

([The Guardian](#) , 3 de mayo de 2013). My problem with euthanasia is not that it is a immoral way to die, but that it has its roots in a fearful way to live.

I am, as they say, on the wrong side of the argument. A YouGov poll out this week demonstrated convincingly that the public strongly support the idea that we have a right to choose when we die. Doctors still don't, MPs don't, and the clergy don't. But even the majority of people in the pews now support assisted suicide.

And I have little doubt that, soon enough, the law will follow. These days, people say they want to die quickly, painlessly in their sleep and without becoming a burden. Apparently, this is what a good death now looks like. Well, I want to offer a minority report.

I do want to be a burden on my loved ones just as I want them to be a burden on me - it's called looking after each other. Obviously, I know people are terrified of the indignity of dying and of being ill generally. Having someone wipe our bums, clean up our mess, put up with our incoherent ramblings and mood swings is a threat to our cherished sense of personal autonomy.

But this is where the liberal model of individual self-determination breaks down. For it is when we are this vulnerable that we have little choice but to allow ourselves to be loved and looked after. Lying in a bed full of our own faeces, unable to do anything about it, is when we break with the idea of René Descartes' pernicious "I think therefore I am".

No, we are not brains in vats. We are not solitary self-defining intellectual identities who form temporary alliances with each other for short-term mutual advantage. My existence is fundamentally bound up with yours. Of course, I will clean you up. Of course, I will hold your hand in the long hours of the night. Shut up about being a burden. I love you. This is what it means to love you. Surely, there is something extraordinarily beautiful about all of this.

Likewise, I have no fondness for pain per se. And I can even imagine taking a draught of something myself one day, were some pain to become utterly intolerable. I do understand. And, yes, even understand that helping others to do it can sometimes be an act of mercy.

But it is also right to push back against the general assumption that pain reduction is

unproblematic. For pain is so much a part of life that its suppression can also be a suppression of a great deal of that which is valuable. Constantly anaesthetising ourselves against pain is also a way to reduce our exposure to so much that is wonderful about life.

Yet too many of us make a Faustian pact with pharmacology, welcoming its obvious benefits, but ignoring the fact that drugs also can demand your soul. That's perhaps why we speak of the overly drugged-up as zombies.

Finally, the contemporary "good death" is one that happens without the dying person knowing all that much about it. But what about the need for time to say goodbye and sorry and thank you? It is as if we want to die without actually knowing we are dying.

Much of this originates in the excessive fear we now have of dying, a fear that is amplified by the let's pretend game that we play when we remove death from public view. It is precisely this fear that operates when adults worry about taking children to the funeral because "it will upset them".

As with many things like this, it is a reflection of adult anxiety rather than the child's ability to cope. And the message it communicates is that death is something strange, weird, and spooky. This only serves to incubate our fear and encourages us to devise further strategies to keep the full knowledge of its reality at bay.

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