

# The King Herod Solution

Awful, terrible news! I noticed a small item in last week's British Medical Journal that once again revealed the cruel and callous nature of patriarchy. Under the headline Fall in Death Rate we learn that 'Between 2009 and 2015 deaths from leukaemia in children have fallen by 38 per cent in boys and 20 per cent in girls.'

That was the total content of the item, and the reader was not told whether the figures applied only to Britain, to Europe, to the west or to the whole world. But what is awful about these figures is that the death rate of wherever the figures referred to fell by almost twice as much for boys as for girls.

It is possible, of course, that the boys' reduced death rate brought their death rate closer to that of girls, if the death rate of the boys was higher initially than that of the girls. This would mean that the position of girls relative to boys had deteriorated. If, on the other hand, their previous death rates from leukaemia had been equal, the death rate of girls would now exceed that of boys. Either way, a terrible injustice was being done to girls.

The item did not mention whether the decline in death rates came from improved treatment or from a decline in incidence, but whichever is the case, it is clear that the disparity must be 'addressed,' to use a word favoured by politicians and bureaucrats.

The easiest and cheapest way to do this would be to withhold treatment from a proportion of the boys with leukaemia, since the disease is now often curable. This would restore the balance, the status quo ante. Letting more boys die of leukaemia would serve the cause of equality and therefore of justice.

At the other end of life the situation is different. Women live longer than men, on the whole, at present about 4 years longer. In 1900, the difference was only 3 years. Since the right to life is the most fundamental human life of all, and since equality between the sexes is a matter of elementary justice, it follows that something must be done to right the long-lasting intolerable situation.

Again, the most economical way of doing so, especially in these times of financial stringency, would be to deny life-prolonging medicine and procedures to a proportion of women (chosen by lottery). This would obviously be preferable to the alternative, compulsory euthanasia.

First published in