Dispelling Health Care Myths

Clifford Asness, Ph.D. has written an excellent paper entitled Health Care Mythology. You can read it here.

Excerpts-

> *In the case of health care, the fact that we spend so much more on it now is largely a positive. The negative part is if some, or a lot, of that spending is wasteful. Of course, that is mostly the government's fault and is not what advocates of government control want you to focus upon. We spend so much more on health care, even relative to other advances, mostly because it is worth so much more to us. Similarly, we spend so much more on computers, compact discs, HDTV, and those wonderful one shot espresso makers that make it like having a barista in your own home. Interestingly, we also spend a ton more on these other items now than we did in 1950 because none of these existed in 1950.*
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> *If we all tried to be Canada, it's a non-working perpetual motion machine and no miracle pills ever get made because there will be nobody to pay the fixed costs. I'm a big fan of Canadians in general …, but when it comes to pharmaceuticals they are lucky hosers, subsidized by Americans. Drug companies in general sell their products to Canada at low prices, making a little profit, and reducing slightly the amount they need to charge us. This does create the silly illusion that the Canadian system is somehow better than ours because our own drugs are cheaper there. They are only cheaper to the extent we are subsidizing them by paying their portion of drug development costs and, unfortunately, we cannot subsidize ourselves (or we go blind). [*
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> *We could go with the Canadian system and have super cheap*

drugs, if only we can find a much bigger, more medically advanced, freer country right next to us to make miracle drugs for themselves, and then we insist that we pay them only a bit above their variable cost for our share, and then they in turn agree to let us be their parasite.

But, luckily it doesn't take a superb philosopher to understand that health care simply is not a "right" in the sense we normally use that word. Listing rights generally involves enumerating things you may do without interference (the right to free speech) or may not be done to you without your permission (illegal search and seizure, loud boy-band music in public spaces). They are protections, not gifts of material goods. Material goods and services must be taken from others, or provided by their labor, so if you believe you have an absolute right to them, and others don't choose to provide it to you, you then have a "right" to steal from them. But what about their far more fundamental right not to be robbed?

Read the entire paper – it is very worthwhile-