



Hospice or Hemlock?: Searching for Heroic Compassion

Constance Putnam

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End-of-life decision making is often viewed from an academic perspective, which can obscure the debate's central human concerns. This guide introduces general readers to people with personal stakes in the right-to-die conundrum. Putnam provides practical assistance to readers and their loved ones, simultaneously incorporating the abstract and theoretical analysis essential to examining how we die in contemporary Western society. She also presents the backgrounds of the Hospice and Right-to-Die (Hemlock) Movements.

To elucidate the human side of the debate, Putnam profiles and interviews six important figures:

- Dame Cicely Saunders, founder of the modern Hospice Movement
- Derek Humphry, founder of The Hemlock Society in the U.S.
- Herbert Cohen, an early leader in euthanasia circles in The Netherlands
- Timothy Quill, whose assistance in a patient suicide resulted in a case before the U.S. Supreme Court
- Joanne Lynn, founder of Americans for Better Care for the Dying
- Jack Kevorkian (profiled, but unavailable for interview)

Another unique feature of this book is the application of philosopher Judith Jarvis Thomson's general theory of rights to the very specific right to die. Pointing to potential compatibilities between the two positions, she concludes that heroic compassion does not require a final choice between Hospice and Hemlock?there may be room enough for both.

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