

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
House of Commons
Ottawa

Honorable Members,

Having devoted half of my medical career to the practice and teaching of palliative care, I was astonished and profoundly disappointed that your committee took such a backward step, to the words «euthanasia» and «assisted-suicide», at the very time when the vast majority of authors and associations have opted quite rightly for «physician (or medically) assisted death (or dying)», usually shortened to PAD or MAD.

The reasons are not superficial. They amount to recognizing that «euthanasia» already has a long career, mainly with respect to animals. The gesture remains compassionate, but it is imposed. This is all contrary to PAD, where a respectful, reciprocal autonomy between patient and physician is essential in reaching and acting on the decision. The patient must ask.

Most importantly, it is what assures the morality of the act. Wrote the eminent ethicist T. Engelhardt: «What is wrong with killing is taking another person life without permission. Consent cures. The suicide consents» («Death By Free Choice»). Likewise, emeritus philosopher T. Beauchamp demonstrate in «When Hastened Death is Neither Killing Nor Letting Die», that **justification** is what allows to go beyond the rules, a reasoning approved by several illustrious theologians, from Protestant Paul Tillich to Catholic Hans Küng. The word euthanasia can indeed make some people quite anxious about the weight of the consent.

Likewise, «assisted-suicide» totally fails to convey the truth of the situation: the irreversibility of the desperate situation of the sick, precisely the opposite of all random suicides. This allows opponents to point to the contradiction between suicide prevention efforts and the legalizing of «assisted-suicide», an expression very close to an oxymoron.

This ominous vocabulary must be straightened. Only fogged minds can see a euphemism rather than reputed philosopher's Paul Ricoeur's «solicitude», in the expression «aide médicale à mourir» / «physician-assisted dying», as beautifully developed in «Oneself as another».

Respectfully submitted,

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