Really, why not pull the plug?

By Chaplain Norbert J Karava

When considering issues of morality it is important to distinguish between the objective moral nature of human acts considered in themselves and the subjective moral state of affairs brought about in the persons who perform them. Thus, while we may accept that objectively, murder defined as the taking of an innocent life is morally reprehensible and heinous as an act considered in itself, we cannot immediately conclude that the person who physically accomplishes the act of murder is actually guilty of the specific malice inherent in the act, objectively considered.

Is the person in question cognizant of the malice of the act, and to what degree? Is this person's freedom of will impaired, and if so, to what degree? Whereas we often can glean a sense of these things from our knowledge and experience of both ourselves and others, we are well advised to avoid indicting anyone of moral guilt in the proper sense of the word, except ourselves.

I intend this as a caveat before writing on a highly controversial subject, to wit, the immorality of suicide: I truly do not judge anyone who has committed or attempted to commit this act. The intended focus is on the moral nature of the act, again considered in itself and not the subjective instantiation of the act in this or that specific person.

An observation: Whereas we comfortably speak of the immorality of such acts as murder, theft, robbery, lying, torture, sexual assault and exploitation, it happens extremely rarely that someone unequivocally posits the immorality of suicide. The necessary conclusion that we would have to draw, namely, that a person who knowingly and willingly commits suicide thereby becomes an irresponsible and evil man, as he would by knowingly and willingly committing murder, robbery, or mendacity, seems to be universally repugnant to contemporary sensibilities, and inadmissible in public and, or official venues.

Yet, I opine that this is the 800-pound gorilla sitting in the living room of our official publications, suicide prevention-preventive medicine education, conferences, slide presentations and yes, even our memorial services… that we pretend not to notice: After we've psychoanalyzed commonly occurring emotional dimensions of suicide to death, after dispensing all the warm 'fuzzies' conceivable in an effort to persuade our suicidal correspondent that his problems aren't bigger than life itself and that "life is good" and "worth living," after presenting the calculus of what is to be gained and lost, we find ourselves crashing like a wave onto the cliffs of truth: Unless there is a truly moral reason not to commit suicide, there really is no reason not to, just as ultimately, without a moral reason, there is no reason not to lie, cheat, steal or murder. Failing a moral reason and an attending conviction of truth, we are adrift in a sea of Prozac and then suffocating in the vacuum of our own ultimately valueless and meaningless "well-being." Indeed, which, in this case, is worse: the death we are being saved from or the life being offered us to live?

We sometimes flirt with something approaching a moral reason against suicide if we dare to ask such questions: "Where will this leave those who love you and need you?" But alas, all too often we fear to lay bare the implications. And the nagging and unspoken thought "It seems that you valued your pain more than their love," stubbornly refuses to be banished even by the most pathos-drenched eulogies.

For human persons, their monkey-manners notwithstanding, whose glory and uniqueness is such that their minds are capable of entertaining and grasping moral truth, all merely psychological motives taken together do not equal a single moral precept. As we and those we love stand, in our moments of crisis, eyeball to eyeball with our own "to be or not to be," we can help each other discover, in a moment of courage, that if life has not supported our agendas, the solution is probably not so much in either attempting to change the nature of life or terminating it, but in reexamining our agendas in the light of truly moral reasons. Ah, but that does take courage, doesn't it?

Your student child may be able to fly free to, from United States

By Lt. Cmdr. Jed R. Espiritu, PSD Yokosuka

Did you know, your command sponsored son or daughter may be eligible for government-paid transportation to and from the continental United States?

For example, your daughter, is attending college back in the states. You are speaking with her on a long distance phone call when she breaks the news: She isn't visiting you in Japan during spring break because, "It just costs too much." What do you tell her?

Section U5260 of the Joint Federal Transportation Regulation (JFTR, Volume 1) states that if you are a military member who is permanently stationed outside the continential United States and authorized to have a family member reside at or in the vicinity of your permanent duty station or home port, your minor son or daughter may be able to fly to and from the United States at the government's expense.

Section C5120 of the Joint Transportation Regulation (JTR, Volume 2) reflects similar guidelines for Department of Defense (DoD) appropriated fund civilian employees who are U.S. citizens living in a foreign area.

Be mindful, however, that some of the JFTR/JTR guidelines do not apply to those of us stationed in Yokosuka. Three key categories of student transportation from Yokosuka are:

• An unmarried dependent child who will be engaged in formal education in the United States, with "formal education" defined as: An undergraduate college education, a graduate education pursued on a full-time basis at an institution of higher education, or vocational education pursued on a full-time basis at a post-secondary vocational institution.

• A DoD Education Activity (EA) student travels for academic competitions and co-curricular activities.

• A handicapped DoDEA student traveling for diagnostic and evaluation purposes.

Service members and DoD civilians are authorized one annual round-trip for a family member student at any time within a fiscal year (Oct. 1 - Sept. 30) between the member's overseas duty station and the student's school in the states.

Keep in mind that your son or daughter may or may not be eligible within these federal guidelines, so familiarize yourself with the JFTR/JTR. For more information, visit the DoD Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee website at http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/trvlregs.html, then visit the Personnel Support Detachment (PSD) Yokosuka Navy Passenger Transportation Office.

Immediate differences you find while driving in Japan

By CFAY Licensing Office

Besides the obvious differences of driving on the left side, and the turn signal lever located on the right side of the steering wheel column, newly arriving personnel must pay very close attention and acclimate to the width of the roads, including the size of parking spaces.

You must realize and appreciate that everything in Japan is much more concentrated, including all the roads.

Once you get used to them, you will be able to drive anywhere; however, take the time to adjust to your new surroundings. Don't force your way into spaces, you will only end up becoming a statistic. You must learn how to negotiate from the opposite side of the vehicle which takes time and patience.

You should understand that each accident that happens can be avoided if you take a minute to understand your surroundings. Once you do this you will prevent an accident from happening. If you are one that usually gets a lot of bumps and bruises, you will have more chances of having a traffic accident. Know yourself, take time to practice or do one better; ask a passenger to assist you if you're not certain of how much space you have.