

Is Euthanasia Ethical or Not?

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## Is Euthanasia Ethical or Not?

The right to life is commonly cited to be the first and most important among fundamental human rights and freedoms, but the right to choose is of equal importance. If a person is unwilling or unable to enjoy life anymore because it turned into a severely limited existence due to health complications, he or she should be given a chance to end it. This is a key stumbling block in debates between opponents and supporters of euthanasia and assisted suicide, who argue about the ethical and legal implications of this medical practice. Even though the opponents of euthanasia speculate that it is a form of murder, which goes against the teachings of God, it should be considered ethical and legal as long as it reserves one's right to choose and enables people to free themselves or their dear ones from suffering.

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To begin with, euthanasia, also referred to as mercy killing or assisted suicide, is a medical practice, which consists in disconnecting the life support system from a terminally ill patient or administering an injection that would let a person die in a quick, civilized, and painless way. Moreover, physician-assisted death goes along with ethical principles of personal autonomy, benevolence, and medical integrity.<sup>1</sup> It is a way to free people from physical or psychological suffering because “legalized euthanasia would protect the vulnerable from wrongful death and enable peaceful death with dignity.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rui Nunes, and Guilhermina Rego, 2016, "Euthanasia: A Challenge to Medical Ethics," *Journal of Clinical Research & Bioethics* 7 (4).

<sup>2</sup> Visnja Strinic, 2015, "Arguments in Support and Against Euthanasia," *British Journal of Medicine and Medical Research* 9 (7), p. 3.

It takes into account the wish of the patient to die and reinforces one's right to be heard and freedom to choose, which are things that people in the last stages of their lives desperately want to have. Frankly speaking, it is hard to imagine anything more violent and heartless than making a person continue suffering despite one's will to put an end to it.

Secondly, euthanasia appears to be highly beneficial and relieving in those cases when a patient's condition is critical but irreversible, so that his or her life support turns into an immense financial and psychological burden for friends and family. Sometimes, people may spend years or decades in a coma before dying a natural death. However, the state of a coma is more like basic existence than the life as a normal person. The individual cannot think, feel, or react to the surrounding world. Such patients live as long as they are put on life support systems, which are expensive and require the constant surveillance of healthcare specialists. Obviously, only few families would be able to afford such a service in order to let patients die by themselves. What is more, watching a close person in such a condition and constantly bracing oneself to face the sad news is a devastating psychological and emotional challenge for relatives, which may cause serious mental disorders. This is why letting a person go instead of postponing this moment makes it easier for the family to live through loss and bereavement.

Thirdly, if a person consciously chooses to end one's life preliminarily because of being terminally ill, and if he or she does not change this point of view after going through psychological therapy, assisted suicide appears to be the most merciful solution. In fact, it is certainly more ethical to terminate one's life in medical settings under the surveillance of professionals and in the presence of close people than letting one commit suicide. What is more, euthanasia is certain to bring expected results, whereas not every suicide attempt is successful. The failure to take away one's own life may lead to unbearable pain and suffering, the loss of physical abilities, depression, and a constant feeling of guilt, shame, and disappointment. Letting a person go through such a detrimental experience has nothing to do with ethics, morals, or

mercy.

Nonetheless, opponents of euthanasia spark off intense debates to forbid this practice because of the violations of ethics that it allegedly brings about. People with a firm conservative outlook or religious stance emphasize on human life being sacred and maintain that “euthanasia is a crime against life and God.”<sup>3</sup> Another popular argument against mercy killing refers to the assumption that the doctors who are assigned to carry out this procedure will suffer from a feeling of guilt and shame for taking somebody’s life.

In order to conclude, physician-assisted death should be recognized as ethical and legal, as it complies with the moral standards of healthcare and reinforces one’s freedom of choice. Furthermore, it relieves people from pain and suffering, lifts financial and psychological burdens from a family’s shoulders, and potentially decreases the rate of suicide. At the same time, the arguments against euthanasia seem to be biased and easily disputable because they are not based on hard evidence. What is more, abdicating one’s right to die voluntarily and destining one to suffer is violent and selfish. To live or to die should be the decision of the patient, not of any religious or political group.

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Bilal S. H. Badr Naga and Majd T. Maryyan, 2013, "Legal and Ethical Issues of Euthanasia : Argumentative Essay," *Middle East Journal of Nursing* 7 (5), p. 33.

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