

# On the Lost Virtue of Hospitality -or- Whose Home is this Hospital?

Brendan Leier PhD

Clinical Ethicist UAH/Stollery

Assist. Clinical Professor

Dossetor Health Ethics Centre

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# Why Hospitality?

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- Universal Virtue
- Cardinal Virtue of Classical World
- Our current situation...

# What is Hospitality?

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- Latin *hospes/hostis* (*stranger*) + *polis* (*power*)
  - Hostel, Hospital, Hospes, Home, Hospitality
- Greek *Xenia* (*stranger*), i.e. (*Xenios Zeus*)
  - *hostis*, "stranger,"
  - *hostire*, "equalize"
  - protection
  - guidance

# The Virtue of Hospitality

Much like *eudaemonia*, hospitality is no longer recognized as an essential/fundamental moral virtue in society, nowadays passed off as etiquette.

Historically, hospitality was a central and near-universal cardinal virtue in the Western world both Hellenistic and Christendom, Vedic traditions, Islamic philosophy, Judaism, Chinese philosophy.

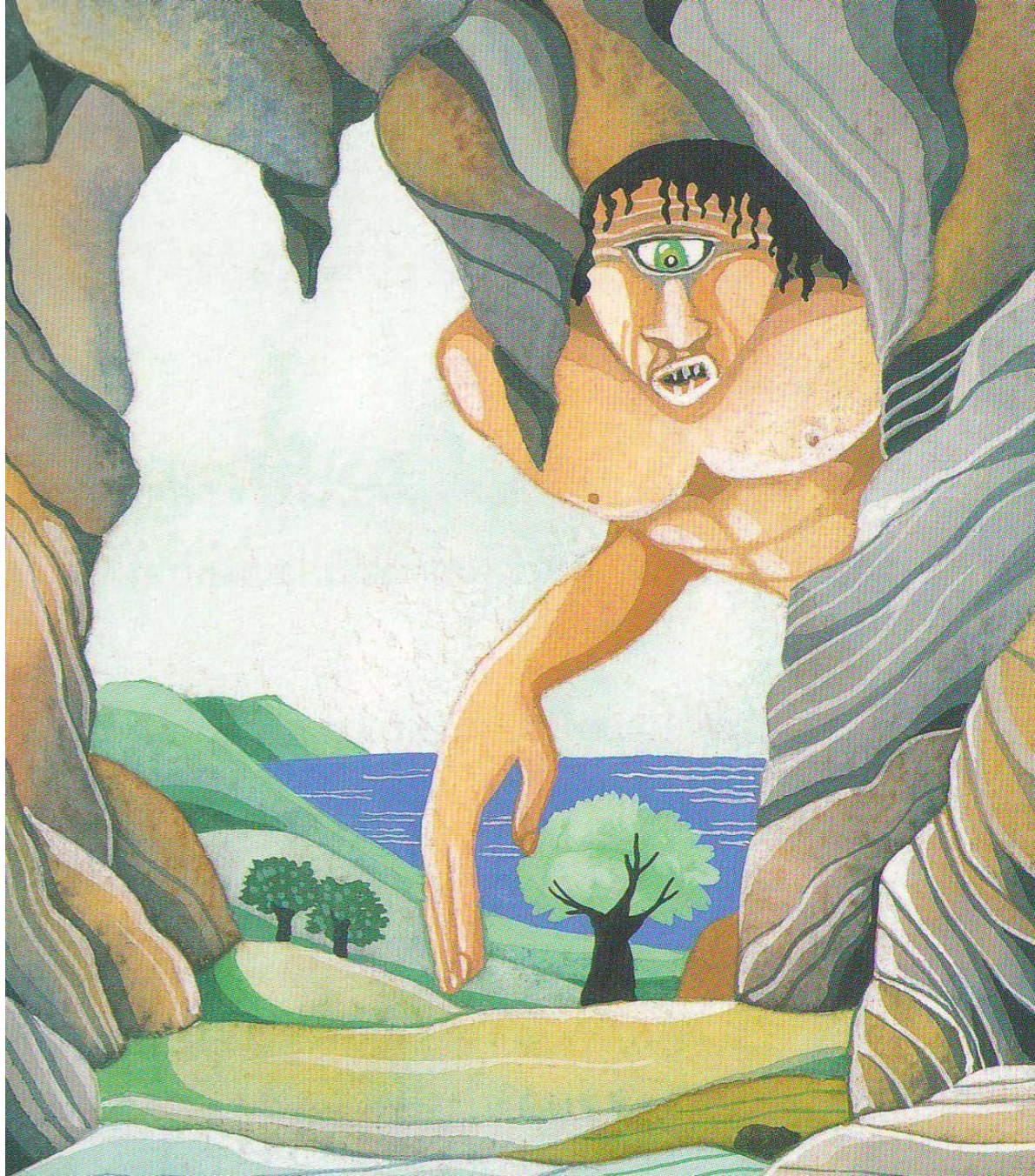


**Jupiter and Mercurius in the house of Philemon and Baucis"**  
by Peter Paul Rubens





# Hospitality in the Odyssey





## Hospitality in the Odyssey

- As a prototype of anti-hospitality and thus uncivilized, inhumane behavior, Homer creates Polyphemus the Cyclops who, instead of feeding guests, eats them. With Polyphemus and his fellow Cyclopes, Homer provides the philosophical anthropology congenial to anti-hospitality. The Cyclopes prize social atomism, considering themselves as self-sufficient individuals.

## Hospitality in the Odyssey

- This means that, spiritually, they do not fear the gods, and, temporally, they do not meet in the public square for political deliberation. Because their land provides ample goods and they need not engage in agriculture, the Cyclopes have little sense of dependency or vulnerability. Their curiosity about others is nonexistent. They have no ships, remaining self-satisfied as a stationary, non-journeying people.

# Hospitality in the Odyssey

- Ordinary humans are not at all like Cyclopes. Our lives are marked by interdependence and the need to toil for our sustenance. Even in technologically advanced societies, the vulnerability to natural forces out of our control remains ever present. We live in communities, accept reciprocal responsibilities, deliberate together, and, most of all, travel.

(Raymond D. Boisvert, (*Ethics is Hospitality*) Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association Volume 78 Issue 0 / 2004)

## Odysseus' return...

- The forester now led him to his hut
- and made a couch for him, with tips of fir
- piled for a mattress under a wild goat skin,
- shaggy and thick, his own bed covering.
- ... friend,
- rudeness to a stranger is not decency,
- poor though he may be, poorer than you.
- All wanderers and beggars come from Zeus.
- What we can give is slight but well-meant - all we dare.

# Cyclops Ethics or Virtue Ethics?

## **The Old**

- Hospitality
- *Ethos*
- *Eudaimonia*

## **The New**

- Customer Service
- Ethics
- Principlism



# Hospitality Lost

- Modern “sedentary city mind” replaces the medieval “pilgrim mind”

G. Santayana

- “*homo viator*” (man the wanderer) becomes “*homo sedentarius*” (sedentary man)

G. Marcel

# Hospitality Lost

- Illich – True hospitality is lost when the burden of hospitality is institutionalized.

# Is True Hospitality Forever Lost?

That Depends on the Answers to Two Questions:

- What Is the Nature of Homo Sedentarius?
- Whose Home Is this Hospital?









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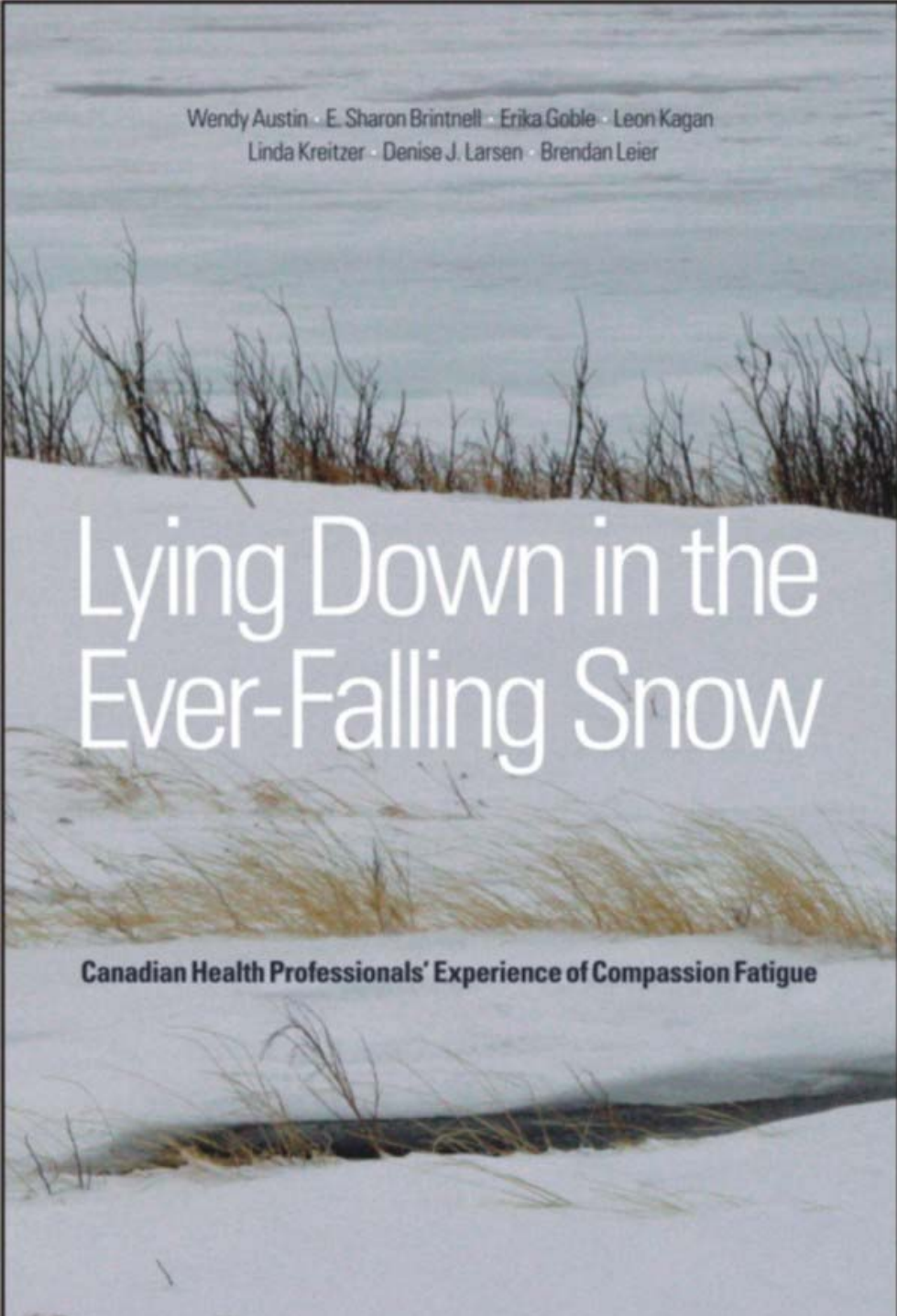
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- What patients dwell most upon after a healthcare encounter is the nature of the care they received, not the treatment, but the care.

# Levels of Hospitality

- The 'I': *Ethos* understood most properly as dwelling or habitat.
  - Does the hospitable organization protect its inhabitants?
  - Moral distress/compassion fatigue



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# Lying Down in the Ever-Falling Snow

**Canadian Health Professionals' Experience of Compassion Fatigue**

# Levels of Hospitality

- The 'I': *Ethos* understood most properly as dwelling or habitat.
- Unit/Service: Is this place my home?
- The Org?



**thanks!**

I am [bleier@ualberta.ca](mailto:bleier@ualberta.ca)

[www.capitalhealth.ca](http://www.capitalhealth.ca)