

Being human, being divine. What makes us human?

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End of life. Decisions

Euthanasia and mercy killing

- Many issues are similar to abortion.
- If you can murder a fetus, why not a newborn, a child or an adult?
- Whose is your body?
- Do you control it? Should you?
- Who says suffering is bad for you?

Think about this

- *Hebrew Scripture*. Religious aim of creating a 'ritual and ethically holy community where every word, thought and deed is an act of obedience to God.' Community matters.
- *Gospels and Epistles*. On the whole, Christianity focuses less on outer manifestations of purity, and more on interior intention, or spiritual expression. Concern for community is taken up. In Gospels, fidelity to God and neighbour take pride of place. Jesus excludes nobody. Epistles: the 'herd' ethic is set in an increasingly catholic, pan-ethnic, post-resurrection 'economy of hope',
- *Creative fidelity* to Christ's teaching is what we need in biomedical ethics. And since Christian teaching is that Our Lord became fully human, this means creative fidelity to authentic humanness as it is in the world. Incarnational ethics (Stanley's term).

Biomedical decisions

- (1) top-down *deductivism*;
- (2) bottom-up *inductivism*;
- (3) their favoured model, *coherentism*, seems to me to be jargon for saying 'taking all things into consideration in the present circumstances, ignoring what we don't like.'

four clusters of moral principles

- (1) respect for autonomy;
- (2) nonmaleficence;
- (3) beneficence (balancing benefits against risks and costs); and
- (4) justice (distributing benefits, risks, costs fairly): for whom? the drug company? the patient? the NHS (bleomycin is expensive)? the young doctor?

Natural law

'A comparatively uncomplicated view of human nature which a religious believer could hold is that human nature reflects the wisdom and goodness of the creator God.' The notion that morality derives from the nature of things is grounded in the works of philosophers from at least Aristotle onwards: 'the good for every organism is to attain fully its natural activity.' Bentham, Hobbes, and Hume. 'Sin blots out the law of nature.' (Summa)

Virtue, right and wrong

'Who am I? Who ought I to become? How am I to get there?' Can virtue ethics help?

Taylor's scheme

Desire or longing.

Imagination.

Compassionate love.

Discipleship

In vitro fertilization. Embryo research. Competition or cooperation?. Eternal life—now or then?. Rituals—waking to sleeping. So what makes us human?