Essay on Euthanasia: Views of Christianity and Hinduism

Euthanasia is a method that painlessly ends a life. It is often seen as a controversial practise as many frown upon ending someone's life. Euthanasia can be a good thing as it is done to end the extreme suffering someone can experience from physical and mental health. Euthanasia is only legal in two countries, The Neverlands and Belgium. Although euthanasia is illegal in many countries it is discussed worldwide and throughout many different religions.

Euthanasia is not legal in south Africa, but there have been attempts to legalise it. In the late 90s it was brought to parliament, but it failed in being legalised. In 2011 an organisation called Dying with dignity was formed, their aim to make assisted euthanasia legal for people who have debility conditions. According to the second chapter of the bill of rights we have the right to life, interesting enough we do not have to right to choose to die, but suicide is legal. Euthanasia is basically assisted suicide so it should be legal, but it is not. Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 (Act 51 of 1977) defines murder as the unlawful and intentional killing of another human being. That is why euthanasia is viewed more as murder than suicide. Another interesting thing to consider is that the euthanasia of animals is legal. According to the Animals Protection Act 71 of 1962, it is legal to euthanatize an animal who is suffering due to being very ill or injured. This is legal, yet euthanasia of humans is seen as inhumane, so it remains illegal. Why should euthanasia of a human be seen as worse off than euthanasia of an animal. Although humans are viewed more important than animals, both humans and animals are living creatures. Professor Pierre De Vos made an interesting comment on euthanasia that should be remembered when debating this topic; "As a general principle, a person who assists another to end his or her life, is guilty of murder and can be successfully charged and prosecuted. Where a doctor or family member knowingly administers a lethal dose of a painkiller to end the suffering of the terminally ill patient or a patient who is in a permanent vegetative state, he or she will potentially be guilty of murder and could be prosecuted". (TheSouthAfrican Staff & Agencies, 2018)

Euthanasia has been legalised in Belgium, since 2002. Belgium has a system for euthanasian of those who go through extreme suffering. One cannot just wake up one day and decide to be euthanised and have it done on the same day. It takes at least three months. There is a process that happens before someone can be euthanatized. The person must be sound of mind when making the request. If it is believed that this decision is made because the person is depressed, they are put on a trial of anti-depressants. If they still want to go through with the euthanasia by the time the trial ends, then they are sound of mind and the depression is not curable. Another important thing is that the person has to be well informed about their condition, they have to know its severity, the treatment plans and anything else related to it. Another important thing is for a doctor, who knows them, to review the case to see that it is a voluntary choice, not that they were forced into it. On the board of people who approve the euthanasia there has to be the doctor who knows the patient, a second doctor who doesn't (especially if they are not going to die of natural causes), a psychologist and a member of the euthanasia board. After the euthanasia has been approved the person must wait three months before the procedure. In this time, they can organise with their family what is going to happen after they die, and they can see if they truly want to go through with it. When the time finally comes, the person is given a mixture to drink that will painlessly end their life. Belgium may be strict with who gets to be euthanised, but it is legal for children to be euthanised. In 2014 it was made legal for children to

be euthanised by lethal injection. The decision must be made with input from both the child and the parent.

Christianity and euthanasia are not friends. In fact, the Christian community believes that Euthanasia is evil. The Christian community views euthanasia as murder and that is against the ten commandments. “Only God should decide the hour of our death.” The Christian community believes that only god can decide when we die. Therefor the act of euthanasia is an act against god. Christians worship god, so going against god’s will is something that they do not want to take part in. According to Pope John Paul II, suffering is part of god’s plan. Euthanasia will unquestionably be an act against god in his eyes, because he believed that painkillers should be avoided to be used. So, if a Christian cannot use pain killers to ease the pain in their death, they definitely cannot be euthanized to end suffering. According to Roman s 8:28 and Relations 21:4, God works for all things god and promises that good will even come from the suffering and that one day the suffering will end. Some Christians have a different view on euthanasia, that goes against most of the community. One of these people was a famous Archbishop known as Desmond Tutu. His comment on euthanasia was; “As a Christian, I believe in the sanctity of life, and that death is a part of life. I hope that when the time comes, I am treated with compassion and allowed to pass on to the next phase of life’s journey in the manner of my choice.” (Simon Dippenaar, 2016)

Hinduism has two points of views on euthanasia. Before you can get into the views on euthanasia, you should probably know the relationship between suicide and Hinduism. Suicide is usually prohibited in Hinduism. This is because it disturbs the timing of the death and rebirth cycle. This can result in bad karma. There is a form of suicide that is accepted in Hinduism, it is called prayopavesa. This is when someone fasts until they die. Even though it is technically suicided, it is not viewed as such as it is natural and not violent. prayopavesa is often used for spiritual advances, so if someone has terminal cancer, they may prefer to die from prayopavesa rather than from the cancer. In Hinduism there are two main ways to view euthanasia. The one view is that euthanasia disrupts the timing of the cycle of rebirth, so both the patient and the doctor may gain bad karma. The other view on euthanasia is more positive. The doctor will gain good karma as they are doing a good deed, the doctor ends the patient’s life painlessly which ends the suffering.

I am on the fence when it comes to my opinion for euthanasia. I do not totally agree with it, nor do I believe that it is evil and should be dismissed. Human life is important, in fact all life is important. I personally believe one must do what ever they can to keep on living. If there are treatments and if there are ways around the conditions, I believe one must always try. I also believe that no one should suffer. If there is no other way to end the suffering or if there are no found cures, I believe that euthanasia is warranted. Euthanasia can be a lot better than suicided, and death by terminal injury or illnesses. Euthanasia allows for families to prepare for the death. Euthanasia can be less of a nasty surprise than finding you loved one’s dead body. I do see more advantages then disadvantages for euthanasia, but part of me is still very conflicted. When someone becomes a doctor, they swear to an oath to do no harm. Is ending their life harm, even when it is painless? And is it harm to leave them suffering? They also swear to not injustice their patients. Is it justified to let someone suffer when all they want is a peaceful and painless death? Questions like these slowly push me towards being all for euthanasia, but there is always a part of me that struggles with the idea of ending a life.

Euthanasia may only be legal in two countries, but it will always be discussed worldwide. This is

because it is a controversial topic that many have opinions on, including religious groups. Some are against Euthanasia, like the Christian community, who believe God decides when someone dies. Some are conflicted, like the Hindu community, who have different views on how Euthanasia affects karma. Euthanasia is legal in Belgium and has many limitations of it. There is a long process to go through before you can be euthanized. Euthanasia has been brought up in parliament, but still has a long way to go before there is any hope of it being legalised here in South Africa.

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