

Hippocratic Ethics



ETHICS: BIOETHICS (FALL 2014)
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Hippocratic Oath



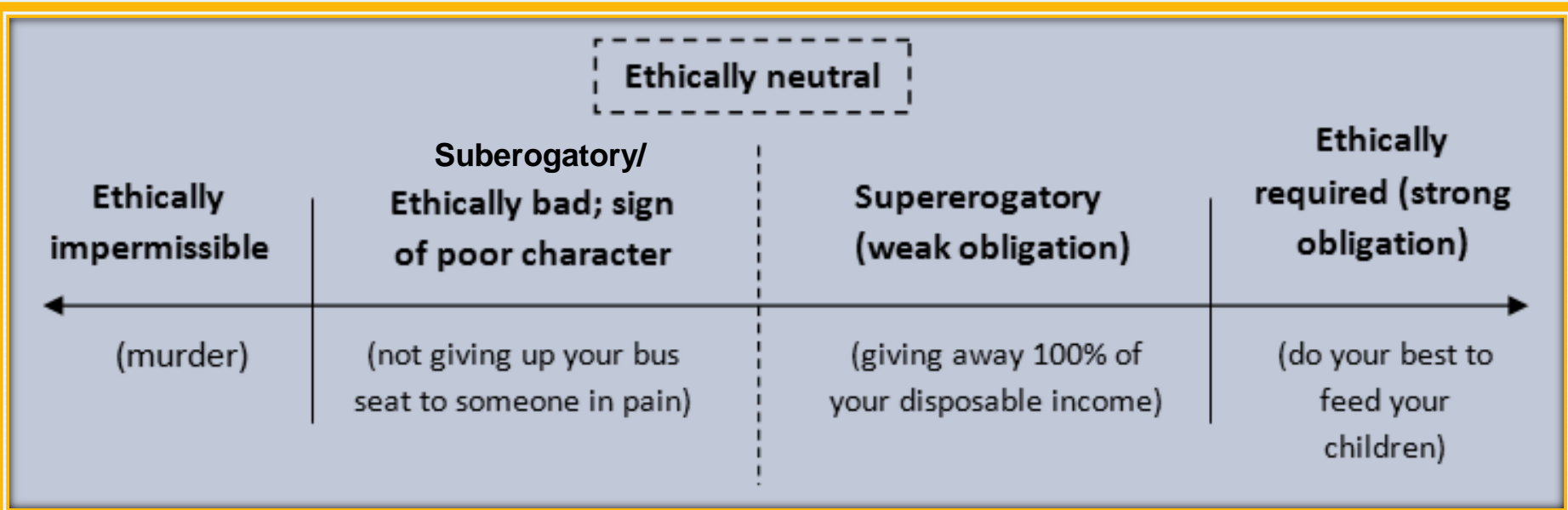
- Oath voluntarily taken by many medical school graduates
 - Variations on original text
 - Often considered foundation of medical **professional ethics** – those obligations and responsibilities someone has *in virtue* of his/her chosen profession
- Virtues, duties of a physician according to HO?
 - Passing on skills, perpetuating the profession
 - Not doing harm or injustice to patients
 - Knowing the boundaries of one's profession
 - Respecting confidentiality, privacy
 - ...others?

Hippocratic Oath: Questions to Ask



- **How binding should the HO be in the daily practice of medical professionals?**
- **Do you agree the HO ought to serve as the bedrock for medical professional ethics?**
 - What are the benefits and limits of the HO?
- **Consider these differing viewpoints:**
 - The HO underscores the ethics *inherent to* the profession of medicine.
 - HOs have “a generalized air of ‘best wishes’ about them, being near-meaningless formalities devoid of any influence on how medicine is truly practiced” (Dr. David Graham)

Types of Duties



- *Prima facie* vs. absolute obligations/duties
- Negative vs. positive rights/obligations
 - Correlativity thesis: $R \rightarrow O$

Heroism and Cowardice in the Face of SARS



- Costs/risks to HCWs
 - Own safety
 - Safety of loved ones, contacts
 - Isolation, quarantine
 - Threat of punishment in some areas if stepped away
- Obligations to self, loved ones, public, patients, other HCWs...
- Conflicting ideas re:
 - Professionally *required* to stay and treat?
 - *Supererogatory* to stay and treat?
 - *Permissible* not to stay and treat, but *suberogatory*?

Heroism and Cowardice in the Face of SARS



- How would you characterize the actions of HCWs – local and foreign– who helped in the face of an unknown epidemic?
 - What if doing so involved extraordinary personal cost, such as subjecting one’s own children to increased risk?
- How would you characterize the actions of HCWs—local and foreign—who were called on to help but did not?
- Should professional organizations take an ethical stance in cases like this, and if so, what should the stance be?
 - Does the Hippocratic Oath mandate certain actions?

Discussion:

The Case of Carlos & Consuela



- What are the conflicting professional obligations in this case?
 - How might those obligations be weighed differently depending on (e.g.) risks to the patient and to others?
- What are the moral costs of the different courses of action?
- Evaluate the contrasting views of Fleck and Angell in response.

Questions?



COMMENTS?