoning

Given that nonporous materials block transmission of bacteria and viruses; it is required that all health care providers use gloves when in direct contact with patients (principle-premise). We are about to get patients out of bed for their walks (circumstances-premise), so we need to put on gloves (conclusion).

An Example of Inductive Practical Reasoning

The last five patients receiving IVP dye had adverse side effects. There is every reason to believe this person will also have a reaction to the dye. One is left to ask, "Do we have sufficient information to assert that the dye must not be used?" The answer is no, but we can say it probably ought not to be used or used with caution. To strengthen an inductive argument, you need additional information or appeal to principle. The first principle of action is, "Do no harm" (principle-premise). This situation could likely cause harm (circumstances-premise), so I will not use the dye (conclusion). Note both deductive portions of these arguments form practical syllogisms. A practical syllogism does not connect terms but principle and situation to conclude this is a case of the principle. From this one can conclude what ought to be done. The inductive argument above was strengthened by the addition of a deductive argument from principle.

Arguments Secure Decisions Not Actions

Academically, one might provide an ideal deductive argument with proper relationships between the concepts of the claims to make a **valid argument** and true premises that secure a **sound argument**. This is the very best support for the conclusion of what ought to be done, but sound arguments secure a decision; they do not secure human action. Humans are free to choose how they will act. Ethical principles are stated on a universal level but humans act within the world of particulars. Thus, we often do not grasp the application of the argument, or we may know what ought to be done but choose to do something else.

Even if one does argue effectively for what ought to be done, people