

Evento: XXV Seminário de Iniciação Científica

EUTHANASIA: THE RIGHT TO DIE¹ **EUTHANASIA: THE RIGHT TO DIE**

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¹ Interdisciplinary theme among the areas of education, law and social communication.

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INTRODUCTION

Death is inevitable thing, every one of us one day will be dead, there is no doubt about it, there is no way out, nobody can scape. It doesn't just happen to human beings, it happens with animals, plants, it happens to every living being, it's the cycle of life to be born, to grow, to get older and finally die. So, what's so wrong about euthanasia? Or what's so right about euthanasia? We may not have the best answer for them, but we may have an idea about this phenomenon.

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission (2016, p. 3, Author's Griffin),

The word 'euthanasia' is derived from the Greek word euthanatos meaning 'easy death'. Generally it is used to describe the process of intentionally terminating a person's life to reduce their pain and suffering. Euthanasia is sought not only by those suffering excruciating pain, but for other reasons such as changes in quality of life resulting from catastrophic physical injury and psychological factors associated with incurable diseases.

Generally, the patient gives his/her consent to a physician who then is responsible to do a determined sort of procedure that will end the life of the patient, this is most known as voluntary euthanasia. However, at the other hand, we might have a different situation where, if for instance, the patient unconscious or unable to communicate and therefore he/she can't express his/her desires. In this case, a family member or somebody else who may be involved with the patient or when authorized by the law for taking the patient's decisions would be able to come over and take the decision of letting the procedure be done for the individual to die. The final decision can also

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be based on the previously expressed decision of the patient stated in an advanced healthcare directive. This second case is called non-voluntary euthanasia (IRISH COUNCIL FOR BIOETHICS, 2017).

Now, there are also the Assisted Suicide and the Physician Assisted Suicide. The first reflects to the idea in which the individual takes his/her own life in accordance with the information, guidance and even medication given by a third party. The second only differs from the first on the aspect of the third part. Here, the third has to be obligatory a doctor.

Notwithstanding, there are certain situations in which the doctor withholds or withdraws from the patient the treatment or medications that he/she is receiving respectively, just because those things don't work out anymore. By this sense, "[...] its provision would be overly burdensome on a patient then it may be withheld. Also if a treatment is initiated but becomes a burden on the individual and no longer offers any therapeutic benefit then it may be withdrawn." (IRISH COUNCIL FOR BIOETHICS, 2017, n.p.).

METHODOLOGY

This article arises from a bibliography analysis through books written by reputable authors over the subject and all sorts of material and instruments available on the Internet as well. Its goal is to debate the euthanasia issue on our modern society through others bias such as the legal, political and social. In addition, we bring up news and alternative ways to cope with the euthanasia issue in a try to find better solutions for it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Yet, when it comes to the subject of ending life by a way of choice, in other words, the right to die, the debate grows proportionally. From the perspective of autonomy, it's somehow acceptable that the individual has the right to make independent choices such as ending his/her own life if, for example, an adult with a clear mind and without any mental disorder decides to refuse medical treatment even when the foreseen result could be death.

The supporters of euthanasia declare that "[...] the state does not own the responsibility of promoting, protecting and fulfilling the socio-economic rights such as right to food, right to water, right to education and right to health care, which are basic essential ingredients of right to life." (MATH; CHATURVEDI, 2012, n.p.).

However, it doesn't seem so acceptable and even legal to end a life through euthanasia all the time. There are some specific cases that is morally and legally permissible to end a life by making use of euthanasia, the typical example appears when a vegetative terminally ill person who is diagnosed with no more alternatives for recovering and that death would be a plausible solution just because to continue prolonging his/her life would just bring more and more pain instead of relief. In this case,

[...]proponents argue that euthanasia allows terminally ill people to die

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with dignity and without pain and state that society should permit people to opt for euthanasia if they so wish. Proponents also state that individuals should be free to dictate the time and place of their own death. Finally, proponents argue that forcing people to live against their wishes violates personal freedoms and human rights and that it is immoral to compel people to continue to live with unbearable pain and suffering. (IRISH COUNCIL FOR BIOETHICS, 2017, n.p.).

By this context, Christiaan Barnard quoted by Stone (1999, p. 76) says that: "I believe often that death is good medical treatment because it can achieve what all the medical advances and technology cannot achieve today, and that is stopping the suffering of the patient."

Another argument frequently used by the authors who support the euthanasia is over the fact that is widespread recognized around the world the right to refuse medical treatment that sustains or prolong life. Thus, "[...] For example, a patient suffering from blood cancer can refuse treatment or deny feeds through nasogastric tube. Recognition of right to refuse treatment gives a way for passive euthanasia [...]." (MATH; CHATURVEDI, 2012, n.p.).

According to Shala and Gusha (2016, p. 79),

A strong argument in support of euthanasia is that a decision to end life is fundamental to human dignity, personal autonomy and safety, concepts that are protected by various international instruments of human rights. Although the right to liberty and security of person is given a limited interpretation and has so far been limited to freedom from arbitrary detention, the notions of personal autonomy may affect the future development of human jurisprudence around.

Meanwhile, at the other hand, there are contrary arguments against euthanasia and they have different interpretations about the issue. Let's see one by one all the main arguments against euthanasia.

By the religious understanding, nobody has the right to die because life in itself is considered to be something sacred/holy, in other words, it's a gift from God and so it has to be preserved as much as possible and just God has the power and authority to take the people's lives. Other groups often state that "[...] individuals don't get to decide when and how they are born, therefore, they should not be allowed to decide how and when they die [...]." (IRISH COUNCIL FOR BIOETHICS, 2017, n.p.).

Many of the opposers frequently argue that in order to have a right to die we first have to consider the right to life. So, the State has to focus primarily its efforts to protect life as well as providing care to the patients. Therefore, by this understanding, "[...] If euthanasia is legalized, then there is a grave apprehension that the State may refuse to invest in health (working towards Right to life) [...]." (MATH; CHATURVEDI, 2012, n.p.). A classical example of it would be the palliative care for those patients who are struggle with cancer, in this aspect if euthanasia would be legalized then

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those people couldn't have access to a really good treatment because the investments would be bigger when compared with euthanasia. So the State wouldn't spend too much money on the treatment assuming that euthanasia is much cheaper than that.

Among the arguments against euthanasia and the right to die, there is also a possibility of misusing euthanasia to satisfy the interests of other people. We can mention a situation where the family members or relatives want to inherit the property of the patient, so they find euthanasia as an alternative way to eliminate the patient to get the patient's patrimony. Thus, according to Math and Chaturvedi (2012, n.p.), "[...] 'Mercy killing' should not lead to 'killing mercy' in the hands of the noble medical professionals [...]."

Research has revealed that "the desire for death in terminally ill patients is closely associated with clinical depression--a potentially treatable condition--and can also decrease over time [...]." (CHOCHINOV et al., 1995, n.p.).

CONCLUSION

As we've observed in this study, the term euthanasia came from the Greek language which literally means *good death*. Therefore, it refers to the idea of a death without pain or suffering. Thus, the suffering of an individual who is in a situation of pain is reduced considerable. Besides, we could also realize that this question involves moral and ethical principles. It might be understood that euthanasia is closely linked to the field of bioethics and law.

For the Christianity side, a good death happens not in the organic sphere but through the spiritualization of the individual and how it leads him/her spirituality. So, by this context, it would be legitimate to say that the Christian doctrine is based on bearing the suffering during this earthly life and then death would be understood as the opening door for the eternal paradise full of grace, peace and happiness.

On the other hand, there are those people who want to free themselves from their suffering and they are in favor of euthanasia. At the other hand, those people who are against euthanasia at any hypotheses. Thus, the center of the discussion is always human existence. In any case, this whole debate is intrinsically linked to the issue of human dignity. So the State as well as the law must balance each specific case according to its necessities.

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