

Candidate 3 evidence

Medical Ethics Essay

How valid are religious responses to assisted dying?

Assisted dying is when somebody who is terminally ill decides they want to end their life & require assistance to do so. An example of this could be, putting drugs in someone's reach so that they can take an overdose. Generally, most religious people are against assisted dying, for example, Christians. However, there are also those who believe assisted dying should be legal and an option for those nearing the end of their life. It could be argued that religious responses to assisted dying are valid, but only to a small extent.

One of the main religious responses to assisted dying is the Christian response, Christians believe in the sanctity of life; life is a gift from God & only he should decide when we die. In the bible, in Ecclesiastes, it states: "There is a time for everything. A time to be born and a time to die: This suggests that Christians do not believe people should choose their own death - God gave us this life & only he can take it away. However this view could be seen as harmful as it takes away the dying person's autonomy. Many people think it is important that somebody is able to choose what happens at the end of their life. A Christian, however, would say that autonomy is not as important as someone's duty to make the most of God's gift of life. While it is valid that we should honour God's gift, there is always the possibility that God intended for somebody to choose assisted dying. As well as this, many Christians believe that God gave us free will. This means that surely God intended for us to make our own choices in life. Overall, the Christian view of the Sanctity of life is valid to an extent, however not fully as it fails to take into account the fact that God may want us to have autonomy.

Another religious response is the Sikh response. In the Guru Granth Sahib, it states, "God sends us & we take birth. God calls us back when we die. This links back to the Christian view that God chooses when we are born and when we die. However, again, God gave us free will, therefore we still have the right to personal choice. However, a religious person such as a Christian or Sikh may respond by saying God gave us free will specifically to see if we would obey him or betray him - our autonomy could be a test to see if we will honour his gift of life by choosing to die naturally rather than choose assisted dying. However, this view shows God in a negative light as a truly loving God would not want people to suffer at the end of their life just to honour his gift. Because of this the Sikh and Christian view of our autonomy and free will being a test is only valid to a small extent.

Other than autonomy, there is also the issue of compassion. Is it compassionate to let someone suffer rather than end their pain? Or, on the other hand, is it compassionate to the patient's family to let the patient Choose assisted dying? In Buddhists believe non-attachment is necessary to achieve nibbana, which is their ultimate goal in life. Instead of attachment, Buddhists practice loving kindness, which is wanting the best for somebody without being attached to them or emotionally invested in what happens to them. Because of this, compassion for the dying persons family likely would not matter for a Buddhist when determining whether assisted dying is morally acceptable. This is because the family should be practicing non-attachment. On one hand this is a good view to have for a Buddhist as practicing non-attachment will help them to gain positive karma, which will help them to achieve Nibbana. However, this view could also be seen as cold, since it is unrealistic to expect everyone to be unattached. We are human after all & have emotions. This is especially true in the contest of assisted dying as the family will likely fear their relatives death and the grief this will cause. Because of this, the Buddhist view can only be considered valid to a moderate extent.

Another moral issue related to assisted dying is the issue of dignity. Many people want to end their life early so that their loved ones do not have to take care of them or witness their illness progress. To many people, assisted dying would allow them to die in a more dignified way. For example, Richard Selley was a 65 year old man with motor neurone disease, who travelled from Scotland to Switzerland to die peacefully. Afterwards, his wife stated that the end was calm and dignified and exactly as he would have wanted it. Dignitas was clearly important to him and a factor of his decision. Some religious people agree that dignity is important. Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of Cape Town, stated, 'I have been fortunate to spend my life working for dignity for the living. I now must turn my attention to the dignity of the dying.'

However, some religious people think that the issue of dignity makes assisted dying unacceptable. The Church of Scotland stated 'dignity is best realised through the palliative care model.' Palliative care looks after people who are nearing the end of their life. For example, someone may receive care at home or in a hospice which focuses on reducing their pain & discomfort until they do die. However, is palliative care always more dignified? Many people do not want to be taken care of when they cannot do every day things for themselves, & assisted dying for them may be more dignified. It is true that dignity is an important issue, as Desmond Tutu Stated. However, the church of Scotland view that palliative care allows dignity more than assisted dying is not true, as

we can see though cases such as Richard Selley, because of this, the Church of Scotland View is only valid to a very small extent.

Overall, there are many religious responses to assisted dying such as Christian, Sikh, I Buddhist viewpoints. The Buddhist view is valid in theory, however when applied to real life it is cold & unrealistic. The Christian & Sikh view that God could decide when we die is only valid in some situations as there may be others where God intends for someone to choose assisted dying. Finally, the Christian idea that palliative Care is more dignified is invalid in most situations as examples such as Richard Selley show. Overall, religions responses to assisted dying are only valid to a small extent.