

The Depraved Penalty: Capital Punishment

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I have mixed feelings about the death penalty. I hear about the grisly murder of any person and a deep sadness engulfs me. I am really torn apart when I hear about the death of a child or woman. I think about the gratification I would feel if the murderer was killed in a grotesque fashion much worse than what was inflicted on the victim. I then think to myself, "what if the alleged murderer is innocent." David Bruck says, "People are so horrified by a particular crime, and they want to wrap themselves in the feeling of indignation that the public understandably experiences" (qtd. in "David Bruck Quotes"). I refute Edward I. Koch's thesis statement in "Death and Justice," "Life is indeed precious, and I believe the death penalty helps to affirm this fact" (320). The first reason I take the opposing view of Koch is because mistakes are made in our imperfect judicial system. The second reason is people should never be able to make the decision to end another person's life, The third reason is a true life without parole sentence would be worse than the death penalty.

O.J. Simpson was arrested for murdering Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman. I use this simply because he was so obviously guilty and was acquitted. I disagree, as do many others, with the way the Casey Anthony trial turned out. The exact opposite could happen. Marquis de Lafayette said, "I shall ask for the abolition of the punishment of death until I have the infallibility of human judgement demonstrated to me" (qtd. in Bedau). According to Hugo Adam Bedau in, The Case Against the Death Penalty, "Since

1900, in this country, there have been on the average more than four cases per year in which an entirely innocent person was convicted of murder. Scores of these persons were sentenced to death. In many cases, a reprieve or commutation arrived just hours, or even minutes, before the scheduled execution. These erroneous convictions have occurred in virtually every jurisdiction from one end of the nation to the other. Nor have they declined in recent years, despite the new death penalty statutes approved by the Supreme Court" (Bedau). Koch states that, "If government functioned only when the possibility of error didn't exist, government wouldn't function at all" (322). I think a lot more reasoning should be in play when you are dealing with a human life. It is not a box of government staples that are the wrong size.

In Koch's introduction he quotes a convicted murderer named Robert Lee Willis who said, "Killing people is wrong.... It makes no difference whether it's citizens, countries, or governments. Killing is wrong" (319-20). There is no reason except for self-defense, and only as a last resort, that I would take another's life. I have the ability to reason; therefore, I am not an animal. Animals in the wild kill for sustenance, or to protect themselves and their young. I am a civilized person whose food is provided for. I do not need to kill to get ahead in any aspect of my life. I educate myself, and work to provide the necessities to live. I firmly believe that killing for gain, passion, or punishment is wrong. Capital punishment or life imprisonment does not deter murder. People who commit premeditated crimes do not think they will get caught; therefore, they do

not think of the consequences. When someone kills in the heat of the moment, most, if not all of their judgement is put on hold. Consequences are always thought of after the fact (Bedau).

Mother Teresa says, "Life is too precious, do not destroy it" (qtd. in Tonia).

Koch writes of Jimmy Breslin, a critic of capital punishment. He suggests that a life sentence is worse than the death penalty (323). I agree with this. I imagine living in a bathroom for the rest of my life. Three times a day someone brings me food, just enough to curb the hunger I always feel. I rarely see anyone I have ever loved in my life. The only stimulation I have is to read, write, and maybe watch television. Once a day I am put in a cage outside, if weather permits. This is my existence (Sullivan). It would not take long for me to become mentally unstable. If I chose to end my life, there is nothing to which I could tie the sheet I would use to commit suicide. I would much rather face death than imprisonment such as this. I know this is not how the average murderer does time. This is a possibility for the ones who refuse to cooperate in the prison environment. The average killer in prison lives much better than that. I do not really agree with it. I think the time done should be consistent with the crime done. I want murderers to have a tough time in prison. Let karma be the judge of what happens to them. I remember the serial killer Jeffery Dahmer. He did heinous things to young boys. He was stabbed to death in prison.

I am an agnostic. That means to me that I believe there is some form of undefined higher power which I choose to call God.

I do not think my God intended for society to live like animals. I believe there is a higher purpose for us, even a murderer may have something to contribute. The higher purpose cannot be met with state sponsored killing. I cannot imagine anything worse than to be given a death sentence if I was innocent. Life is a wonderful joyous experience. I have no right to take it away from someone else. If I ever did commit murder I deserve to be locked away for the rest of my life. The only stimulation I should get is thinking about the wrong that I did.

Works Cited

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