

ABSOLUTE VALUE OF LIFE

Kant was the prime philosopher of absolute value - in other words that which should be done no matter what. The other side of that is that anything that violates or opposes the absolute value should never ever be done. Naturally Kantians hold that killing the innocent is always totally wrong.

For Kant, to be a person is to be that which exists for relationships. Others are not your subjects - they have rights to make their own decisions. That is what he meant by saying that we must absolutely and inevitably and without compromise treat human beings as ends not means and value them because the human being is a rational thinking autonomous being. This raises problems for equal rights. Babies and brain damaged people are downgraded in value. Interestingly, you cannot test and examine a brain damaged person like an object or inferior. Guinea pigs have to be people who have all their mental faculties. Kant surely makes society grudgingly respectful of equality. Kant wants us to act like machines out of deference to the moral law without feeling and wanting to obey or not obey is unimportant. His system does not come across as cheerful or encouraging.

Another problem is the doctrine of the soul. You cannot prove that somebody has one for you don't really know what a soul is or what it is supposed to do. Maybe Ann works like a normal person for her soul is a non-personal one that acts like a person. So the doctrine being too nebulous is out. It confuses a serious subject and it is inherently immoral to suggest the doctrine as true.

If one has absolutely no right to take a life and that is absolute fact then there is a problem. You have the right to do what you believe is right. If you believe you are even a little right to take a life then you cannot say you have absolutely no right to take a life. It depends on what you believe. An absolute right cannot be respected without an absolute belief in it. So the belief comes first. Absolute belief creates problems for what if one absolutely believes that stealing babies is okay?

Whatever disagreements there are about right and wrong nobody can or should deny that murder is wrong. Some forms of Utilitarianism say that happiness and not persons matter and they need to be answered. In principle if not in practice such doctrines suggest murder can be okay.

Either persons or their happiness come first. But it is silly to say happiness comes first because that would only be because it benefits a person so the person comes first. In other words, the person is an absolute value.

It cannot be right to allow anything that will take away life unnecessarily. It is wrong to kill anyone who is very suicidal for it would be wiser to let them take the chance to improve their lives.

We should not risk our lives without need and that is why we must forbid dangerous sports – like boxing – heavy drinking, drug taking and heavy smoking. It is obviously better to prolong life than to indulge in needless pleasure that will shorten it. There are other pleasures.

War is wrong for nobody can predict where it will all end or control what is done. Rape and the wanton killing of civilians result. If the benefits of war are outweighed even by one needless human death war is not lawful. Capital punishment is not justice or deterrence for the sensible person will not fear death. We condemn it too.

Let us look at the argument, “There is nothing inherently sacred about life so the reason it is valuable is because it needs to continue. When extreme suffering removes that need it is not murder to end that life”. It is wrong to prevent people from having the need by killing so their life should be respected for its sake.

Is it murder to knowingly let someone die? You cannot murder unless you intend to murder. So when it is the intention alone that counts it is murder. Some say it can't be for you were not sure the person would die. But with most methods of killing you are not sure anyway. We can murder by omission. It is murder to hypnotise someone to kill for you so it is murder to let nature kill a person for that is the same as sending someone to do it.

Life being an absolute value implies that capital punishment is wrong except when you are in the desert and killing a killer is the only way to make sure they never kill again.

If life is an absolute value then life should be good. That means that no matter what you do nothing justifies anybody letting you suffer if they have the magical power to prevent it. The dentist has to hurt us to save us from worse hurt but a God does not. Belief in God and its promotion is against human rights for it involves saying that God is right to let us suffer though he has the power to stop it which can only mean that human beings have no value. Religious people will say their belief in

God makes them value people more. But that is not what the belief authorises and supports.

Existence and life are not exactly the same. Absolute value of life is important and we are referring to life as in existence. We are not using the distinction between existence-life and life as in living a reasonably happy life. We just mean life in this analysis.