

## Dilemma of Euthanasia Is Morally Justified or Not in the Light of Theories

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper focuses on studying various ethical and moral theories, which influences the person's decision on euthanasia. It has also studied the stance of religion on euthanasia. With the help of a lot of research, this paper aims to find out the views and reason of different theorist on euthanasia; it also aims to find out reasons of theorist for declaring euthanasia morally justified or not. This paper further aims to give both pro euthanasia theories and their viewpoints as well against euthanasia theorist making easier to analyze the worth of judgment. This paper also aims to find the relation between religion and morality while performing an action and its effect on people situation, through this paper will highlight the situations in which euthanasia is morally justified or not.*

### Introduction

#### An Introduction to the Concept of Euthanasia

Euthanasia refers to intentionally ending life due to pain and suffering. This is a very debatable statement for our society and the above statement very well describes the consequence of the action [1].

#### 23 September, 3 days before Craig's scheduled suicide

"Patient: By this point I have got two choices, either actually go through with it or, else to say, I am too scared right now and don't want to do it. If I go through with it, I die, which I will at some point. If I don't go through with it, my choice is to suffer and give suffering to my family and then die. Considerably that's more painful and more stressful, hence, I should die. And this makes sense to me" [2].

There is a person who will look at this and think that no matter what, committing suicide is wrong. God has forbidden it. You cannot play God and take your own life. Well, all right fine. But you know what; this death won't play God if I have to live with help of machines. Cheers to death. I would be dead by now. Pre mature babies are kept under doctors and nurses supervision in intensive care unit when they are born. Doctors plays God even then, don't they? And Christians never say we have to stop organ transplant and we should not save pre mature babies. We should let them die. For them it's okay to play God and when they see someone suffering, they say we can't play God" [2].

We evolved a moral instinct, a capacity that each child that is to make quick judgments about what is morally right or wrong based on the unconscious thinking of our actions. But now our moral wrongs are equated with religious wrongs. They are equated with the actions, which violate God [2].

Furthermore Human's ethical values are formed and affected by the clarified orders of State and religion for example in Countries belonging to Middle East and Asia [3]. It is against law to practice euthanasia [4]. Moral quality is as an issue of first significance, a matter of advising reason. The morally right thing to do, in any circumstance, is whatever their best purposes behind doing are. Truth doesn't motivate us vigorously. Regardless, when we get some answers concerning a reality and are influenced by its unassuming parts. What inspires us to presume that executing our self is moral, when we know we are and our family is enduring? We feel that we are a burden on them therefore people start thinking about euthanasia. And the person usually find people who de motivate him by saying it's immoral to take your life, it's suffering for your family. It's the unethical to do. Therefore we want to focus on different theories such as utilitarianism, consequentialism, deontological theory and religious views to observe whether the act of euthanasia is morally justified or not? [5].

### Objectives of the Research

This paper will focus on the act of euthanasia in the light of theories (namely utilitarianism, situation ethics and religious views Kantian

ethics) and evaluating the action in the category of morally right action to perform or not. Moreover it is a very common practice nowadays to equate moral practices with religious practices therefore this paper will also try to find out neutral basis to take moral decision regarding euthanasia [5].

### **A Brief Introduction and Structure of the Research**

Admittedly so, euthanasia is being practiced widely all over the world, there are a lot of patients in severe pain and suffering who practice euthanasia secretly and on the other hand some commit it openly. In this period humans usually relate moral rights to religious rights [6].

This paper will focus on number of selective theories that did a research on the action of euthanasia and formulated the view on it. Therefore this paper will find out up to what extent euthanasia is justified or not for a terminally ill person. The basis of the theories and their effect on taking a morally right decision will also be discussed in the paper to understand the moral criterions and non-moral criterions behind the act of euthanasia.

These theories will be introduced in the sections below. In these sections different theories will be greatly discussed, reasons behind formulating their views, the effect of these theories on people while equating the act of euthanasia in the court of morally right action or not. With the help of the information provided through these theories one aims to analyze the act of euthanasia being a moral action or not and furthermore it will throw the light on the reasons in which it's justified to take this action if a person is terminally ill.

Throughout the study, references will be made of important documents we would have come across during my research for the paper that validate our study and make it all the more interesting for readers.

### **Ethical Theories**

#### **Utilitarianism view**

Universalistic theory comes under the category of consequentialist theory. Consequentialists believe that rights actions are always those that produce best result/consequences. Universalistic consequentialism analyzes the result morally when it's affecting other people [7,8].

While considering any action we first think of its good consequence. But it's very important to know what a good consequence is? [7]. John Stuart Mill, one of the very famous and an important philosopher describes it by saying utilitarianism good consequence is happiness and delightfulness, and happiness and delightfulness is a pleasure and we only seek pleasure by being painless. Therefore according to John Stuart Mill, right action is the one, which turn into happiness and pleasure and minimal pain for the person who is getting affected. Thus, good consequences are pleasure and happiness and absence of pain. These views judge actions by their utility. Mill's theory judges the morality of actions by its consequence. According to Mill's Greatest happiness theory, to act moral actions one should focus on the amount of

happiness it's giving to greatest number of people. Mill also says that sacrificing and making comprises on one's happiness is also moral if its giving happiness to greater number of people [7,8].

As indicated by Mill, there are many kinds of pleasure but he focused on two kinds of pleasure mainly, higher and lower pleasures. Mill stated that higher pleasures arouse intellect and rationality whereas lower pleasures are simple and arouse body. Being humans it's our aim to seek higher pleasures as they bring greater and long lasting happiness in our lives than the lower pleasures. Mill says that to judge the extent of pleasure and happiness, one need to experience different form of pleasures. Furthermore Mill says in his theory that morality of actions of one's life is greatly depended on the situation he is in. But as far as the consequence of that particular action results in greatest over all happiness then that person is moral and the action he opted for was morally justified [7,8].

Considering the Mill's first and the second stance of Ideal utilitarianism if a person is terminally sick for example; if a person is suffering from fourth stage blood cancer that means he is terminally ill and because of his chemotherapies that person is enduring severe pain. Along with that his family members are responsible and it's their duty to take care of him. Therefore he is a burden on his family and in severe pain. In this situation if he wants to end his life by practicing euthanasia, according to utilitarianism that is morally justifiable [7,8].

Universalistic theorists focus on the pros and cons of the action and accordingly they tend to take decisions. The advantages patients consider while opting for euthanasia are, the family will be independent from worrying about the suffering of the patient more over patient will be saving on monetary terms as he won't be needing medical treatments and medications. When the patient is committing euthanasia he will be benefiting hospital by freeing the room and making it available for other people. Most importantly a patient who considers taking euthanasia is very well aware of the quality of his life and his suffering. He knows that he is a burden on his family in a way and most importantly he is terminally ill and won't get any better therefore he thinks that if he commits euthanasia he will benefit a lot of people and there the concept of utilitarianism applies the greatest good for the greatest number; they may possibly feel that prolonging their sickness would be morally wrong [7,8].

#### **Egoism Ethical View**

Egoism is an ethical theory that says morality of an action is determined by self-interest. Actions that satisfy self-interest are moral and those, which don't satisfy self-interest, are immoral. It means that humans only act morally when they are promoting their long term self-interest [9].

However this theory doesn't mean that a person should only be selfish and shouldn't benefit others, egoism believes on the fact that person's own self-interest and others can easily coincide. And in the process of helping yourself, person is helping others. There is also a possibility that while aiding others and helping them you are

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helping yourself in the process. Ethical egoism doesn't not forbid such actions where as it promotes such actions. This theory only emphasis on the fact your actions are not moral till the time you are fulfilling self-interest of other people. They only become moral when a person satisfies his own self-interest and those actions are only providing benefit to him [10].

Furthermore ethical egoism theory says that it's not necessary that while gaining one's self interest, a person should always perform such actions which he wants to do at that particular time or to do such actions which provide short term benefits. For instance, a person wants to do drink and get into a habit of consuming drugs and doesn't want to seek education; ethical egoism rejects all such pleasures. Ethical egoism says that a person should only do such actions that in reality are beneficial for him and in his best self-interest over the long-term period. Ethical egoism promotes self-fishiness but in no means it promotes foolishness [11].

Thomas Hobbes is a original egoist who said that to prevent a person from chasing his self-interest by harming society, people should leave the freedom on of their self-interest just to fulfill the desire of gaining self-interest of other people [12]. Egoism ethical theory helps a person to differentiate in between self and others interests. Ethical egoism is a challenging theory as it contradicts with some of our moral believes and these moral believes are followed by many people and they are not easy to ignore while taking an action [13].

According to ethical egoism, there is only single ultimate rule of conduct, which is the principal of self-interest and this principal adds up to all moral and natural duties and obligations [14].

Bentham, a very famous philosopher introduced the Bentham Hedonic calculus. And in this theory he formulated the pattern to make a distinction between a morally justified and unjustified action [15].

In the case of Euthanasia Bentham would consider the Intensity of the torment and its Duration. He would need to measure that against the quantity of individuals influenced (Extent), and consider whether keeping somebody alive would lead to different joys (Richness). He would likewise need to include the measure of other "pains" the patient would confront e.g. loss of pride (Purity), and consider the odds that there' may be a cure or treatment later on (Certainty). The agony is quick, while conceivable future advantages are Remote.

And in most cases the extent of pain is so high that the Bentham theory would support euthanasia [15].

### **Situational Ethics**

Joseph Fletcher pioneered situational ethics. He was a priest and had to abandon it to follow his career in situational ethics. His work formulated the modern situational ethics movement. He was a member of American Euthanasia Association and the Association for Voluntary Sterilization. His theories are considered to be

similar to the teachings of bible yet they contradict bible.

Situational ethics is pragmatic which means dealing with situations rationally and sensibly in a form that they are considered practical rather than theoretical. Therefore according to this theory a person should act in a way, which is best for the situation [16].

Joseph Fletcher, situational ethics states that decision making of a person should be based on the situation he/she is facing and not based on the laws. He said rules and principles are not of any importance when it's coming to doing an action that is right means moral action. He said it's completely unjustified when people say that rules must not be broken when they are in difficult situation. He said that by passing on this statement humans give more importance to the law rather than a person who is in a difficult situation. He said this makes rule more important than humans and then exceptions are never acceptable. He further said that there are antinomians that completely cast out rules; Fletcher said that even that's wrong as it creates complete chaos and disturbance leading to the confusion between two courses of action [16].

He said that the situationist respect laws and they also follow them, they are also well aware of the traditions of the society. He said that situationist respect all the rules and obligations formulated by state, religion and society however they say that person is free and has a free will to make choices for himself according to the situation [16].

The main component of this theory is Relativism. It means that when someone is faced with any difficult situation, he/she should act out of love rather than following rules. Situationist put a lot of emphasis on the factor of love. That means rules don't apply, person should act according to the demand of the situation for instance rule like "do not steal" become relative to love, if love demands you to steal for your hungry loved one, you should steal and feed your loved one [16].

Another concept is agape which a sort of love is also. It's just in relation with others means good will for others. It shows concern for other people. Fletcher used the term 'best interest'. Situationist say that we should act out of love for others and choose the action that is best for people's self-interest [16].

Situation ethics always consider people first and give people more importance than rules and principles [16]. Another situational ethicist Paul Tillich said that if there were no rules, individuals would dependably need to work out on numerous occasions what was the correct thing for them to do, and that in handy terms this would be unimaginable. Hence, he acknowledged that there could be principles, yet that they should only offer directions and guidance to make decisions [17].

While applying situation ethics to euthanasia, it is very clear to see that Fletcher would support it. In the event that a man is experiencing a hopeless sickness that is putting a man through a colossal measure of agony and they ask to end his life and stop this

affliction, Fletcher would say that the most adoring thing to do is to permit the individual to end his life. Along these lines you will end their affliction and are making them cheerful as you are permitting them to complete their desires. But situation ethics on euthanasia can only be implied if a person is suffering from terminally ill sickness [16].

## Ethical Theories

### Kantian Ethics

Immanuel Kant formulated Kantian theory/ethics. He is considered to be one of the rational philosophers. He has always been credited for a significant part of the foundational thought in the advancement of deontology and deontological views.

Deontologist holds a view that there are some actions that are morally right or wrong in them, and that's because of the nature and the type of action they are, whether its result is good or bad whether or not there is a good outcome. Kant says that human possess ability to reason and that ability is present because of the presence of moral agents. Kant says that to evaluate an action to have moral worth and for that action to be considered as good will, the action must be taken in a duty's form. For an action to be moral, a person should consider it to be his/her duty rather than doing it for a reason. For example a person should not steal because it's wrong to steal rather than thinking that if he steals he will be given punishment for that action. Kant explains decisions right or wrong independent of it's reasons. He believed that the moral principles can, on a fundamental level, be known as a result of reason alone and are not based on recognition. He assumed that reason could be revealed in the fundamental measures of moral quality. The principles of morality are; good will, duty and categorical imperative [18].

Kant put a lot of emphasis on good will. He said that characteristics in person such as courage, intelligence and happiness are only desirable if the will is good otherwise it's undesirable and considered as immoral. He said that the leading good, which we consider, is solely based on its foundation of law and that determines human's will. Idea of good will is the idea to act out as duty. Such duties characterize our moral value and worth, and without duty and moral worth humans are insignificant. Therefore we cannot have moral worth if we act out according to our happiness, love, emotions and feeling for others. Actions only have moral worth if they are act out because of a duty. It means if you don't act out according to your duty then your action doesn't have true moral worth. Kant considered human's will to act out an action according to a principal [18].

Furthermore Kant say that a person should only take such decisions which he can make it universal and that can be applied to others. He referred to this as categorical imperative. He said that we should all act in such a way that the maxim of our action can implied universally. According to Kant an action is only moral when it can be applied at universal level. For a moral rule to be universal, it must be categorical not hypothetical. A hypothetical prescription tells us what to do if we desire a particular outcome. Categorical

aims at providing us with universal law. Kant completely disagreed with the decisions that were taken out of love, compassion and agape [18].

Therefore Kant was completely against euthanasia. While using this Maxim, "I am suffering from stage four blood cancer. I am in a lot of pain due to treatments. My family is suffering because of me. I am short on monetary terms and I have also occupied a bed in hospital that can be used by other patient who has higher chances to be healthy. Hence I should die, I should commit euthanasia" [19]. Now Kant will apply categorical imperative analysis and he will state that of he dies because of this reason and if we apply this universally then patients will lose hope, they will not use their will power and everyone will use the reason of pain to die therefore this can't be universalized [18].

### Religious Views

The reason why people say that euthanasia is morally unjustified because now our moral norms are equated with religious norms, actions that are against God's teachings. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, echoing a majority voice concerning the necessity of religion as a guiding light for morality, "Morality without religion is only a kind of dead reckoning-an endeavor to find our place on a cloudy sea by measuring the distance we have run, but without any observation of the heavenly bodies" [20].

Islam condemns the killing of any human being under all circumstances. As mentioned in the Holy Quran, Islam is completely against any human being causing harm to them and rejects the idea of suicide [21]. Islam considers that since Allah is the One who brought us to life, He is the only authority that should end it as well [22]. Islam is a religion with very clear-cut ideas about what is right or wrong, and euthanasia according to Islamic principles is wrong under all circumstances [22].

Christianity also rejects the idea of euthanasia. God mentions it in Ten Commandments; 'Thou shall not kill'. It clearly says that it's against teachings.

A person with strong religious believes argue that God completely forbids killing oneself in any situation. They say that human's life belongs to God and he is the only who has all the rights on our lives therefore we should take this right in our hands. Different religions believe that we should not go against God's will as we can suffer from a lot more pain in case of punishment [23].

The Jewish tradition regards the preservation of human life as one of its supreme moral values and forbids doing anything that might shorten life. However, it does not require doctors to make dying last longer than it naturally would. Jewish law and tradition regard human life as sacred, and say that it is wrong for anyone to shorten a human life his is because our lives are not ours to dispose of as we feel like all life is of infinite value, regardless of its duration or quality, because all human beings are made in the image of God. Saving someone from pain is not a reason to kill him or her nor is it lawful to kill oneself to save oneself from pain [24].



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## Discussion

### Morality vs Immorality

Euthanasia refers to intentionally ending life due to pain and suffering. This is a very controversial as stated above because people usually think that whether it is morally right to end the life, is it allowed in religion? When we talk about dilemma, we often think that what raises a dilemma to the moral dilemma and makes decision correct? Then what are the characteristics of moral as differ from non-moral dilemmas? Humans need a conflict between rightful duties to capture the pull of moral dilemma. There is a huge moral conflict between two in compatible beliefs that is humans believe that they don't have any right to decrease the life span of anyone and humans should not even increase someone's suffering, pain and endurance. On the other hand there are people who also hold a view that it's correct to end the life of a person if he is terminally ill. And now humans face a huge conflict between taking someone's life or letting the person endure pain [5].

Considering Craig's example that is mentioned in introduction. Craig is terminally sick and he is in severe pain. I saw a video. Craig is opting for euthanasia. He said that there are a lot of people that disagree them and scare him through the means of religion. Now the question is whether his act of euthanasia is morally justified or not? Are people going to equate morality with religion? [2].

Considering utilitarianism perspective on Craig's decision and according to this perspective his decision is completely moral. Utilitarianism focuses on the believe of greater happiness through an action therefore Craig is terminally sick, he can't enjoy anything in his life and his wife is bounded with him, gets worried about him, he is using many medical equipment, a lot of money is being spent on him but the outcome is same, his death. Therefore if Craig decides to end his life, to end the suffering of himself and of other people then his action is morally justified [5,8].

When we apply egoism ethical theory on Craig's death. It's justified. Ethical egoism considers the benefit of self-interest. They want to maximize on person's self-interest and in Craig's case he wants to end his suffering and this action is going to maximize his self-interest then it's moral [9].

Situational ethics holds a perspective that a person's actions should be based on the situation and he should act out of love therefore if Craig's want to opt for euthanasia, his family should accept his decision and should support him as this action of his family is desirable for Craig and they should do it out of love. Therefore situation ethics also support euthanasia [16].

On the flip side of the coin Kantian ethics rejects the idea of euthanasia. Kantian ethics says that the action of person should be universal and the maxim should be categorical imperative therefore Craig's statement that he is doing euthanasia because he is pain and wants to end his suffering then this is morally unjustified action. If we apply this maxim then that means any person who is in pain and cant suffer it he has all the rights to commit euthanasia and this is immoral as there is no law which states that and this is not

the duty of a rational person therefore it is morally unjustified [19].

Abrahamic religions also reject the idea of euthanasia. They strongly hold a view that humans are responsibility of God and all of human's things even the life belongs to God therefore no matter how much a person is living with. He has no moral rights to end his life by any means. This thing is clearly stated in Holy Quran for Muslims as well stated in 'Ten commandments' "Thou shalt kill" for Christians. Jews also hold a same believe that God is against suicide. Therefore Craig's action according to religion is not morally justified [22-24].

As stated above that to reach to the conclusion humans need to have a moral conflict. In Euthanasia we do reach at the conflict where we have to decide whether to shorten someone's life and decrease the pain or to prolong the pain [25].

### Scope of the Research

This paper has gone to discuss various ethical theories that are applicable to the act of euthanasia mostly being consequentialism theories such as Utilitarianism, situational ethics, egoism and some being deontological theories such as Kantian ethics and religious reasoning. Then it has discussed the way these theories teachings are being used by people to differentiate between morally justified actions or not. It further studied the effect of theories while choosing an act of euthanasia by terminally person. It further goes on studies the reason behind equating religion and morality. These theories have been studied widely and analyses of the case of Craig are also mentioned in the paper. Craig's case of euthanasia has been analyzed under the light of both consequentialism and deontological theories. Dilemma of euthanasia, we morally justified or not have been attempted to solve through the model of the above-mentioned theories.

The need for this paper is essential as it's a common practice of people nowadays to equate morality with religion. Now days when someone decided to take an action of euthanasia, he faces a lot of criticism from society, religious scholars and many more. People directly label that person as immoral and start judging him [26]. On general level people don't try to understand the suffering and pain of patient instead they guide them to follow principles, laws and their duties. Therefore it is very important for people to get aware of the theories and their teaching as it increases rationality and awareness [26]. With this we try to spread that it's not necessary for a person to be religious to take morally justified decisions; atheist, agonist or any other faith person can take moral decision. Through this paper we also want to increase the awareness among people regarding issues like euthanasia, so that they help the person who is in pain and try to respect his judgment by applying those theories.

### Conclusion

As stated earlier euthanasia is a very controversial because people have different views on it. This paper found out all the moral judgments and decisions are based on the situations and these judgments can differ from religious views. Equating morality with

religion is a very common practice, it isn't right in no less than two ways: It erroneously accept that individuals without religious confidence do not have a comprehension of good rights and wrongs, and that individuals of religious confidence are a greater number of high minded than agnostics and atheist [27]. Based on the studies of good judgments in an extensive variety of societies, atheist and agnostics are impeccably fit for recognizing ethically allowable and illegal activities. More importantly, across a moral dilemma, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Sikhs, Muslims, atheist and agnostics convey the same judgments and with the same level of intelligibility or deficiency concerning their supports [27].

The thought that religion is vital for producing good judgments fails on another level. Most, if not all religions depend on generally straightforward-deontological standards don't kill, lie, steal and break promises. These guidelines won't, be that as it may, clarify the example of good judgments that we portrayed in the past parts. We feel the heaviness of an ethical situation when straightforward deontological or utilitarian standards fizzle us. Religion may force individuals to say that euthanasia is un justified, however when gone up against with comparative yet less natural and sincerely charged cases, their instincts tilt them in an alternative direction [6].

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