

## EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia, the ending of human life where there is impending death or grave suffering, is thought to deny how special we are. Opponents say, "We are not dying dogs that can be put down. We are more than animals or gods in comparison. Worries about people being forced to accept being put to sleep or manipulated are practical concerns not ethical ones."

A right to live is not the same as a duty to live. A right is what others have to let you have. A duty to live means you have to keep alive at all costs even if means being tormented at 110 to try and live another week.

A person who forgoes euthanasia to live is seen as a hero. A person who chooses it is never seen that way. To many, that suggests we somehow know it is wrong.

Let us look at euthanasia deeply.

Voluntary euthanasia - the terminally ill patient freely asks to be killed by the doctor who obliges.

Non-voluntary euthanasia - when the terminally ill patient is mercy killed but could not consent perhaps due to being in a coma.

Assisted dying - when a terminally ill person is given the means to take their own lives.

Assisted suicide - is deliberately giving another the means to take their lives even though they are not terminally ill.

Euthanasia is ending the life of a person who is dying to spare them further unbearable suffering.

And some opponents of euthanasia argue that suffering can be a good thing or is intrinsically good. That is extremism of the most disturbing kind. Unless you see the good the suffering is doing and weigh it to matter more than the suffering you have no right to assert that anybody's suffering is worth it. And you cannot see. You cannot see into the person's heart and mind.

Some say that it is wrong for the person is forced to desire it by her or his suffering. But you are forced to do many things to get what you want.

It is advised, "You never know what kind of new discovery is round the corner. It is better to let them live just in case as unlikely as it will seem." Anybody who accepts this logic could justify prolonging life deliberately despite the agony a person is in. Indeed they should if life is the supreme value. Incredibly, the advice is spurned by the Roman Catholic Church, "Care for the dying does not mean keeping a person alive by extraordinary means when there is no hope of recovery. Every reasonable measure must be taken to sustain life. But there comes a point at which it may be more merciful to let nature take its course" (page 17, Moral Questions, A Statement by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales).

Is it euthanasia to give pain killers that shorten life to a dying patient as long as the intention is not to kill but to take away pain? Those who say yes say this is the principle of double effect. It means that the person is not to be blamed for killing the person for they had no choice but to give the drugs to stop the pain. The principle teaches that if you give painkillers that will bring on death to a dying person and they are needed to arrest the pain then you merely foresee that death will be a result but you do not intend it.

Giving the painkillers is euthanasia for the result of this will be the cause of death. The person is dying anyway but without the painkillers they would die of something different.

The Church hypocritically pretends otherwise. I repeat, the painkillers will kill the dying person not the illness even though the illness is in the process of killing the person. The Church would say that if you had a patient dying of cancer and you gave her a whole bottle of aspirin at the one time under the pretence that it was to kill the pain not her that would be murder. Yet it says that if aspirin could kill her slowly it is fine! To be consistent, the Church should let you decapitate your dying patients not to kill them but to kill the pain!

It would be euthanasia if the person giving the drugs that speed up death intended to kill instead or intended that as well as to take away the pain. The Church does not really believe in the principle in relation to euthanasia though it says it does believe. To give one out of thousands of possible examples: I put on a show with my car at a traffic junction to entertain other drivers and I cause an accident. The principle says I didn't do wrong for I didn't intend the accident. Yet the Church

would say I sinned in this. The use of the principle to justify giving the life shortening painkillers contradicts the Church teaching that all human life must be considered equally important and once we encourage or cause the death of somebody to save them from intense suffering we are saying their life is not as important as the life of healthy person.

I see a car that will hit two people crossing the road. I see that if I grab the man walking beside me and push him out in front of the car I could save two lives by sacrificing his. The principle of double effect rejects this as immoral. The reason is because I have used the man not as a person but as a means. I have degraded him (page 130, Ethics: The Fundamentals, Julia Driver, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007). But this presumes I was wrong to sacrifice one life to save two. If it is good to sacrifice then I honoured the man. I was not treating him as a means because I had to do the greater good. I had no time to ask him if he wanted to be sacrificed so I had to assume it. Sometimes I have to assume things for people in emergencies and it doesn't mean I am degrading them or treating them as means or objects. The example shows that those who use the principle of double effect are inconsistent. They take it up and then they drop it when it fits or when they feel like it.

The case with the man being treated as a means infers that it was a serious evil to do that to him. If it was evil, was it really that evil? Perhaps it was a bit evil but not worth kicking up a fuss over especially considering the circumstances. If I let the car plough into the two people crossing the road and kill them I am using them as a means of doing my will to do nothing.

If I can't use the person as a means even to stop the deaths of the persons crossing the road then I am saying life is totally and absolutely valuable. This suggests that life should be preserved at all costs. If a person is dying, it is immoral to give him painkillers to control his agony if those painkillers will shorten his life.

Euthanasia is wrong but it is not very wrong so it should be tolerated. If life comes first as the antis say, the hospitals have a choice and should let the patient suffer. They practice euthanasia after all. Euthanasia is certainly wrong but should be made a tolerable evil. It is not seriously evil under the right circumstances and if the patient consents. We can't forbid everything.

The anger that erupts in the Church when anybody is mercy killed or when the law is going to tolerate it indicates that the Church opposes euthanasia for unworthy motives. When regulated properly it is not the worst thing that could happen and does not deserve all that rancour. The anger suggests a strong lack of compassion. The Church will talk about its compassion but it is actions we want to see for words are words especially when they come from a shady institution like the Church.

The Roman Catholic Church lets you kill a man in self-defence and doesn't let a mother abort her baby to save her life! They reply that the man is an evil person while the baby is innocent. But what if the man was insane and an innocent person? They still permit you to kill him. Its all lies and hypocrisy and its intelligent men who create these rules and they must see that they are lies. The Church blackmails women to kill themselves and their babies by going on with the pregnancy with the guilt it heaps on them for even contemplating abortion.

Pro-euthanasia campaigners assert that if a dog is suffering you get it put to sleep. They say people should have the right to request to be put to sleep if their suffering becomes unbearable and they are dying anyway. The Church says this is asking people to put more value on their lives when they are healthy than when they are sick. The Church says then that it is equally bad to administer euthanasia even in the gravest of circumstances as to kill a health young woman. So it refuses you the right to think, "I know euthanasia is wrong, but I wish I could give it to Tommy for he is so ill and he is dying anyway and he consents to euthanasia but I can't oblige him and that is that." The Church plainly implies that such compassion for Tommy is bad. If you cannot wish you could end his life in his circumstances, then how can it be right to want to relieve his pain at all? Any other kind of compassion must be bad as well.

When somebody suffers hideously, people around him or her think, "Rather him or her than me!" And those are the people who ban euthanasia!

The hypocrisy surrounding euthanasia is disturbing. It is death they are being hypocritical about. Such hypocrisy belittles death.

Many countries that ban euthanasia have it smuggled in under a different name. For example, late term terminations of a baby that cannot live are really acts of euthanasia rather than abortion.

Something makes us feel and value letting somebody over killing them. Perhaps letting them die and making that so possible amounts to shooting them. Or more so! But we do not care. You turning off a machine when the person can't endure life is seen as different from somebody burning to death at the stake at your command. It is seen as different from you shooting them to spare them agony. In the first you are seen as immaculate and debatably good in the second.

Withdrawing support for their life and actively ending their life are two different things. The intended outcome is the same -

a death, a dead body. So the difference is in what we want to think about and what we want to think of ourselves. It is about ourselves. People may argue, "The feeling that there is a barrier there is the reason we need very strong and unquestionable civil and social and cultural and religious bans to put us off taking life directly." But caring only about direct or indirect and not the dead body at the end speaks volumes. It is morality divorced from real concern for persons.

If you are a person who thinks that consequences or results are what counts then clearly what matters is that there is a dead body whether "I give the person who is dying drugs but I am doing it not to virtually kill them but to end the pain" or "I want to give the person drugs to end their pain by killing them." It leads to actions such as driving fast cars which is not inherently harmful but has risks being equated with actions that are inherently harmful such as getting drunk every day. Indeed if the result is what matters then intentions do not and to insist on them is a form of evil. Its a form of self-righteous selfishness.

If God is important for giving you dignity and belief in his is essential for recognising the dignity he gave, then it follows that if you suffer as in lose a sense of dignity then this is his fault. It is cruel to blame the victim and who creates the state of depression? Not the person! This is important. Euthanasia law codes and campaigns regard the lack of a sense of dignity as important and one of many possible justifications for granting an assisted death. If you see a sense of dignity being taken away as grounds for euthanasia then you are potentially blaming God for letting them down and forcing you to consider offering assisted death.

"To kill a person on the grounds of compassion is to say they and their life has no value. This is seen as false compassion or sentimentalism." We are told that. Only you can decide if it is! The other awkward question is, "If it is wrong then how much does it matter? Enough? Not enough? Is it worth banning legally?" We can answer that we take the person's life with their consent because their life has value and circumstances don't leave any better choice.

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