

Euthanasia and Orthodox theology of Communion

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The article discusses the issue of Euthanasia from the perspective of an Orthodox theology of communion. It demonstrates, that issues related to Euthanasia including moral and ethical issues cannot be limited to the individual and his context, but are in fact issues that should and do incorporate the wider community. The emphasis of Orthodox Theology on Communion and on the community could present possibilities of how to deal with Euthanasia by transferring the debate from the context of the individual and his or her choice or choice of other immediate individuals to an ecclesially centred platform. Just as there is a tendency for greater individualisation in society there is a tendency to moral and ethical individualisation and atomisation.

Keywords: *Euthanasia, Orthodox Theology, Theology of Communion, Ethics, Morality*

Introduction

In this brief paper we would like to draw attention to the fact that euthanasia, as indeed other forms of suicide too often viewed on a platform of individual decision and on a limited view of the human person. We would like to draw attention to the fact, that euthanasia and suicide are in fact communal events in their essence, both on a practical and theoretical level. We apply some principles of an orthodox theology of communion to the issue and show that the debate on this problem should incorporate wider notions of the community. This stems from the idea that the individual person is not an abstract concept but a person in relation, and his or her suffering or desire for death are indicative of a problem and failings of the community not only the individual. Judgments on the practice of euthanasia have to take this into account and in fact, as the practice itself shows, it is always a communal problem since it involves others and not just the individual at hand.

Preliminary considerations

Even in ancient thought, the body was often understood as a prison for the soul.¹ The body's visible corruptibility and the pain associated with it, has

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¹ The issue of the relation of the body and soul is historically very complex. In this regard one can draw reference obviously to Plato and Aristotle, since both played a major role in the