

Eros vs. Logos

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On July 15, 2011 I was diagnosed with a stage IV “double hit” Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, a type of blood cancer. After three months of intensive chemotherapy and a subsequent stem-cell transplant, I was in remission.

This past summer, a 22-year-old college graduate named Pat reached out to me. All cancer stories are painful to hear, but Pat seemed to have an especially unfortunate time. For six months he was mistreated. When he was correctly diagnosed, he needed to start a much more aggressive chemotherapy regimen. This is a perfect example of kicking someone while they’re down.

Similar to me, he was told he needed a stem-cell transplant. Like most patients in this situation, he wanted to hear from a patient on the other side of the procedure.

We had a few lengthy conversations over the phone throughout the summer, but we never had the chance to meet in person. In early September, I received a phone call after two weeks of not hearing from him. His body was failing and he told me he didn’t know who else to call. I know we both felt the situation. Pat died in early September with a great deal of potential. I’m not just being cliched; he had a gift to inspire and the intelligence to be accepted into Columbia, Harvard, and Stanford Law.

The “why me” question is one that I’m sure Pat thought of even if never spoken. At first I thought it was a selfish question to ask, but

then I thought of my family and friends. Why is this happening to them? The anger would boil as I would ask, "Who is to blame?"

I kept landing on God. It was a hard subject to avoid as everyone was praying for me and speaking of the afterlife. This only intensified the question, "Who is to blame?" Is it myself or God? Well, I did not do anything morally or ethically wrong to deserve cancer...so God must be at fault. One day, however, I finally realized there doesn't have to be blame.

What is seven billion minus one?
I guess it depends on who you ask
An actuary? Dr. Misdiagnosis? A mother?

Two million hands paired for prayer
Is twenty-two years a man's fair share?
Was it something I had done
I was a good brother, a friend, a son

Dear mystery man,
I'm not asking now,
I'm moving you straight to where I live,
And I live at the center of the surface of a sphere.

What is seven billion minus one?
A bit more logical with you gone.
Sincerely, Patrick
March 1990-September 2012