Why is it morally wrong to kill an innocent human being?
“kill”: change from being biologically alive to biologically dead; shorten life; one is causally responsible.

**Injury** Does killing X logically imply injuring X? What would be examples of non-injurious killing?

1. Killing X who is being tortured or roasted to death *and who wants to be killed* [mercy killing]. *In general*, if X is fully rational, and I treat X in a way in which X would want me to treat X or in a way to which X would be indifferent if X, then I am *not injuring* X. (153.1.3)

2. X is permanently unconscious and is kept alive only through expensive measures. X is beyond injury. If someone else needs those measures, and would eventually return to a normal life, then there is no prima facie moral obligation not to withdraw these measures. [Competing overriding obligations.] (153.2.1)

3. X had a stroke, leads a physically comfort-able life, is hopelessly senile. X’s life is qualitatively low (155.1.3) compare to X’s pre-senile life. X previously requested death if X came in-curably close to this condition. There is no in-jury by keeping X alive [??]; ending X’s live would involve at least some slight injury (155.2.1). “Can the slight goodness of these experiences stand against the weight of an earlier firm declaration requesting that life be terminated in a situation of hopeless senility?” (155.1.2) Do X’s wishes have sufficient moral weight to justify ending X’s life?

If ending X’s life would injure X, then X should not be killed (except in cases of self-defense, or senility when X’s wishes to end X’s life when senile).

If ending X’s life would in situation S not injure X, and X wished for death in S, then it is morally permissible to end X’s life.

**Wishes** What were X’s wishes prior to X’s vegetative (or senile) condition when X was rational?
If it is morally obligatory to some degree to carry out X’s wishes for the disposal of X’s body and possessions after X’s death, it would seem to be equally morally obligatory to respect X’s wishes in case X becomes a vegetable (or senile). [Do the reasons that apply to the former also apply to the latter?] If X can no longer be injured, and X would want to be taken off life-support, then we may withdraw life-support. If X expressed wishes to continue living on life-support, then we may not withdraw that support, except when that support could save a normal life. (153.2.2)

Since there can be no more injury to X in deliberately ending X’s life than there is in deliberately withdrawing life support [when X wished this], then active measures are permissible [when X wished this]. (154.1.1)

X should not suffer needlessly just because X cannot express some desire. (consult friends, X’s religious views)
How do we get those wishes when X can no longer think? (155.1.2) What would be a rational choice in their situation?
Corroboration (154.1.3)
Examples where ending someone’s life is a positive benefit. Terminal illness, severe pain. What are the patient’s wishes? (a) Even if it would be irrational to continue living, there is a prima facie obligation to respect X’s wishes. (b) If the patient wishes to die, this is not sufficient to justify euthanasia, because of the risk of bad consequences (societal abuses).
[Irrational wishes to live generally respected. Irrational wishes not to live generally not respected.]

When are wishes rational? Not when one is in deep pain. So, such wishes are not respected.
When we made decisions in the past about the current problems, we really did not know what it would be like to be in the present problem. Should we respect such wishes?
Problem: Request not to end one’s life is considered morally weighty, but not requests to end one’s life in the same circumstances. Justification?

Suppose X reaches a quality of life that X no longer accepts, and X would prefer to be dead. Is X injured by being kept alive? Is X injured if X is killed humanely?

Killing X is wrong only if it is an injury to X, or if it is contrary to the known preferences of X. It is wrong to kill X when are we obligated not to injure X and when we are prima facie obligated to respect X’s wishes about what happens’ to X’s body.

There is a strong prima facie duty not to kill except in justifiable self-defense. Too strong.