

[Assisted dying: does it benefit society?](assisted-dying-does-it-benefit-society.html "Assisted dying: does it benefit society?")

Assisted dying: does it benefit society?

May 2013

[Kevin Yuill](speakers.html#kevin-yuill "Kevin Yuill"), [Ray Tallis](speakers.html#ray-tallis "Ray Tallis"), [Rev. Jane Barraclough](speakers.html#jane-barracrough "Rev. Jane Barraclough") and [Rev. Bob Pounder](speakers.html#bob-pounder "Rev. Bob Pounder") introduced their considered thoughts on assisted dying / suicide



As a new **Assisted Dying Bill** is tabled by **Lord Falconer** and as religious bodies such as the Unitarian Church show increasing tolerance towards assisted suicide, we ask the question, is taking one's life ever permissible, whatever your faith? The taboo against suicide held for millennia, enforced by sanctions against it in all the world's major religions. Whereas most humanist and atheist organizations favour a liberalisation of the laws, major churches and most official religious bodies incline against it (the Catholic Church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Lutheran faiths, Islam) or are simply vague about it.



There are some useful case studies from a formalisation of assisted dying being permitted in certain circumstances when particular formalities have been met, so are these examples enough of a reassurance to those who are holding onto the line that assisted dying should not be formalised in law and regulated through procedure? Or do the examples from other countries merely highlight the unnecessary unravelling of a societal norm that could lead to unwelcome consequences of a move toward more generalised acceptance of suicide and euthanasia.



Perhaps because of the difficulty of discussing the issue through personalised testimony, or perhaps because it's simply not an easy matter to resolve, the issue of assisting someone ending their life is not one that society has a clear view or majority view on. The question of autonomy and having control over one's own decisions is definitely blurred by a legalised bureaucratic approval process by state appointed functionaries, but how else could the autonomy of purposeful beings be best managed when faced with end of life decisions, or is the existing fudge the best we can hope for?



Like abortion, many individuals feel that they must make up their own minds about the rightness or wrongness of such a decision. Should these questions be left to individuals or does society have some stake in trying to dissuade and prevent individuals from killing themselves. Shall we regard suicide in certain very specific circumstances as not suicide at all but **assisted dying**? Can the act of taking one's life ever be an entirely individual one?

Some background readings

[Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide](briefing_on_euthanasia_final_version_sept_2003.pdf "Euthanasia and Physicia-Assisted Suicide"), Maranatha Briefing, September 2003

<http://jme.bmj.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/10/591?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RES>

ULTFORMAT=&fulltext=Legal+physician-assisted+dying+in+Oregon&searchid=1&FIRSTINDE
X=0&sortspec=relevance&resourcetype=HWCIT" target="_blank" title="Legal physician
assisted-dying in Oregon">Legal physician-assisted dying in Oregon and the Netherlands:
evidence concerning the impact on patients in vulnerable groups♦, Battin MP, van der
Heide A, Ganzini L, van der Wal G, Onwuteaka-Philipsen BD, J Med Ethics♦2007,♦33:
591-597</p><p><a href="rcn_briefing_april_2009_assisted_suicide.pdf" target="_blank"
title="Assisted Suicide - An Overview of the Debate">Assisted Suicide - An Overview of the
Debate, RCN Policy Unit, April 2009</p><p><a
href="http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/6442/" target="_blank" title="Suicide is
a marvellous possibility for humans">Suicide is a marvellous possibility for humans, Kevin
Yuill, spiked 8 April 2009 </p><p><a
href="images/dignity-in-dying-report-a-law-out-of-step-2009.pdf" target="_blank" title="A Law
Out of Step - June 2009">A law out of step, Dignity in Dying Report June 2009 </p><p><a
href="http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/7072/" target="_blank" title="Giving
the green light to suicide">Giving the green light to suicide, Kevin Yuill, spiked 23 June
2009 </p><p><a href="http://www.spiked-online.com/pdf/bigissuedebate.pdf" target="_blank"
title="Should we all have the right to die?">Should we all have the right to die?, Brendan
O'Neill and Debbie Purdy, Big Issue debate 13-19 August 2009 </p> <p><a
href="http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/7311" target="_blank" title="Turning
death into a consumer product">Turning death into a consumer product, Kevin Yuill, spiked
25 August 2009</p><p><a href="http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/7358/"
target="_blank" title="Assisted suicide: the real slippery slope">Assisted suicide: the real
slippery slope, Kevin Yuill, spiked 8 September 2009</p> <p><a
href="http://youtu.be/Ahzq9n3gVE0" target="_blank" title="Should physician-assisted dying be
legalised?">Should physician-assisted dying be legalised? video of Battle of Ideas
discussion October 2009</p><p><a
href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jan/16/charlotte-raven-should-i-take-my-own-life"
target="_blank" title="Charlotte Raven: Should I take my own life?">Charlotte Raven: Should I
take my own life? by Charlotte Raven, The Guardian, 16 January 2010 </p><p><a
href="assisted-dying-draft-unitarian-discussion-document.pdf" target="_blank" title="Assisted
dying, draft discussion document by Unitarian Movement 2012">Assisted Dying, draft
discussion document, by Unitarian Movement ahead of national assembly vote on policy
2012 </p><p><a href="suicide-is-not-painless.html" target="_blank" title="Suicide is NOT
Painless">Suicide is NOT Painless, by Denis Joe, Manchester Salon opinion piece March
2013♦ </p><p><a
href="http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/1137286296/instituteofid-21" target="_blank"
title="Assisted Suicide: The Liberal, Humanist Case Against Legalization">Assisted Suicide:
The Liberal, Humanist Case Against Legalization, by Kevin Yuill, available from Amazon 8
March 2013 </p><p><a
href="http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/brendanoneill2/100208881/memo-to-all-radical-campaig
ners-please-stop-exploiting-suicidal-people-for-political-ends/" target="_blank" title="Memo to all
radical campaigners: please stop exploiting suicidal people for political ends">Memo to all
radical campaigners: please stop exploiting suicidal people for political ends, by Brendan
O'Neill, The Telegraph 25 March 2013</p><p><a
href="http://thebackbencher.co.uk/paul-lambs-request-for-the-right-to-die/" target="_blank"
title="Paul Lamb♦s Request for the Right to Die">Paul Lamb♦s Request for the Right to

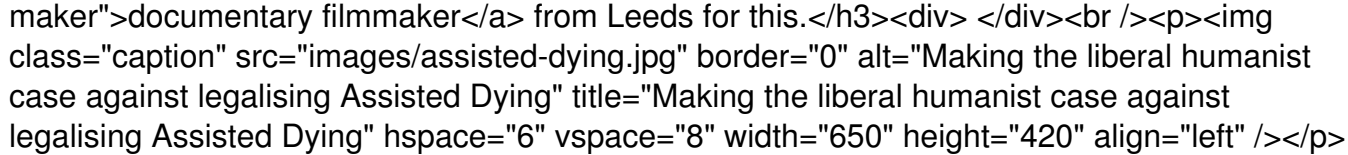
Die

[Assisted suicide; leave the law alone and let juries do their duty](http://libertarianhome.co.uk/2013/05/assisted-suicide-leave-the-law-alone-and-let-juries-do-their-duty/ "Assisted suicide; leave the law alone and let juries do their duty"), by Sam Woolfe, Backbencher 1 May 2013

[Assisted Suicide: The Liberal Humanist Case Against Legalization](assisted-suicide-the-liberal-humanist-case-against-legalization.html "Assisted Suicide: The Liberal, Humanist Case Against Legalization"), by Richard Carey, Liberty League 9 May 2013

[Assisted Suicide: The Liberal Humanist Case Against Legalization](assisted-suicide-the-liberal-humanist-case-against-legalization.html "Assisted Suicide: The Liberal Humanist Case Against Legalization"), review by Denis Joe for Manchester Salon May 2013

Watch video of the speakers' initial comments and discussion below (before the camera battery failed). Thanks to Dan Clayton the [documentary filmmaker](http://www.danclayton.co.uk/ "Documentary film maker") from Leeds for this.

The image is a placeholder for a video or document titled "Making the liberal humanist case against legalising Assisted Dying". It is positioned below a paragraph of text and above a horizontal line. The image itself is not visible, only the alt text and the surrounding HTML tags are present.

hspace="6" vspace="8" width="650" height="420" align="left"/>