

Realists have a Religious Right to Experimental Medicines

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The Church of Reality hereby asserts the religious right to use experimental lifesaving drugs, even if these drugs are not deemed to be safe, in order to treat serious illness that is disabling, life threatening, or terminal illness. Although we respect the various government agencies who are charged with keeping drugs safe for public use, we recognize that when an individual is terminal, that they have a right to be allowed to take greater risks than individuals who are otherwise healthy because they have nothing to lose. The reasoning behind this edict is as follows:

The Church of Reality is a religion based on the pursuit of the understanding of reality as it really is by humans. Humans understand reality collectively through the {In:Tree of Knowledge} which represents the sum total of all human understanding. Even though we understand reality collectively, the collective is made up of individuals who contribute their knowledge and experience as functional happy members of a harmonious society in which the individual can explore reality living in a sane and healthy society.

As Realists we are free thinkers and as part of our religious practice, we think things through and we think for ourselves. We are {In:Explorers} not {In:Followers} and because the future is the {In:Sacred Direction}, we assume a position of leadership in society. It is our religious mandate to guide society towards a better understanding of reality as it really is. Although we are generally a law-abiding group, when the laws of the nation states for which we are members impose laws on us that are not supported by logic or reason and impose an undue burden on our way of life, then we have a religious duty to both work to change the law and in some cases to disobey the law.

Some countries allow certain groups to have an exception to the laws where the law interferes with their religious freedoms. The United States at this point in time is one of them that allows for such an exception based on religious doctrine. Our doctrine is an evolving doctrine. As the times we live in change and our technology evolves, our doctrine evolves with it. We as Realists are in a unique position to change our doctrine to suit our religious needs. In this case we issue this edict to assert our religious position so that institutions of justice can more easily ascertain our religious position and accommodate our religious rights.

The Church of Reality doctrine includes the concept of {In:Self Ownership}. We are the owners of our own lives. We are writing our own {In:Life Story}. The very core of who we are includes a greater level of self-determination than most other religions assert. We make our own choices and it is important to us even if some people make bad choices. Although we understand that other people need to be protected from being harmed by the bad choices of some individuals, when it comes to making choices where the consequences of the choices are primarily visited upon the individual making the choice, then we assert that a person has the right to make those choices where there exists some rational basis to make the choice.

The Right to Experimental Drugs and Procedures

When new experimental drugs are developed, they are tested to make sure that they are effective and that the side-effects are known and that they don't kill more people than they save. While these drugs are being tested it is generally illegal to give these drugs to people except within the context of human trials. However all potential patients are considered to be equal and the laws generally do not distinguish between normal people and the terminally ill.

If an individual is diagnosed with a terminal disease and they are given 3 months to live, then they aren't going to be able to wait 7 years for a product to come to market. They will be dead by then. However, the new drug or procedure might be the "miracle cure" that will save their life. In this context the patient has little to lose and everything to gain by taking the

experimental drug. On the down side they might die sooner, but that is a small price to pay for a chance to be cured. Even if the new drug kills the patient there is a benefit to society in that the developers of the drug know earlier that the new cure doesn't work and they can then learn from their mistakes and try something else sooner that may result in future lives being saved.

Some countries have faster drug approval processes than others. A realist living in a country where the drug is illegal is often prohibited by law from obtaining a cure from a country where the drug is legal. While it might make sense that one country might have higher standards to protect healthy people from unproven treatments, those same laws restrict the terminally ill patient from receiving medicine that could save their lives. Clearly there is a logical basis for giving the terminally ill a different level of access to experimental drugs and procedures than people seeking cosmetic procedures.

For example, if a drug is approved for use in Russia because it prevents the recurrence of some form of cancer, but the drug is in clinical trials in America and is therefore illegal, a Realist would have a religious right to obtain and use this drug. And the religious right extends to the caregivers that may be involved and those who obtain the drug illegally. The fact that the drug is approved in another country or is in some kind of legitimate scientific trials is sufficient reason for a Realist to have the right to chose this treatment if they are terminal or seriously ill, or even have an expectation that they might be preventing a serious illness. Under the doctrine of self-ownership the individual has the right to make their own choices based on their own values.

When a life-saving drug is approved in one country and is not yet approved in your country, it means that some medical professionals have concluded that the treatment has value. Similarly when a drug like Marijuana is classified by one level of government to have no medical value, but other levels of government and a significant sector of the medical community find otherwise, then the Realist has a religious right to rely on and have access to the treatment, especially in the case of those who are seriously ill. We cannot be expected to sacrifice our lives as Realists to obey laws and regulation that are often the results of politics rather than sound medical science. And even if we turn out to be wrong, we have the right to be wrong. Even if something is the wrong choice it is our wrong choice to make.

Religious Accommodation of Medical Decisions in US Law

It is common in law to allow a person to refuse life saving medical treatment because the treatment involves violating their religious values. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, refuse blood transfusions choosing to die rather than to violate their religious principles. So the law allows a person to choose to die for religious reasons. Since all religions are to be treated equally under the law, then we Realists should have the right to do the same thing. If we choose to risk death using an experimental drug that may kill us, or we choose to use a level of pain medication that will definitely kill us but allows us to die in he manner that we choose, then we have a religious right to make those kind of choices just like the Jehovah's Witnesses do.

Other religions put value in preparing for the "next life" and are allowed to make medical decision in this life to accommodate those values. Our values are focused on "this life" and one's life story. Our religious values include a strong sense of self-determination in writing one's own life story. That includes choosing how and when to die or what risks one might take in order to live. It's my life and it's my choice. I own myself.

Active and Passive Medical Choices are the same in our Religion

Our religion is different than many other religions in that many other religion are based on the idea that there is one or more deities that control life and death and that it is up to the deity to determine when you are going to die. "Doctors should not play God.", is the principle on which many laws are made. In this world view one can choose to withhold treatment but ultimately it is up to the deity to choose to take your life. Thus doctors are restricted by law from "playing God".

The Church of Reality is not a deity based religion. Our world view is that life includes death and that our life and our death are the most personal of experiences. Our religion does not include the belief in deities that control life and death and therefore there is no moral difference between actively helping someone die and passively allowing them to die. To us, deciding to withhold food and allowing a person to starve to death is perhaps more morally objectionable than injecting a patient with an overdose of morphine to end their suffering. We are not playing God because there is no God to play. Our religion asserts the right to select active measures equally with passive measures when making religious based medical choices.

In some jurisdictions one might be religiously allowed to refuse medical treatment because it is based on not doing something where they might not be able to require a medical treatment because it requires someone to act rather than to not act. It is our position that this distinction is a religious distinction and that it should not be imposed upon religions like ours that do not share that value system. In our world-view the decision to act and the decision to not act are the same and our religious rights to have a religious exception includes allowing caregivers to have the same immunities to give religious medical care as we have to receive it.

The Sacred Principle of Compassion allows us to give medical care

Sometimes people treat themselves. But more often there is a caregiver and a patient. Sometimes both are Realists and sometimes they aren't. Sometimes the caregiver is a Realist and the patient isn't.

In the Church of Reality one of our {In:Sacred Principles} is the {In:Principle of Compassion}. If we are taking care of a friend, for example, who has terminal cancer and we become aware that the Chinese have found a drug that cures this form of cancer, but our government hasn't yet approved the drug for use in this country, and the friend chooses to use the drug, we have a religious duty to provide the drug if we can regardless of what the law says. We are not supposed to say, "too bad, you have to die because some regulatory agency isn't smart enough to have different standard for healthy people and the terminally ill." Our religious values do not include obeying laws which would result in injury or death of friends or loved ones if obeyed.

Most advanced nations have an exception to any crime on the basis of justification. Any law can be broken if you can convince a jury that there was a good reason to break the law. Murder, for example, is illegal. But in self defense it can be justified. So the law contemplates that there may be reasons to break the law. There are also nonreligious exceptions to the law where a group is exempt from law for religious purposes. In the Church of Reality we have a religious purpose under the Principle of Compassion to save the lives of those who ask us for help. Or for that matter, to help end the life of someone who is terminal and suffering.