

Pro voluntary euthanasia from a moral aspect essay sample

[Life](#), [Death](#)



The questionable practices of physician assisted suicide (P. A. S.) and voluntary euthanasia have been popular debate topics for several years. The merciful relief of pain and suffering P. A. S. and voluntary euthanasia can alleviate is negatively construed by narrow minded, biased thought processes, which leads to a rigid and unreasonable position. Being for the legalization of these practices, an individual has the opportunity to form intellectual arguments that undeniably defend and favor the moral logic of euthanasia. Research has shown legalization of P. A. S. and voluntary euthanasia to be capable of significant financial and legal benefits. The premises stated throughout this paper illustrate euthanasia as a practical option from a moral perspective, backed primarily by three renowned, natural rights that prioritize a patient's quality of life, autonomy, and well-being. These rights share similarities to the words, " Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" which were scripted in the Declaration of Independence, and remain widely accepted by our nation.

The principles of life, autonomy, and well-being are used to defend the pro physician assisted suicide perspective. Before delving into each of these subcategories, it is important to explain different words stated throughout the remaining text. The American Medical Association's Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs (2010) quoted, " Euthanasia is commonly defined as the act of bringing about the death of a hopelessly ill and suffering person in a relatively quick and painless way for reasons of mercy" (as cited in LeBaron, 2010, p. 6). Euthanasia originates from the Greek terms " eu" meaning happy and/or good, and " thanatos" meaning death. Euthanasia can therefore literally be broken down to mean " happy death" (LeBaron, 2010,

p. 6). Euthanasia is too broad an expression to not clarify its terms when dealing with the several meanings that surround that word. To further classify unfamiliar phrases a few definitions follow. LeBaron (2010) stated, Voluntary euthanasia is a death performed by another with the consent of the person being killed...Involuntary euthanasia is a death performed by another without the consent of the person being killed (p. 6). Voluntary euthanasia is similar to physician assisted suicide except for the latter entails the physician providing means for the patient to perform the life ending act (LeBaron, 2010, p. 7) Gifford (1993) as cited in LeBaron (2010) quoted,

Passive euthanasia involves allowing a patient to die by removing her from artificial life support systems...Active euthanasia, by contrast, involves positive steps to end the life of a patient, typically by lethal injection (p. 6). Because the distinctions between each of these terms lies in the perception of how one defines “ omission” and “ commission” of specific actions it is impossible to label one practice morally acceptable and the other under complete opposite regulations. This paper argues in favor of euthanasia with the pretense it is to be performed under strict, legal guidelines. There are very specific parameters to be met before voluntary euthanasia is to be considered by the patient and physician (Kappel, 2001, p. 4). This course of action is pertinent to legal spectrum of the debate.

Life is the first factor analyzed in this particular debate. Each individual has the unalienable, natural right to life. Life is clearly an important value, but its

worth may depend upon an individual's idea of what determines the quality of life. " If a person has a low quality of life, they may make the decision to end their life because it is no longer worth living, no longer a good life" (LeBaron, 2010, p. 16). Those opposed to physician assisted suicide or voluntary euthanasia, may choose to be accepting of passive euthanasia, although like voluntary, passive euthanasia results with the same intended outcome: the end of a person's life. The distinction between voluntary and passive euthanasia is not thorough, clear, or concise, which only more so confuses the terms that allows passive to be legally permitted and voluntary not. Letting one die, either by removing from a respirator (act of omission) or medically injecting with a lethal agent (act of commission), concludes with death. Cauthen (1999) stated,

It [life] should be cherished, preserved and enhanced in every way possible. But when the potential for meaningful, joyful, desirable life has been thoroughly exhausted and every effort made to prevent the inevitable, we should make it legally possible for the merciful to show mercy to the dying who request intervention to end their suffering (para. 5). The concept of life should not be placed superior to what is right in each extreme circumstance. Life is the property to the person living it, and when living becomes undesirable it should be that person's choice to do what is right for them. Autonomy is the right providing this defense.

The liberty to act in an autonomous manner should be granted to those who wish to welcome a peaceful death instead of pathetically waiting in pain and suffering for the same ultimate conclusion. Christman (2009) stated,

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Individual autonomy is an idea that is generally understood to refer to the capacity to be one's own person, to live one's life according to reasons and motives that are taken as one's own and not the product of manipulative or distorting external forces (para. 1). Allowing euthanasia to be non-judgmentally performed is a prime example of promoting the right to autonomy.

Completely disregarding the right to autonomy, each American citizen was born with, undermines the word "Liberty" our founding fathers intentionally included in the Declaration. Carter (2007) showed a relation between the term autonomy and liberty when he stated, "Positive liberty is the possibility of acting-or the fact of acting-in such a way as to take control of one's life" (para. 1). Like the term liberty, well-being is similar to autonomy and related such that respecting one of the two has the ability to enhance the other (Kappel, 2001, p. 6).

All patients, and human beings for that matter, own the right to well-being. This right needs to be promoted. Crisp (2008) stated, Well-being is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person. The question of what well-being consists in is of independent interest...One correlate term worth noting here is 'self-interest': my self-interest is what is the interest of myself and not others" (para. 1). In this quote, one's well-being consists of obtaining interests that present or lead to happiness. "One uses 'happiness' as a value term, roughly synonymous with well-being or flourishing...[happiness] concerns what benefits a person, is good for her, makes her better off, serves her interests, or is desirable for her for her sake" (Haybron, 2011, para. 1, 6).

Aristotelians, a tradition of philosophy based upon the works of Aristotle, believe well-being produces an active life filled with value (Haybron, 2011). A life that has been fulfilled with happiness and well-being is lived to the maximal human capacity. A person contently sitting around all day may be doing exactly what he enjoys and desires, but he would not, according to Aristotelian, be doing well, or happy (Haybron, 2011). It truly then cannot be justified to believe a person suffering in pain, lying in a hospital bed, receiving futile care has any means of well-being or happiness. In fact, the exact opposite of what is promised in the Declaration is being forced upon those desiring euthanasia.

Although still a heated debate, physician assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia are not in any way types of demonic practices. Instead of perceiving these types of euthanasia as murder, an open mind can assist another in realizing the moral goodness euthanasia could grant. The right to live a happy life according to one's self-determinations is defended by the words " Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" printed in the Declaration of Independence. Being for the legalization of this practice, an individual has the opportunity to form intellectual arguments that are humane and widely accepted by society. The main argument is such that the stated rights to life, autonomy, and well-being are accepted by the society of our nation, and justified by real premises.

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