



Alcoholic Euthanized in the Netherlands — Where Is This Going?

In the Netherlands, the government will kill you at your request, if you are an alcoholic. Perhaps officials believe it is cheaper than paying for rehab.

More than 5,500 individuals were euthanized under the euthanasia laws of the Netherlands last year, including a man who considered himself a hopeless alcoholic and another who suffered from chronic depression after having been a victim of sex abuse.



Fiona Bruce, a member of the British Parliament, told the *Daily Mail* that it was “deeply concerning and yet another reason why assisted suicide and euthanasia must never be introduced into the UK.”

Sadly, however, the concern expressed by Bruce, a member of Britain’s Conservative Party, can also apply to the United States. A growing number of Americans believe that euthanasia and assisted suicide are positive solutions to many different “problems.”

Bruce added, “It is once again a troubling sign of how legalized euthanasia undermines in other countries the treatment and help the most vulnerable should receive.”

Mark Langedijk was killed by lethal injection at his parents’ home recently, because he could no longer go on living with the pain of being an alcoholic. So, Langedijk applied for euthanasia, which was approved by a government doctor working for the Support and Consultation on Euthanasia in the Netherlands.

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On the appointed day, a doctor arrived at his parents’ home to kill him. When the doctor arrived, Langedijk’s family was gathered around while he “laughed, drank, smoked, ate ham and cheese sandwiches and soup with meatballs.” The doctor went over the details of the procedure, directing Langedijk to get into bed.

At that point, Mark and his family began crying.

“We cried, told each other that we loved each other, that it would be all right, that we would care for each other, that we would see each other again, we held each other,” said Langedijk’s brother, Marcel. “If it was not so terrible, it would have been nice.”

Finally, Marcel described his brother’s final moments. “Mark’s eyes turned away, he sighed deeply. His last.” Then, Dr. Marijke injected the third syringe, whereupon Mark’s “face changed, lost color,” Marcel added. “My little brother was dead.”

When the Netherlands legalized euthanasia 16 years ago, it was sold as a solution for individuals who were undergoing “unbearable suffering,” with no prospect of improvement. Advocates at the time cited physical sufferings from terminal cancer and the like, but as can be seen in the case of Langedijk, the



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reasons for using so-called mercy killing have expanded.

And its use has grown in acceptance. Langedijk's brother, Marcel, defended the killing of his brother. "He did not take the easy way out. Just a humane one." He specifically dismissed Bruce's concerns. "If that's troubling for Mrs. Bruce, that's a pity. I am just glad my brother did not have to jump in front of a train or live a few more years in agony."

To those who see the use of euthanasia for conditions such as alcoholism and depression as a slippery slope, Marcel Langedijk argued that they are "illnesses, just like cancer. People who suffer from it need a humane way out."

Writing in *Independent*, a British publication, Jenn Selby took issue with the use of euthanasia. "I am only alive right now because I was disturbed [when contemplating suicide]. Three times. Once by a message, once by a stranger and once by a dog crying outside my bedroom door. Without those random events, I wouldn't have broken the trance; the illusionary belief that there was nothing but darkness in my future."

Selby said that there were times during her depression that if a doctor had asked if she wished to be euthanized, she would have "gratefully accepted." The stark truth is, such suggestions are sometimes made by medical professionals in the Netherlands.

Selby was particularly upset when she read that suicidal woman in her 20s was euthanized "due to her supposedly 'incurable' Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)." Selby could relate, because she also suffers from PTSD. "I was attacked some years ago and, during the lengthy and harrowing police process, repeatedly experienced anxiety attacks, sometimes so severe I would black out. I lapsed in and out of depression, and experienced waves of suicidal thoughts."

But Selby got past those thoughts, and argued in her article that such suicidal thoughts are not permanent. "Like the tide, they come and they go. Slowly, with therapy, I learned to recognize this ebbing and flowing, allowing painful emotions to rise and fall away, safe in the knowledge that they were just what they were — momentary lapses of reason."

About 30 years ago, I wrote an article in *The Oklahoma Constitution* newspaper in which I predicted that the drive for seat belt laws and living wills were part of the drive for socialized medicine. I said that once we accept the premise that the state should be able to force us to wear seat belts, then the next logical step would be the government will take upon itself to tell us what to eat.

While I wear my seat belt, I do not think it is the proper role of government to make me wear it. The proper role of government is to keep individuals from hurting other individuals. Now, I was told that, well, if a person is not wearing a seat belt and is injured in an automobile crash because the person was not wearing a seat belt, then that person is hurting others because that person is adding to the cost of the healthcare system.

Then it hit me. With the creation of socialized medicine (by whatever name you call it), my health and your health becomes a concern for those who are running the government. For those who have never read George Orwell's *1984*, the opening scene depicts the main character, Winston Smith, being awakened by the telescreen and ordered to do his exercises.

That is why I have some concern over the push for "living wills." While I would have no problem with an individual choosing to sign such a document on his own, this is how I fear it will evolve.

Under a nationalized health care system, in which the government is "paying" for all medical care, the



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government would make a simple cost analysis of the merits of keeping someone alive. Is it worth it to perform, say, knee surgery on a very old person? With only so much money available in the government healthcare system, should that money be spent on a paraplegic who is unable to work? Putting an alcoholic into rehab, or a depressed person into therapy, can be expensive — socialist governments, looking at the bottom line, might think it is cheaper to give Mr. Langedijk the needle.

After all, we need to save money for other government spending programs, such as paying for the healthcare of an illegal alien, a woman to give birth to an illegitimate child, or even artwork that can't make it in the free market. Give grandma a walker or a cane. Give her a pain pill, is the way President Obama put it. After all, money spent on knee surgery can better be spent, in the minds of socialized medicine advocates, on some government program, maybe even for foreign aid.

This line of thinking is not entirely new. In the early 20th century biology textbook *Civic Biology*, author George Hunter argued, "In the insect communities the welfare of the individual is given up for the best interests of the community.... This should teach us, as we come to take our place in society, to be willing to give up our individual pleasure or selfish gain for the community in which we live."

According to Hunter, some individuals are just "parasites" on society. "If such people were lower animals, we would probably kill them off to prevent them from spreading." In 1914, when Hunter's book was published, he admitted that society would not likely do that.

In the Netherlands, however, it is government policy that certain people need to die. At the present time, it is voluntary, but what about the future? After all, who would have predicted that the day would come when the government of a modern, civilized nation would actually participate in the killing of a person simply because that person wants to die?

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