

Euthanasia in society: positive or negative?

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Euthanasia

Euthanasia is the act whereby a physician can deliberately end the life of a patient with the intention of relieving them the pain or the suffering they are going through, as they are ailing. Different countries have different laws regarding euthanasia and their school of thought regarding the laws governing these actions are different hence the reason why their laws are varying from one nation to the other. The actions of euthanasia can be grouped into different categories such as non-voluntary, voluntary, as well as involuntary. Voluntary euthanasia is ending life painlessly with the help of a physician and it is legal in some selected countries while involuntary euthanasia encompasses killing of an ailing patient without their consent or the consent of their guardian and this form of euthanasia is illegal all over the world hence be regarded as murder. Additionally, involuntary euthanasia involves that which lacks the consent of the patient, and it is treated as illegal and murderous. However, the controversial argument that has always revolved around euthanasia is its ethics, morality, as well as the legal issues surrounding its actions. As a result, some of the debate surrounding this topic entails why it should be legal based on its pros as well as the reasons why it should not be legal based on its demerits.

The history and argument regarding euthanasia date back when the doctors started to take the Hippocratic Oath. The oath states, “ I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it nor will I make a suggestion to this effect.” In the ancient Rome and Greece, there were pagan physicians before the Christians came and during this time, the inclination and perspective

towards euthanasia were more tolerant. This is because many people during this time did not have a firm belief in the priceless and immanent value of human life. Consequently, these pagan physicians would freely perform all kinds of unethical practices such as abortions, voluntary, and involuntary mercy killings. Despite the essence of the Hippocratic Oath, many of these physicians did not obey what is said, through these ages, there were many cases of mercy killing, and it was based on the physician giving his or her patient the poison they wanted to take. However, during the 12th to 15th Century, the inception and spread of Christianity to many parts of Greece, Rome, and other parts of the world brought about the outlook that human life is a gift and trust from God. Therefore we should not just kill.

Consequently, this belief led to the rise of reinforcements of the Oath in Hippocratic schools where they were against euthanasia. During the 17th Century, there were common traditional laws, which did not approve any form of euthanasia in the American colonies, but as we approached the 18th Century, renaissance and reformation writers challenged this law, which did not approve euthanasia. As a result, in the 1770s, Samuel Williams started his work of advocating for the use of drugs like morphine during euthanasia and was a significant milestone in the argument. From the 1930s during the Great Depression, there was an increased public support for euthanasia and in 1937; the voluntary euthanasia act was introduced in the US Senate.

The people, who are in favor of euthanasia, believe that euthanasia cannot have proper regulations, which will ensure lack of misuse from the medical practitioners. Rather, they recognize that there are some issues, which will still stand out, for instance, it will be hard to deal with people who want to

implement these actions to compel susceptible patients into being killed or even for their selfish reasons. Most people who support euthanasia think it is the right of a person to have control of their body and lives and as a result, it is them who can have the power to ascertain when they can die, in what way and who will assist them through this process. Behind this reasoning, we have the notion that people need to be free with their lives and make their choices such that any constraint on human rights will be regarded as a bad thing. Additionally, behind this reasoning is the idea that every person is an individual entity with the right to make their independent decisions as long as the greater good of the community or others cannot stop their decisions because, in the end, we are all destined to die.

However, there are other perspectives, which have been discussed by the people who are against this practice of euthanasia. For instance, those against euthanasia have raised the ethical issues surrounding euthanasia for example; it will weaken the respect the society can have for the godliness of life. In addition, the fact that we can accept the practice of euthanasia simply means that we as the people in a society tend to treasure and accept that there are lives which are more important and worth more than others. For instance, mercy killing a sick person implies that their life is not worth trying to cure it, so they are better off dead. They also add that the fact that the instance we accept voluntary euthanasia, there will be an open path, which will create other cases of involuntary euthanasia and the deaths of individuals who the physician or anyone can see them be undesirable. Other practical arguments are that there will be decreased palliative care, euthanasia will go out of control due to lack of regulation, and it will cause

the terminally ill patients to receive less treatment. Additionally, euthanasia will give the physicians a lot of power that can make other patients succumb to the pressure to accept death instead of hoping to heal.