

THE GEM

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We reserve the right to edit submissions due to space or taste limitations.

We reserve the right not to print submissions that are submitted after Monday at 3:00pm.

Editorial Euthanasia

Euthanasia can be either active or passive. Active euthanasia involves injecting lethal doses of a substance into a living human being. Passive euthanasia involves turning off life – support devices such as respirators. Should humans have the right to choose death by euthanasia if they are suffering? Can this be considered murder if the living person's consent is given in writing?

Euthanasia is the act of painlessly putting to death certain individuals, by lethal doses of a substance. Euthanasia is used for individuals who are terminally ill, or suffering greatly.

Euthanasia is illegal in all countries of the world except for some specific cases in the Netherlands. However, Euthanasia is being practiced in Holland. Many people, perhaps thousands, are killed this way each year in Holland. Some of the doctors who have performed this act have been taken to court but all known cases have been acquitted.

In order for a doctor to perform euthanasia, there must be a living will. In other words, the patient must have written down his or her desire to be put to death in a given situation, such as after a serious accident. The will must have been made when the patient was of sound mind, and each case must pass in front of a selected board.

Many people call euthanasia "mercy killing" but others call it murder. It is difficult to say who, if anyone, has the right to actively and purposefully put an end to a human life. Whenever an animal is suffering or dying, it is permissible to ask your veterinarian to "put it to sleep". However, when people are being tormented by pain and disease doctors must do what they can to keep them alive. Should people be given the same right to death as we give our animals? Many argue that they should not.

Many people believe that passive euthanasia is not euthanasia at all, but rather it is simply letting nature run its course.

According to "Life Span Development" by John W. Santroch, there are two forms of euthanasia: one which is active (as described above), and the other passive. Passive euthanasia involves the taking away of life sustaining devices so that a patient will eventually die. One common example of this, is the turning off of respirators. Many people argue that this is not euthanasia at all, but rather it is letting nature take its course.

The act of letting nature take its course is going on in Canada in what is commonly known as the "hospice". Individuals who have been diagnosed as being terminally ill by a doctor, may enter into

a hospice. The hospice offers a patient a pain-free death, and the opportunity to be surrounded by family members and loved ones. There is absolutely no intervention with the disease, it is simply allowed to run its course. However, the hospice does stress to the patient, that they will be kept completely pain-free. Whether you decide this is a form of euthanasia or not is a personal decision.

In "The Nature of Things" with Dr. David Suzuchi, a doctor from Holland described one case where euthanasia was used. A woman he had been treating was diagnosed as having tongue cancer. She knew that eventually a tumor would form and it would block off her windpipe. Therefore the woman would die by suffocation. The woman asked for euthanasia to be performed at an opportune moment. She asked that right before she would choke to death the doctor would perform euthanasia. Therefore the doctor would not be killing the woman, the tumor was. He would only be preventing her suffering. The day came, when the woman had to fight and gasp for breath. She signalled the doctor to give her euthanasia and died peacefully. The doctor said he felt completely justified in killing the woman and he could not believe that other doctors would just let the woman die of choking.

Some people feel that euthanasia allows a person to die a dignified death. Instead of lying in a coma for months and months, or dying slowly and painfully from a disease, a person can die very quickly and painlessly by euthanasia. Those in opposition believe there is no such thing as a dignified death, and therefore this cannot be used as a reason for euthanasia.

If euthanasia was legalized it could be used to kill those who are a drain on society. If euthanasia is not murder, it certainly has the potential to become so.

Should people be allowed to make a choice for themselves whether or not they want euthanasia? If they are allowed, who should help them make such a decision, and under what circumstances should it be performed? Is one of our rights as a human being the choice to die quickly and without long, drawn-out suffering, or is this advocating murder? These questions and many more make up the heated debate surrounding euthanasia.

Those opposed to euthanasia are afraid that if it were legalized it would get out of control. They feel it would, in the future, be used to kill those individuals who no longer are able to contribute to society, whether it be because of age, or physical or mental disabilities.

Euthanasia is actively killing another human being. However, under certain situations can it be accepted as mercy killing or is it outright murder?

Decide for yourself.

By Terri Lyn Hall

Attention!

Regarding the article entitled "The Unreality Postulate" which appeared in last week's Gem. If anyone has any information on how this article was printed, please contact the Gem immediately. This article was not mailed to the Gem account through VAX mail, nor was it submitted in written form. Actually, it did not appear until the paper was returned from the printers. Upon questioning our printers, they claimed that they only printed what was sent to them, as usual. At first, we thought this was a prank, but due to circumstances surrounding the night's layout, and because we always check all the flats before they are sent off, it would not have been possible for anyone to have done it. If anyone can enlighten us as to how this happened, please let us know. There have been stories about strange things happening in Main building, but I'm sure there must be some logical explanation....I hope.

look for Letter to the
Editor in this issue

