

Slide 1

**Against Empathy**  
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Alberta Health Services  
Clinical Ethics

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Slide 2

**2015/16 Humanity in Healthcare Series**

This four-part series will examine the relationship between the personhood of clinicians and the organizations they serve. By exploring four specific themes, hope to reflect a few broader questions: Do codes of ethics, organizational values, and corporate culture serve to enhance the authentic experience of care? Could institutionalized healthcare avail itself of the natural and beneficial caring aspects of human beings? Is authenticity essential to healthcare?

Part 2 *On the Roles of Humor in Healthcare*  
Part 3 *Reason and Desire in Healthcare*  
Part 4 *What is Dignity?*

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Slide 3

**Why empathy?**

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Slide 4

**Why empathy?**

- unquestioned virtue in health and professional pedagogy



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Slide 5

**Why empathy?**

- unquestioned virtue in health and professional pedagogy
- new critical work from moral psychology and x-phi



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Slide 6

**Jesse Prinz**

PRINZ, J. (2011), AGAINST EMPATHY. The Southern Journal of Philosophy, 49: 214–233. doi: 10.1111/j.2041-6962.2011.00069.x

Is Empathy Necessary for Morality? (Forthcoming in P. Goldie and A. Coplan (Eds.), Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives. Oxford University Press.)



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Slide 7



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Slide 8



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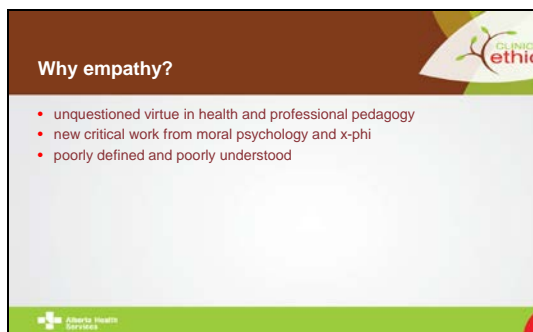
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Slide 9



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Slide 10

**Why empathy?**

- unquestioned virtue in health and professional pedagogy
- new critical work from moral psychology and x-phi
- poorly defined and poorly understood

What are the relevant questions today?

- should we use the concept of empathy in institutional design?
- is empathy dangerous?
- can empathy be taught?
- instead of empathy, what?



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Slide 11

**What is empathy?**



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Slide 12

**emotions in moral philosophy**

- Plato's reason/emotion dichotomy results in the reification of reason



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Slide 13

**emotions in moral philosophy**

- Plato's reason/emotion dichotomy results in the reification of reason and relegation of emotion to instinct/sentiment
- when moral philosophy is considered outside again outside theology, reason regains/retains a central focus with rare exception (Hume, Schopenhauer, James and the phenomenologists (Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger))



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Slide 14

**History of Empathy**

*Einführung* of Theodor Lipps (1851-1914) (Cassina 1800?) provides the first systematic examination of what is now referred to as the phenomenon of *mind-reading*, generally, the ability of people to come to understand the contents of another's mind.

While Lipps is concerned with a variety of questions, his account is similar to a much earlier one that introduces the important distinction I hope to discuss.



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Slide 15

**Prinz Definition**

The British moralists, including David Hume and Adam Smith, used "sympathy" in way that is similar to the way I want to use "empathy." Here Smith (1759: II.i): "Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator." My question, in the page that follow, is whether empathy so-defined is necessary for morality.



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Slide 16

**Aristotle's Definition of Empathy/Compassion**

- Three cognitive conditions must be met for Subject A to respond compassionately to Sufferer S.
  - Belief that the suffering must be serious
  - Belief that the person does not deserve the suffering
  - Belief that the Sufferer S shares similar possibilities and vulnerabilities with Subject A.



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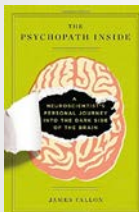
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Slide 17

**James Fallon cognitive -vs- emotional empathy**



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Slide 18

**The Need for Empathy and The Danger of Empathy**



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Slide 19

**The Death of Ivan Illych** (Louise and Aytmer Maude trans.)

He went. Everything took place as he had expected and as it always does. There was the usual waiting and the important air assumed by the doctor, with which I was so familiar (resembling that which he himself assumed in court), and the sounding and listening, and the questions which called for answers that were foregone conclusions and were evidently unnecessary, and the look of importance which implied that "if only you put yourself in our hands we will arrange everything — we know indubitably how it has to be done, always in the same way for everybody alike."



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Slide 20

It was all just as it was in the law courts. The doctor put on just the same air towards him as he himself put on towards an accused person. The doctor said that so-and-so indicated that there was so-and-so inside the patient, but if the investigation of so and-so did not confirm this, then he must assume that and that. If he assumed that and that, then...and so on. To Ivan Ilych only one question was important: was his case serious or not? But the doctor ignored the inappropriate question.... All this was just what Ivan Ilych had himself brilliantly accomplished a thousand times in dealing with men on trial. The doctor summed up just as brilliantly, looking over his spectacles triumphantly and even gaily at the accused.



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Slide 21

From the doctor's summing up Ivan Ilych concluded that things were bad, but that for the doctor, and perhaps for everybody else, it was a matter of indifference, though for him it was bad. And this conclusion struck him painfully, arousing in him a great feeling of pity for himself and of bitterness towards the doctor's indifference to a matter of such importance.



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Slide 22




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Slide 23




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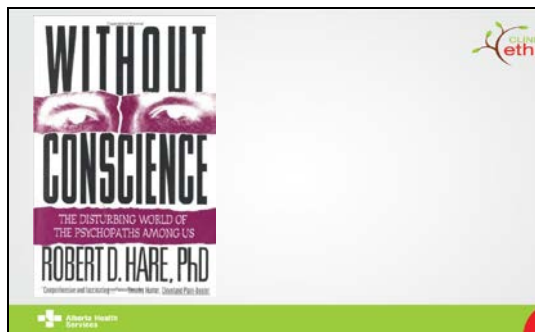
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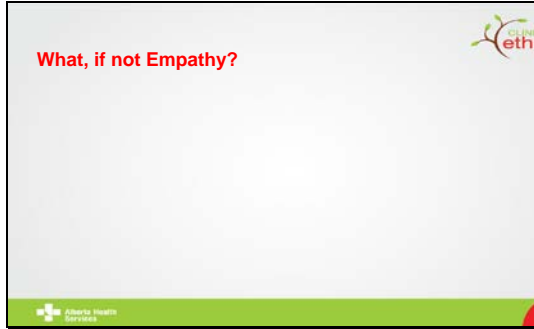
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What, if not Empathy?

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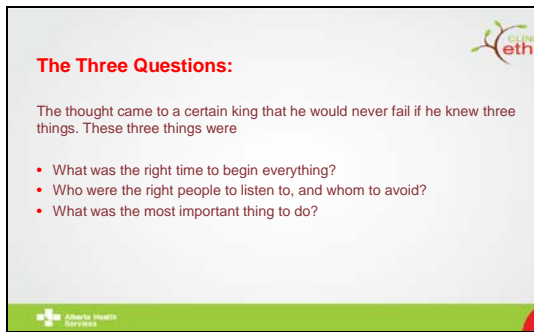
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**The Three Questions:**

The thought came to a certain king that he would never fail if he knew three things. These three things were

- What was the right time to begin everything?
- Who were the right people to listen to, and whom to avoid?
- What was the most important thing to do?

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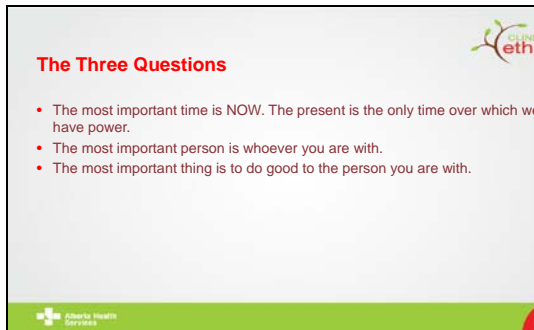
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**The Three Questions**

- The most important time is NOW. The present is the only time over which we have power.
- The most important person is whoever you are with.
- The most important thing is to do good to the person you are with.

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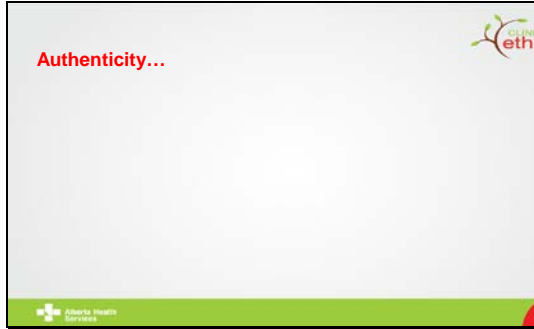
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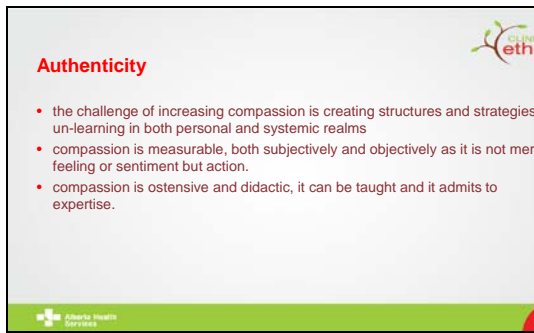
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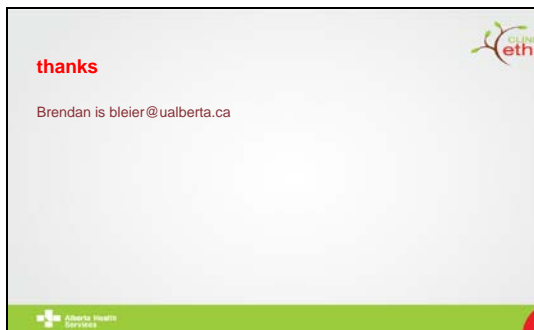
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