

Ethics euthanasia assignment

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Aquinas, who lived in the 13th Century, believed that ‘everything has a purpose revealed in its design’ – written in his ‘Sum Theological’; – and this influenced his theory hugely, as he believed God created us, and that we can use our reason to discover our purpose(s), to live in a fulfilling manner. Aristotle also thought this, in his concept of ‘Dominance’, and as an explanation, a knife that cuts sharply is fulfilling its purpose more than a blunt knife, and in the same way, if we act in the ethical way we should, we will thrive and flourish together.

Both the thoughts of Aquinas and Aristotle influenced the ethics of Natural Law, and therefore how a follower would react to euthanasia, as if we assist others deaths, we will not thrive, individually or in a community, and part of our purpose is to survive, not commit assisted suicide. This leads on to Aquinas’ concept of the five primary precepts. These provide a basis for Natural Law, bridging the gap between Divine Law and Human Law, and they are absolute precepts that must be followed to fulfill an ethical life.

They involve: preservation of life, worshiping God, education and nurturing of youth, reproduction, and living peacefully in society. A follower of this theory would apply the necessary precepts to see how they would respond to a dilemma. In this case, the preservation of life; worshiping God; and living peacefully in society would probably be the most relevant. It is evident to see that from the precept stating the importance of the preservation of life, that already this ethical theory would object to euthanasia.

Although, furthermore, it would not be living peacefully in society, if people were free to assist others’ deaths. And as we are created in God’s image

(Genesis 1 : 27), and He is the one who is in charge of life and death (1 Samuel 2: 6), we should not get involved with that, as it is not in our business to decide when others' lives end. Aquinas also develops secondary precepts to go alongside, and these are more flexible than the primary precepts, and their purpose is to help fulfill the main precepts.

As one precept is to preserve life, a secondary precept would be 'do not murder', and would include 'do not euthanize'. Natural Law also teaches about real and apparent goods, which involves the difference between perceiving that an action is good, and the reality as to whether or not is moral. A follower would say that it would be an apparent good to commit euthanasia, because that is what seems to be the best action to take, when in reality it only appears that way, and is not actually good, or a ; real ; good. However, the doctrine of double effect could be applied in this issue.

This teaches that a result like euthanasia might be the undesired and unavoidable consequence of trying to fulfill a good action. For example, if a patient needs a pain-killing drug like morphine in increasing amounts, it could get to the point where they need so much morphine, to kill the pain, that it ends up shortening their life, or even killing them immediately. This would come under the doctrine of double effect as the intention was to keep the patient from being in pain, and would also come under the category of passive euthanasia.

Active euthanasia, probably involving a direct injection, would be objected to by a follower of Natural Law. As an alternative they would probably suggest palliative care, as something that preserves the patient's life in the best way

possible. A Christian may actually follow the teachings of Situation Ethics, as a more relative way of viewing this issue. This was developed by Joseph Fletcher, an Episcopal Priest in the USA, in the 1950's.

He wanted to go back to the basis of Christian thought, and so went to the life and teaching of Jesus. From verses Mark 12: 31, where it states to love your neighbor as yourself', he based his ethical theory on the idea of doing the most loving thing. This means that the theory is teleological, as it looks at the end result of actions to see if it's moral. In relation to euthanasia, rather than basing its ethics on absolute rules, a situation ethicist will look at the individual situation. It is based on

Christian teaching, and is often related to the Church of England, so it does uphold an intrinsic value to human life; although in some situations, this theory states that the most loving thing to do, and therefore the moral thing, would be to commit euthanasia. This theory is based on some rules though, known as the four working principles. These include: pragmatism, relativism, positivism and personality. This means that a situation ethicist will look at these principles to see if the best action to take is practical, relative, based on unconditional love and benefiting for the people.

Although committing euthanasia is often the last option that would be best to take, a situation ethicist would say that if it complies with these principles, and also the six fundamental principles – which involve statements like 'Love is the only intrinsic good ; , and ; Love and justice are the same' -it is the most loving thing to do. That is how a follower of situation ethics would respond etc euthanasia, they would not utterly object to it, like a follower of

natural law, but they would look at the individual case. .) Human dignity does not matter to a follower of religious ethics ‘ . Discuss Human dignity is considered by some to the most important aspect when considering an ethical decision. It is defined by the intrinsic value that involves respect of all persons, often related with equality and human rights; and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that ; recognition of [this] inherent dignity is the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world’ .

Steven Weinberg stated that religion is an insult to human dignity’ , and to say that a follower of religious ethics does not consider human dignity can be justified; but my immediate reaction is that the statement is over-generalized and rash. In support of the statement, it can be argued that some religious ethics do not take into account dignity, if they deny an action that restricts that individual’s autonomy. The very suitable example is of course euthanasia, in which people wish to take their own lives, although because that action being contrary to some religious beliefs and ethical theories, they are not permitted.

There are many individuals who are restricted by a disability, meaning that they are not able to take their own life if they wish, and so would have to enlist the help of another. However, in most countries, if one person assists another suicide they will be arrested. A strong argument is that this is discrimination against the person with the disability, as they cannot make the decision they wish by their own ability, and if they obtain another’s help, they will have to leave that person behind, knowing that they will probably be persecuted for it.

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Terry Parachute, a famous fantasy-writer, is known for his fight for euthanasia, in the light of his developing Alchemist's. It is in cases such as these where it is the elisions ethics which are restricting others freedom, and therefore their dignity. This is why there are organizations such as Dignities; - a Latin word meaning worth, or dignity - in Switzerland, which carry out assisted suicides at the request of its patients.

Scholars such as Peter Singer would support the work of Dignities, along with other utilitarian, as he believes it can bring the greatest good to the greatest number when the possibility of euthanasia is available. As he is a preference utilitarian, he would state that the moral thing to do would coincide with the preferences of those involved, so the individual and the family around them; and often he would say that those preferences wouldn't conflict with the dignity of the individual.