

Court should grant people right to die

This week the U.S. Supreme Court takes on its first case concerning voluntary euthanasia.

Euthanasia, the right to cause death so as to end suffering, is a topic of great emotional controversy. Since the first case in 1976, more than 50 cases have been fought around the country with most states ruling in favor of those who would choose to die instead of live in a vegetative state.

The case before the Supreme Court, *Cruzan vs. Missouri Department of Health*, concerns Nancy Cruzan, a 32-year-old woman who has been in a vegetative state for almost seven years. Her parents want her doctors to remove the feeding tube which presently keeps her alive. The doctors say she could live another 30 years in her current condition.

It is estimated more than 10,000 people are being kept alive in a similar manner. Countless others are kept alive by machines and drugs. Still others are elderly and ill and just wish to die.

The Supreme Court is not expected to make its decision on *Cruzan vs. Missouri Department of Health* until this summer. The decision may decide whether the Constitution protects the right to refuse medical treatment. It also may make a decision concerning who can decide to refuse medical treatment — the patient and/or family members.

Choosing to die rather than suffer from vegetation or painful illness is a very personal, private decision. In the Bill of Rights the "right of privacy" is secured; the decision to end one's life due to a basic inability to live it should be up to the individual.

Living wills are becoming more and more common in states that allow people the right to refuse medical treatment and nourishment. These people are making a personal and responsible decision. People who are hospitalized for extensive periods of time with no hope of recovery put a tremendous emotional and financial strain on family members, not to mention the medical system.

Skyrocketing health care costs are partly due to the extensive costs incurred by people who are permanent hospital inpatients. Most families cannot afford lifetime inpatient care and hospitals often have to pick up the bill.

If a person can no longer live, use his or her brain and communicate with others in some way, why should his or her body be forced to stay alive?

When the Supreme Court makes its decision this summer, we hope it will decide on the constitutionality of voluntary euthanasia. Although for some it may be considered murder, for others it may mean long-awaited peace.



Earth Day planning needs everyone's input

There is a meeting going on tonight we believe people should attend.

The University Earth Day Coalition is meeting tonight at 7:30 in the EMU Ben Linder Room. The coalition is planning events for Earth Day 1990 on April 22, and all are welcome.

Given the growing interest in environmental issues, and the worsening condition of the planet, we hope people will find time to show up and participate in planning upcoming Earth Day activities.

Those who attend the meeting will be given a short introductory speech about the day itself and a rough idea of what events will happen on campus and in the Eugene area. Then, the meeting will split into smaller groups, with each of the participants giving their input as to what events should take place and how they should be undertaken.

Since the first Earth Day in 1970, much has happened in the world of environmentalism. The energy that went into Earth Day sparked interest in environmental issues, and led to the creation of the Environmental

Protection Agency, and subsequently the Clean Water and Air acts.

But concern over the environment has had to grow again following apathy in the early 80s. And the 20th anniversary of Earth Day is as good a time as any to reflect on the progress of — and hindrances to — the movement.

This year's coalition is actively seeking the support and involvement of an array of campus groups, representing ethnic groups, women and people of color. Environmental issues affect us all, and Earth Day should reflect this by getting as many opinions as possible.

Earth Day has been celebrated at the University every year it has been in existence, one of the few college campuses in the United States that can make that claim. Eugene itself prides itself on being an "environmentally aware" community. We hope this year's Earth Day will continue this tradition, and, with participation from a diverse group of people, raise some awareness about this fragile planet and what we are doing to it.

Letters

Good learnin'

Kudos for your Nov. 16 edition. Hey, who said you couldn't get some good learnin' at a university.

First off, who couldn't be impressed with those fiscal tigers manning the EMU board of directors. Initially, the EMU's decision to allow the continued sale of cigarettes looks like real hardnosed business.

Anyone with the slightest bit of business acumen could easily see how the board is nothing more than a bunch of featherweights. If the board is really interested in selling dangerous drugs, and making a profit, then they ought to get on down to where the real action is and learn the art of selling dangerous, addictive drugs for some bigtime profits. That way they could really lower prices.

Heck, they probably knew this all along. That's why they tried to win us over with the appeal for the rights of smokers. It was touching to learn how much they cared about the human rights of smokers. No doubt all of these board members were on hand to protest

the CIA's visit to the EMU. Or were they?

But, say, those CIA boys probably aren't all that bad. Just ask those security force folks down in El Salvador, or maybe the guys down in Chile.

Robert Schimmer
International studies

Solution

I vehemently agree that pornography humiliates, objectifies and dehumanizes. However, to inform Joel Diegleman, (*ODE*, Nov. 21) there are a few reasons why we should necessarily disregard the 1986 "Attorney General's Commission on Pornography — Final Report":

1) It was created as an instrument of fundamentalist ideology, and not out of sound, investigative premises.

2) The Commission blatantly ignored social science research findings which ran against their preconceived message.

3) The report failed to acknowledge the increasing consensus that it is the violent

component rather than the sexually explicit component of mass media images which correlates with subsequent violent behavior.

"Pornography is the theory; rape is the practice" is certainly a message worth heeding, but also one important enough to amend as our knowledge of the situation increases.

We now have strong reason to believe that violent PG and R-rated films, non-pornographic magazines, and prime time television are as much the "theory" behind the "practice" of rape as are the offensive magazines from the Bookstore and EMU Main Desk to which Diegleman objects. The solution isn't censorship.

While I share Diegleman's deep objection to the dehumanization in these magazines, I refuse to follow Meese and his merry pranksters down the dark, windy road of what the former Attorney General calls "common sense" prosecution of pornographers.

Is this the same "common sense" which so sagely dictates policy on abortion, birth control, sex education, and fund-

ing for AIDS research? Those concerned about the objectification of women and hate crimes in general should be wary of convenient complicity with coercive government, no matter how brief.

The solution is education. Let us inform the reader, not eliminate his reading.

Mark Fellows
English

No substance

Regarding Bert Tryba's frequent letters condemning religion.

Despite Tryba's claim of reliance on reason, his views are full of as many emotionally inspired opinions, and are just as open to criticism, as belief in the God he dismisses.

Belief in God is indeed a matter of opinion, but it is a belief that demands social action, condemning apathy. Atheism, conversely being essentially a "refutation of theist ideas," has no substance or foundation for creating a better world.

Atheism is a lot of pseudo-intellectual masturbation festering in its own relativist ghetto,

refuting everything and promising nothing. Atheism is a social neuter, capable of making only the motions of social change, but incapable of actually producing anything of value.

Throughout history, it has been the church which was the stronghold of literature, art and history itself. Evil has been done in the name of God, but it has been done by individuals acting in spite of religious assertions, rather than in accordance with them.

But such aberrations are irrelevant. Consider only what is happening today, right now, in that corner church. That church is a good place full of good people, doing good things.

Church membership is up; "Mere tradition" you call it, but it is more. Religion is alive: Alive not only because we want it, but because we need it. And God who graces us with it is ever more alive, for God has allowed us to stray, welcoming our return to discover this truth on our own.

Jason Maas
Eugene

Thursday, December 7, 1989