

Persuasive Essay 10 - 12: Euthanasia: Should humans be given the right to play God?

Should humans be allowed to play the role of God? Legalising euthanasia would do just that. Euthanasia is where individuals who are terminally ill elect to end their own life. This has and will continue to be a contentious issue with the right people's religious beliefs conflicting with those of the rights individual. The power to play with people's lives should not be handed out under a legal and/or medical disguise. Thus euthanasia should not be legalised.

The term 'Euthanasia' comes from the Greek word for 'easy death'. It is the one of the most public policy issues being debated about today. Also called 'mercy killing', euthanasia is the act of purposely making or helping someone die, instead of allowing nature to take its course. Basically for advocates of the practice of euthanasia it means killing in the name of compassion. However this view is contradictory to religious beliefs, who are these medical people to meddle in the God's plans. Euthanasia promotes abuse and gives doctors the right to murder all in the name of 'compassion'.

All proponents in the euthanasia debate will agree that no matter the safe guards put in place around this practice; this process is susceptible to abuse. As Dr. J Forest Witten warned that euthanasia would give a small group of doctors "the power of life and death over individuals who have committed no crime except that of becoming ill or being born, and might lead toward state tyranny and totalitarianism." The only way to safe-guard against such blatant abuses of power, such megalomania, is to keep the practice illegal.

An example of this very statement by Dr. J Forest Witten was seen in Pennsylvania, in 1947 when forty-seven year old Ellen Haug admitted having killed her ailing seventy-year-old mother with an overdose of sleeping pills. Her excuse was that she couldn't endure her crying and misery. Ellen said that her mother had suffered too long and Ellen herself was on the verge of collapse. Her excuse was that "if something had happened to her, what would have become of her mother?" Her reason was not only vain; it was also very selfish. Ellen was not putting her mother out of misery but she was getting herself rid of a responsibility, releasing herself from the 'burden'. She was in fact, merely taking the advantage of calling her cold-blooded murder euthanasia. Likewise, a recent Dutch government investigation of euthanasia came up with some disturbing findings. In 1990, 1,030 Dutch patients were killed without their consent. Twenty-two thousand and five hundred deaths were caused due to withdrawal of support, 63% (14,175 patients) were denied medical treatment without their consent and twelve percent (1,701 patients) were mentally competent but were not consulted. These findings were widely publicised before the November 1991 referendum in Washington State, and contributed to the defeat of the proposition to legalise lethal injections and assisted suicide. Euthanasia, at the moment is illegal in most parts of the world. In the Netherlands it is practiced widely even though it remains illegal. The Dutch incident is a clear example of how euthanasia has promoted abuse in the past and therefore as the old proverb goes we should "learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones".

Euthanasia gives physicians, who are only humans - the right to murder. Doctors are people who we trust to save and cure us, we regard them as the people who have been trained to save our lives but euthanasia gives doctors the opportunity to play God and most seize this opportunity. A perfect example of an opportunist would be Dr. Jack Kevorkian, better known as "Dr. Death" who took advantage of his patients' sorrows and tragedies and murdered them. In fact, Kevorkian has helped more than 100 people

Introduces the topic, establishes audience's attention
Some background information provided
Contention established

Explanation of topic key terminology
Loaded language to shock and engage audience
Logical/rational sequencing of arguments
More formal language used

Use of expert/quotes to support contention. Has an effective impact on audience

Use of loaded language

Case study used to support contention

Quoting the source

Statistics/evidence- makes the argument more difficult to refute.

Emotive language- this has a strong effect on readers and positions them to see something in either a positive or negative light.

commit suicide and not all of his patients were terminally ill. In addition, in the late 1980s the lunatic created a machine for murder, it was a "suicide machine" that allowed a person by pressing a button, to dispense a lethal dose of medication. Later, Dr. Kevorkian was sentenced to ten to twenty-five years in prison for second-degree murder for providing lethal injection to a seriously ill patient. Dr. Jack Kevorkian, however, is not the only example of a doctor who tried to "play God".

One can also learn a lot from the mass murder that took place in Germany during World War II. Over 100,000 people were killed in the Nazi's euthanasia program. During the War, the doctors were responsible for, selecting those patients who were to be euthanised, carrying out the injections at the killing centres, and generating the paperwork that provided a medically credible cause of death for the surviving family members. Surprisingly, organisations such as the General Ambulance Service, Charitable Sick Transports, and the Charitable Foundation for Institutional Care transported patients to the six killing centres, where euthanasia was accomplished by lethal injections or in children's cases, slow starvation. Throughout the past and the present, euthanasia has given doctors an excuse to get away with their crimes; it has given mere humans the power to play God.

The physician's role is to make a diagnosis, and sound judgments about medical treatment, not whether the patient's life is worth living. They have an obligation to perform sufficient care, not to refrain from giving the patient food and water until that person dies. As their code states 'do no harm'. Medical advances in recent years have made it possible to keep terminally ill people alive for beyond a length of time even if it is without any hope of recovery or improvement. The American Medical Association (AMA) is well known for their pro-abortion campaigns and funding. Ironically, the AMA funds many hospices and other palliative care centres. They have a firm stand on life. The AMA has initiated the Institute for Ethics, designed to educate physicians on alternative medical approaches to euthanasia during the dying process.

Other than promoting abuse and giving doctors the right to murder, euthanasia also contradicts religious beliefs. Euthanasia manages to contradict more than just one religion and is considered to be gravely sinful. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church has its own opinion on euthanasia. The Vatican's 1980 Declaration on Euthanasia said in part, "[n]o one can make an attempt on the life of an innocent person without opposing God's love for that person, without violating a fundamental right, and therefore without committing a crime of the utmost sin." It also says that "intentionally causing one's own death, or suicide is therefore equally wrong as murder, such an action on the part of a person is to be considered as a rejection of God's sovereignty and loving plan." In fact, a Jewish Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits warns that a patient must not shrink from spiritual distress by refusing ritually forbidden services or foods if necessary for healing; how much less he may refuse treatment to escape from physical suffering. As there is no possibility of repentance or self-destruction, Judaism considers suicide a sin worse than murder. Therefore, euthanasia, voluntary or involuntary is forbidden.

Islam too finds euthanasia to be immoral and against God's teachings. Actually, the whole concept of a life not worthy of living does not exist in Islam! There is absolutely no justification of taking life to escape suffering in Islam. Patience and endurance are highly regarded and rewarded values in Islam. Some verses from the Holy Quran say - "Those who patiently preserve will truly receive a reward without measure" (Quran 39:10) and

Appeal to fear- most readers will have lived through or have knowledge of the Nazi campaign- this will make readers feel very afraid and will be more receptive to authors solution

Appeals to traditions and beliefs

Appeals to traditions and beliefs

"[a]nd bear in patience whatever (ill) may befall you: this, behold, is something to set one's heart upon" (Quran 31:17). The Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) taught "[w]hen the believer is afflicted with pain, even that of a prick of a thorn or more, God forgives his sins, and his wrong doings are discarded as a tree sheds off its leaves." When means of preventing or alleviating pain fall short, this spiritual dimension can be very effectively called upon to support the patient who believes that accepting and standing unavoidable pain will be to his/her credit in the hereafter, the real and enduring life. This shows that euthanasia is contradictory to most religious beliefs and is certainly nonsense to those who believe in God and the sanctity of life.

Euthanasia should not be legalised. It is by no means a solution to human suffering. Though euthanasia is a controversial subject, it is evident that it only disrupts the normal pattern of life and leads toward creating a more violent and abusive society. Life is a gift and not a choice and practices such as euthanasia violate this vital concept of human society. Every step must be taken to preserve the sanctity of human life.

Concluding statement.
Restates contention and main arguments.
Finishes with a powerful statement for a last impact.

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