

# The debate on euthanasia: utilitarianism



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Is it appropriate to end the life of a person in a critical condition who is experiencing extreme torment and enduring? This paper is going to look at how the ethical theory of utilitarianism applies to the controversial issue of euthanasia. Distinctive moral positions and contentions are held for various types of euthanasia. Therefore in this paper, I will discuss active and passive euthanasia from a utilitarian's perspective. In addition, the utilitarian views of voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia will be explored.

Euthanasia, also called helped suicide, is the act of discharging a person from a hopeless malady or unbearable enduring. There are two principle types of euthanasia. Aside from the fact that life is taken from these patients, the process differs between active and passive forms. In both, life is taken from the patient who is suffering from a hopeless malady. However, active euthanasia is a demonstration of executing the individual by deadly infusion to bring about quick and effortless passing. In contrast to this, passive euthanasia is when you kill that person by taking away something significant they needed to live. This can be in the form of terminating one's life support or withdrawing from medical care immediately.

The second types of willful extermination are voluntary and non-voluntary. Voluntary willful extermination is the point in which the individual, who is at death's door offers, agree to seek euthanasia. Non-voluntary is when the terminally ill is not able to give consent so they give the approval through another person. This all being said and for the purpose of this paper, I will be focusing on active-voluntary euthanasia from the utilitarian point of view.

Euthanasia is a social problem because most people don't agree that individuals, especially terminally ill patients in excruciating pain, should be able to end their lives. This is also extremely controversial if this patient cannot give consent for themselves. There is a great deal of debate encompassing euthanasia, which revolves around whether it ought to be lawful. The debate encompassing euthanasia includes numerous religious, therapeutic and sociologic perspectives.

Jeremy Bentham, a philosopher from London, created the principles of moral philosophy called utilitarianism. " Utilitarianism is the creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness"(Mill Pg. 4). This means that through a utilitarianism perspective, a deed or task must be done in terms of the greater good. What's more, the best joy rule expresses that an ethical activity is one that expands the aggregate utility on the planet. As it were, if an activity is moral, it raises the measure of satisfaction on the planet. This permits activities to be positioned by profound quality. In the event that an activity fulfills one individual, it is ethically right. In spite of the fact that if another activity would make more than one individual cheerful, that activity is all the more ethically right. Utilitarianism expresses that something is good or great when it delivers the best measure of useful for the best number of individuals. It's a hypothesis of standardizing morals that asks whether a particular activity is great or awful, moral or unethical.

The main principle of Bentham's theory is the Principle of utility. " By ' utility' is meant the property of something whereby it tends to produce benefit,

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advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all equivalent in the present case) or (this being the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered” (Bentham Pg. 7). Utility measures the happiness or unhappiness that results from a particular action. When applying or taking this from the perspective of an ill patient, the controversy comes from whether or not this patient should be granted peace from suffering, for their own happiness, or suffer longer for the happiness of their loved ones.

Mill portrays the distinction of delights as quality in joys, or what makes one joy more profitable than another. While examining delights, simply as a joy and that’s it, it ought to be in more prominent sum and create the most great. Process separates amongst higher and lower-quality joys. On the off chance that a delight were of higher quality, then more individuals would pick it over an alternate joy. As indicated by Mill, this is valid, regardless of the possibility that this joy is joined by uneasiness and that same individual would not exchange it for a more noteworthy measure of the other joy.

With all this being said about utilitarianism, and now applying utilitarianism to euthanasia, there are different moral positions for different forms of euthanasia. For purposes of this paper and argument’s sake, I’m going to discuss active voluntary euthanasia. Mill’s Greatest Happiness Principle states that, “ actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness” (Mill Pg. 4). Mill would agree with active voluntary euthanasia because it leads to the greatest happiness of the patient and the family. Therefore from the utilitarian point of view they would agree with active voluntary euthanasia.

One objection to utilitarianism is individual rights. People will argue that just because something makes someone happy, it does not make the action right. Think of it from a moral perspective, as this can be applied to various parts of life. Take for example theft. Is it wrong to steal millions of dollars in medicine to heal your sick spouse because you are too poor to afford paying for it? Furthermore, it isn't right to hurt certain people with a specific end goal to fulfill other individuals? Another protest would be that individuals trust that utilitarianism is excessively requesting. Utilitarianism infers that we ought to dependably act keeping in mind the end goal. Individuals that protest say this is excessively strict of a necessity. It is soliciting excessively from individuals to be constantly spurred to advance the general satisfaction. What happens when the general bliss has been accomplished? There are going to be individuals who are unsatisfied and the circle will proceed. One study to this is to understand the definitive results of your actions.

The thing about utilitarianism is that it is a type of consequentialism, meaning an action is judged by its consequence. Regardless of whether an activity is ethically right or wrong depends completely on its results. Consequentialists will state that activities are correct when they expand for more noteworthy benefit. With the objection of utilitarianism being too demanding, Mill states, "no system of ethics requires that the sole motive of all we do shall be a feeling of duty; on the contrary, ninety-nine hundredths of all our actions are done from other motives, and rightly so...the motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action...the great majority of good

actions are intended not for the benefit of the world, but for that of individuals, of which the good of the world is made up” (Mill Pg. 13).

## **Work Cited**

1. Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*
2. John Stuart Mill, “ *Utilitarianism* “