

# World wide issue of suicide



Suicide is a world-wide issue. Suicide is commonly referred to a permanent solution to a temporary problem. A person may choose to end his/her life for many different reasons. The person may feel unhappy, angry at a situation, helpless, or feel like it is his time to go. If people have never had suicidal thoughts or have never had to deal with the issue of suicide, it is hard for them to understand why anyone may have suicidal feelings. In many parts of the world, the issues of assisted suicide and Euthanasia are being debated. Some people see assisting suicides in any way as unethical; others have an opposing view. Assisted suicide should be legal, because it is a person's own choice as to whether to live or die, and it is his/her own life.

Assisted suicide and Voluntary Euthanasia are large ethical issues and are often thought of as the same thing, but there is a difference.

Assisted suicide involves the passive participation of a medical professional in an individual's decision to take their own life. This may take the form of dispensing a lethal pill or providing advice. In either case, it's the patient who ultimately takes the decisive action. Euthanasia, in contrast, involves a positive action on the part of a doctor to end a life at that person's request — by administering the fatal dose, for example (American Psychological Assoc.).

Bernice Levitz Packford, a 95-year-old woman, was interviewed about assisted suicide. She wants her life to end but does not want to take it herself. She stated as her reasons, " Because I am a coward. And it's lonely". Bernice also gave an explanation of euthanasia. " In euthanasia, somebody is doing it to you. I'm not good at defining the differences but I'm not happy

with that term.” (American Psychological Assoc.). Euthanasia is a disturbing thought to most people; it sounds like a form of murder. Yes, someone is taking the life of another person in assisted suicide, but what makes it different from murder is that the person wanted his life to be taken. Bernice feels that assisted suicide is better than euthanasia, because her death is her own choice and doing. Many issues need to be addressed concerning assisted suicide: whether or not assisted suicide is really a person’s choice, if it is ethical, and if it should be legal.

Utilitarianism supports assisted suicide. “ Utilitarianism is the doctrine that an action is right (wrong) in the proportion to its tendency to promote (diminish) the overall happiness of everyone concerned.” (Foster, 2010)

Following the reasoning of utilitarianism, as long as the majority of people are happy with an action, it is ethical. The person having assisted suicide wants to die and is happy with that decision; the person believes death will bring them pleasure. As sad as losing a loved one might be, family and friends could also find joy knowing that it was the person’s decision to die and that he/she is now free from pain. The majority of people could find joy from assisted suicide.

Those who object to utilitarianism state that, although it is easy for people to decide what is right or wrong based on the feelings they experience, a person cannot predict their feelings nor can they predict the consequences of such a drastic action. How does the person know they will be happier after they die? Some people who are religious believe in a glorious after-life, but what about those who don’t believe this, and what if an after-life does not exist? Was assisted suicide still a good choice? Bernice doesn’t believe in an

after-life but said, “ I believe a person lives on in the memories of their friends and family.” She still believes that her choice for assisted suicide will bring happiness.

Because utilitarianism supports the majority, another common objection to utilitarianism is that by following this theory it often violates people’s rights. Assisted suicide would not violate anyone’s rights, if it was legal. In fact, by not legalizing assisted suicide, it is taking away the right of the person to make a personal decision to die. Bernice said, “ Can Parliament find the gumption to give me the right to assisted suicide? I could then have my family and friends around me to say goodbye as I die with dignity.” The lives of people belong to no one, except themselves. Denying a person control of his/her life takes away a personal right.

Under the theory of utilitarianism, assisted suicide is ethical and justified; the Divine Command Theory would disagree. “ The divine command theory is the view that to say that an action is morally wrong is to say that god disapproves of it, and to say that an action is right is to say that god approves of it.” (Foster, Review Sheet, 2010)The Divine Command Theory bases ethics on God’s teachings. To many religious people the Bible is a book of God’s moral principles and teachings. In multiple places in the Bible, God tells people what He thinks about life and suicide. “ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6: 23). God gave man life, and therefore the life of all man belongs to him. Using assisted suicide is against God’s moral teachings. The Bible further explains that man belongs to Him: “ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20). God's teachings show that assisted suicide is opposing His will. It is not a person's right to choose to take his/her life, because their body does not belong to them; it belongs to God. A person should live a full life and die when God chooses to end their life, not when that person decides to.

Under the Divine Command Theory, morals come from God. God has set up laws and morals for people to follow and obey. Legalizing assisted suicide is against God's teachings, and therefore is unethical. Just like with all theories, there are objections to the Divine Command Theory. The Divine Command Theory is flawed, because it does not consider a group of people like Bernice who are not religious and have no moral guidance under this theory. Where are people who do not believe in God supposed to get their moral teachings? How are they to decide right from wrong? Not even all religious people can agree on God's teachings (cite). Using the Divine Command Theory, assisted suicide would be immoral for people who believe in God; however, those who do not have such beliefs in God would be left without guidance in regard to the issue of assisted suicide.

The people who would like to have assisted suicide can be placed in a general category. For the most part, the people in this group are old, have health problems, are disabled in some way, and/or are near death. These people are often in pain and are incapable of living a "normal" life. They are no longer healthy and, in many ways, are living on the lives of others. In this kind of situation, it is very difficult to find happiness. Although an optimistic person could find joy in any situation, most people are not that optimistic

and lose hope. Many people reach a point in their life where they give up. They can't find a purpose in continuing to live and would rather die a peaceful death instead of living in misery. Even though the person wants to die, he/she doesn't want to die in a gruesome way. Assisted suicide allows a person to take his/her life in a humane way. However moral or immoral the action of assisted suicide may be, a person should have the personal right to take his/her own life.

Assisted suicide needs to be separated from normal thoughts of suicide. Suicide is often thought of as an irrational decision. The common methods of suicide are often inhumane and no one likes to think of a loved one participating in them. Assisted suicide is different; it is usually accomplished with a pill or an injection. Unlike the intentions of most people who commit "regular" suicide, assisted suicide is never meant to hurt someone or to escape from life's troubles; rather, the person is ready to die and is not trying to "escape" living. A person planning to take his/her life through an assisted suicide has made a rational decision and often discusses their plans and decisions with a number of family members as well as with professional personnel.

People have a blurred perspective as to whether the choice is really the person's who is participating in assisted suicide. Making assisted suicide legal would give people the right to make the decision, thus taking away the question as to whether he/she was "persuaded" to make the choice.

Obviously, not all would choose assisted suicide for many different reasons such as religious reasons or that they just don't want to die. If assisted suicide was legal, it is possible that more people would choose to end their

lives, because it could be so easily done. Some think that making assisted suicide legal persuades people to choose that action. If assisted suicide were available, people with severe disabilities because of their old age, might feel pressured to participate in assisted suicide even if they did not want to die, because they would be made to feel like they were a burden to the world. The person might decide to participate in assisted suicide, because it would be legal and considered the proper and respectful thing to do. Although some people may feel pressure to use assisted suicide, it would still be the person's own choice. Just like anything in life, there are always people trying to persuade others to do something, but a person has to be strong and make personal decisions.

The ethics of allowing assisted suicide can be compared to the issue life support. After a traumatic accident, some people are hooked up to life support, and are more like “vegetables” than humans, unable to do anything on their own. The family of the person has a choice as to whether or not to keep them alive with a machine or to “pull the plug” and let them die. The person who is on life support has no say in the decision to end his/her life. The person might want to continue living, and might not be ready to die, but if the family decides that letting them pass on is the best decision, then it is done. If disconnecting life support to end a person's life is legal, then assisted suicide should also be legal. People who are old and/or are burdened with disabilities are not living on a machine for life but rather are depending on the people around them for life. If a person is not on life support, it is unethical for family members to decide to end a person's life,

but a person should have the right to end his/her own life, and it should be considered ethical.

When people lose a loved one, it can be devastating. Many people die unexpectedly and in tragic ways. Dealing with the loss of any person is hard. With assisted suicide, the passing of a person can be expected, the family can be around, the method can be humane, and the family can find comfort in knowing that it was the person's own decision. The overall situation can bring joy to everyone involved. No one should be allowed to deny a person and his/her family the right to make a decision like this. Assisted suicide should be legal.