

Philosophy Final: Euthanasia

In this essay, I will be discussing the topic of euthanasia. I believe that euthanasia is morally permissible and I will support my position by considering both sides and expressing which views I agree with and which ones I do not. I will provide my own thoughts on the issues at hand, as well as counterarguments against my thesis that euthanasia is morally permissible. My final goal is to show why legalizing euthanasia worldwide is more preferable than natural death in specific situations.

Many who are hesitant towards legalizing euthanasia question how the process works and if it is as safe and painless as doctors say they are. I believe that in order for euthanasia to be permissible, it must be regulated. Since it's legal in four states in the U.S., they each have common ways they use to end the lives of their terminally ill patients and how to regulate it. In order to qualify for "physician-assisted suicide" in Oregon, a person must be a resident, 18 years of age or older, must have decision-making capacity, and must be suffering from a terminal disease that will lead to death within six months. A patient must make one written and two oral requests for medication to end his or her life. The written one, provided in the Dignity Act, must be signed, dated, and witnessed by two people in the presence of the patient who confirm that the patient is "capable, acting voluntarily, and not being forced to sign the request." The patient's decision must be an "informed" one, and the attending physician is thus obligated to provide the patient with information about the diagnosis, prognosis, potential risks, and probable consequences of taking the medications. Like Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Vermont's law requires that any patient asking for a lethal prescription must be a resident of the state, be at least 18 years old, declared mentally competent to make the request, and two doctors have to certify that he or she has six months or less to live. The actual process, however, is quite simple. A

physician usually prescribes lethal drugs, secobarbital or pentobarbital, which are barbiturates, which put that person to sleep at normal doses, but depress the brain and respiration at large doses. The patient doesn't eat for four or five hours before taking an anti-nausea drug and the lethal drug about an hour after that. It takes about five minutes for the patient to fall into a coma and the average length of time until death is about two hours. If euthanasia is regulated and performed in this way, patients can say their last farewells and be surrounded by loved ones, as should always be.

One counterargument that has been brought up numerous times is the high cost of being euthanized. As for the economic side, a major illness can put a huge strain on family finances. While some life-saving surgery is considered too expensive, the same company will front up with the money for a much cheaper alternative, euthanasia. Economic cutbacks in health spending pose a major threat to those who are medically marginalized. If euthanasia becomes legal, it would then increasingly become a method of cost-cutting for health care providers. Additionally, as the ageing population grows, there will be increasing pressure to look at euthanasia and assisted suicide as a means of cost containment.

Another counterargument that I need to consider is the fact that euthanasia can emotionally affect families dealing with the death of a family member or friend. In the Netherlands, euthanasia is carried out on about 3200 people a year, of whom 80% have cancer. They performed a test and the results were based on relatives and friends of 58 of the 78 patients who died by euthanasia and 114 of the 156 control patients who died naturally. The results showed no apparent differences between the two. Losing a loved one is always hard, regardless of how they pass away. The grief experienced by family members in these cases differs from

grief after euthanasia, mainly because the relatives of the patient have had the opportunity to say goodbye, which is seldom the case without euthanasia.

The word *euthanasia* translates to “good death” or “dying well” in Greek. It therefore carries within it a positive connotation. We have the right and moral obligation to euthanize our beloved pets when they are suffering and in pain so why are we not morally obligated to provide the same options for ourselves and our loved ones who have no quality of life? The Declaration of Independence proclaims our inalienable rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." If our right to life itself is diminished in value, our other rights will have no meaning. Scientists have come far with new medicinal advancements and have eradicated many once deadly diseases. However, illnesses like AIDS and cancer have yet to obtain a cure, so its victims must suffer day after day until they die. According to Anderson, it seems as though euthanasia would be morally permissible depending on each person's values. She believes that we are complex and there is no one theory of value that dictates morality. People only want one theory and Anderson's Pluralistic Theory of Value rejects that idea that there must only be one theory of value. She understands all types of values and believes that there is more than one, and argues for pluralism by introducing “rational evaluative attitudes.” She states that the definition of rationality is to understand and accept the attitudes and feelings of other people. Anderson believes that attitudes “involve not just feelings but judgment, conduct, sensitivities to qualities in what we value.” “Rational evaluative attitudes” rely on the context of a situation and every attitude varies depending on the person put in that particular situation.

According to Hume, free will means that you are the author of your choices and your choices are non-random and non-determined. Hume believes that we must recognize our desires, make choices, and act on our choices. For Hume, what we do is governed by thoughts and

feelings of which we are conscious and of these feelings he thinks pain and pleasure play the essential role. Hume's theory states that the prospect of pleasure and pain guides us. We do what promises to give us pleasure, and we do everything in our power to avoid things that cause us pain and grief. Therefore, if Hume were to read my thoughts on euthanasia, he would agree with me. Euthanasia is a way in which we, as human beings, fight for our right to not deal with pain. Hume would consider whether suicide violates our duty to our loved ones and he would agree with me in saying that we are not obliged to do a small good for society at the expense of a great harm to ourselves. He would also argue that if our continued existence is a burden on society, then euthanasia is not only permissible, but commendable. On the argument of whether or not euthanasia is violating a duty to oneself, Hume would say that many suicides have been done for good personal reasons since it requires such a strong motivation to overcome our natural fear of death.

Dr. Jack Kevorkian of the 1990's was convicted of murder when he committed physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, for many thankful patients. His practice was beneficial to those who suffered from permanent illness, not only for them but for their families too. Those who oppose this subject say that it is immoral and unethical for a doctor to help a patient die. On the contrary, I strongly believe that they are helping these patients by releasing them from their pain and suffering. Forcing a patient to stay alive against their will is inhumane and immoral and the responsibility of doctors is to help their patients not to suffer. We all want to die honorably, and it makes a family suffer and stress when a loved one is in pain every day. Euthanasia is not a tool or an excuse for murder, but a method of last resort when no other options are available. Allowing people to have a good death, at a time of their own choosing, will make them happier

than the pain from their illness, the loss of dignity and the distress of anticipating a slow, painful death. Euthanasia is not murder; it's a way for a patient to die with dignity.

Works Cited

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