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EUTHANASIA

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Euthanasia means “good death” or “mercy killing”.

Euthanasia raises a number of agonising moral dilemmas:

- 1 is it ever right to end the life of a terminally ill patient who is undergoing severe pain and suffering?
- 2 under what circumstances can euthanasia be justifiable, if at all?
- 3 is there a moral difference between killing someone and letting them die?

Historically, the word "euthanasia" was first used in a medical context by Francis Bacon in the 17th century, to refer to an easy, painless, happy death, during which it was a “physician's responsibility to alleviate the 'physical sufferings' of the body.”

There are two main types of euthanasia. Active euthanasia – a doctor or a nurse gives an ill patient medicine that will kill them. Passive euthanasia – a patient does not get the medicine or treatment that they need in order to stay alive. Euthanasia also may be voluntary, non-voluntary and involuntary.

Reasons for Euthanasia:

- 1 Everyone has a right to decide when their life should end.
- 2 If the quality of life has become so bad, a person may feel too much physical or emotional pain.

Reasons against Euthanasia:

- 1 Doctors have a problem with euthanasia because they have sworn an oath that does not allow them to take part in the killing of people.
- 2 Euthanasia should only take place if someone really wants it or if they understand how ill they are.

In some countries, like Switzerland, Belgium or the Netherlands certain types of euthanasia are legal. But it still continues to be an issue of contention in these countries even today.

- 1 The official Roman Catholic Church is against euthanasia and says it is a crime.
- 2 Hindus think that it interferes with the cycle of death and rebirth.
- 3 In Islam all forms of euthanasia are forbidden.
- 4 Buddhists are against involuntary euthanasia. Their position on voluntary euthanasia is less clear.
- 5 Jewish law and tradition regard human life as sacred, and it is wrong for anyone to shorten a human life.

According to the 2007 British Social Attitudes survey, 80% of the public said they wanted the law changed to give terminally ill patients the right to die with a doctor's help, 45% supported giving patients with non-terminal illnesses the option of euthanasia. “A majority” was opposed to relatives being involved in a patient's death.