

Euthanasia as an ethical dilemma in the current world

Introduction

This essay concerns with ethical dilemma of euthanasia in the current world. It is divided into three parts. First part explains what euthanasia means. Second part describes opinions of experts and my own opinion. Third part speaks about potential threats connected with euthanasia. Main goal of this essay is to analyse euthanasia from different views. Mainly because author of this thesis is not worker in healthcare and he has only non-professional view to this topic.

1 Euthanasia as an ethical problem of the current world

First of all it is important to mention definition of euthanasia. According to Cambridge dictionary it is *“the act of killing someone who is very ill or very old so that they do not suffer any more”* (Cambridge dictionary, 2022).

Britannica, the biggest printed encyclopaedia in the world, says that *“euthanasia, also called mercy killing, is act or practice of painlessly putting to death persons suffering from painful and incurable disease or incapacitating physical disorder or allowing them to die by withholding treatment or withdrawing artificial life-support measures”* (Britannica, 2022).

Both versions sound like very sensitive and helpful ways of caring about very ill people. So where is the problem? It is important to look at this problem from different views. Primarily it is about possible abuse of euthanasia. Do we know clear definition of “very ill man”? Which illness is really deadly? And if the illness is deadly right now, would it be the same tomorrow?

Other view is legal. *“Euthanasia can be voluntary or non-voluntary. In voluntary cases, the person consents to the ending of their life. In a non-voluntary case, the person is unable to consent to the decision, so the decision is made by a guardian. For example, a person in a coma who is unable to make a decision on whether to remove themselves from life support, would need a guardian to make the decision to end their life.”* (Cornell Law School, 2021)

Who is allowed to execute the euthanasia? And which way? Is using the deadly cocktail of medicaments murder? Who has to push the button which starts the euthanasia? Could it be the doctor? Or it has to be the patient? If I am participating the euthanasia like a supervisor, am I obligated to stop the euthanasia? Or could I support patient to push the button? And many many other questions which are connected with this problem.

So why is euthanasia so big topic? Because of humanity, because of laws in some countries, because of travelling to these countries to the execution of euthanasia. And because some people only survive instead of live. If they for example suffer from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, in last phase of their illness they cannot move and speak. Is really human to let them suffer? Hard to say from ethical view.

2 Euthanasia forms and countries with legal active form

Firstly we have to divide euthanasia into two forms. One of them is the active form. What does it mean? Right to end our life with help of other people. It is often connected with "*suicide tourism*". People who want to die because they suffer from deadly illness in terminal phase travel to countries where is active euthanasia legal. Second is right to refuse treatment. You can say "no" to other treatment and doctors have to respect it. After the death of this man they cannot be judged as a murders.

Very important term is "*assisted suicide*". It could be the shortest definition of euthanasia. This version is legal for example in Switzerland, the well-known European country with the suicide tourism. In the European Union we can find three other countries with legal euthanasia – the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain. If we look for other states in whole world, it would be Canada, Australia or Columbia. (EN Wikipedia, 2014)

3 Process of assisted suicide

This process is used in Switzerland where it is executed by three companies according the cities - Dignitas in Zürich, Ex International in Bern and Life Circle in Basel. First of all is to send request to the Suisse doctors for review. Some requests are refused, some people change their opinion later. If it is approved, doctors write recommendation to execute the euthanasia.

The day when deadly ill man wants to die is absolutely up to him. This man must not be persuaded about the death. After last decision patient can choose music which wants to listen. And afterwards doctors prepare special cocktail of deadly medicaments. This “*drink*” has to be taken only by own hands of the dying man. After three minutes this man falls asleep. And after seven minutes is dead. (Týden, 2014)

4 Ethical dilemmas of euthanasia

“I always felt that euthanasia is good but extreme solution. In my opinion to kill somebody with extreme suffer is moral. But it is question if it could be legal. I am very critical here. Why? Legalisation is way for higher demand.” (Theo Boer, 2022)

One opinion for euthanasia:

“I was witness of situation with assisted suicide. And it was very pleasant. It is good death. Janette Butlin died with smile in her face. And her family members looked like content and conciliate. Everything what would be against her will would be bad.” (Tomáš Krupa, 2020)

And some reasons against euthanasia – according the BBC. For example...

“Euthanasia gives too much power to doctors. Euthanasia exposes vulnerable people to pressure to end their lives. Moral pressure on elderly relatives by selfish families. Moral pressure to free up medical resources. Euthanasia is against the word and will of God. Suffering may have value.” (BBC, 2014)

In my opinion reasons why not are very strong. Lower my personal point of view in some questions.

Too much power to doctors – Are doctors authorized to kill people? Why they take an oath of Hippocrates?

Moral pressure on elderly relatives – Am I really necessary for others? Especially if I am too old and ill? Would not be better to die and save energy and money of my relatives?

Free up medical resources – Why should I lie and die when my death is certain? Does this life have any meaning? Should not be better to free up place for other people who still have chance to live?

Value of suffering – Not only religious but also philosophy problem. According the Immanuel Kant... *“Our inherent value doesn't depend on anything else - it doesn't depend on whether we are having a good life that we enjoy, or whether we are making other people's lives better. We exist, so we have value.”* (BBC, 2014)

5 My personal view and reasons why

Many times in past I asked myself if euthanasia is moral and if it should be legal. And my opinion is... NO. I wondered it like with the death penalty. What would be possible to do when I have found out that yesterdays deadly illness is today treatable? It is the same with the death penalty. In the nineties police did not use DNA test. Now we have this test. And some sentenced people had to be release. Why? Because of mistake of justice. The same problem should be with euthanasia.

Other reason is compunction. If the man is still alive I have chance to help him. Maybe it could be only waiting for miracle. But he is still alive. When I help him to realize euthanasia, I am participant of his death. Is it my guilt?

According to me the biggest danger is abuse. Why? People are still people. And not every man is fair and honest. If the dying man is rich, it is potential chance for *“murder”* to achieve this wealth. Is problem to persuade doctor to write message with *“death sentence”*? Especially with old people. I say no. Suddenly the way for easy wealth is here.

And the last reason. Is anyone else empowered to end life of other people? No. Definitely no. It is my own life. And only I can make decision what to do with it.

6 Discussion in the Czech Republic

“Patients many times pleased me to end their suffering.” Doctor Věra Procházková (Deník, 2019) Member of Parliament Věra Procházková who was also doctor from emergency department spoke about need to offer possibility of euthanasia and tried to prepare proposal of law. Immediately reacted specialists from Chamber of doctors and spoke about need to have some data to possibility analyse the situation.

"The worst is awaited assistance of the doctor. I cannot accept this." It was reaction from one of asked Czech doctors if he had accepted euthanasia. The then minister of healthcare Roman Prymula said that he would accepted euthanasia but only in special specific cases. (Deník, 2019) Actually Czech society do not solve situation with euthanasia.

Conclusion

This essay has analysed euthanasia from other different views. Ethical, moral, human and law. But nobody knows correct answer. Why? It does not exist. Reasons for option YES are very strong, similarly reasons for option NO. Not only European but World majority opinion is to have an euthanasia illegal. But nobody can predict society changes connection with mind changes. These days everything is so fast that every change is much more faster than in past. Maybe the same problem will be with opinions on euthanasia.

Resources

Cambridge Dictionary, 2022

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/euthanasia>

Britannica, 2022

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/euthanasia>

Cornell Law School, 2021

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/euthanasia#:~:text=Euthanasia%20is%20more%20commonly%20performed,Jersey%2C%20California%2C%20and%20Vermont>

EN Wikipedia, 2014

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legality_of_euthanasia#/media/File:Legality_of_euthanasia.svg

Týden, 2014

https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/zdravi/vec-eutanazie-za-smrti-se-jezdi-do-svycarska_301856.html

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https://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/euthanasia/against/against_1.shtml

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