

K. 'English law seems (like the law in many other countries) to be in a radically unprincipled, inconsistent and unstable condition, prohibiting doctors from intentional killing by an act but, at least sometimes, permitting them to kill by omission.' Discuss.

(Suggestions: The quotation comes at the end of a section of the Cambridge Medical Ethics Workbook where John Keown has been discussing the goals of palliative care (Chapter I Section 6, pp.27-32). The section of the workbook gives an indication of the state of English law in these areas when Keown wrote his article, but you may want to concentrate on the questions whether it is actually possible to 'kill by omission', and whether the distinction of action and omission (= failure to act) is sustainable in this, or indeed in other, contexts. The claim that the law is in a 'radically unprincipled, inconsistent and unstable condition' is clearly a serious one. Is it true? What causes it, and how may principle and stability be restored? There is interesting reading on acts and omissions in Kagan and Glover (both influenced by utilitarian perspectives.)

L. 'The doctrine of the double effect is based on a distinction between what a man foresees as a result of his voluntary action and what, in the strict sense, he intends.' Is this distinction sustainable?

(Suggestions: The quotation comes from Philippa Foot's paper 'The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect', chapter II in her book *Virtues and Vices*. This, and the friendly discussion of the principle by Anscombe, along with the hostile discussion by Glover, would be worthwhile as a starting point. A good essay is likely to be sprinkled fairly liberally with examples of cases to which the doctrine or principle might be applied and to offer an account of the sustainability or otherwise of the principle in relation to these cases.)