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The Differing Viewpoints Regarding Euthanasia

Euthanasia is granting painless death to a patient by a doctor through the consent of patient or family of the patient in cases of a permanent vegetative state due to a coma or a painful and incurable disease. There is much contention around this topic as many people consider this eugenics, a way of cleansing the gene pool of the less fit members of society. This claim is further insinuated when euthanasia as a topic is brought about regarding minors, as they die before they are able to continue their progeny. Others are concerned that we try and play God deciding to whom we can and cannot bestow death upon. This is because of the grim fashion in which we empirically consider the pain and suffering a person should go through before it is morally allowed to let them take their life with the consent of the government or the hospital. They maintain the question as to why is it we do not let a depressed person who has gone through much emotional and mental distress not take their life but someone in physical pain be granted the right to do so. However there are those that see the government and the law granting who can and cannot choose death as a form of fascism and authoritarianism not allowing those who wish to pass to have their wish, they simply want the right to do so; to them it is irrelevant whether or not someone wishes to pass away. As it has become self evident all sides of the argument each have great merit and also minor flaws. Thus it becomes quite difficult for governments to implement and regulate. While physicians, who swear never to harm a patient while also giving oath to fulfill any patients request, are subject to a state of a constant contradiction that they have to live and work with.

In Steven Forbe’s website article “Time to Terminate ‘Assisted Dying,’” he argues how eerily similar assisted physician suicide is with the practice of eugenics practiced by the Nazis. He maintains that it is “axiomatic that life is sacrosanct.” Forbes brings up criticisms of Holland’s and Belgium’s decisions to acknowledge the consent given by minors and their parents to forego treatment in the face of inevitable death. He maintains that such applications should be barred from existing in a “civilized and humane society” The purpose of the article is to inform the reader of the “inhumane view” that society is degrading to. This is due to the fact that society allows minors and the elderly that are unfit to undergo voluntary death allowed by the government. He wants to explain that we should allow “free market healthcare” left to third parties instead of the government, as they will innovate new ways to administer medicine to allow the state of the patient to stop being extremely painful. Furthermore third party businesses could innovate new ways to soothe patients as they remain in a vegetative, until they reach the terminal stage of the disease. The audience for this web article are American businessmen as he states that the only real solution “to the rising costs of healthcare is the creation of genuine free markets, which always turn scarcity into abundance.” Furthermore, the website Forbes.com is focused on economy and current economic affairs which appeals to businessmen. The fact that this author is also for voters and taxpayers is evident by the fact that Forbes is author of the book *Reviving America: How Repealing Obamacare, Replacing the Tax Code and Reforming the Fed will restore Hope and Prosperity*. The stance Forbes has regarding euthanasia is that all forms of it should be abolished as “such practices have no place in a truly civilized and humane society” (Source 1).

 Kyle Munkittrick’s magazine article published on Discover, “Euthanasia, Immortality, and The Natural Death Paradox” discusses that death chosen on “our own volition” is a moral good when compared to our death being chosen by someone else in a malicious or accidental manner. He also claims that death by natural causes not in anyone’s control is erroneously attributed to be morally good when in fact he believes it to be morally neutral, thus it follows that death chosen is better than death received perchance. The purpose of the magazine article is to attempt to fix the wrong reasoning held by society that natural death is always better than death chosen as he states, “A fetishization of natural death should not hold us hostage to the quality and duration of our lives.” This becomes even more apparent as the only original work he contributes to the discussion regarding euthanasia is his definitions of a “moral good”, a “moral wrong”, and what is “morally acceptable”. The audience for this article are those curious in the scientific community, such as scientists or simply science enthusiasts, as the discover magazine’s slogan is “Science for the Curious.” The stance the author has is that euthanasia should be permitted to those who wish to pass, as there is nothing wrong with choosing death nor is there anything inherently good about a natural death (Source 2).

In the New York Times article “The Last Thing Mom Asked,” Sarah Lyall recounts the difficulties she faced in assisting her mother with suicide and how the law obstructed the fulfillment of her mother’s wish. She recollects the difficulties she faced in letting her mother peacefully pass, as she did not know the lethal dose to administer her, instead making her endure more days of primal fear and anger. The genre of this newspaper article is an inner monologue representing internal conflict. The purpose of the article is simply to inform the audience of the inner turmoil in her life, as she is “looking for a way to put this off as long as possible”. She states that she is neither a “doctor… [nor] very brave” but all she wants to do is what her mother desires. She also describes in detail all the events that are unique only to her and her relationship with her mother in great detail to really get the audience understand her position and understand why she did what she did. The audience for this article are people who also have a family member suffering from a terminal disease who want to assist in their death as she states how such people “are not alone,” and ends the article stating “There are … many different ways to help someone die.” The stance the author has towards euthanasia is positive, as she helps her mother die despite the lack of support from anybody in the medical community. Her stance becomes visible from the first line “I am about to kill my mother” (Source 3).

In the scholarly article published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, they conduct a study to gauge the opinion of medical professionals working at a university hospital on how euthanasia should be administered. The schools of thought being positive euthanasia where the “use of therapy… will promote death sooner than otherwise” and negative euthanasia where there is “omission of therapies that probably would prolong life.” More than 60 percent of 1st year medical students, 4th year medical students, and physicians favored negative euthanasia. The purpose of the scholarly article is to inform, as evidenced by the statistics and quantitative data in the article and it is also to gauge the view that the medical community has on euthanasia and how it should be administered. The stance for the article is neutral, as it neither endorses nor criticizes euthanasia; it simply wishes to ascertain the perception of the medical community on it. The audiences for this scholarly article are scholars and physicians who are interested in seeing the general view of their physician colleagues and their students on such a controversial practice, as the article thoroughly represents the data for the opinions of the students and physicians on how euthanasia should be administered (Source 4).

Forbe’s article and Munkittrick’s article are stark opposites. While the former wishes that all types of euthanasia be abolished as it is a crime against humanity and has “Hitlerian theories,” the epitome of the worst mankind has to offer, the latter argues that that euthanasia is morally good and that “fetishization of natural death” is repugnant and is based in arguments that are false by definition. However these definitions are Aristotelian definitions in arriving to the conclusion, as there is no definition of what it means to be morally good that can ever be satisfactorily reached. The article by Lyall is intriguing, as initially in her life she never really considered what euthanasia is, and in her article it becomes apparent that she only supports euthanasia because it is her mother’s wish. She simply wishes for the right to be granted to her to be able to take someone’s life with their consent, something Munkittrick would be a proponent of. The work by JAMA is intriguing because it is intentionally neutral on its view of euthanasia as it simply measures the perception of medical professionals in a hospital on how euthanasia should be administered. It is intriguing that many physicians are supportive of euthanasia that is based on omission as opposed to the few physicians that are supportive of euthanasia by medicine, something Forbe’s fears and something Lyall had committed. Most physicians would not be supportive of the method with which Lyall dealt death to her mother.

Sources

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