Articles

Ethics Leadership in Research, Healthcare and Organizational Systems: Commentary and Critical Reflections

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Author's Note

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Abstract

In the last decades there has arisen a greater awareness of the ever present need for critical academic reflection on the nature of ethics leadership and committees in research, healthcare, and organizational systems. Yet what is meant by ethics itself? How is ethics understood as a historical phenomenon? What challenges must ethics leaders face about their self-understanding and their role within an institution? What strategies might prove fruitful for future development in ethics leadership? What is the authentic role of ethics leaders and boards within an institution? If the work and service of ethics leaders and boards are to increase and deepen the ongoing life of an institution, then it is important for these leaders and bodies to engage in an ongoing and critical assessment of their identity, their self-understanding, their mission, their specific services, and the ways in which they can become a proactive part of the evolving richness that research, healthcare, and other types of institutions provide for the life and welfare of society and its citizens. This article explores these issues by way of academic commentary and reflection in the hope of stimulating ethics leaders and boards toward new and unprecedented self-understanding and servant leadership.

Keywords: ethics, ethics leadership, ethics education, ethical decision-making.

Introduction

In the last century, the dialogue between academic inquiry/scientific discovery and ethics has undergone unprecedented development. This development is completely understandable given the enduring questions and critical reflections that have arisen from a necessary tension between a consideration of what is possible for human beings to discover or invent, and how such discoveries and inventions may impact the good of individuals, societies, and cultures. This is a healthy and critical tension that has as its ultimate objective the preservation and advancement of "The Good" and even "The Best."

Yet the dialogue between discovery/invention and ethics has also developed and deepened because of real historical tragedies that arose from a lack of ethics education or awareness, an inability to engage in mature ethical discernment, or ever-possible problems due to less-than-positive motivations. In response to such incidents, governments and societies have enacted diverse regulations and set up oversight bodies to ensure that "The Good" is always maintained. Such provisions have great importance in research of all disciplines, in healthcare and human services, and in organizational systems and their mission development.

Yet a casual observation of some sets of regulations -- or of the activities of some various ethics leadership bodies, or boards or committees -- makes one wonder: What is their strategic purpose? What is their understanding of "ethics" itself? What is their role in ethical leadership within their institution? What approaches have ethics leadership bodies evolved that may not be as helpful as others? What strategies might be envisioned that will help ethics leaders and committees to maintain their ultimate purpose in the most beneficial way?

Given the essential and diverse roles of ethics leadership bodies in research, healthcare, and organizational systems, there is a need in this age to come to a richer understanding of the nature of ethics itself and of how ethics promotes the best of all values systems while seeking to prevent problems and errors. Upon this foundation, it is necessary for ethics leadership and ethics bodies to engage in critical self-reflection upon their own role, style, approach, and meaning within the scheme of an organization's life and culture. Ethics leaders in diverse ways call researchers, healthcare leaders, and professionals to the task of living up to the highest values. It is equally important, then, that ethics leaders and committees engage in that same activity for themselves and for the ongoing development of their service on behalf of others.

Ethics leadership in society has always been a constant and critically important factor for academic, professional, and personal life. This article will seek to promote and undergird the essential role of ethics leadership in research, in healthcare, and in organizational systems. To do so, it will be necessary to address the fundamental nature of ethics itself, its place in the human historical context, several areas where quality improvement and change are needed, and several strategies for future growth and development. Lastly, what will be posited briefly is a powerful metaphor by which

ethics leaders or ethics boards can understand their ongoing and essential role in the communities they are privileged to serve.

Ethics: Its Nature, Its Domain

If one is to understand the critical and powerful role of ethics leaders and structures in research, healthcare and organizational systems, a grounded understanding of ethics itself is important. Yet how is ethics best understood? From the most casual observations of daily conversation, one would have to conclude that the term itself is used and understood in a wide variety of ways. Like all other terms in common vocabulary, the word *ethics* is connotative or, in linguistic terms, tensive. In other words, it is "many meaninged." It is a rich term but one, like others, that can easily slip into diverse usages that may or may not be helpful.

Over the course of centuries in Western scholarship, ethics has been associated with a wide number of related academic and professional disciplines: law, general philosophy, moral philosophy, regulatory compliance; and, in ecclesiastical domains, the disciplines of moral theology and canon law. The relationship between these domains or disciplines and that of ethics is understandable, reasonable, and appropriate. However, it is unfortunate that there has also grown up in common parlance a reductionist tendency to equate ethics with one or more of these disciplines. A prudent review of this tendency would reveal that a complete equation of ethics with, perhaps, moral theology or canon law or law itself does not fit with the understanding of the nature of ethics as it has evolved, at least in Western civilization. Areas such as public law or church law deal with statute and social parameters that reflect the common boundaries that citizens agree are needed to uphold a peaceful and reasonable society. Moral theology reflects the nature of what is "good" or "evil" based upon a particular system of religious beliefs. In these two instances, equating ethics with any of these disciplines would give rise to a diversity of perspectives that could not sustain broad human agreement. Therefore, this manuscript will assume that ethics itself is a larger umbrella underneath which all of the other disciplines can well be understood and appreciated. Yet besides these academic perspectives, how is the term "ethics" understood in daily usage?

Within common parlance, "ethics" is often used to signify compliance with various standards or with law. This is a very common approach and one that is completely understood. The goal of ethics in this perspective is to regulate behavior or customs or requirements. In many cases, it is an approach well suited to social or cultural clarity. It gives rise to codes of ethics and behavior that ensure that social or group expectations are met uniformly and without deviation. In addition to this perspective, cultures and societies also speak of a group's particular "ethic." An ethic in this second sense means an organized pattern or image that conveys a particular value or set of principles to which individuals are meant to conform their own identity. "Ethic" in this sense is also a familiar means for conveying the image of a nation's self-understanding within the family of cultures. In the United States, for example, Americans utilize the

ethic of "hard work" or "fair play" as a way of expressing one's identity as a citizen. Ethic in this sense is a means of conveying an image, a perspective, a corporate self-understanding. Yet, is ethics only about either ethical compliance or an ethic-image? In both cases, the end result of these two perspectives is conformity toward achieving an already defined goal of the perfect or The Good. They also define "good" versus "bad." Is this what classical thought describes as "ethics?" Does ethics in the highest sense only mean compliance or the avoidance of evil? What of new ideas of what constitutes The Good? What perspective allows for a culture or nation or society to grow and develop and evolve?

Classical and contemporary academicians have posited that ethics is concerned ultimately with the character of persons and/or institutions. In fact, that is its origin in language, its primordial linguistic definition from the Greek *ethos*. Ethical formation is, then, a question of character development for individuals, groups, institutions, societies, and cultures. It is the foundation upon which individuals and societies can choose "The Good" freely and without undue coercion. It is not just about good versus evil. Rather, ethics is an emergent and evolving discovery of what constitutes "The Good." In fact, ethics is what allows for and assists explorations of sometimes competing "goods." From this perspective, ethics does not just look to the prevention of evil, but equally or more so to the promotion of The Good. It might then be posited that ethics in this regard is an academic and professional "domain" under which all of the ethics-related disciplines discussed previously are gathered in a type of synergy. Therefore, if one were to explore the meaning and critically important contributions and services of ethics leaders and structures, it would be an enriching and illuminative experience to reflect upon how such leaders, committees, boards, or other bodies are as much about enriching and promoting the character of persons and institutions as they are about preventing non-compliance or failure to meet obligations and expectations. This raises the question of the context of ethics leadership and how this has developed over time and within the human condition.

Historical Phenomenology

Over the last century, historical circumstances have given rise to the need for greater and more comprehensive leadership and structures to oversee and ensure compliance with ethical standards within healthcare institutions, research entities, and organizations of all types. Clearly, the rise of genetics and other scientific discoveries and complex medical decision-making for patient-centered care such as the Karen Ann Quinlan case have made eminently sensible the need for professional ethics consultations and the development of healthcare ethics committees, or the older termed "bioethics" committees. In research, the incidents of problems and tragedies are well known, from the Holocaust of World War II to the Public Health Service Syphilis Experiments in Tuskegee, to more contemporary issues arising from the Jesse Gelsinger or Ellen Roche cases. Given these instances, the development of complex and demanding regulations and the role of Institutional Review Boards (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUC) has been an expected and rational response. In organizational

systems, clear contradictions between for-profit behaviors and the high ethical codes of leaders draw the attention of rank and file citizens to the need for greater ethical accountability in professional athletics, financial services, academic accreditation oversight for degree mills, and the need for stringent ethics oversight for elected officials' personal activities *viz a viz* their responsibilities to the public they serve. The existence and oversight of congressional or state level ethics committees and ethics leaders are not at all immune from expectations of the public whose taxes fund the salaries of elected officials in whom much trust has been placed.

Many comprehensive works have been written on the existence, historical development, operations, and benefits of ethics leadership and committees in healthcare institutions, research institutions, and organizations of all types. An appreciation of the individual historical details is easily attainable. However, there are two other perspectives that are central, though often not explored, for realizing the critical importance of ethics leadership and structures such as healthcare ethics committees or IRBs.

More deeply than recounting the rise of individual ethics structures, the role of ethics in medicine, healthcare, science, academics, research, and organizational life is simply incontrovertible. Recall that ethics is ultimately about *ethos*, namely the character of individuals and institutions. With this as a backdrop, it is easy to understand that the "ethos perspective" is a continual part of human culture, human ingenuity, and human systems. Ethics as *ethos* is a perennial and absolutely essential partner in the wrestling match between what is The Possible and what is The Good. Ingenuity asks us to consider: "What *can* we do for others?" Ethics as *ethos* asks us: "What *should* we be doing for the good of others?" These questions necessarily collide with each other. The wrestling is not facile. It does not necessarily always end in truth. One need only recall the famous case of Galileo to see how fear and ignorance can influence negatively what should be a tense but fruitful dialogue between genius and ethics. One need only recall the horrors of the pediatric experiments of the Holocaust to see what happens when inquiry fails to partner with ethics. However, despite the numerous and egregious errors in judgment that have been and still will be made, there is a need to understand from the historical, as well as more philosophical, perspectives that there is an unquestioned, sensible, and constant relationship between human ingenuity and ethics. The relationship is tense and often conflictual. Yet the sparks that it has raised in human history are absolutely critical to human development and even human survival. The real task is not to avoid the sparks, but to keep them from developing into a destructive conflagration that destroys both genius and persons.

Yet there is something deeper. How and where does one find ethics and its place in the contest of competing values and initiatives? There is a tendency to believe that ethics is born solely from a set of absolute values or truths that exist above or outside of the human experience. There are many philosophical and spirituality perspectives that have posited this over time. Wise and prudent philosophers and theologians of many traditions have debated this since the rise of speculative thought in human culture. Yet

one perspective reminds us that "human meaning" is not something that can be found or interpreted from outside or above. In short, human meaning is not communicated to persons "hierarchically." It is not a "top-down" experience. While human persons are taught much and formed from outside the self, human beings ultimately must realize who they are and what their nature is from within their own skin, within their own condition as individuals and members of human culture. In other words, the discovery of "truth" is found not hierarchically but "historically," i.e., within the self and within one's lived condition. From this perspective, then, it is important to consider that ethics leadership, ethics structures, and even ethics regulations and procedures must find their authenticity and validity from within the actual lived experience of the professions, the organizations, the individual professionals, and the lives of the people that these all serve. To act as if ethical validity is found only in subservience to written regulations without considering their interpretation or adaptation to local circumstances, to individuals, and to emergently new phenomena leads to fruitless tensions and conflicts that distract the corporate attention from meaningful considerations and tasks at hand. Hence, there is a clear need for ethics experts to consider and respect that servant leadership must be carried out from within the life of an organization to benefit its Greater Good.

It is very unfortunate that this more expansive "historical" perspective is neither realized nor explored for its far-reaching implications for ethics leadership in research, healthcare, and organizational systems. In fact, a greater understanding of the deeply important historical nature of authentic ethics leadership would well assist institutions, communities, ethics leaders, ethics committee members, and other personnel to avoid some of the trends that otherwise cloud the presence and vastly positive contributions that ethics leaders and structures do and can make now and into the future. With this in mind, one might reflect on three specific patterns that coalesce diverse observations and experiences that some have made about problem areas in ethics services and structures.

Contemporary Challenges for Ethics Leadership

Whenever standards, rules or regulations must be enforced, there inevitably will be tensions and conflicts. This is simply the nature of things. For those in healthcare, research, or organizational systems who have had any experience with ethics leadership or related structures, it is likely very easy to recall such tensions and issues arising from competing individuals or competing interests. Sometimes, unfortunately, there are instances of real violations that transcend a lack of understanding or awareness. It is notable that in cases of research misconduct (i.e. plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication) ethics leaders must establish that such instances were committed knowingly, intentionally, and recklessly. In other words, the processing of ethics problems must clearly take into account intentionality as well as actual behaviors. However, beyond these expected tensions, there are other possible observations or perceptions about local ethics leadership or structures that point to a need for such leaders or structures to engage in deeply critical self-examination, bluntly honest self-scrutiny, and ongoing development and improvement. Such self-inquiry is critical to ongoing positive development as

well as to avoiding strategies or postures that would obviate the qualitative work and high intention of ethics leadership and oversight. From those who have been extremely well experienced with ethics leadership and structures in research, healthcare, and organizational systems, there are a number of less-than-positive experiences that require mature and honest reflection. Such experiences seem to coalesce around three postures: lexification, reification, and deification**.**

Lexification

Academic law is one of the richest areas of human study. The average citizen is well aware of the importance of law and its need for social order. Yet there is a tendency on the part of the non-lawyer to wish to reduce the intricacies of law or of related regulations to facile or overly simplistic rules for the road. In addition, there are some organizational members who are not lawyers themselves but who, without consulting counsel, engage with others as if they are. The results of this unfortunate posture and approach are many. In ethics leadership and in ethics structures, what often can occur is a compliance approach that is rigidly legalistic and undermines the intention or letter of the law itself. Lexification is a process wherein individuals or groups strip the law and regulations of their essential complexity (in fact, their beauty) in favor of a rigid oversimplification that does not respect the need for adaptation, interpretation and even consultation with those who really are the experts in the law itself. This tendency occurs for a wide variety of reasons. Some institutions insist upon high metrics of productivity that force ethics structures to adopt procedures that are swift and seemingly easy. Yet such procedures cannot withstand the complexities of modern research, healthcare, or strategic planning in organizations. In some other instances, the human tendency to self-aggrandizing power can become a harmful factor that undermines and/or might even contradict actual ethical discernment. In any event, the problem of lexification is one that can undermine achieving the best solutions or best decisions in a given situation. Law is not the same as legalistic regulatory compliance. This is not to say that regulatory compliance or the law is not essential. What is problematic is an approach that reduces law and regulation to minimalist unthinking scorecards for the sake of personal power or for the sake of facile decision-making by simple vote of the majority at hand.

Reification

Along the same lines, it is important to note that the human animal always tends toward adopting that which is easy and immediate. This is not new in human experience. We look for the facile. Yet ethics is not a facile experience. In all cultures and civilizations, philosophers and thoughtful persons have cautioned that prudence requires care and time. Situations and decisions must be approached gradually to realize their long-range implications. Unlike the adolescent who yearns for immediate or instantaneous gratification, ethical discernment is neither swift nor easy. Many factors must be considered. In contemporary human culture, the advent of the Information Age brought with it a quantum leap in our quest for speed and ease. The widespread

use of computer processes and social networking has opened the doors to new and unprecedented velocities. When engaged in such velocities, it is easier to deal with "things" than it is with "processes." As some observe, this has affected the understanding of ethics leadership and how it influences decision-making in research, healthcare, and organizational systems. Some computer programs now allow a healthcare provider to type in a question with a problem and receive an automatic response from a data repository that looks for similarities in certain factors. Yet such programs do not know the mood of the room, the patient and surrogate wishes, the immediate factors. This image of a computer giving easy answers to swift questions about complex issues portrays the problem. There are some tendencies that would turn ethics itself into a "thing." A "res," as Latin experts would call it. Yet ethics is not a thing. It is not a loadstone of corporate information that is passed on intact from one age to the next. Ethics is a process of human inquiry. It evolves, matures, deepens. It requires intense re-interpretation and change. It always undergoes what social scientists refer to as "hermeneutics." An interesting word, hermeneutics. It comes from the Greek god, Hermes. Hermes would take a message, not of his own, but of the other gods, and cross the waters of chaos to translate it for human hearing. Yet when he arrived, he assumed another shape to trick the hearer into listening to the message. In other words, he "subverted their assumptions" so that they would be jarred to hear the truth in fresh ways. Real ethics is just like that. To engage in ethical leadership is not to tap into a loadstone, a pre-existing mass of ready-made answers. Rather it is to engage in the tense and extraordinarily powerful dialectic between principle and experience. Ethics leaders and structures do well to consider this most powerful paradigmatic shift from what some observe in today's ethical decision-making experiences.

Deification

It is commonly said that knowledge is power. The need to comply with vast and diverse regulations and codes of conduct has led institutions to require that ethics leaders or ethics structures become experts in these areas. Such leaders and committees are essential to the institution's ability to stay within the necessary boundaries of appropriate and credible behaviors. The need for ethics leaders and ethics structures is therefore obvious. Yet what is invested in their presence? Indeed, they hold and upkeep a repository of knowledge that is essential for the life of the institution and its continued good order, productivity, mission completion, and ongoing strategic development. However, the powerful presence of ethics leadership and ethics structures can subliminally lead to investing them with a valuation that transcends the ordinary. In some instances, there are those in the respective institution who treat such leaders and structures with an almost divine-like respect and deference. Perhaps it is the nature of ethics itself as a discipline or a subliminal association of ethics to traditional religion that leads to such deference. Regardless of the motivation, deification (or divinization) is deeply problematic for institutions and also for ethics leaders themselves. For institutions, to place sole authority only in ethics leadership is to become increasingly deaf to the other voices of institutional life that are equally part of the entire orchestral

lure of ongoing and rich mission development. For ethics leaders and ethics structures, when such deference is afforded and accepted as the norm, there is a deep danger of becoming self-satisfied and comfortable. The "deferred-to" ethicist or ethics committee, or individual ethics committee member such as an IRB member, suddenly no longer deepens the body of knowledge, no longer grows and develops. In fact, the danger of self-satisfaction is so real that it begins to erode and destroy the servant leadership posture that is at the heart of ethics itself. Sometimes this occurs tragically in the ethics leader or the ethics committee member who begins to believe in his or her special role almost as if divinely decreed. Deification in ethics leadership is that principal and cardinal vice that undermines and contradicts the very nature of ethics itself and its mission to promote The Good above all other motivations --- including those of an individual ethics committee member who might tend toward self-aggrandizement, the idolatry of the self and one's self-importance.

A Need for Balance

Lexification, reification, deification. Problematic yet very understandable. After all, ethics leaders, ethics committees and their members are human persons after all. There is a need for institutions to balance out the lived ethics experience to keep these and other problematic areas from eroding the benefits and essential services of ethics leadership. Such was part of the genius the Institute of Medicine imparted in its 2003 classic study of human research protections, *Responsible Research: A Systems Approach to Protecting Research Participants*. In that scholarly work, a recommendation was made that IRB's would be re-imaged as "Ethics Review Boards" as part of a peer system of interconnected but distinct review bodies whose corporate work with one another would engage in prudent and mature ethical discernment that addressed complexities and human factor as a collegial system of reflection and decision-making. Much of what the Institute of Medicine addressed in this work regarding human research protections might well be applied interdisciplinarily and fruitfully to healthcare ethics leadership and to organizational systems.

Beyond this one example from the Institute of Medicine, there are other vastly pluriform historical experiences that can give rise to effective strategies to secure the best academic and professional services for ethics leadership. Such strategies can also assist in avoiding every tendency that might undermine the needs of the healthcare, research and organizational communities which ethics leaders and committees are called to serve. One set of principles may be of particular importance to all types of institutions and to the mission that each institution must meet and develop for the public trust.

New Horizons for Authentic and Effective Ethics Leadership

Ethics, both as a theory and as an applied science, is complex and ever changing. Precisely because of its inherent tie to human nature and human experience, it is always in a state of flux. Given the rapidity of its disciplinary nature and its need for constant

reinterpretation and application, what might be a useful strategy or best practice for ethics leadership and for the diverse services of many types of ethics committees or structures in healthcare, research and organizational systems?

Since 2005 and under the inspiration of Lee Shulman, PhD, now its emeritus president, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has published a series of landmark research studies within its Preparation for the Professions Program regarding the initial and continuing graduate level education of the traditional and more contemporary professions. These research studies have analyzed the educational preparation of those preparing for careers in law, engineering, academic theology, pastoral ministry, medicine, nursing, and education itself. The works that have been completed have engaged in in-depth analyses of the various subject matters and the pedagogies used for professional education. Across all of the volumes published there has emerged a tripartite approach that would be useful for ethics leaders and committees to adopt for understanding their own academic and professional development as well as their own means of serving the members of their organizations: a) academic knowledge and its interpretation; b) professional skills and their contextualization; and c) ethical formation and its "price."

Academic Knowledge and Its Interpretation

As previously mentioned, due to its inherent ties to human nature and human history, ethics itself is a vibrant and living academic field. It is always "*in viam*," namely, always on the road into deeper regions of understanding. Human experience is ever in dialogue with the human mind to discover what is The Good or what is The Best in human nature and human activity. With this as a backdrop, it is no small wonder that those who lead ethical inquiry or provide ethics analyses and services must remain abreast of the dynamic nature of ethics and how it applies to various emerging phenomena in culture and history. Like any other body of knowledge, ethics is ever expanding. Authentic ethics leadership requires a posture of academic humility, not as in deprecation but as in academic respect for the "humus," the groundwork of the field of inquiry itself. Ethics leaders and ethics committee members have a responsibility to realize and understand the Ethics Tradition as a living body of knowledge that grows ever larger. In addition, and drawing upon the work of the Carnegie Foundation for educating those in theology, there is a need for ethics leaders and committee members to become engaged in the ongoing interpretation of the meaning of ethics as a body of knowledge. Confronting what ethical experience is and how it is diversely understood is critical for the best possible utility of ethical theory to a particular situation at a given point in time and space.

Professional Skills and Their Contextualization

Ethics, however, is not an abstruse academic art or science. Quite conversely, it has immediacy to the lived experience of human individuals and human communities.

It is therefore an applied body of knowledge that demands particularly high levels of understanding and skill for absorption, adaptation, and dynamic applicability. While ethics principles, perhaps in patient decision-making or in human research protections, may appear as constants, their application is always nuanced and always flowing. Hence, there is a need for ethics leaders and ethics structures or committees to be open to new and deeper professional skills development. How does this principle or that regulatory requirement apply to a particular research protocol and its intended scope of work? How does this or that understanding of human agency impact the cultural structures of the women and men of an overseas culture when they present for healthcare intervention? These and other types of general questions always will arise from within the ethics context and will undoubtedly challenge the institution, the professional provider or academic, the patient or research participant, and those who are to be well informed ethics resources for all of them. The development of analytic skills and professional reasoning also requires another approach from the Carnegie's work on theology, namely the challenge of contextualization. As previously stated, ethics and its application are neither once and for all, nor are they applicable universally without some measure of interpretation. The interpretation of ethics requirements will depend logically upon the context that is posed at any given place and time. Ethics leaders must be able to apply the body of ethics knowledge and regulatory requirements through well-honed professional analysis that is able to interpret situations and boundaries, but within specific contexts and epochs. Ethics is intimately tied to the human condition. It is, like its human worldview, ever able to respond to human questions that are themselves as dynamic as the humans who ask them.

Ethical Formation and Its "Price"

But all this must take its toll. Unlike other bodies of knowledge, ethics has an immediacy to the human condition and to human nature that logically would seem to impact upon the ethicist, the ethics leader, or members of an ethics committee of any type. The Carnegie Foundation's research discovered demanding, intricate and intriguing curricular pedagogies that professional education requires of public leaders in areas such as healthcare and medicine, education, academic theology and also pastoral ministry. These professions themselves have exacting codes of conduct. However, the research of the Carnegie Foundation gives rise to an important consideration. Are codes of conduct or "ethical education" in the professions aimed only at the behaviors of the professionals themselves? Or is there something deeper? It is clear that behavioral aspirations alone are not sufficient. Rather there is a deeper sense of ethics that is required, namely "ethos-formation." In other words, this is the familiar "character formation" discussed earlier in this work. Character formation is not just about adopting regulatory stances or meeting requirements in the spirit of regulatory compliance. Character formation opens the doorway to substantive change within the individual person and in that person's professional affiliations. For ethics leaders and ethics structures, this is profound. While healthcare ethics questions, or ethics requirements for research protections, must be central to the leader's or committee's oversight obligations, there is a need for leaders and

structures to look into the mirror and ask how they are realizing in the flesh and blood of their own leadership the values and requirements they are exacting upon others. What impact is being made upon the person and life of the ethics leader or ethics committee member? What changes are these leaders making in themselves that they would require of others? If ethics leadership and services are to be authentic and reach their highest fulfillment for The Good of the institution and its professional members, then the same questions that are asked of the healer or the researcher must be asked of the ethics leader or committee member. If not, then how ethical or authentic is the leadership of the ethicist or ethics committee?

Conclusion: Creating Communities of Wisdom

In the last decade, much has been written and lectured in the area of ethical leadership in various professions, especially those that touch deeply the public trust. Of particular interest is the international scholarship and insight of Elizabeth Holmes, PhD, and the work of the Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership located at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. In her work, Dr. Holmes has called leaders of organizations, including those in research and healthcare, to consider very carefully the factors and stages needed for authentic and value-full ethical decision-making. Yet there is a question that arises from this immensely important approach and similar work being explored by her and other colleagues such as Dr. Al Pierce at the National Defense University, and at other institutions. What arises is not just the challenge for the individual ethics leader or the individual professional. Rather it is the long-range price or "cost" to institutions, their inherent self-understanding, their mission, their service, and their place in the "economy" of human culture. No, not the "economy" of dollars and cents. Rather the original meaning of the term "economy" as found in ancient Greek. The term "*econome*" means a household, not commerce. A household is a place of identity for a family or a lineage or a legacy. In this regard, the price of authentic and value-full ethical leadership is a challenge to the "*econome*" of contemporary research, healthcare, educational, or other institutions that serve the public trust.

In the past decades, our institutions have sought to reduce costs, raise efficiencies, and increase mission effectiveness. This is a highly valued series of goals especially in these harsh economic times. Yet the adoption of "best business practices" seems to have occurred in a rapid and perhaps uncritical manner. While the adoption of best business practices is important for healthcare, research or education, it is equally and critically even more important to remember that healthcare, research and education are not themselves businesses *per se*. They are, in fact, human services for the sake of the public trust and to ensure the highest Good for societies and individuals. Recalling these important roots is at the very heart of the service ethics leaders and ethics structures have within their organizations. For while other administrative offices call the attention of the organization to various important factors of "what it does" for a living, ethics leaders are called upon to remind the organization of "who it is" and "who it serves" on a daily basis. Ethics leadership is the central and critical prophetic voice that calls the institution

back to the meaning of its existence and forward to its powerful role for the future. While others ensure the institution remains productive and on track for quantitative efficiency, ethics leaders and ethics committees must ensure that institutions remain on track for quality service through a consistent identity that embodies the very values of what the institution says it is about. Ethics leaders and ethics committee members do this best when they embody it in their own presence and processes lest they be accused of being unable to practice that which they enjoin upon others.

For communities that would adopt these aspects of servant leadership, there is always the possibility of newness of life and purpose. In fact, authentic ethics leadership is a central and important means for the life of research, healthcare, education, and other organizational systems. These ever need to make a quantum leap from being preoccupied solely with compliance to becoming caught up in the expansive demands of integrity. They need continually to be on the road from being institutions of information or knowledge alone, to becoming Communities of Wisdom --- communities whose prudence, insight, and professional giftedness add significantly to the quality of life of those whose needs drive them closer to the fiery Promethean desires of ingenuity and human care.

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