



Pathway
THROUGH THE MAZE

Finding a pathway through the ethical maze

Jill Gordon

Centre for Values, Ethics & Law in Medicine



The University of Sydney



A dilemma ...

is a di-lemma

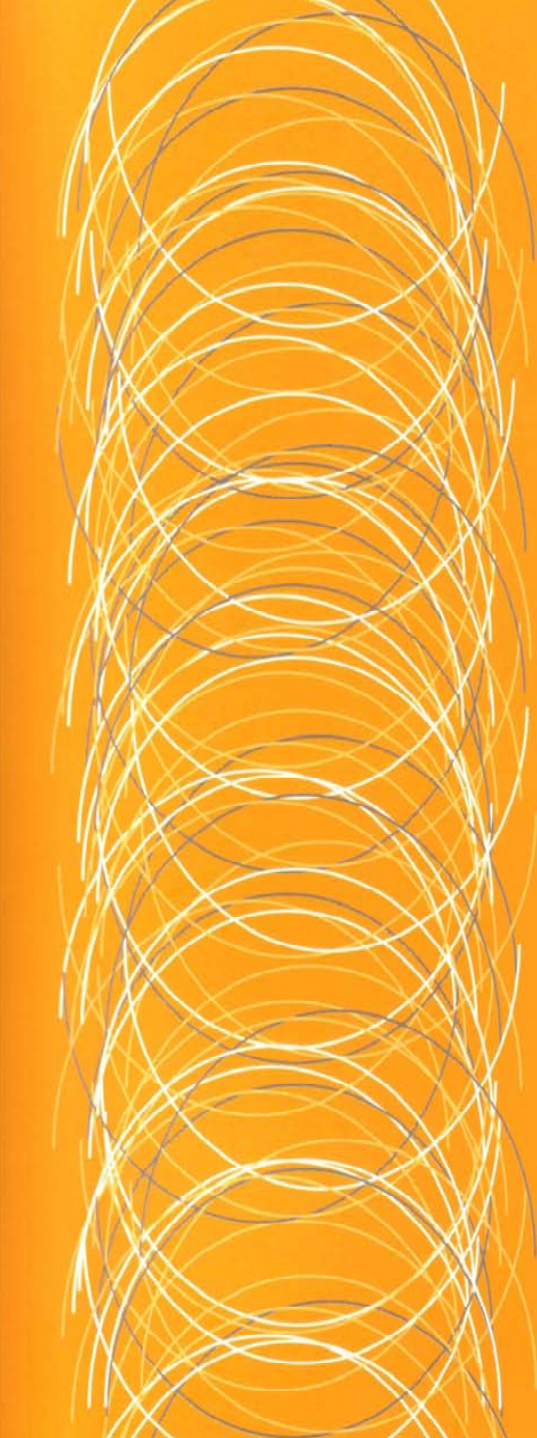
Isaiah Berlin: *The ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other; the possibility of conflict – and of tragedy – can never be wholly eliminated from human life, either personal or social.*



What do we rely on from day to day?

Most considerations of right behaviour intuitively take account of:

- The likely impact of an action (karma)
- The importance of social cohesion and trust
- Empathic understanding (*Do unto others...*)



Where do these beliefs come from?

Often derived from, or associated with,
a religious belief system.

Increasingly associated with secular approaches:

Secular Wholeness – David Coresi

Godless Morality – Richard Holloway

Moral Wisdom and Good Lives – John Kekes

The Happiness Hypothesis – Jonathan Haidt

The Empathy Gap – J D Trout



Ethics vs Bioethics

Do the ethical problems that involve medical and health care require a qualitatively different approach?



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Bioethical issues

- can crop up suddenly
- can be extreme
- can have wide ramifications
- may require expert knowledge



Ethics vs Bioethics

What do we teach
students in medicine and
health care?

Frameworks

Rule or principle-based frameworks

Is there a rule we should follow?



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Frameworks based on consequences

Is it possible to calculate the greatest good for the greatest number?



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What would a virtuous person do?



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Rule or principle-based frameworks

Is there a rule we should follow?

Frameworks based on consequences

*Is it possible to calculate the greatest good
for the greatest number?*

Frameworks based on motives

What would a virtuous person do?

Frameworks that take their reference from
a 'paradigm case'

What can we learn from past experience?

Deontological ethics

Based on rules and principles

- Do what you think is the best for your patient (beneficence)
- “Do no harm” – Hippocratic oath (non-maleficence*)
- Respect the wishes of your patient (autonomy)
- Consider the wellbeing of society as a whole (distributive justice)

* *"Don't be evil"* – Google motto



Consequentialism or utilitarianism

- *'The greatest good for the greatest number'*
- morally right actions are those actions that produce good outcomes or consequences

Australian philosopher Peter Singer is a good example of a utilitarian approach - see *The Life You Can Save* at

www.thelifeyoucansave.com



Virtue ethics

- Emphasising the virtues, or moral character of the decision maker
- Central concepts of *virtue*, *practical wisdom* and *eudaimonia*

Alasdair MacIntyre *After Virtue*, London, Duckworth, 1985
Rebecca Walker & Philip Ivanhoe (eds.) *Working Virtue*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007

Casuistry

- Casuistry does not require us to agree about ethical theories; instead it looks for similarities between a paradigm and the problem at hand
- Casuistry often creates ethical arguments that can persuade people of different ethnic, religious and philosophical beliefs to treat particular cases in the same way.

Ethics of Care

Recognises the interdependence of individuals

Concerned with relationships and how we relate to the most vulnerable

Concerned with context, and with safeguarding each individual

NATIONAL SQUALOR CONFERENCE 2009



Carol Gilligan *A Different Voice*, 1982



Ethics and Squalor

Key questions

- Why are self neglect, environmental neglect and/or hoarding a problem?
- Who has the problem?
- How do we evaluate risk?
- What is our duty of care? Who shares in that duty
- How can we balance autonomy and beneficence?
- How can we balance client's rights and the rights of others?

Ethics and Squalor

Key questions

- Who doesn't want a safe home?
- Who doesn't want water, light and a soft clean bed?
- Who doesn't want good health?
- Who doesn't want help to overcome handicaps?

Interference \longleftrightarrow Rescue



Ethics and Squalor

Particular considerations:

- The young
- The aged
- Those with psychiatric disorders
- ‘Medicalising’ squalor



Decisions, decisions

“It is quite true what Philosophy says: that Life must be understood backwards. But that makes one forget the other saying: that it must be lived— forwards.

The more one ponders this, the more it comes to mean that life in the temporal existence never becomes quite intelligible, precisely because at no moment can I find complete quiet to take the backward-looking position.”

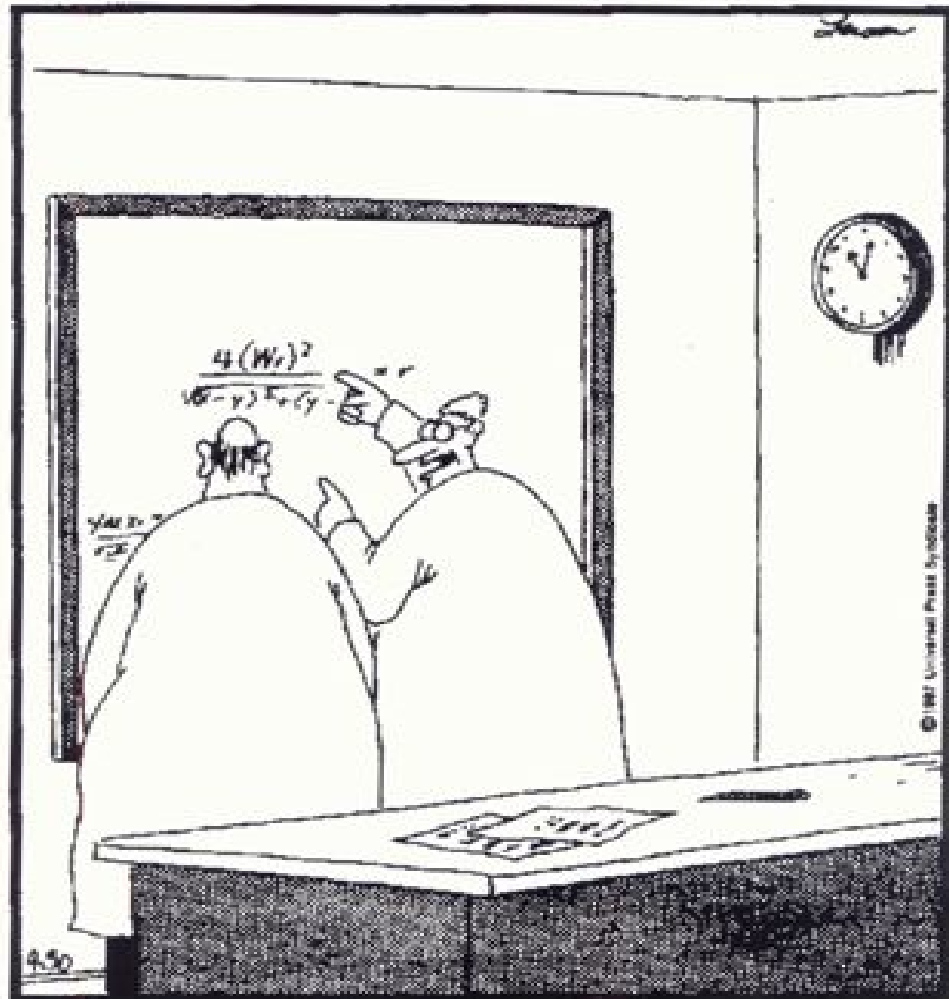
Søren Kierkegaard

Final thoughts

- In fields as complex as health and social care, ethics inevitably involves balancing competing principles and values
- Dilemmas are irresoluble but decisions are unavoidable
- Ethics is about seeing all sides, so broad social and cultural competence are prerequisite skills for everyone in the field

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



"Yes, yes, I know that, Sidney . . . everybody knows that! . . . But look: Four wrongs squared, minus two wrongs to the fourth power, divided by this formula, do make a right."



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Thank you

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