

Candidate 1

Euthanasia morally acceptable' How far do you agree?

This essay is about the morality of euthanasia. One of the most debated and controversial issue worldwide. It is a mix of absolute fact and religious tones. Throughout this essay I will attempt to shed some light on this rollercoaster of a topic, but there will be no resolute 100% answer to this question. Euthanasia has been a philosophical conundrum since ancient Greece, and until this day there is no concrete answer. Many philosophers have had their thoughts examined and scrutinised and, in this essay, I will do the same. In this essay I will aim to introduce the idea of euthanasia by giving a clear description of euthanasia. I will also show the religious perspective accompanied by the non-religious perspective. I will attempt to come to a sound conclusion regarding this matter by using the knowledge, analysis and evaluation throughout the essay.

Euthanasia is the termination of life. However, to say that is a complete misconception of the actuality of it. To say this is to be too absolutist and isn't revealing of all the complications, intricacies, and variables of euthanasia. Euthanasia is often a consensual process in which a mutual understanding between patient and doctor is met and terms are agreed upon to commence with being euthanised. Within euthanasia there is many different ways in which it can be carried out, and it is isolated into certain categories relative to the context of the euthanasia. Some of these categories include passive euthanasia, active euthanasia, indirect, voluntary and non-voluntary. The word euthanasia derives from the Greek 'eu' (meaning well) and 'thanatos' (meaning death). In essence this means, well, death, which encapsulated euthanasia effectively. The notion of euthanasia being morally permissible can be traced back to the stoics (Socrates and Plato)'. Of course, this view is completely different to that of the Christian faith as it is believed to contradict one of the sacred ten commandments. There have been many attempts to legalise the use of euthanasia such as the society bill, which was rejected in 1936, and, later, in 1950. However, it wasn't until 2001 before the Netherlands became the first nation to decriminalise euthanasia, it was closely followed by Belgium in 2002, but a state in America (Oregon) allowed physician-assisted suicide in 1998. In 2009 the South Korean supreme court recognized a "right to die with dignity" in it's decision to approve of a request from the family of a brain-dead woman that she be removed from life-support systems

Euthanasia can be desired for many reasons, such as terminal illness or severe depression. According to the official Dignitas website; 1 person travels to Switzerland every 8 days to be euthanised. It is estimated (with rough calculations) euthanasia can cost anything in the range of 86,500-€15,000, the average being \$10,000. However, a report from The Money Charity show sixty eight percent of UK households have less than £10,000 in savings. There is a limit to how ill one can be before euthanasia becomes unusable: this can damage the time left of the patient. Over fifty percent of all patients interviewed had no regard for the law and still wanted to go through with the euthanasia. All patients must have their medical records and reports reviewed, which slows the whole process down which often impacts the mental health of the patients and increases anxiety in family members who may not get the appropriate documentation.

Euthanasia is broken down into certain categories relative to their complication, for instance active euthanasia which consists of an active form of killing, such as injecting the patient with a lethal dose of a drug. This form of euthanasia is highly illegal in countries like the United Kingdom, as by definition it is murder, even though it is consensual. It is highly debated, the controversy of active euthanasia. The idea that doctors possess the ability to "actively" kill seems to rattle a few feathers, not to mention the religious point of view. A religious view is that of life is sacred and euthanasia disregards that- this in of itself is an oxymoron as life is sacred mostly down to free will and to take that away due to what you believe is ridiculous.

The next form of euthanasia is that of passive euthanasia which consists of intentionally allowing death by withholding artificial life support i.e., ventilation. This is also illegal in Great Britain as it is seen as undignified and could also be rather painful circumstantially. Again, it raises a question 'who determines whether they are eligible for maintaining these life supports, and where is the line crossed; who needs it and who does not?' On one hand you could have a severely ill person whose life depends on these life supports and can't venture out his hospital room, the only reminisce of life visible would be their sentience and limited social interactions (doctors and visiting etc.). What life is that to live, knowing of impending death and not being able to fulfil dreams or aspiration due to the aforementioned terminal illness. On the other hand, why should the family be forced to part

with their child, sibling, significant other or friend prematurely. Regardless of it being desired, this form of euthanasia is often considered the most unnatural.

Involuntary is another form of euthanasia. This, shockingly enough, is the only legal form of euthanasia in Great Britain. It entails the use of euthanasia on a patient in which the patient is in a position where consent is impossible such as comas, or unconscious and in both scenarios the wishes of the patient are unknown. I'd argue this is the most controversial as consent is very limited and when it does exist it is second hand, coming from a next of kin etc. There is a considerable differentiation between involuntary and non-voluntary euthanasia. Involuntary is performed on a person who would be able to provide informed consent, but does not, either because they do not want to die, or because they were not asked and non-voluntary is when the explicit consent of the individual concerned is unavailable, such as when the person is in a PVS, or in the case of young children.

I believe, if available, there should be a respect to the wishes of the patient, especially if they are unable to give consent. This being legal in Britain does not make it common place, certain criteria and specifics need to be made. The patient must be in a critical state and extremely unlikely to survive without aided help. And with both forms of the nonvoluntary/involuntary euthanasia, the religious perspective views the patient to be alive before taking life support. The "thou shall not kill" speel. Now, when I say 'speel', I'm referencing the absolutism of the Christian view on euthanasia, this view is also relevant in the abortion debate. I'm not trying to be an advocate of taking lives of course, but to completely abandon and disregard the many variables that can come into play during euthanasia is very harsh. Life is only worth what it is due to the complete randomness of it and our definite freewill we possess, but only being given number of days/weeks/months completely restricts what is possible and dramatically shortens what we could accomplish, this massively changes what life means (perceptively).

Euthanasia is also possible by upping the dosage of pain-relieving medication, which happens to speed up the process of death. This way is called indirect euthanasia, and indirect euthanasia is technically a form as euthanasia as the goal isn't to kill the patient but just to relive the pain. It is still in regard of unethical due to the acknowledgment of the outcome and the willingness to allow the death, albeit indirectly. Indirect euthanasia can be officially justified, this is called the doctrine of double effect. This doctrine specifies that doing something morally good that has a morally bad side effect then it is ethical ok to do,

given the bad side effect was not intentionally. This still applies even if you were almost certain the bad side effects would probably commence. As I mentioned earlier, this is technically not an official performance of euthanasia, but it is often the most commonly requested way by patients, and so it should. Whether you believe euthanasia to be ethical or not; it should be widely accepted that dying this way is humane and should be treated as such.

The last and final form of euthanasia is assisted suicide. Similar to the latter, assisted suicide is not technically a form of euthanasia as it doesn't always rely on medical intervention. Assisted suicide entails what it is called. Someone asks someone (usually a close friend or family member) by a mutual agreement to kill them." This however is deemed as murder in most places on the planet, and it is by definition, but assisted suicide is the most controversial form of euthanasia. In my arguments however, I have opted to solely focus on active euthanasia. From henceforth when referring to euthanasia, it will be synonymous with active euthanasia. Of course, with every single thing ever, with a mist on controversy, religion must rear its head, and to this there is no exception. As established the Christian religion are firm believers in sanctity of life and their believe in sanctity of life far exceeds their belief in sentience of life. "I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person" This is a quote from Pope John Paul II, and the quote is very black and white, euthanasia is complex, and it shouldn't be undermined from a religious perspective. Active euthanasia is in violation of one the 10 commandments being "Thou shall not kill" and Pope John Paul II has determined his whole view from a quote from an ancient book. But euthanasia is much more than that, it can't be unacceptable because a man with influence can quote scripture. The classical religious notion that life is God given and that every step taken in your life predisposed, which is just a huge juxtaposition as the promise of God is free will but to go for euthanasia by using your free will goes against God's ideals, even though your path was predetermined. The bible is very adamant on engaging the fact that we as humans should relinquish our decisions of personal autonomy devote ourselves entirely to God "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own" . The implications of this are that euthanasia should become obsolete as they do not have control over their own bodies and should be wholly devoted to God.

The Christian belief is that of similar principle of suicide and murder, they are stroked with the same brush. The human creation is in God's image (Imago Dei) and should be treated as such, so to take away a God-given gift is unforgivable. Within the catechism of the Catholic Church there are many quotes that exacerbate the opposition of euthanasia such as "Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect. Sick or handicapped persons should be helped to lead lives as normal as possible." The implications of this are that the Christian view neglects to comprehend the dignity in euthanasia and think it's a necessity for everyone to live until physically unable. The Christian view, as stubborn as it is, isn't completely unviable. "Even if death is thought to be imminent, the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be interrupted."

On a personal level I am entirely set on believing euthanasia should be a choice given some particular circumstances, but there is logic in this quote, that being that doctors have an obligation to care for a patient and ensure their survival and maintenance of life. That being said, I'm fully aware that in some cases dying is better than living. For example, those who are in extreme consistent pain. This does create an issue in Christianity as it is often preached from various sources that life is something incredibly special "Each life is truly a gift from God. We can honour His gift by cherishing our own lives as well as respecting and valuing the lives of others. Yet sometimes life is better to not be lived. If life can't be cherished, then that life will not honour God. So why does God desire those who live in suffering to continue in their suffering? I guess it could all be chalked down to a test from God to prove your worth, but from the outside looking in it seems rather despicable. Why would God give us our own freewill and allow us to create these procedures such as euthanasia which he hates ever so much, only to slam the door and not allow it? It is unfair and rather ridiculous. I mean God's existence has not even been proven, I am not discrediting faith, have as much faith as you want, but at the end of the day God isn't real to everyone, yet as a nation we abide by his philosophy. The hypocrisy of the quote becomes more poignant when we look at God's capabilities. God is omnipotent (amongst other things), this is highlighted in Genesis when he creates the world in the 6 days. Romans 1:20 reads "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse" However, God will not use his omnipotence to prevent people from

having terminal illnesses, or severe depression, or even accidents that result in non-recoverable disabilities such as paralysis.

From the start it is imperative that Christians must acknowledge God's benevolence "The love of God is always greater than we can imagine; it even reaches beyond any sin with which our conscience may charge us" is a quote from Pope Francis further solidifying the idea of God's overwhelming adoration. However, this reluctance to use divine intervention to prevent these situations really questions God's benevolence and rather portrays God as a tyrannical being which contradicts the notion of any God of classic western theism. This drastically hampers the argument of religious morality, as why should it be immoral to desire euthanasia, but for God to allow people to be crippled and be diagnosed with cancer is seen as a plan from God. To add to these contradictions "You shall love your neighbour as yourself is a bible quote which suggests we should treat others and respect others to the standard of which we want to be, yet do not respect a person's choice of euthanasia. Value of life is a universal thought throughout the world, but what constitutes a valued life philosophy that one has value once someone can recognise their value. An extract from Singer's rethinking life & death "Hardly anyone really believes that all human life is of equal worth" What Singer means by this isn't that a person on a normal basis is worth more than the next, but rather a malformed baby or an Alzheimer riddled elderly man are not worth the same as a normal person, normal being a cognitive person with a grasp of life's worth. In 1973 George Zygmanski was in a horrible motorcycle accident near his home in New Jersey and was taken to hospital, he found out the accident resulted in him being paralysed from the waist down. Mr Zygmanski was also reported to be in a considerable amount of pain. He told his doctor and his brother (Lester) that he wished to be euthanised. He begged on several separate occasions to be killed, and each time he was denied. His brother had queried about his brother's recovery, to which he was told he wouldn't. This resulted in the brother, Lester, smuggling a gun into the hospital room, briefing the situation to his brother George. He then told George "I am here to end your pain, George. Is that all right with you" All George could do was nod, due to a surgery to assist his breathing. Lester then promptly put a bullet through George's skull. Obviously, this is an extreme case, but it happened nonetheless, and it begs the question as to why the pair had to go to such extreme lengths? Regarding this case Singer made clear that he felt that there should have been another

channel open for Lester and George, he felt that George should have been given the right to die via injection- or anything less distressing than a gunshot given the environment.

Singer has also openly discussed with situation with his mother. His mother was diagnosed with dementia, and as he was feeding her, he realised her perception of life became equitable to that of a child. He realised that his mother would be more dignified dying. However, does he have the right to speak on behalf of her, after all she is her own person? Well, Singer argues that she has lost personhood and she will never be what she was again, and as one of the people who knew her best, his voice should be stronger than most in this situation. It would be safe to assume that it wasn't an easy conclusion to reach. However, where Singer's argument flaws are that we can't differentiate on people's lives based on how well they live. For instance, someone's grandmother with dementia is of a higher value to that person than they are to me, to me they are just a person with a deteriorating illness, but to them it's a loved one. That being said, the sanctity of life debate imposes value on everyone, an equal value- which in our world is not something to strive for. We need to maintain a spectrum of value to even entertain the notion of appreciation.

Humanitarianism is completely relevant in this debate too. Humanists follow to central themes regarding euthanasia, they use empathy and compassion: if someone is suffering terribly, and you are in a position to alleviate the suffering you should (at minimum) introduce the possibility of the opportunity to remove the suffering. They also use autonomy: we have the right to do with our bodies as we desire, if we are given the freedom on how to live, we should be given the same opportunity to choose how we die. Humanists have the impression human life exists when you're living and not if you're merely existing. This important to understand if the patient feels they still have a life worth living and whether they have reasons to go on that outweigh their reasons to part with living. And most importantly it's imperative to know if they have reached the decision that they wish to end their life. It is thought that to euthanise is to play God as only God should dictate death. However, this argument is not a particularly useful argument due to the fact that humanists don't believe in a God, and that personal autonomy is imperative in being human. Paul Lamb is another man who after a motor accident was left paralysed from the neck down except small movements in his right hand. Paul was aware that he was practically dying and said "I am paralysed from the neck down and live in a constant state of pain. In the future my suffering will become too much to bear. When that happens, I want to be able to control

and choose the circumstances of my death." Paul took his fight to court, and each time he was shutdown. This man expressed his agonising pain and his desire not to die, but to control how it happens, and in my opinion in the humanitarian view he deserved that right. It seems I just to allow him to constantly suffer each day without the clarity of when and how his death will take place. Paul eventually died before he could change the law that prohibits euthanasia.

To conclude, the debate regarding euthanasia is difficult to reduce to one solid answer. However, in my unprofessional opinion I believe euthanasia is looked down upon in the wrong light. I'm not trying make murder or genocide or any form of non-voluntary euthanasia obsolete, and of course I don't endorse those. But euthanasia is not the opportunity to take someone from this life, but an opportunity to prevent a life lived with remorse and hatred. The idea that we as people should acquiesce through life because we're lucky to be alive is such a foolish testament. We shouldn't be conditioned to places we don't want to be, you wouldn't want to be trapped in a room with no way out. I believe that euthanasia is a very difficult thing to go through, the process long and tedious, and the acceptance of your fate must be overwhelming- but to even have that possibility there is deserved of everyone who needs to struggle everyday with life changing diseases or injuries. The arguments of sanctity of life don't have much solidarity when someone feels they need to resort to euthanasia, to keep them alive and suffering is barbaric and unfair. I feel that to prevent people from escaping their pain due to the rules put in place based on the broken teachings of an unproven deity is the true immoral conquest and to justify it with faith is as accountable as turning a blind eye to those suffering gravely.