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Calvin College Worldview lectures, 2009-2010

Overall rubric: Care and Justice in Medicine

### **Introduction**

Contemporary medicine provides us with an increasingly paradoxical puzzle. As medicine becomes technologically more sophisticated, it can do more, but it also costs more, producing the paradox that the more we do for some, the fewer resources there are to care for others. We can extend human life to a degree undreamed of a century ago, but that very extension can come at the cost of isolating people from their loved ones at the moment they need them most—the moment of death. Medicine’s very success threatens to undermine its central goals. These lectures address this paradox, offering ways of addressing it by focusing on the nature of care and its relationship to the practice of medicine.

### **Following are possible lecture topics:**

#### 1. Care, Justice and Medicine

Description: The term ‘health care’ indicates the centrality of care to the practice of medicine. In the contemporary world, however, the rapidly increasing cost of providing care to patients, combined with the increasingly sophisticated and expensive technology of medicine force us to confront the ways that providing care and doing justice to all come into conflict. This lecture examines the way that getting clear on what care is (and isn’t) can help us think about what the limits of good medicine might be. In particular, we will draw on some of the resources of both the Christian tradition and contemporary ethics of care to think about the paradoxes of unlimited love in a finite, budget-restricted world.

*Suitable for an academic audience. Disciplines: Philosophy, Medicine, Nursing, Health Sciences, Religious Studies, Sociology.*

#### 2. Medical Dilemmas: Care and Technology

Description: Both spectacular successes and deep problems of medicine are the product of our increasingly sophisticated technology. Technology allows us to extend lives in almost miraculous ways; it also makes the process of dying an extended experience of agony for many people. And technology itself carries within it an imperative to put it to use, so that from the fact that we have the technology available to us, we feel compelled to use it. The use of technology needs to be subordinated to the primary medical task—that of caring for patients—in order to make sure that medicine both can do what it ought, and that it does not outgrow the limits of our resources.

*Suitable for generally educated audience. Of particular relevance for those interested in Health Care, Public Policy, and Ethics.*

### 3. Christians, Technology, and Health Care

Description: Medicine plays an increasingly important role in the lives of almost everyone alive today. It has the potential for enormous good, but also the power to take over our lives and remake them in its own image. This lecture addresses the power and perils of modern medicine from a Christian perspective, identifying the ways that medicine is a powerful force for good in our lives as well as the ways that medical practice can become problematic or even damaging for central human relationships.

*Suitable for general audiences, Christian and non-Christian alike, with an interest in the relationship between faith and the culture of medicine.*