

Ethics on euthanasia



Euthanasia: Society's Disrespect for the Value of Life According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, euthanasia is the act of intentionally and painlessly terminating the life of a desperately sick individual for merciful reasons (Merriam-Webster, 2010). Euthanasia deteriorates society's respect for human life. Also called physician-assisted suicide, it has currently become a widespread practice in the medical profession causing society's unemotional conviction towards death even to some extent of construing that human life is worthless. This mind-set disgraces humanity and causes societal dilemmas. A society that undervalues life sees no guilt in committing acts of violence, particularly murder, thereby making life value dangerously demoralized and humanity altogether weakened (Doerflinger, 1989, p. 16-19, Koop, 1989, p. 2-3).

The "slippery slope" or the "wedge theory" is an assumption that makes the distinction between voluntary euthanasia and involuntary euthanasia hardly recognizable, thereby supposing that agonizing individuals request their deaths because they feel they are a burden to themselves; and society requests to terminate an individual's life because of being a burden to the people around them and to society, as a whole. Kamizar, a professor of law at the University of Michigan and a non-supporter of the "wedge theory" argues that "Once society accepts that life can be terminated because of its diminished quality, there is no rational way to limit euthanasia and prevent its abuse." (Wolhandler, 1984, p. 377).

If euthanasia is legalized, the probability for exploitation and mistreatment of individuals by the more supreme individuals will enormously amplify (Le Baron, 2010). In direct conjunction with this dispute is the argument that individuals having control over the more vulnerable individuals might

develop addiction to euthanasia (Le Baron, 2010, Doerflinger, 1989, p. 19).

A strong proof of advocacy on euthanasia was done by the Nazis in 1939, when Hitler ordered mass “mercy killing” of the sick and the disabled or those individuals with unworthy lives. Disabled children were killed by means of lethal injection or gradual starvation, while sick/disabled adults, particularly those with epilepsy, schizophrenia, senility, paralysis and syphilis were murdered in gas chambers. Six killing centers were established in Germany. It was approximated that more than one hundred thousand people perished in the Nazi euthanasia program (“Holocaust Timeline: Nazi Euthanasia,” 1997).

Legalizing euthanasia will erode the public’s trust in medical practitioners and in the health care system. The ethical image of physicians will likewise deteriorate (Le Baron, 2010).

The Netherlands, being the first nation to legalize physician-assisted suicide in 2002, had a 20% death toll from euthanasia, 12% of which were involuntary cases. The consent of physicians on physician-assisted suicide increased unlawful predicaments of untrue testimony of the patients’ willingness to die. The sickening consequence of euthanasia would be evident in the public’s distrust in the physician’s credibility to treat patients, alleviate them from pain, and extend their lives (“An Overview on Euthanasia; Are we the Master of our own Destiny?” 2010).

The euthanasia plague has been the object of attention of many politicians around the world. While the continued existence of the elderly and individuals suffering from horrible physical pain may be personally meaningful to their families, still, from an economic perspective of the government, those individuals are no longer economy-contributors to society

(Sprague, 2009).

Supporting and legalizing euthanasia demoralizes human dignity which is an inherent right of every individual. Euthanasia violates an individual's "sanctity of life". The society that we live in generally reveres heroism, bravery, sacrifice and martyrdom. Christ himself had endured enormous pain to save mankind through crucifixion. Thus, this signified that Christ's endurance of bodily pain symbolized strength and not weakness. Legalizing suicidal death would be identical to sabotaging human's value and dignity into weakness and total submission ("An Overview on Euthanasia; Are we the Master of our own Destiny?" 2010).

Legalizing euthanasia, I believe, is akin to embracing a culture of death. The elderly, the terminally ill, and the physically debilitated would feel pressured to end their lives so as not to cause financial burden to their families. They may justify euthanasia to spare their families of possible bankruptcy. As of today, not all agonizing diseases could be alleviated by medical intervention, however, due to the continuous advancement in medical technology, even the most fatal of diseases will eventually find a cure. Submission of oneself to voluntary life termination is disrespect for the sanctity and value of life, even for the most compassionate of reasons. Some people might accept euphemisms on euthanasia. Others, especially those individuals experiencing near-death situations and immeasurable pain, would agree on decriminalizing euthanasia. But I, as a God-fearing individual, believe that only God gives and takes away life. Every life has intrinsic value, regardless of age, status, and capabilities.

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