

## *Love for Life*

- so far frequently just Double Standard of Morals in our Society

by Wolfgang Fischer

The Dutch model of active euthanasia is spurring the guardians of morality into action. Yet instead of using the opportunity for an open debate about a humane way of dying outside the sphere of interest of the medical industry, the modern Pharisees are engaging in noisy and vehement polemics. Such a debate in the face of legalised euthanasia in Holland certainly needs to be controversial; nonetheless we should not overlook the fact that an act of compassion concerning senseless human suffering in the face of death is long overdue. Whether lethal injection towards this end should be permitted, seems questionable precisely because natural ways of dying are in many cases still being withheld. People refusing food and fluids from an expressed and documented inner wish to die, should no longer be force-fed after the longed-for moment of their losing consciousness; this is inhumane. Just as pain is being relieved through drugs as a matter of course, so should in clearly defined cases the death wish of individuals doomed to die be accepted. If truly loving life, everyone ought to be concerned also about the mental pains and insecurities along the path of mortals. This poses a specific cultural challenge which has so far been largely neglected.

An act of grace which has long become a matter of course with animals and pets should no longer be allowed to be presented, with very dubious argumentation, as unacceptable for humans or even endangering our civilisation. Precondition for a way of euthanasia that accepts death as the natural ending of all life and ensures a sensitive companionship in the final hours, is a truly life-loving and life-supportive culture of humaneness, such as has yet to be developed.

In stark contrast to this, current comments range from "outrageous presumption" and "destruction of civilisation" to "break with our Christian and humanist tradition..." Active euthanasia is said to be incompatible with the Hippocratic oath, "God is holding his hand over life and death"... Thus for instance the Lutheran Church of Germany.

The mendacity and insincerity of the double standard of morals evident in these hypocritical reactions is mind-boggling.

Blessings of weapons by the churches, institutionalised pastoral care of the military, the arms industry as a generally accepted branch of economics, the German government's reintroduction of a policy of armed conflict in violation of the intent of the German constitution, the failure to outlaw war on the international level, regulations concerning the handling of physical and chemical pollu-

tants that are pro-industry and anti-life, the ways of dealing with nascent human life in connection with the debate about gene technology, the gene technology with its false promises as such - all these manifestations of our civilisation, besides sundry other everyday cruelties and systemic injustices, bear witness to a rampant general "culture of destruction and killing" - a fact which the representatives of our established institutions are still turning a blind eye to. As long as civilised societies are siding with those who scorn Life and favour Capital, accepting and encouraging behaviour that devalues nature solely for the sake of material gain, they are quite blatantly turning humans into slaves whilst exploiting nature. Their love for life, expressed in ever so smooth formulations, proves to be a fake.

The values providing orientation in our society have long been shifted from nature needing protection, from life needing protection and from solidarity needing to be actively encouraged, towards a general acceptance of violence against nature and life and towards legally protected greed without any regard for the social or ecological consequences. And the supportive attitude of Neoliberalism towards the blasphemy of modern life is truly the limit.

Love for life requires a simple ethics. A truthful "destruction of civilisation", which is still to be hoped for, would be the clear break with the life-throttling status quo of the currently ruling politics. It is high time for us to hold our hand over life and death ourselves so that, defending the dignity of life, we may put a stop to the activities of the profiteers. The increasing urgency of this is shown by the current neoliberal policies of neglect and destruction of our ecological and social foundations.

Any debate concerning this issue ought to query the actually given foundations of modern life. It is high time to initiate a 'post-civilisation' age - an era of actual respect for our natural conditions and dependencies. An era of outlawing historically developed life-threatening habits and behaviour patterns. An era, finally, of partnership with nature, of friendship among fellow humans. An era of a therapeutic culture where social justice and equality of opportunity for each individual have become a matter of course. An era of love for the life on our planet.

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