

WHAT IS A HUMAN?



WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU ARE MINDFUL OF HIM?

Historical Euthanasia

Debate over euthanasia is not a modern phenomenon. The Greeks carried on a robust debate on the subject. The Pythagoreans opposed euthanasia, while the Stoics favored it in the case of incurable disease. Plato approved of it in cases of terminal illness. But these influences lost out to Christian principles as well as the spread of acceptance of the Hippocratic Oath: “I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to that effect.”

Contemporary Euthanasia

1. Euthanasia is a combination of two Greek words, “good” and “death.”
2. Dr. Jack Kevorkian was tried for first-degree murder in June 1990 for assisting in a suicide.
3. Physician assisted suicide is legal in eight states and multiple countries.
4. The “right to die” and “death with dignity” movement is substantial enough that few instances go to trial in any state.

Challenges of Euthanasia

1. Within human history our current environment makes this topic more difficult due to the development of medical technology and medicines.
2. Issues of life and death can be very complex and are deeply personal. Thus, simplistic answers fall short in complex situations.
3. Human suffering is the result of the curse of sin which produces groanings beyond our natural capacity to bear.

Two Views

Traditional View: It is always wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being, but in certain circumstances it is permissible to withhold or withdraw treatment and allow a patient to die.

Libertarian View: There is nothing sacred or morally significant about a human being's biological life. Nor is there a moral difference between killing someone and letting them die.

Defining Terms

1. Active Euthanasia: the intentional and/or direct killing of an innocent life either by that person (suicide) or by another (assisted suicide).
2. Passive Euthanasia: the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment when certain justifiable conditions exist, thus allowing the patient to die.

Defining Terms

1. Withholding: a treatment is not started
2. Withdrawing: a treatment is stopped

These two events have differing emotional responses, but morally are identical. The greater question is the nature and role of the treatment in a specific circumstance.

Defining Terms

Ordinary Means: All medicines, treatments, and operations that offer reasonable hope of benefit without placing undue burdens on the patient.

Extraordinary Means: Any medicine, treatment, or operation that does not offer reasonable hope or places excessive burdens upon the patient.

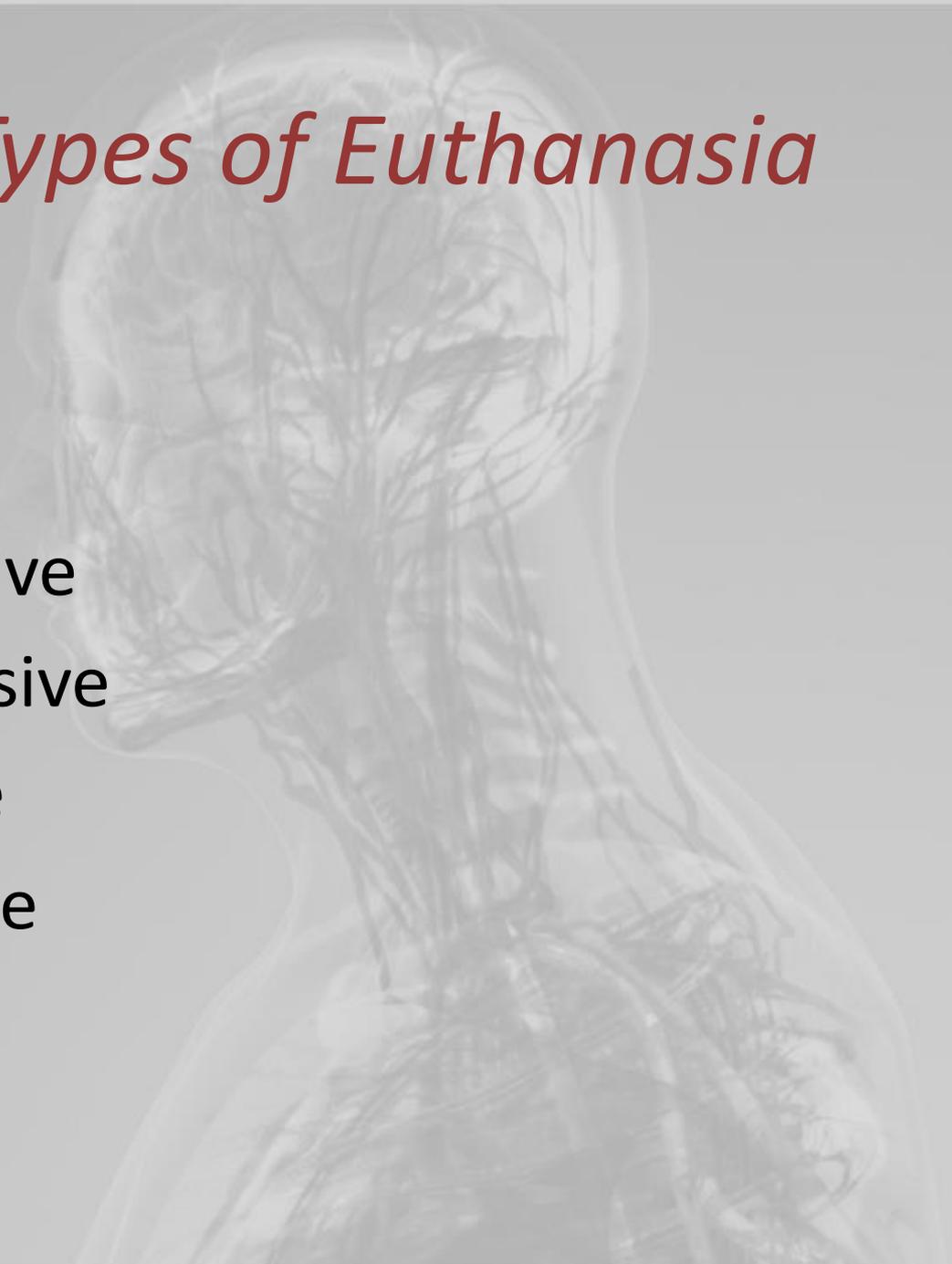
These categories seek to provide moral intuitions relating to withholding or withdrawing a treatment from a person in a state of irreversible disease where death is imminent.

Defining Terms

1. Voluntary: when a competent, informed patient makes a request
2. Nonvoluntary: when a person is incapable of forming a judgment or expressing a wish in a matter
3. Involuntary: when a person expresses a wish to live but is nevertheless killed or allowed to die

Six Different Types of Euthanasia

1. Voluntary Active
2. Voluntary Passive
3. Nonvoluntary Active
4. Nonvoluntary Passive
5. Involuntary Active
6. Involuntary Passive



Traditional View

The traditional view forbids all forms of active euthanasia. It allows for withholding or withdrawing treatment in some cases where certain circumstances exist; for example, cases where the patient is terminal, death is imminent, treatment is judged extraordinary, and death is not directly intended.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of Autonomy: A competent person has the right to determine his or her own course of medical action in accordance with a plan he or she chooses. We have a duty to respect the wishes and desires expressed by a competent decision-maker.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of Beneficence: One should act to further the welfare and benefits of another and to prevent evil or harm to that person. Beneficence requires me to do something for someone.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of Nonmaleficence: One should refrain from inflicting harm (or unduly risking the infliction of harm) on another.

Nonmaleficence requires me to refrain from doing something to someone.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of Life Preservation: We have a moral duty to protect and preserve human life whenever possible. The burden of proof is always on taking human life, not sustaining it.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of the Value of Life: The Bible teaches that human beings are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) and therefore have dignity and value. Human life is sacred and should not be terminated merely because life is difficult or inconvenient. We must not place an arbitrary standard of quality above God's absolute standard of human value and worth.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of Sovereignty: The Bible teaches that God is sovereign over life and death. Christians agree with Job when he said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). The Lord said, “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand” (Deut. 32:39). God has ordained our days (Ps.139:16) and is in control of our lives.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of Murder: The Bible specifically condemns murder (Exod. 20:13), and this would include active forms of euthanasia in which another person (doctor, nurse, or friend) hastens death in a patient. While there are situations described in Scripture in which life-taking may be permitted (e.g., self-defense or a just war), euthanasia should not be included with any of these established biblical categories. Active euthanasia, like murder, involves premeditated intent and therefore should be condemned as immoral.

Biblical Principles

The Principle of Death: Death is both unnatural and inevitable. It is an unnatural intrusion into our lives as a consequence of the fall (Gen. 2:17). It is the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26, 56). But the Bible also teaches that death is inevitable. There is “a time to be born and a time to die” (Eccles. 3:2). Death is a part of life and the doorway to another, better life. Thus, Christians can also reject the notion that everything must be done to save life at all costs. Believers, knowing that to be at home in the body is to be away from the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6), long for the time when they will be absent from the body and at home with the Lord (5:8). Therefore they need not be so tied to this earth that they perform futile operations just to extend life a few more hours or days.

Conclusions

1. Active euthanasia is morally wrong.
2. Withholding or withdrawing treatment is acceptable in certain situations.
3. Individual choices are to be made within the purview of God's Word under the boundaries of one's personal conscience before God.
4. God is God of the living and the dead.

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