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English 110 - D2

2 October 2018

Is it ethical to place an impediment on someone’s right to choose death and devoid them of their autonomy, assuming that the decision was made in a rational state of mind, using contemporary ideas of natural rights? I am going to be approaching this question from a secular standpoint, and instead evaluate the dilemma using an interpretation of the most contemporary version of natural rights which we can all unanimously agree upon. Furthermore I want to make the distinction that the ethics I employ are not divorced from morality. What interests me is the ethics of two conflicting natural rights that cannot simultaneously and, most importantly, equally exist at the same time without a natural right taking precedence over another or having lexical priority before the other despite them both being equally important. The lexical priority, I believe, comes not from a branch of ethics found in natural rights, but a personal school of morality that institutions try to impose onto its denizens. Any social or political institution that extends its domain further than that which is necessary must be regarded as tyrannical or authoritarian. Thus is it not unethical to prevent a disambiguous act through unethical procedures? For instance, is it not wrong to allow freedom of nonviolent assembly but limit what type of people can assemble in such a manner? In the same vein I believe it is wrong to allow us full autonomy in pursuit of happiness (which some find in death) but then dictate what does and does not constitute as happiness.

This sort of research paper would be fit for a publication regarding bioethics such as the American Journal of Bioethics as it is focused more on the social and political philosophical aspect of medicine and its practice. This is because I argue the case of euthanasia, which is quite contentious in contemporary America, where the publication is based. My audience would include much of the medical community, as many medical professionals debate on whether they should allow for positive euthanasia, which is the active process of administering lethal doses of medicine, or negative euthanasia, which is the process of abstaining from prolonging the life of a terminally ill patient through medical means. Furthermore, a secondary audience for my research essay would be legislators who are on the fence on whether or not they should endorse or bar euthanasia from being enacted in hospitals, and on what grounds do they derive their opinion from. Since my work is based on the concept of natural rights guaranteed to us, they would find it intriguing in how they can use the ideas that our founding fathers based our country on, to further their argument.

A model essay would be “A critique of three objections to physician-assisted suicide” by Dan Brock. This is a great essay because it doesn’t simply regurgitate the law and what other legislators have already decided in forming his opinion, nor does he attempt to offer definitive proof for why euthanasia should be legalized. Instead he simply argues why banning euthanasia would be unsatisfactory and uses a school of ethics in forming his opinion (Source 1).

Bibliography

1. Brock, Dan W. “A Critique of Three Objections to Physician‐Assisted Suicide.” Ethics, vol. 109, no. 3, 1999, pp. 519–547.
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3. Coghlan, Andy. “Should Young Children Be given the Right to Die?” New Scientist, vol. 220, no. 2942, 2013, p. 12.