

## IT'S ABOUT TIME

- I. End-of-life decision-making (decisions to forgo life-sustaining treatment)
  - A. What is the question to which this 'text' is the answer?
  - B. Determining instead of being determined by 'fate'
  - C. Given that we are fated to die, what does it mean to determine fate
  - D. This presupposes that we can and do know what we are doing.
  
- II. Can and do we know what we are doing?
  - A. The so-called 'easy' case of the competent patient
    - 1. The patient who is terminally ill or imminently dying
    - 2. The *chronically* ill patient
    - 3. The catastrophically injured patient
  
  - B. The patient who lacks decision-making capacity
    - 1. Even if we have a basis for saying that we 'know' the 'time' to withdraw treatment and anticipate that death might occur, is it the health care professionals' right or the families' right to determine that 'time'?
    - 2. We do not make such determinations *with* these patients, but for them.
    - 3. Because this is so, then unless determining when withdrawal of treatment is to occur is not integral to end-of-life decision-making, then either it is the case that we may cease involving competent patients in this aspect of these deliberations, or we must acknowledge that the rights of competent and incompetent patients are not and cannot be regarded as the same.
  
- III. Decision-making under uncertainty
  - A. Because we cannot know as precisely as we would like what ought to be done, we need to be more attentive to the 'how' of decision-making.
  - B. What matters where the how is concerned?
    - 1. Promoting/respecting human dignity
    - 2. Encouraging professional/personal self-scrutiny
    - 3. Promoting rational (shared) decision-making
    - 4. Discouraging deceit, coercion, manipulation (power plays)
    - 5. Educating those involved in/affected by such decisions
  - C. Why it is and what it means that 'it's about time'.