

## The Moral Basis of Professionalism

Exploring narrative, character and expertise

The Worshipful Society of  
Apothecaries of London  
  
Philosophy of Medicine  
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david.obree@edinburgh.ac.uk  
Edinburgh Medical School



### AIMS OF THIS SESSION

#### PART ONE

TO EXPLORE THE LINK BETWEEN  
NARRATIVE AND ETHICS

WE ARE ALL STORY-TELLERS

WE ARE ALL ETHICISTS

STORY AND ETHICS ARE INEXORABLY INTERTWINED

#### PART TWO

COVID NARRATIVES



David Obree

Fellow in Medical Ethics and Medical Education

MBChB lead for Medical Ethics Legal and  
Professional responsibilities

Master of Public Health (Ethics Module)

Dentist

[Dentistry : Drama : Medical Ethics and Law]



First Formal Medical  
Education 1505 - Surgeons  
and Barber Surgeons formed  
the Royal College of Surgeons  
of Edinburgh



"... a surgeon should have well-formed hands, long slender  
fingers, a strong body, not inclined to tremble, be well  
grounded in natural science, and should know not only  
medicine but every part of philosophy..."

Guido Lanfranchi Chirurgia Magna 1296

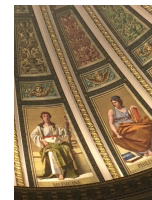


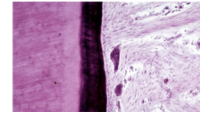
"Knowledge of the ethical and legal basis of  
medicine is as essential to clinical practice as an  
understanding of basic medical sciences"

Medical Ethics and Law for the Doctors of Tomorrow: the 1998 Consensus Statement  
updated. Spratt, Boyd et al. J. Med Ethics 2020; 36:55-60

"An understanding of ethics should thus  
be considered a key competency for  
people working in public health"

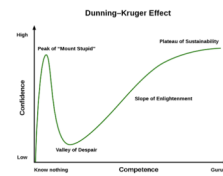
Public Health Ethics in Practice: A Background paper on public health ethics for the UK Public  
Health Skills and Knowledge Framework (2017)





Nous (Intelligence)  
Episteme (Academic knowledge)  
Techne (Practical skill)  
Praxis (Reflective doing)

Nous + Episteme + [Techne + Praxis = Experience]  
> **Phronesis** (Practical wisdom)



**Why Our Ethics Curricula Don't Work**  
Charles Bertolami [Journal of Dental Education 68:4, 414 2004]

- 1) Education isn't the answer to everything
- 2) Ethics is boring
- 3) Not fostering an introspective basis for true behavioral change





Art, literature, drama and music, in all their many forms, are expressions of human creativity; they reflect human joy and sorrow, and human celebration and reflection. Part of what it is to be a complete human being is to participate in some form of artistic activity, either as a spectator, reader or viewer.

The humanities in medical education: context, outcomes and structures  
Jane McLaughlin / *Med Ethics: Medical Humanities*, 26:23-30 [2000]

Along with an understanding of the sciences [the humanities] constitute what it means to be 'educated' as distinct from simply 'trained'

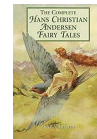
Downie, RS The role of literature in medical education  
*Journal of Medical Ethics*, 25:5 [1999]



narrative  
[nar-uh-tiv] noun

A story or account of events, experiences, whether true or fictitious  
A series of cause and effect events organised into a story

Peterborough  
June 4th 1973



The world's priests and shamans knew what psychology would later confirm : if you want a message to burrow into a human mind, work it into a story



Fiction is intensely moralistic [...] it puts us in a position to judge wrongdoing, and we do so with gusto

Story in other words, continues to fulfil its ancient function of binding society [...] it tells us what is laudable and what is contemptible. Story is the grease and glue of society: by encouraging us to behave well story reduces social friction while uniting people around common values. Story homogenizes us; it makes us one.



The Curious

We each have a little Sherlock Holmes in our brain. His job is to 'reason backwards' from what we can observe in the present and show what orderly series of causes led to particular events. Evolution has given us an 'inner Holmes' because the world really is full of stories (intrigues, plots, alliances, relationships of cause and effect), and it pays to detect them. The storytelling mind is a crucial evolutionary adaptation. It allows us to experience our lives as coherent, orderly, and meaningful.





**Plot**  
[plɒt]  
noun  
The main events of a play, novel, movie, or similar work, devised and presented as an interrelated sequence.

Overcoming the monster

The quest

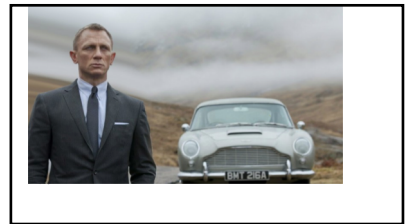
Rags to riches

Rebirth

Voyage and return

Comedy

Tragedy

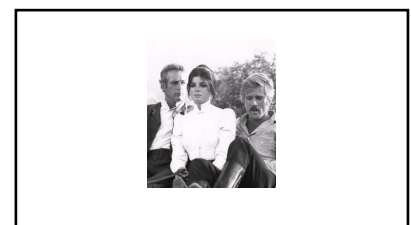
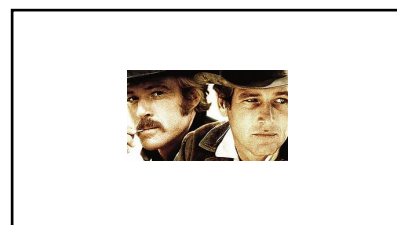
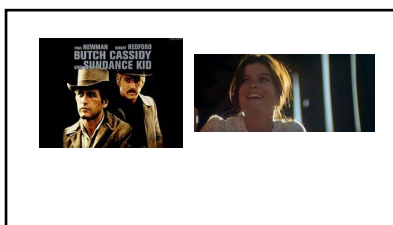
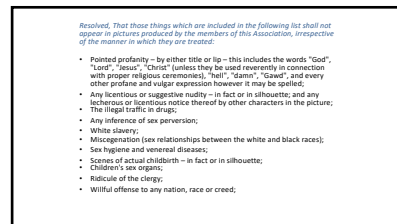
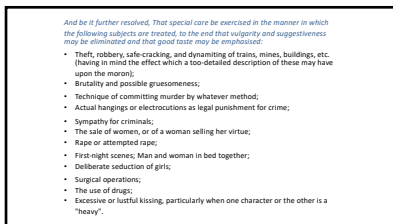
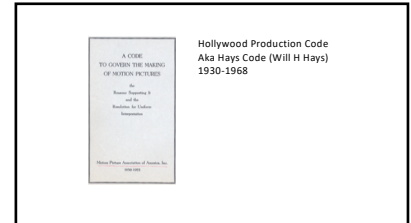
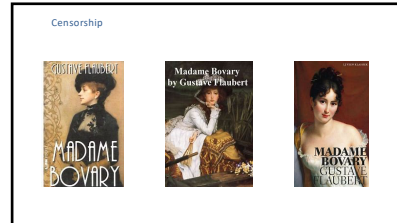
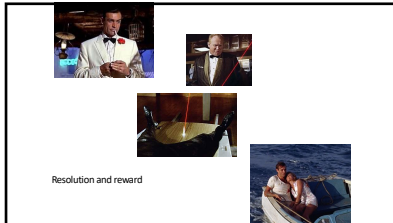


The invincible hero

The frustration/obstruction to his quest/challenge to invincibility

The villain/the hero's potential nemesis







VENOM (2018)



Narrative drives



Eros and Thanatos



Jeremy Bentham

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pleasure and pain



What events, relationships and experiences are responsible for a character becoming who he or she is



"What is character but the determination of incident?  
What is incident but the illustration of character?"

Henry James *The Art of Fiction* 1884



#### narrator

[nar-ey-ter]

Noun

1] a person who gives an account or tells the story of events, experiences, etc.

2] a person who adds spoken commentary to a film, television program, slide show, etc.



"The narrator is often a medical professional who ventriloquises the voice of the patient"

Brian Hurwitz  
Professor of Medicine and the Arts  
King's College London  
[M&A Conference 2017]



Roland Barthes (1915-80)

La mort de l'auteur

(The Death of the Author)  
[1967]

Today's Professionalism: Engaging the Mind but Not the Heart –  
Jack Coulehan, *Academic Medicine*, 80:10 [2005]

"The medical community suffers from depleted moral imagination..."

"... As a result of the tension between explicit and tacit values, students learn to objectify their patients and devalue subjectivity. In part they learn to conceptualize their patients in terms of flow sheets rather than personal stories. At the same time, they internalize hospital narratives, which tend to be cynical, arrogant, self-congratulatory, and highly rationalised, but nonetheless become influential in the formation of the trainee's professional persona."

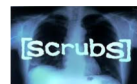


Today's Professionalism: Engaging the Mind but Not the Heart –  
Jack Coulehan, *Academic Medicine*, 80:10 [2005]

"Central paradox in medicine [...] tension between self-interest and altruism"

Narrative competence "the ability to acknowledge, absorb, interpret an act on the stories and plights of others"

"This involves immersing students and young physicians in a wide array of narratives, drawn from their own experiences as well as those of others, that display professional virtue. In essence, this approach would provide a counterculture of virtuous practice that may gradually displace the more negative elements of contemporary medical culture [...]"




Television Viewing and Ethical Reasoning: Why Watching  
*Scrubs* Does a Better Job Than Most Bioethics Classes  
Jeffrey Spike


[*American Journal of Bioethics* 8:12 11-13 2008]

"[...] the mass media can provide an invaluable supplement to the ethics education of students in medicine, and ethics professors who ignore that fact (or worse, condemn it) are not doing their job."





[2015]  
93% of first year medical students  
familiar with House and/or Scrubs.  
45% stated preference for Scrubs  
39% stated preference for House





What makes a good doctor?




Gregory House, "Is he a good man?"

Martha M. Masters

Genius 3rd Year Medical Student  
Finished school at 15  
In-between school and Med  
School did PhDs in Applied  
Maths and Art History






Joe Duggan  
Political Campaign Manager  
Severe rash, unknown  
cause



Medicine is like  
politics,  
all that matters is  
results



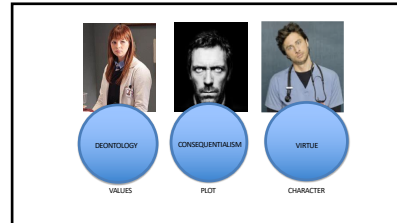
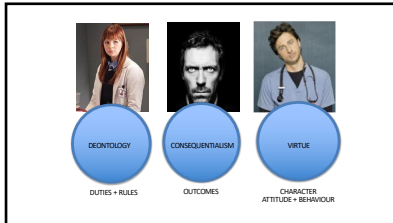
That's not true,  
respect matters.  
Integrity and honesty  
matter . .



My stupid ideas are what  
most doctors consider the  
rules for professional  
conduct

Rules are just helpful  
guidelines for stupid people  
that can't make up their own  
mind



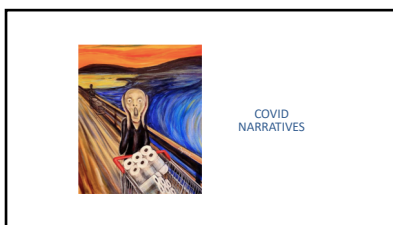
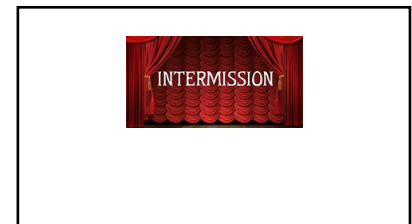
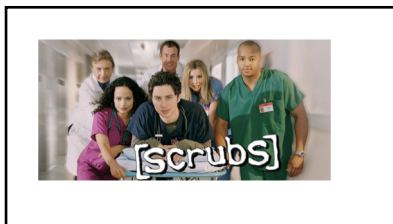


**HOUSE  
PHILOSOPHY**  
EVERYBODY LIES

... A protagonist modelled on the legendary Sherlock Holmes, it satisfies our long-standing fascination with detective stories. But House is more than another ER - its singularity lies primarily in its surprising protagonist, a man who simultaneously inspires interest and loathing.

House is like a car wreck - you can't help but look. While thankfully, most of us don't come upon car wrecks every day, House illustrates something we do encounter daily: irritating people.

Jennifer L. McMahon, *House and Sartre* - "Neil is other people" in *House and Philosophy*



**SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS**  
How the Power of Storytelling Shapes Our Lives

BETH GAYLEY

Stories are the flight simulators of human social life.

Just as flight simulators allow pilots to train safely, stories safely train us for the big challenges of the social world

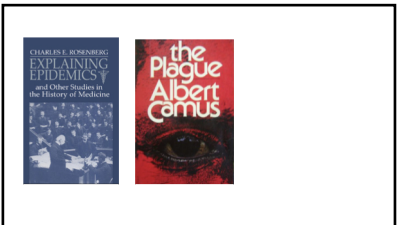
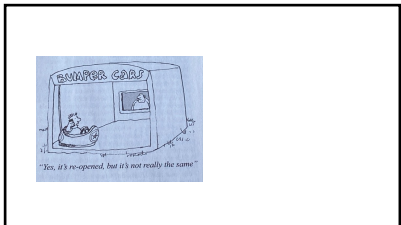
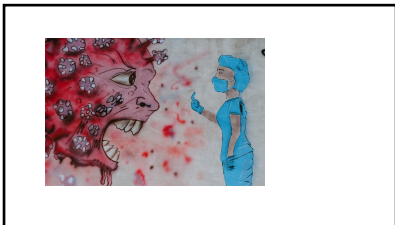
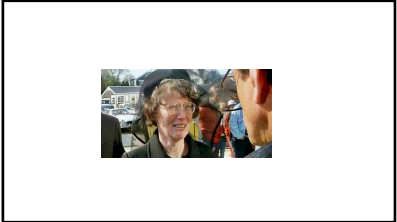
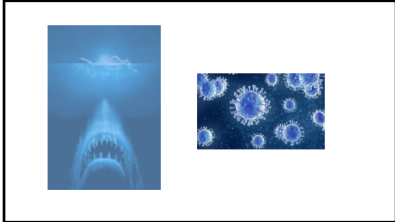
**Stories Have the Power to Save us : A Neurological Framework for the Imperative to Tell Stories**

Ben Le Hunte, Jan A Golembiewski  
Am Sociol Sci Journal 1:2 (2018)

The claim that stories have the power to save us is audacious, yet one that can be validated by neuroscience

[...] the brain is hardwired to process stories in a most fundamental way, indicating that he evolutionary priority that storytelling has had in human development [...] the human brain uses 'fictional worlds' to expand understanding of the 'real world' [...]

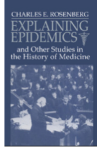
It gives a neurological foundation to Kenneth Burke's notion that literature provides us with "equipment for living." That stories work as "proverbs writ large" - helping us to understand the fundamentals of survival - the workings of cooperation and conflict.





As a social phenomenon, an epidemic has dramatic form. Epidemics start at a moment in time, proceed on a stage limited in space and duration, follow a plot line of increasing and revelatory tension, move to a crisis of individual and collective character, then drift towards closure.

Just as a playwright chooses a theme and manages plot development, so a particular society constructs its characteristic response to an epidemic.

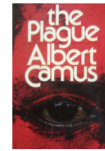


Act 1 Progressive Revelation - communities slow to accept and acknowledge an epidemic

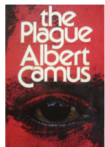
Act 2 Managing Randomness – seeking an explanatory framework

Act 3 Negotiating Public Response

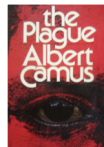
Act 4 Subsidence and Retrospection - 'epidemics ordinarily end with a whimper, not a bang'



Most were chiefly affected by whatever upset their habits or touched on their interests. They were annoyed or irritated by them, and these are not feelings with which to fight the plague. For example, their first reaction was to blame the authorities. The Prefect faced criticism that was echoed in the press ('Couldn't there be some relaxation in the measures proposed?')



[Rambert] went to see large number of civil servants and people whose competence one did not usually question... They had undeniable expertise in problems of litigation or insurance, not to mention excellent qualifications and evident goodwill. You might even say that the most striking thing among all of them was their goodwill. But when it came to the plague, their knowledge was more or less nil.



[Dr.] Rieux and his friends now discovered how tired they were. Indeed the members of the health teams could no longer overcome their tiredness. Dr Rieux noticed it when he observed the steady growth of a strange indifference in himself and his friends. For example, men who up to now had shown such a lively interest in any news about the plague, no longer bothered with it.



The plague has its benefits because it opens peoples eyes and forces them to think. The evil in the world comes almost always from ignorance, and goodwill can cause as much damage as ill-will if it is not enlightened... the most appalling vice being the ignorance that thinks it knows everything.

Create all the happiness you are able to create; remove all the misery you are able to remove.

Every day will allow you to add something to the pleasure of others, or to diminish something of their pains.

And for every grain of enjoyment you sow in the bosom of another, you shall find a harvest in your own bosom; while every sorrow which you pluck out from the thoughts and feelings of a fellow creature shall be replaced by beautiful peace and joy in the sanctuary of your soul.

Jeremy Bentham 1748-1832



Absolutism Rigid, inflexible, enforced, totalitarian

Universalism Agreement but 'on my terms'

Pluralism Engagement  
(Cosmopolitanism) (without total acceptance)

Relativism Acceptance (without engagement)

Nihilism Anarchy



david.obree@ed.ac.uk

