

# Essay on Euthanasia – Mercy Killing

*“Euthanasia means as an action which aims at taking the life of another at the latter’s expressed request. It concerns an action of which death is the purpose and the result.”*

This definition applies only to voluntary euthanasia and excludes non-voluntary or involuntary euthanasia, the killing of a patient without the patient’s knowledge or consent. Some call this “life-terminating treatment.” Euthanasia can be either active or passive. Passive euthanasia allows one to die by withholding or withdrawing life supporting means. This is a tricky area because ordinary and extraordinary means of supporting life come into the picture. Ordinary means such as nutrition and hydration are never to be withheld since they are one’s basic right in order to survive. However, one is not obliged to use extraordinary or ‘disproportionate’ means to sustain life. Due to complexity, each situation needs to be looked at individually when discussing extraordinary means. However, as a rule, one can discontinue “medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome.” One cannot intend death by withdrawing or withholding treatment, but should, however, obey God and let one die a natural death. To withdraw treatment as a condition worsens is letting one die and not a direct killing. In this case, it is the disease that is killing and not the one who withdraws the treatment.

Active euthanasia or ‘mercy killing’ pertains to Dr. Kevorkians’ of the day. This is the direct intentional killing of a patient with either their consent (voluntary), without their consent when impossible (non-voluntary), or without consent but not sought (involuntary). Advocates of this murder have covered their ears to

the command of the Lord: Thou shall not kill! The goal is to eliminate or relieve suffering by an evil means of death. Many patients are in immense suffering and maybe led to choose death as the answer by these 'doctors', friends, or relatives. The culpability for the patient, in these cases, maybe lessened, but, this act of killing can never be justified. These patients, whether having an incurable disease, being elderly, or suffering in other ways, are crying out for help and love. Palliative care, not death, is the answer. Medical personnel, friends, and family must reach out and comfort the afflicted. Suffering and pain are manageable, especially today, with so many medicines and treatments available. Pain killers can be prescribed as long as there is no danger or intention of death. The consciousness of the patient is strongly encouraged, so that if dying, one may prepare to accept to meet God.

We cannot do whatever to our bodies, since they are not our own. God made us and knows what we need here on earth, so that we, someday, may enter into eternity. If Christ endured immense suffering, then why do we expect any less? We are called to be imitations of Christ and to share in His Passion. Is my life really mine? "If we live, we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die we are responsible to the Lord. Both in life and death, we belong to the Lord ." God has a plan and each human person having an eternal destiny has dignity. God, being the author of life, alone has the right to create and destroy life. No human person has this right to take innocent human life, no matter how one tries to justify it. Thou shall not kill is still command and not a suggestion, as many seem to believe. There are many reasons why Euthanasia is gravely immoral some of which have already been discussed. Suffering has many benefits, especially suffering in the last days of one's life. In addition to sharing in Christ's Passion, one may find peace in God, reconciliation with family and friends, and acceptance of death. One also may be undergoing temporal punishment here on earth through suffering; a

sort of `purgatory on earth'.

There are many benefits and advantages to suffering. However, in a pragmatic society like ours, we tend to look past the positives and see only the negative side. This type of reasoning has led many to see death as the answer to suffering, regardless of the consequences.

Euthanasia whether active or passive is immoral and contrary to God's law. Within passive euthanasia, what is considered extraordinary means of sustaining life may not always be clear, but ordinary means such as hydration and nutrition must be provided. We must look past the suffering in this world and look towards our eternal home with God. As humans, we cannot always see the answers and for that reason, it is not we to decide about the death of a human being, God has not given us this authority. We must also ask ourselves concerning euthanasia; Where will it end? If we allow the elderly or incurable to be assisted in suicide, what other groups will be given this 'right'? Will the handicapped or mentally retarded be next? Will teenagers, who are the leading age group of suicide, also have this 'right to die'? The answer rests in our hands. If we continue to disrespect human life and its creator, God, then we will destroy ourselves. A right is a moral claim and since we do not have a claim on death, which itself has a claim on us, we cannot act for the right we don't have. Perhaps Mother Teresa was right when she said that "if a mother can kill her own child, what is there to stop you and me from killing each other?" There is no way to stop this culture of death, unless, we get back to God's law and speak out, boldly, against the horrors and injustices of the day!

*"... we must be wary of those who are too willing to end the lives of the elderly and the ill. If we ever decide that a poor quality of life justifies ending that life, we have taken a step down a slippery slope that places all of us in danger. There is a difference between allowing nature to take its course and actively assisting death. The call for euthanasia surfaces in our society periodically, as it is doing now under the guise of "death with dignity" or assisted suicide. Euthanasia is a concept, it seems to me that is in direct conflict with a religious and ethical tradition in which the human race is presented with " a blessing and a curse, life and death," and we are instructed ...therefore, to choose life." I believe 'euthanasia' lies outside the commonly held life-centered values of the West and cannot be allowed without incurring great, social and personal tragedy. This is not merely an intellectual conundrum. This issue involves actual human beings at risk..."*

*– C. Everett Koop, M.D.*