

## **Euthanasia and Natural Law**

Kenneth J. Coughlan

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Under the natural law human beings' value is defined by intrinsic dignity, not a utilitarian calculus of functionality. An outworking of this intrinsic dignity is the concept of the common good which Charles defines as “the sum total of social conditions that allow people, whether as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment as human beings within society” (Charles, 233).

However, our modern culture is losing sight of the common good. We have become focused on individual rights and freedoms, ignoring the fact that unless rights and freedoms are properly balanced by obligations, they become meaningless. People are increasingly viewing freedom as an end in itself rather than as a means to promote the common good.

This is precisely the case in attempts to legitimize euthanasia. The autonomy to decide how our lives should end is considered a virtue. But in the words of Charles, “Once society decides that euthanasia is acceptable, there is nothing to prevent the next step, which is to place pressure on others to actualize this duty” (Charles, 289). Charles goes on to argue that the most marginalized people in society may be pressured to submit to an “option” of euthanasia that did not previously exist, merely because of the alleged burden their lives create for others (Charles, 289).

We see remarkably similar examples in American culture today. Since the right to same sex marriage was recognized by the Supreme Court, pressure has been placed on Christian business owners to assist in actualizing that right. Abortion victimizes the weakest members of society in order to alleviate an alleged burden their mere existence imposes upon others. Thus, the “slippery slope” is real. These consequences run counter to the natural law, and as such weigh insurmountably against the alleged morality of euthanasia.

## WORKS CITED

Charles, J. Daryl. *Retrieving the Natural Law: A Return to Moral First Things*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. Print.