Euthanasia

Instances of euthanasia or mercy killing can be traced back to ancient times. Nevertheless, it is just lately that there had been attempts made for legalizing euthanasia. The way we take care of the terminally ill patients eventually impacts upon each of us. In the majority of the deaths there is a chronic disease process, for instance cancer or congestive heart failure, which produces a terminal stage lasting for several days, weeks or months. A lot of people find the suffering more frightening than the death itself (Cundiff vii).

The actual term mercy killing would automatically refer to the statement that the motivation behind euthanasia would be mercy and compassion toward the dying. Several of the advocates of euthanasia declare that a majority of the cases exist wherein there are no means of alleviating the physical pain of the terminally ill patients. Furthermore, there have not been much technological advances which would have done anything for helping in the improvement of the psychological fear and existential anxiety which every person faces when he feels he is about to die (Manning 40). There is also the fear of being trapped on life support machinery and this is a modern fear. Such advocates assert that it is out of compassion for the patients that we submit to their requests of ending their life to end their suffering.

One of the advocates of euthanasia is the ethicist Dan Brock. According to him euthanasia should be available as we would be acting compassionately if we end the pain and suffering of the terminally ill, and those who do not die without life support either. However, there is a lot of controversy surrounding the debate of whether the fear of the terminally ill justifies the demand for euthanasia and also whether modern medicine is progressing enough for eliminating this suffering. According to several of the experts there can be a minimization of pain and suffering in most of the cases and this is possible through properly applying medical technology. Conversely, there is also the view that in several of the cases optimal care is not taken of the terminally ill and there is the possibility of a lot of needless pain and suffering by the end of the life. One of the reasons behind this is that the physicians are not extremely well trained for alleviating the pain and suffering (Manning 41).

There is the view that if there is enough and proper care available for the terminally ill, there is a possibility that the public support for euthanasia would decrease, and may be also majorly. According to Dan Brock a lot of people are “very concerned about the manner and circumstances of their deaths” (Manning 27).

Dr Jack Kevorkian was a Michigan pathologist who assisted people in euthanasia. He was nicknamed Dr Death owing to his regularly helping the terminally ill patients in committing suicide. He even built a machine that allowed the patients to take their life themselves. Although in Michigan it is allowed to assist someone with suicide, Dr Kevorkian was charged with murder after he provided Janet Adkins with the machine which took her life (Singer 177).

Life is a great gift from God. It is God who gave us a life and it is only His right to take it away. Thus, there is no space for arguments related to euthanasia. Suicide, whether assisted or not, violates this statement. It violates a person’s natural desire to live.

If one looks at the issue with a broad mind, there is nothing really wrong with it. The patient is not able to survive with the suffering and he can be responsible for taking his life. Seneca once said: “Just as I choose a ship to sail on or a house to live in, so I choose a death for my passage from life” (Battin 4).
Michel de Montaigne had been the first major dissenter among European writers. He wrote about suicide and according to him suicide is a matter of personal choice and it is the right of the person to take his life. He said that it is logical enough in certain situations. He wrote: “Death is a remedy against all evils: It is a most assured haven, never to be feared, and often to be sought… Life dependeth on the will of others, death on ours” (Barry 66-67). It is clear that he advocated euthanasia and suicide in certain circumstances, and felt that a human being has the right to do whatever he wants with his life. I feel that this should be the approach that people should take.

Works Cited


Cundiff, David, Euthanasia is not the answer: a hospice physician's view, Humana Press, 1992.
