

Mercy may save  
people in the future



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Mercy killing has been defined as the act of terminating life in a way that alleviates pain and suffering (Brill, 166). Over the years, the ethical nature of mercy killing has been largely debated. Currently, only a few countries have legalized voluntary euthanasia. Although some people argue that mercy killing alleviates pain and is mainly a matter of choice for those requesting it, the act should be done away with since it demeans life.

The future is built upon hope for better thing and mercy killing is in a form, the abandonment of hope. Mercy killing goes against all the principles of sustainability and as such should be done away with. In order to form a valid argument it is important to understand the types of mercy killing. There are two types of mercy killing (euthanasia): Voluntary and involuntary euthanasia. Voluntary euthanasia is referred to as mercy killing by consent while involuntary occurs without the consent of the patient (Griffith and Tengnah. 356). Under law, voluntary euthanasia is usually acceptable under certain conditions however this does not speak to the ethical nature of the act.

Under close investigation, it can be proven that the act is highly unethical regardless of the type. First, mercy killing highly depends on the mental competency of the patient. The mental competency of patients who have undergone years of pain and suffering is usually under question (Lesser, 331). Some of these patients may be under pressure from their caretakers to end their lives. The pressure may be in the form of guilt whereby the patient feels that by committing suicide he or she may alleviate the suffering they are imposing on their love ones (Gill and Voss, 8). The act therefore may be not exclusively the wishes of the patient. Mercy killing opens pathways with

which unscrupulous relatives and caregivers may put undue pressure on the patient to engage in the act. While the patient may be able to provide the consent, the reasons behind it are questionable as they not only relate on their level of suffering or pain.

Patients who are in comas may also be subject to mercy killing with the validation that they are in pain. However, it is impossible to say for certain that these patients actually feel pain and the degree of pain these patients feel. Mercy killing under this situation cannot be justified in any way.

Secondly, mercy killing might act as an obstacle to medical development due to reduced motivation. When the AIDS virus first appeared, many people thought that it was incurable. Those suffering from the virus were so scared of their impending doom that they opted for suicide. However, over the years, many medications have been developed that have made the disease manageable with patients living meaningful, long lives.

According to Brill (166), many physicians do agree that it is impossible to point out which diseases are incurable. By allowing mercy killing, people not only act impatiently but also impede the motivation behind the development of new cures and developments that may prolong life (Savage, 330).

Technological development in the modern world takes place in a very fast pace. It is impossible to say what will be developed tomorrow or the day after that may serve as a reprieve for patients from pain and suffering.

Mercy killing does not focus on the future but rather on the present and mainly the past. How can something be termed as right if it negates the possibility for others to receive better treatment in the future? Regardless of personal feelings, society has a responsibility of preserving and maintaining

life for as long as possible. The invention of life support machines seeks to prolong life as long as possible while alternate cures or medical procedures are being investigated. By randomly killing those deemed incurable or terminally ill, we also kill the motivation for the development of better medicines or procedures that may save people in the future or eliminate the sickness completely.

Mercy killing also promotes discrimination against those who are terminally ill and those with incurable illnesses. The government usually spends a lot of money caring for the terminally ill and those with incurable diseases. It is therefore advantageous for those who have been declared physically and mentally incurable to be allowed to die. According to Savage (330), Mike Ervin a journalist with muscle dystrophy argued that although he requires 24 hour care every day, he is still a functioning member of society. He adds that mercy killing is demoralizing as it acts as a reminder of how the sick and those with disabilities are unwelcomed by the society. Lesser points out that mercy killing may lead humanity to situation he terms as “ the slippery slope” (332).

He argues that mercy killing may be used as it was used in Nazi Germany to purify the race. If mercy killings for those who are terminally ill or with incurable diseases are allowed, who will stop the elimination of the old, mentally ill or criminally insane? Society has a lot of individuals who can be termed as socially unfit hence a liability to the society. When mercy killing is accepted by the society, it is a matter of time before these social misfits are subjected to death under the guise of mercy killing. Those suffering from

hunger and famine, unable to support themselves might soon find themselves being “ put down” for their own good.

The search for a pure race has always existed amongst society with people seeking for a disease free, intelligent and superior race (Lesser, 332). Mercy killing can thus serve as a starting point for the achievement of this dream in the future. Finally, mercy killing also destroys the fabric of human civilization: the rule of law. Civilization was built upon sympathy and the respect of life. In the past, the sick and those afflicted with incurable diseases were left out to die. The rule of law was founded upon moral and ethical principles. By allowing mercy killing, however justified, the line between plain murder and “ assisted” suicide can become blurred (Griffith and Tengnah, 356).

Many cases have been witnessed whereby the care takers take upon their own hands to terminate the lives of their patients. Savage (330) highlights a case where a mother shot her sons in the head as she believed that they were in too much suffering. By allowing mercy killings, cases like this can become very common. It is important to note that prolonged sickness makes it hard to distinguish who is suffering more, the caretakers or the patients themselves. Under too much stress, the caregivers might misinterpret their own pain with that of their patients. Human beings are just evolved animals with the same urges of killing. Mercy killing may thus become a common defense against murder (Savage, 329). If voluntary mercy killing is allowed or justified by society, it can be used to take the lives of those who did not request it.

Finally, people claim that everyone has a right to choose whether to live or die. However, when the rights of one person infringe upon the rights of many, that right is negated under law. When mercy killing is allowed for one person, it may act as a precedence whereby others suffering from the same condition are persuaded to follow the same action (Brill, 166). This is the same situation that takes place in mass suicide where people follow the teachings of one person believing it to be true and the only way. Society cannot take chance with mercy killing as the future of others depends on what is carried out by a few individuals. Mercy killing has elicited a lot of debate on its ethical nature and legality. Some governments have allowed mercy killing on the condition that is voluntary.

However, it can be seen that mercy killing has to be stamped out completely in the world. If mercy killings are not eradicated, we might soon be living in a world whereby discrimination of the terminally ill or the disabled is rampant and the rule of law is twisted with murders being committed under the guise of mercy killings. Developments in medicine can also be hampered living countless people suffering from conditions that could have been cured given more patience and dedication. The main benefit of abolishing mercy killings is that life will always be valued by society. Nothing important happens when people are dead and it is only by preserving life that humanity develops and prospers.

Pain and suffering is part of life, and while it is unfair for some to undergo extreme amount of these two, death can never be justified not when there are chances for a better tomorrow.

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