

# The right to end one's own life

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The right to end one's own life Euthanasia is described as the intentionally killing by act or omission of a dependent human being for his or her alleged benefit. Euthanasia is frowned upon by society because it is deemed unethical to intentionally take one's own life regardless of what life has to throw at them. In today's society, individuals have now started realizing that deciding to take one's own life is a personal choice they can make and should not be restricted by moral or social laws from doing so. Depending on which theory (Kantianism/Utilitarianism), one can come to a conclusion if they support euthanasia or not. If one has the right to preserve their life, they certainly have to right take away their life. Euthanasia is a personal choice that's should be freely made as long as the decision is made when the individual is in the right state of mind. The theory of Kantianism teaches that individual should be treated as ends and never to a means to an end. Kantianism puts a greater emphasis on an action and not the results of the action (Maxim). For Kant, individuals to act are to act to the Maxim the same way they would act if it was a universal law. This then for euthanasia would mean an individual should assist in killing all those who ask for their assistance. Putting this into a universal law would not work simply due to the fact that it would lead to the mass killing of those who may or may not actually want to die. This would just lead to the death of people by simply saying I want to die, I don't want to live anymore, I wish I was dead, or anything along those lines. Those who support Kantianism would say if one person commits euthanasia, then everyone in the same situation should also do it. Everyone is different, the act of committing suicide cannot be universalized because each individual differences. The other side of

Kantianism requires us to treat others as end would mean that if one decides to assist another in suicide they should do so simply because it is the right thing to do. They should not do so because of pity, anger or any external or internal factors but simply because it is the right thing to do. This then put the topic of euthanasia is in the situation where if one chooses to ends his/her own life, everyone in the same situation should be able to do so. It becomes then universal that if one does not want to live anymore can simply commit suicide and for those who choose to assist other in suicide should do so because it's the right thing to do and not as a result of an overall goal.

The second theory which relates to euthanasia is utilitarianism. This theory " holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. "(Mills, p. 169).

Happiness is pleasure that is intended and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the absence of pleasure. This theory can be used to support the right to commit suicide simply because of living brings individuals pain and through death they achieve happiness. Denying one the right to commit suicide prolongs their suffering and goes against utilitarianism. For the better good of the individual and for their overall happiness, followers of this theory would agree to assist them in suicide. On the other hand, one can also argue that ending the person's life will bring grief to their family and friends. Other followers can also use this argument to go against euthanasia. They may achieve happiness from death but those around them will grieve over their death. Depending on if we focus on the best interest of the individual or those around them, utilitarianism can support or go against euthanasia. The issues of euthanasia were greatly

argued by both Patrick Nowell-Smith and E. W. Keyserlingk. In *The Right to Die*, Nowell-Smith argued that if we agree that "everyone has the right to life, it follows at once that we have the right to die." (Nowell-Smith, p. 97). He argues that those who join voluntary euthanasia societies are those in their sixties and seventies who enjoy life but want to escape the inhumane methods hospitals use to keep people from dying a natural death. Nowell-Smith also argues it is "inevitable some people will be sad when a person dies; but that sadness will come to them anyways, and it should be lessened rather than increased by the thought that the person they loved died as he wished to die." (Nowell-Smith, p. 97). The right to live for Nowell-Smith imposes that it imposes a duty on others to not kill others without their consent but imposes no duty to keep one alive. Neither the person who asks for assistance in dying nor the person who assists is committing a moral wrong. From Nowell-Smith's perspective, everyone has the right to live and a right to die. Those who choose to die do so in order to escape the hard ways and conditions society uses to keep them alive. In Don Carmichael's Essay, the arguments for assisted suicide are broken up into compassion and individual rights while the arguments against assisted suicide are broken up into the sacredness of life and protection for the vulnerable. Carmichael argues that "respecting people's right to live or die on their own terms does not commit us to helping them do what they want." (Carmichael, p. 190). We should not force them to do what we want for it will violate their freedom of choice and in return we do not have to do as they want us to. Assisted suicide should only occur if the right to live or die is understood as the right to do what a person wants. However, if the right was understood as the right to live or die

on terms that fulfil his being, then there is no reason to go along with what the person wants. A person's right to live or die should be respected as long as the decision is not made due to misinformation, pressure, emotional reaction, or insufficient time and reflection. One can ensure that choice to ends one's life by these conditions by having qualified psychiatrists visit the individual to insure their decision was made based on full information, freely, non-reactivity, and reflectively over time. The right to assisted suicide for Carmichael should be respected as long as the decision is not influenced by emotions or by misguidance. Euthanasia for me then is a choice that every individual should have the freedom to make. Assisted suicide to me is a way for people to escape pain and suffering they experience through living. Denying a person their right to die just add to their suffering. The most important part of euthanasia is the person must have the right to choose. Killing a person without their consent or not knowing if death is truly what a person wants is wrong. Taking a look at the Tracy Latimer case, her father chose to end her life without her consent. Even though Tracy could not walk, talk, or feed herself, this didn't mean she wanted death. This didn't mean she did not enjoy the other aspects of life and to keep on living. Her father was supposed to be all loving and caring but caved in as things got more difficult. He decided to end her life by poisoning her with carbon monoxide. This situation is one that I cannot agree with. Even though Tracy may have seemed to be suffering in her father's eyes, she may have been happy with the life she had. Her dad had no right to make the decision on his own to end her life. Another case that can support why assisted suicide should be allowed is the case of Susan Rodriguez who was rejected the right to assisted

suicide. She suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. She fought for her right to assisted suicide, was denied the right but later on killed herself regardless. This shows those who have made up their mind about committing suicide will do so even when denied the right unless they were put under watchful eyes. I support the right to euthanasia because it quickly and humanely ending suffering, allowing individuals to die in peace. Being hooked up to machines and constantly being drugged in hospitals is not human and not natural. With euthanasia, one chooses how and when they die. It can also shorten the sadness felt by the patient's loved ones. No one wants to see those who they care about suffer for years and years and through euthanasia, family members can have a peace of mind knowing their loved one died in peace. Their sadness is also lessened by them knowing that they died on their own free will. Another reason why I would support euthanasia would be that one choosing to end their life is a private matter and society should not have the right to interfere with an individual's private matter. I strongly believe that one should do what makes them happy as long as what bring them happiness will not affect someone else in a negative way. This holds true with assisted suicide since choosing to end one's life has no direct impact on others. One can argue that committing suicide affects their loved ones but as I have said previously, their loved ones will find peace of mind knowing their loved one died a peaceful death. Their death was a choice and not due to an accident or illness. One can argue that illness can take away one's ability to make choices, dignity, and leaving you with no quality of life. Through illness one can feel that have no control over their very own life and feel the illness now controls them.

Through euthanasia, one takes back control over their life. They over the illness itself by decided to when they die and not wait till the illness decides it's time for them to die. Another reason why assisted suicide would be worthwhile is due to economic reasons. Keeping one alive who may has no chance of recovery costs a lot of money and resources. The amount of money being used to keep a person alive just to see them die could be used to treat and nurse back another person who has a much better chance of surviving. Another reason I would support assisted suicide is because of the fact that doctors out of duty should do what is the best for a suffering patient. Choosing the end a patient's life with the consent of the patient should not be seen as morally wrong since it again they are relieving the patient from pain and letting them overcome their illness. The final reason why I would support euthanasia is simply because if the situation was reversed and we wanted to end our own life but was restricted; how would that make us feel? If we wanted to end our own suffering and couldn't, we would feel our rights as a person is being taken away from us. Over all the right to euthanasia should not be seen a morally wrong simply because it is a choice make out of free will. Assisting a person with suicide should also not be seen a morally wrong because one is simply helping in ending the life suffering of another. As long as the choice of ending one's life is done with their consent and is done for the person's own best interest, then assisting in suicide is something positive. Assisted suicide is one society supports because it helps lessen the sadness felt by the sufferings loved ones; death is a private matter, it is economically reasonable, and put us in a position where we would do on to others as we would have them do on to us. As long

the choice of assisting someone in suicide is done when the individual is in the right state of mind and without misguidance, the act should be seen as morally right. Life brings suffering, and when the suffering over powers the happiness life brings, one has the right to escape through death.

EUTHANASIA: A MORAL CHOICE Valentine Okoro 210235802 GL/MODR 1714

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