

Submission From a Concerned Citizen On the Question of Legislative Euthanasia

Introduction :

The question of legalising euthanasia is not recent. Recent developments however, notable in Victorian Lowerhouse are noted. The issues surrounding legalising euthanasia are intertwined and complex. Physician assisted Suicide are we speak is illegal as is voluntary euthanasia, as well any form a criminal offence punishable by law. Passive voluntary euthanasia (withholding of treatment) is not illegal under outlined circumstances.

and has been rejected as private bills in legislative chambers in Australia for decades. The purpose of this short submission is to raise and perhaps address the following question :

Given that the legalising of active voluntary euthanasia has been rejected by bi legislative chambers grouping at state and federal levels in this country for decades under prevailing wisdom, what new insight has brought about any attempt to realistically into law NOW ?”

The Arguments against Active euthanasia or physician assisted suicide.

I would like to start with veterinary medicine. It is legal for veterinarian doctors (medical specialist for animals) to euthanasia sick or unwanted animals. For example if a racecourse were to suffer a catastrophic s fall dur ring a race and was in much pain – the animal could be euthanised for example by injection. Of course this has to be done “ humanely “ - that is a way that typifies something of the way we should indeed treat our fellow human beings (that is the meaning of the word humanely)

However, there are some very major difference between animals and humans. Firstly the capacity for language. Another is our capacity for self awareness and thirdly is s spiritual element - that first lead more primitive society to bury their dead in a respectful way. According to prominent physical anthropologist the proper burial and respect for the dead marked the beginning, of the cultivated rational and indeed spiritual element of human society.

Our capacity for language, spirituality, the respect for the dead and our common shared culture mark us as separate form the animal kingdom because we can see pain – as sublimate it into a form or suffering that raises it beyond the dimension of direct suffering as expressed in the racehorse example just discussed. In a very real way our unique capacity for Sufferings and how we view it means the psychologically healthy individuals can tolerate pain because there is always “ higher principle at stake”. At both the societal level – for example millions of people tolerated the suffering death in the eruption of two world wars – simply because there was human princible at stake “ and to give in or deny that principle – we might “cease to be human. “ on an individual level . A mother is prepared to tolerate the enormous pain of childbirth (without for thousands of years the modern drugs and medications that lessen of reduce child birth pain) simply beacsue of the highr principle at stake – the bring forth or a new life. Similarly doctors study , in the case or specialists up tp 14 years of involved and difficult and dutiful study to gain the expertise and experience to heal people and reduce the suffering of sick people for a higher principle of human life. In the human life -in all the cycles of it birth, becoming a adult a parent --- all have a higher principle at stake --- the dignity and immutability of human life , sacrificial death – as in soldiers dying in battle – that is greatly admired , need and appreciate by others. Psychologically dpressed or mentally sick individuals may decide to take their own lives. However, it it illegally to committee suicide and criminal for a doctor or any citizen to assist someone else to end their lives – even if their condition is terminal and they are suffering – sometime that suffering (particularly the metal side) is active and destructive.

This now represents the first argument against active voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide – the dignity and immutability of human life.

Why is death any different to any other stage of life ?

It raises the question if one suffers --- should they simply lower the dignity of human life and arrange to kill themselves, and it raises the further question should the government sanction through law and indeed provide the means for a person suffering or their close relatives the power to decide with authority and legality TO KILL THEM.

Based on the prevailing wisdom...and as identified by former Prime Ministers Paul Keating and Tony Abbott – if we as a society give up on people who are or may die after being diagnosed terminally ill and are suffering physical or mental or physical and mental pain are we saying that human life is now devalued to the point that a doctor can view such a human being the same way as the racecourse identified in the previous example..... as something once worth an economic value – but now an economic liability with out any reference to the life-giving spiritual or tangible benefit to the rest of society – is a regressive, unenlightened and sick one.

A Man I worked with developed a terminal illness and moved to a palliative care facility. I have to say that I felt more valued and more dignity in the way he showed me how to face suffering and to face death bravely – knowing that the way you die can be an indication of how you have lived. All people that I have known who were dying their humanity – not as animals but human beings with a soul, their bravery – have touched me deeply including older relative and a younger aunt due to bowel cancer– and in a sense have made me a better human being. Do I see them as racecourse passed their due date and to be put down –No definitely not, some of the words they have said to me have profoundly touched my life – and I thank God for that.

Eric Wolf a prominent anthropologist raised some interesting questions about power. On the darker side of human nature, we have death instinct. First identified in medicine by prominent Viennese Psychiatrist DR Freud it is that part of humanity that is the shadow of the higher human and spiritual principle I have outlined in the previous paragraphs. It ties together the manipulative and controlling part of us that gives rise to political dictatorships in countries, all the way to terrorism, spousal abuse and the activity of quasi religious doomsday sects that manipulate and control. We have all experienced it at some level. As we use it on others, we can in the case of suicide also use it on ourselves or loved ones or family. Eric Wolf states following “types” of power :

1. Power inherent in an individual; 2. Power as capacity of ego to impose one's will on another; 3. Power as control over the contexts in which people interact; 4. Structural power: "By this I mean the power manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows".

Based on Wolf's previous experience and later studies, he rejects the concept of culture that emerged from the counter-Enlightenment. Instead, he proposes a redefinition of culture that emphasizes power, diversity, ambiguity, contradiction and imperfectly shared meaning and knowledge.[6]

This raises a question :

Has there been a cultural shift that now that there is to be a shift or corporations of the “ death culture ” ? when faced with problems – do we need to provide the isolation or make the person the problem and then eliminate them. ?

Is this now the way we process political problems, corporate problems, marriage problems, family problems and international diplomacy .

If it is might I suggest that our society is on a ticking time bomb to destruction in a major way.

So if this is not the role of government up to know, what single factor now leads us to just identify apply this principle to people who are terminally ill suffering and want to die – why not applying it the rest of society

Certainly we would have a “terminally sick community “ if everyone . Our spouse our employee our employer our business partners, our professors our children as utilities to be used up and not in personalistic way and why that identifies them as a human person whose life and experience is worthy to live and necessary to the human society . Pope Benedict 16 , still today one of the greatest intellectual of our time stated the following truth : every person (terminally ill, young child , disabled) is loved, every person is needed and every person is necessary”. Whether you are catholic or not believe in God or not , you have to admit that this principle is a personalistic approach while the approach that gives legal protection and the means and opportunity for a person to kill themselves or someone in their power ---is a utilitarian one.

Nazism – is a utilitarian prospective . Stalinism is also that prospective, as is communism and excessive consumerism . If there are laws to protect governance, consumers, and tax revenues why should the law be changed so that vulnerable people (mentally . Physically , and culturally) No Longer enjoy the protection of society and the right to live in our society, even if, by their own volition they are sick and want to end their life ?

THAT IS WHY ALL LEGISLATIVE CHAMBERS HAVE REJECTED PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE AND ACTIVE VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA AND CAN SOMEONE ANYONE LEGITIMATELY TELL ME WHAT HAS CHANGED ?

Let us continue to support the human person in the human society by protecting life in all its forms difficulties and challenges - that is real compassion , that is real dignity, and that is what all real legislation should attempt to do .

CAN SOMEONE ANYONE LEGITIMATELY TELL ME WHAT HAS CHANGED ?

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