

### Fourth Short Paper: Final Paper, Part III

A brief but intense discussion followed Ron's argument. "Aren't you just basing your recommendation on the "Golden Rule" and dressing it up with references to this guy Kant?" Ted asked. Ron said Kant's ethics did not boil down to the "Golden Rule," but admitted he probably had not been clear enough in making his argument. He then went over it again, after which both Ted and Alice indicated that they understood. Alice then spoke.

"You each have given good arguments," she said. "I agree with you, Ted, that most often the right thing to do is what does the most good for all the people concerned—that's what I understood you to say, at least."

"That's what I said," Ted replied.

"I also agree that Mom's estate would be very helpful to all of us, perhaps most of all to me and my children. I'm certain, too, that if Mom were able to take part in our discussion she would urge us to refuse the operation and let her die for just that reason, just because that is what would do us the most good. That is the way she is. She has devoted her life to Dad and her children, and now to her grandchildren, too. You know, back in English class in my last year of high school we watched "Man of La Mancha" and then had a discussion about it. The teacher asked us to tell about people we knew who were like Don Quixote or Sancho Panza. Most everyone said their fathers were like Quixote and their mothers like Sancho; the fathers were out trying to make the world a better place and their mothers were just helpers. But I said they misunderstood Sancho, who wasn't much of a helper, and that they had seen only half of Don Quixote. They saw that he was dedicated to making the world a better place, however deluded about that he was, but they overlooked the sacrifice and self-denial he accepted in order to pursue that goal. For that reason, I said, my mother was the person who came to mind first when thinking of examples of Quixote-like people. She was the most selfless and idealistic person I had ever met. She still is. Don Quixote thought of himself as a noble person, engaged in noble actions, but he was deluded. Mom's nobility was real."

Ron and Ted nodded in assent.

"Did you know that Mom gave up a promising career as a concert pianist to marry Dad?" she asked her brothers.

"No," said Ron.

"We knew she played the piano well and gave lessons sometimes," Ted added.

"She told me about it when we had a long talk about marriage when I became engaged. She and Dad met while in college. Dad was a very good student in civil engineering; but she was the top piano student in the School of Music. She showed me a letter her teacher had written her when she announced that she was not going on to Curtis, Eastman or Juilliard because she was going to marry Dad. He said that she had a great career ahead of her and that it was a sin to waste such talent."

"I get that letter out and read it once in awhile," Mom told me. "I seem to read it especially when things aren't going well," she said, "but I have never had any regrets. A good life is a life dedicated to good things. If I had become a concert pianist my life would have been devoted to music, to bringing its glories to people for their betterment. As it is, I have been dedicated to my family, to a good man and to the things to which he himself was dedicated, to my children, to making them good people, and to my friends. I don't think that I wasted anything."

Alice continued. “Not long ago I read a great novel which made me think about the sacrifice Mother made for us, *The Song of the Lark*, by Willa Cather. It was about a small town girl with great talent who becomes a famous, celebrated opera singer, living a glamorous life. Mom could have been that girl, yet she declined the opportunity for fame and fortune to devote herself to others, to support them in their efforts to make the world a better place. I think that we must not undervalue that sacrifice.”

“I think she would want us to let her go and take the money. But Ron seems to me to be right, too. I would put it this way: there are times when you ought not to take what is freely offered out of respect and care for the person who makes the offer. If Ron is right, this is one of them. So I just don’t know what to recommend. Besides that, you have put me in a very difficult position. Not only must I now cast the deciding vote, but I am perhaps the one who has the most to gain by letting her die. I must struggle harder to be objective, perhaps, than either of you. Maybe I shouldn’t have yielded my turn to Ron.”

“I know that we must make our decision soon or we may have no decision to make. Mom could have another heart attack at any time. But I’d like to take a few more hours to hear from a disinterested third party, someone who knows how to go about making hard decisions like this, and who can understand both the facts and our concerns. Then I’ll be ready to cast my vote.”

Ron and Ted agree, though somewhat reluctantly, both being quite confident of their own positions. Ron protests that a third party is likely just to ask them what they think, see that there is disagreement and then take no definite position by trying to please everyone. They agree that to prevent that they will ask the person who comes in to take a clear stand, just as if he, or she, were a family member. The three of them discuss the various people they might ask to join them as Alice requests. *They settle upon you.*

- (a) State your recommendation, clearly and unambiguously.
- (b) Explain and justify your recommendation, just as Ron and Ted have explained and justified theirs. In doing so, make ample use of the materials of the course; however, you need not rely exclusively on those materials.
- (c) Place Part III with Parts I and II, as revised, add the originals of the first two parts with their comments, and turn in the entire package.

**DUE: Wed., May 13, 12:00 Noon**  
**c. 700 words, t.w., d.s.**  
**(Put your paper in my Office mailbox.)**