

Reply to Williams

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Abstract In her review of my book *Assisted Death: A Study in Ethics and Law*, Glenys Williams raises a number of substantive objections to its argument. In this note I reply to those objections.

Keywords Assisted death · End-of-life care · Euthanasia · Assisted suicide

I am grateful for this opportunity to respond to Glenys Williams's review of my book. However, there seems little of substance for me to complain of, since she says that she found the book's argument 'persuasive'—always welcome news to an author. And the fact is that we seem to be largely on the same page, at least as far as the legal status of assisted death is concerned. In her own excellent book, which I cite in mine, Williams advocates law reform to accommodate the practice of assisted suicide or euthanasia by physicians who are acting on compassionate grounds to alleviate suffering at the request of their patients.¹

Despite this common ground, she does have a few criticisms which I am happy to address. I'll begin with a complaint which she registers at the beginning of her review and returns to at several points throughout it: that the book contains 'insufficient legal discussion', resulting in 'a significant imbalance as between the ethical and legal arguments'. Since my book is subtitled 'A Study in Ethics and Law', and is intended to deal with both the ethical and legal status of assisted death, any such imbalance looks like a serious fault. Just for the record, the book divides as follows: Part I (Ethics): four chapters, 100 pages; Part II (Law): three chapters, 84 pages. So in that respect there is indeed more ethics than law, though I am not sure that I would regard that 16-page difference as 'significant'.

¹ Glenys Williams, *Intention and Causation in Medical Non-Killing: The Impact of Criminal law Concepts on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide* (London and New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007), ch. 7.

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