



“Of All the Physicians is There a Physician? Irony in the Practice of Medicine”

A lecture by

Farr Curlin

David B. Larson Fellow in Health and Spirituality

Although practicing medicine is a historic and socially established way of living a good and worthy life, the best physicians at times find themselves asking of their own activity, “What does any of this have to do with medicine?” At such moments, physicians are bewildered and are unsure of how to proceed, even as they long to become the physician they are not yet. Physicians may be experiencing irony, at least irony as the concept is used by Kierkegaard and recovered by the philosopher Jonathan Lear in his recent book, “A Case for Irony.” Curlin will use Lear’s account to describe irony and explore its place in the practice of medicine. He will describe contemporary dynamics that seem to make it hard for physicians to recognize and respond well to irony, and suggest resources—including religious concepts and practices—that may help physicians overcome such obstacles. In the end, how physicians respond to irony will determine if ironic experience leads to renewed efforts to realize a better medicine, or results only in detachment from and cynicism regarding medical practice as a way of living a good and faithful life.



Thursday, June 28 at Noon
Room LJ119, Thomas Jefferson Building
10 First St. S.E., Washington DC

For more information, contact the Kluge Center at (202) 707-3302.
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