

Explain the argument for legalizing euthanasia

[Health & Medicine](#), [Euthanasia](#)



Explain the argument for legalising euthanasia. (30 marks) The term 'euthanasia' derives from the Greek language meaning 'a good death'.

Euthanasia is the process in which a person who is suffering from a painful or crippling ailment or disability decides to end their own life, or a person's life being legally ended by another person. Currently, the laws in the UK make it illegal for a person to assist in allowing a person to commit suicide under the murder Act of 1965 and the Suicide Act 1971.

The law states that intentionally ending a person's life, even with their consent, is illegal, as is assisting person to commit suicide. These are both offenses that are seen in the same light as murder. There have been over the last few years attempts to pass bills through parliament to change the laws around euthanasia within the United Kingdom. In 2009, Scottish Parliament tried to pass the End of Life Assistance Bill, which was put forward by Parkinson's disease sufferer, Margo Macdonald MSP.

The law would allow those whose lives have become 'intolerable' due to a progressive degenerative illness, serious trauma or terminal illness to have the assistance of a doctor to help end their lives. Despite a series of proposed safeguards to be put into to prevent abuse of the system should the law be passed, the Scottish Parliament failed to pass the bill, with 85 votes against to the 16 for passing the bill. Similarly, in 2006, the Parliament of the UK tried to pass a bill that would allow a person who has less than 6 months to live, suffering unbearably and sound mind would be able to end their life.

This law was proposed by Lord Joffe who said "We must find a solution to the unbearable suffering of patients whose needs cannot be met by palliative care." Other member of the House of Lords welcomed the bill with support.

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Baroness David who stated “ If I were terminally ill, I believe I would be the only person with the right to decide how I died” and also said that allowing euthanasia “ would provide me with an additional option on how to end my life which I would find tremendously reassuring. ” This bill was also received with opposition.

Other members of the House of Lords who were against the bill included The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams and The Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor. The ProLife alliance had stated that they would resist any changes in the laws surrounding euthanasia. The bill was eventually blocked by the House of Lords, with 148 against the bill, with the 100 votes for the bill. Mark Slattery from the charity Dignity with Dying, said they will continue to campaign to introduce an assisted dying bill.

More recently, Anna Soubry, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health stated “ I think it's ridiculous and appalling that people have to go abroad to end their life instead of being able to end their life at home. ” This statement from Ms Soubry came days after locked-in syndrome sufferer Tony Nicklinson lost his right-to-die case in the High Court, and resulted in refusing food which led to his death 6 days. Tony had wanted his wife to help him end his life without her being prosecuted for murder, after a stroke, left him paralysed and unable to communicate verbally.

He once stated, “ I am fed up with my life, I do not want to spend the next 20 years like this” There have been other high profile cases, which have shown support for the allowing of Euthanasia within the UK. Terry Pratchett, a renowned author and sufferer of Alzheimer's disease, is currently

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campaigning for the right-to-die and assisted suicide. He fears that with his condition, he would not be able to die with dignity, which he wishes. He strongly supports euthanasia, saying that when his time comes, he would wish that he would be able to end his life in the way in which he wants.

Terry has produced and presented television documentaries around his argument of assisted dying, where he met other people who wish to have assisted suicide, and showed the Dignitas Clinic in Switzerland, where British people could go to legally end their life. There are several arguments in favour of euthanasia. One argument is based around the idea that we all have personal autonomy – the freedom to make choices over our own lives. It is argued that we all have control over our own lives, so therefore, that should include our right to choose whether we live or die. By not allowing euthanasia would be breaching the person's rights and taking away person's autonomy, as their choice of life would be made by the law and not by themselves. In addition, it stated in the General medical council's "Good Medical Practice" guide for doctors (2006) that doctors should listen and respond to patients' concerns and preferences, furthermore, it is argued that doctors should respect the decisions of their care and treatment.

Putting this into context, it is argued that doctors would not be upholding or respecting the patient's rights or preferences, should they not be able to respond to their wishes, even if it were to die by means of assisted suicide. It is also argued that doctors already can administer involuntary passive euthanasia legally, so what is the difference of them administering active euthanasia. For example, by switching off a person's life support machine

that they are dependent upon to preserve their life, so the doctor is therefore affectively ending the person's life.

In addition, doctors can also administer medication (such as morphine) to relieve a person's pain, even if they know this could speed up a person's death. In this case, it is known as the ' Principle of the Double Effect' which protects doctors who perform actions in order to achieve a good primary outcome (such as to relieve pain), in case there were unintentional secondary outcomes, such as death. Also, people already have assisted suicide, despite it being outlawed in this country.

There have been cases where family members or friends have been imprisoned for assisting in the death of loved ones who could not end their lives independently. It is therefore argued, if euthanasia already happens throughout the country, which includes the actions of medical professional, and it would be the practical idea to legalise it, as it would allow us legalise what already happens and to have the ability to regulate it. Finally, other arguments can also be based around the ' Quality of Life' Principle.

The quality of life is a condition where a person enjoys a life of independence and physical, emotional and intellectual well-being. Many people who suffer from progressive ailments or disabilities, will often begin to lose their quality of life in one way or another. For example, they may become incontinent, lose the ability to carry out every day personal tasks such as cleaning themselves, or unable to feed themselves, and this can become prevailing throughout the progression of their illness or disability.

This can cause people to lead an undignified and unhappy life, which can be distressing to both the sufferer and the family. Many people, such as Terry Pratchett, when diagnosed with progressive illnesses wish they could end their lives before they enter the stage where their quality of life is insufficient to lead a good life. Some people argue that it is wrong to not allow people who do not lead a good quality to end their lives, as it is seen as the more justified and righteous thing to do, as it ends the suffering both the family and the sufferer endure by being in that condition.