

Slippery Slope?

Writers of counter-cultural books, articles and websites (such as this one) often point to the probability that such things as same-sex “marriage” will lead (or is leading) to polyamorous “marriages” and perhaps zoophilic “marriages”, that establishing the “right to die” for people with incurable diseases will lead (or is leading) to increased “rights” for the state to kill, or allow the killing of, the mentally disabled, the depressed, and maybe, finally, those elderly who own no resources to pay for extensive treatment and care; such accounts often refer to a “slippery slope”. Defenders of Establishment views counter this by saying that “slippery slope” arguments are of necessity fallacious, implying, therefore, that such fears should be discounted; are they correct?

Clearly it is fallacious to claim that A will *of necessity* cause B, and B *of necessity* cause C, and so on (this is a little like the well-known fallacy of *Post hoc ergo propter hoc*: because B is *preceded by* A, then B has been *caused by* A). However, appropriate reasoning does not require that A *may not* cause B, B *may not* cause C, etc., and A may well, in some cases, cause B, B cause C, etc. (and equally B *may* have been caused by A, C by B, etc.). Some defenders of life say that, in such places as Belgium, establishing the “right to die” for the incurable definitely *has* led to a “euthanasia” free-for-all, with targeted organ harvesting and commercial factors on the horizon (see, for example: <http://www.mercatornet.com/careful/view/15269>). So next time you read or see this kind of tactic (I recently saw a well-known television presenter pouring scorn on slippery slope “fallacies”) you’ll know to treat it according to its true worth (you probably won’t get opportunity to reply – that’s the mainstream media for you).

A slippery slope leading to really bad things? Maybe ...

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