

# The history and debate of euthanasia philosophy essay



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Euthanasia has been a controversial issue for a very long time. The ancient Romans and Greeks supported euthanasia after the interpretation of the Hippocratic Oath that was written around 400 B. C. They believed that the person's life should not be preserved if this person has no interest in life. Hence, voluntary euthanasia was not banned in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. However, committing Suicide as well as helping others to commit suicide was considered as a criminal act by the English jurisdiction during the 1300s. Euthanasia faced the first direct law against it in New York at the 1828 which was known as the Anti-Euthanasia law. Euthanasia like Abortion had become a major issue for debating in the following decades until the recent days .(Sandhyarani, 2001). Nowadays, all dictionaries and references define euthanasia as mercy killing of patients in severe incurable pain. Oxford dictionary for example, has defined euthanasia as: " the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma". The way these definitions were defined came from the origin of the word " Euthanasia", where Euthanasia is a Greek word came from the 17th century to combine two words, Eu which means well and easy and Thanatos meaning death.(Oxford dictionary, 2010).

Euthanasia nowadays can be categorized into many different forms and types, the first and most common one is the active voluntary euthanasia where the patient is mercifully killed with his own will and request, it's also known as the assisted suicide. Other different form is known as the involuntary passive euthanasia that let the patients die without their own request, this kind is known for patients who are in comas or unable to talk or communicate with others.(BBC, 2009).

With the current debates and developments in the world, euthanasia is being discussed globally, legalized in some countries and still discussed in others. Netherland was the first country in the world to legalize Euthanasia in 2002, followed by Belgium at the end of 2002 and some parts in the United States of America. Switzerland on the other hand allows the physician assisted suicide in special cases but the euthanasia is still not legal in this country. What must be known about the laws of these countries is that they are strictly standardized for euthanasia as euthanasia is being applied only to specific kinds of patients.

Euthanasia is indeed one of the most controversial issues to date. Taking both sides, supporting and opposing euthanasia in the society, doctors and governments into considerations, the main question now centers on whether Euthanasia is the right act to consider on the cases with no cure and whether euthanasia should be legalized. The process of painlessly helping a terminally ill person to die should be legalized as it's a merciful act that offers dignity and compassion at life's cruel end. People who are euthanized are going to die anyway. However, by legalizing euthanasia, they can be saved from suffering terrible pain.(Friedman, 2010) Therefore, governments should not stand in the way of letting severely ill people with no chances in getting cured to end their lives legally by Euthanasia.

The following research project will hereby focus on the reasons why euthanasia should be legalized, what we can prevent and gain by legalizing euthanasia, effects of euthanasia and its future. The time frame used in this research project is from 2000 till date, the research is showing the latest ideas and arguments presented in the world where euthanasia is still <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-and-debate-of-euthanasia-philosophy-essay/>

developing and arguments involved in this issue are leaning more towards legalizing euthanasia day after day.

## **2. 0 Body of Content**

### **2. 1 Euthanasia is a Freedom of Choice:**

**“ Just as I shall select my ship when I am about to go on a voyage, or my house when I propose to take a residence, so I shall choose my death when I am about to depart from life.”**

**– Lucius Annaeus Seneca (Roman Stoic Philosopher, orator and statesman)**

Every person was born free and has the right to die free with his own will. Moreover, dignified death is one of the fundamental rights people are supposed to have as being part and parcel of the fundamental rights to life. According to the Daily Telegraph (2008), Chantal Sebire was a French woman diagnosed with a rare type of cancer (a malignant neoplasm of the nasal vault) in 2002, her tumor developed and reached a point where it cannot be stopped or cured, it made sever deformities in Sebire’s face taking away the senses of smelling, tasting and eventually sight from her. Moreover, Sebire was suffering from horrible pain; she said a normal human would not allow an animal to go through. She appealed to the French court asking for a permission to have an assisted suicide as she could not bear the pain anymore. However, her appeal was rejected as euthanasia is not legal in France. Two days later Chantal Sebire was found dead as she committed suicide in her house after her appeal was rejected. It can be seen from that case that this way of crossing into death was unfair as it was more scary and painful experience than a regulated euthanasia. In Sebire’s case as well as

other similar cases where cure is not found for patients, patients are going through horrible pain and they are going to die anyway, governments should not stand in the way of those severely ill people with no cure or treatment to end their lives legally by assisted suicide. Therefore, the life of those patients is their choice and they have the right to continue living or die peacefully.

The pursuit of happiness is the pursuit of relief from pain and suffering. (Cockeram, 2007). By having the superior power in keeping the lives of patients with no chance in getting well or having cure is not giving them relief or even happiness, it is like holding their lives, watching them suffer at the last moments of their lives and locking them in a life they are not having since they have lost their senses, feelings or even conscious.

Opponents of euthanasia argue that euthanasia is a cruel act and a human enforcement to end other people lives without their permission. Lozano mentioned that the Vatican believes that ending lives of severely ill people even the premature babies who are gravely ill by euthanasia is an illicit act as well as act of cruelty. (CNA, 2006). Therefore, opponents believe that euthanasia would violate the God's gift of life and enforce in ending lives of people who are not able to communicate with others. However, " according to the article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, " Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". Article 5 adds " No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". If no one shall be subjected to torture, then why do we have to watch them suffer?" (Euthanasia UK, 2007). Most of the people who choose euthanasia are those patients who suffer from diseases that cause a lot of pain and cannot be treated. If those patients choose not to bear the pain, <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-and-debate-of-euthanasia-philosophy-essay/>

they should have the right to do so. (Bose, 2011). It is the right of those patients with no cure to choose their own life and death. Other kind of brain dead patients who are in irreversible coma and cannot communicate have no chances in getting back to life or even getting well as in most cases their brains are damaged, it is in their favor as well as other patients favors with chances in getting cured to be euthanized, providing them with the mercy killing doesn't mean it is a cruel act against their will but it is ending their suffer, releasing their locked souls in no life and lowering the expenses their parents or relatives have to pay for hospitals only for keeping them alive but unconscious through machines. Euthanizing such patients can be by shortening the amount of oxygen or food given to them through machines and tubes. Therefore, euthanasia should not be considered as a cruel act but an act of mercy that gives patients and even their parents the right to choose life or death at the time of suffer and inevitable death.