

Candidate 7 evidence

Essay 9

Morality and Justice – Capital Punishment

Capital Punishment is the exercise of execution as a punishment for a crime, such as murder. Only a state can perform an execution, and if a non-state organisation executes someone they have committed murder. There are several methods of execution, however, the most common one used in America is lethal injection. The prisoner is taken into a room with a viewing window; the victim's family may be present. Drugs are then passed through their veins and all bodily functions ceased.

One moral issue arising from Capital Punishment is that it is seen as an inhumane and cruel punishment. In recent years in the USA, there has been an issue sourcing the drugs for lethal injection, and so experimental executions took place which were found to have caused the prisoners unnecessary pain and suffering. A religious response to this moral issue is from Pope Francis in 2015 when he said "Those in prison have rights too, no one should undergo violence or inhumane treatment. Mercy and forgiveness always." An implication of this is that Christians will be against the death penalty as no one should have to die in such a painful way and a Christian society, such as the USA, is supposed to be all forgiving so why punish someone using such cruel and inhumane methods?

Another moral issue arising from Capital Punishment is that not only the actual execution is considered inhumane and unusual, so too is the way prisoners on death row are treated in the many years they are awaiting their execution. Prisoners on death row are isolated from other prisoners, excluded from prison employability and educational programs and restricted in terms of visitation and exercise – some prisoners spend 23 hours a day alone in their cells. A religious response to this is from the Catechism of the Church when it states, "In light of the Gospels, the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person." An implication of this is that Christians will not support the death penalty as the way they are treated can highly distress them and cause them mental health issues which goes against the dignity of human beings.

Furthermore, another moral issue arising from Capital Punishment is that while on death row, the prisoner is left wondering whether they will actually be sentenced to death. For example, there are currently 2400 prisoners on death row and only 1500 have been executed since 1976. This is considered torture in itself as the prisoner is constantly tortured with the thought of whether they will actually be executed. Therefore, violating Article 5 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights which states "No one should be subject to torture or inhumane, cruel or degrading treatment or

punishment” A religious response to this statement is that humans are created in the likeness of God “Imago Die” and their lives are precious. This means that their lives should not be taken away as they are a creation of God, an implication of this is that Christians will see all criminals no matter what they have done as precious lives that God has created and therefore should not be tortured in this way. I think this is a valid view as every person on this Earth is part of God’s perfect creation and may be punished to an extent but never as far as execution.

A final moral issue arising from Capital Punishment is the fact that some people have been wrongly accused. It is possible that mistakes are made by the justice system and a totally innocent person can be found guilty of a crime they did not commit. In this situation if in prison the person can be released with an apology and compensation, however if they have been put to death there is no way out. A religious response to this comes from Pope Frances in 2017 “We must accept the lost and the sinner as our own and give them the help they need to cleanse heal and restore their lives” An implication of this is that Christians will believe that all criminals deserve a second chance to fix and restore their lives. The finality of execution means that the prisoner may not get the chance to feel sorry or apologise to the victim’s family. I think this is a convincing view as everyone should be given a second chance at life. In addition the finality of execution means that if a person is innocent and has been put to death they cannot be given back their life.