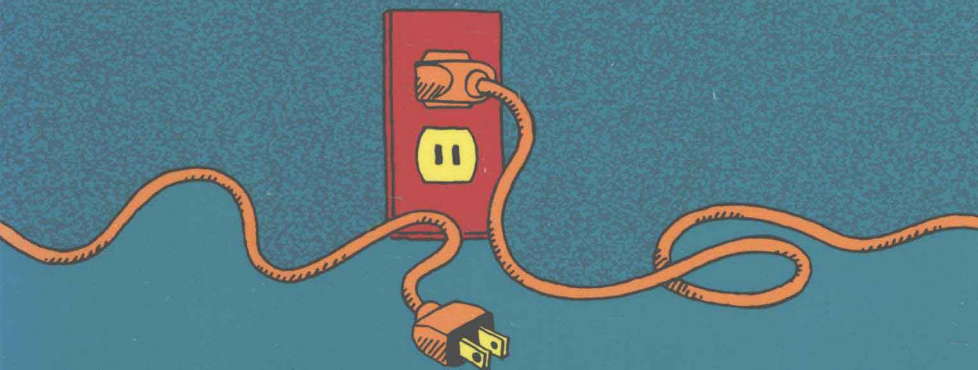
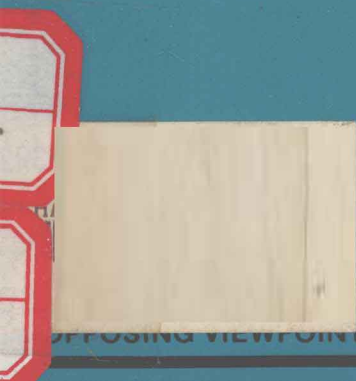


EUTHANASIA



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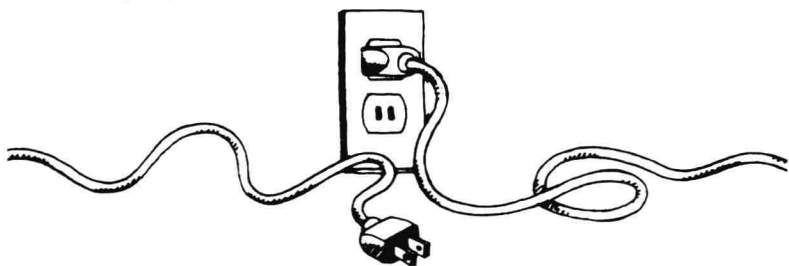
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EUTHANASIA



Opposing
Viewpoints®

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"Congress shall make no law . . .
abridging the freedom of speech,
or of the press."

First Amendment to the US Constitution

The basic foundation of our democracy is the first amendment guarantee of freedom of expression. The *Opposing Viewpoints Series* is dedicated to the concept of this basic freedom and the idea that it is more important to practice it than to enshrine it.

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Why Consider Opposing Viewpoints?

*"It is better to debate a question without settling it than
to settle a question without debating it."*

Joseph Joubert (1754-1824)

The Importance of Examining Opposing Viewpoints

The purpose of the Opposing Viewpoints Series, and this book in particular, is to present balanced, and often difficult to find, opposing points of view on complex and sensitive issues.

Probably the best way to become informed is to analyze the positions of those who are regarded as experts and well studied on issues. It is important to consider every variety of opinion in an attempt to determine the truth. Opinions from the mainstream of society should be examined. But also important are opinions that are considered radical, reactionary, or minority as well as those stigmatized by some other uncomplimentary label. An important lesson of history is the eventual acceptance of many unpopular and even despised opinions. The ideas of Socrates, Jesus, and Galileo are good examples of this.

Readers will approach this book with their own opinions on the issues debated within it. However, to have a good grasp of one's own viewpoint, it is necessary to understand the arguments of those with whom one disagrees. It can be said that those who do not completely understand their adversary's point of view do not fully understand their own.

A persuasive case for considering opposing viewpoints has been presented by John Stuart Mill in his work *On Liberty*. When examining controversial issues it may be helpful to reflect on this suggestion:

The only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this.

Analyzing Sources of Information

The Opposing Viewpoints Series includes diverse materials taken from magazines, journals, books, and newspapers, as well as statements and position papers from a wide range of individuals, organizations and governments. This broad spectrum of sources helps to develop patterns of thinking which are open to the consideration of a variety of opinions.

Pitfalls To Avoid

A pitfall to avoid in considering opposing points of view is that of regarding one's own opinion as being common sense and the most rational stance and the point of view of others as being only opinion and naturally wrong. It may be that another's opinion is correct and one's own is in error.

Another pitfall to avoid is that of closing one's mind to the opinions of those with whom one disagrees. The best way to approach a dialogue is to make one's primary purpose that of understanding the mind and arguments of the other person and not that of enlightening him or her with one's own solutions. More can be learned by listening than speaking.

It is my hope that after reading this book the reader will have a deeper understanding of the issues debated and will appreciate the complexity of even seemingly simple issues on which good and honest people disagree. This awareness is particularly important in a democratic society such as ours where people enter into public debate to determine the common good. Those with whom one disagrees should not necessarily be regarded as enemies, but perhaps simply as people who suggest different paths to a common goal.

Developing Basic Reading and Thinking Skills

In this book, carefully edited opposing viewpoints are purposely placed back to back to create a running debate; each viewpoint is preceded by a short quotation that best expresses the author's main argument. This format instantly plunges the reader into the midst of a controversial issue and greatly aids that reader in mastering the basic skill of recognizing an author's point of view.

A number of basic skills for critical thinking are practiced in the activities that appear throughout the books in the series. Some of

the skills are:

Evaluating Sources of Information The ability to choose from among alternative sources the most reliable and accurate source in relation to a given subject.

Separating Fact from Opinion The ability to make the basic distinction between factual statements (those that can be demonstrated or verified empirically) and statements of opinion (those that are beliefs or attitudes that cannot be proved).

Identifying Stereotypes The ability to identify oversimplified, exaggerated descriptions (favorable or unfavorable) about people and insulting statements about racial, religious or national groups, based upon misinformation or lack of information.

Recognizing Ethnocentrism The ability to recognize attitudes or opinions that express the view that one's own race, culture, or group is inherently superior, or those attitudes that judge another culture or group in terms of one's own.

It is important to consider opposing viewpoints and equally important to be able to critically analyze those viewpoints. The activities in this book are designed to help the reader master these thinking skills. Statements are taken from the book's viewpoints and the reader is asked to analyze them. This technique aids the reader in developing skills that not only can be applied to the viewpoints in this book, but also to situations where opinionated spokespersons comment on controversial issues. Although the activities are helpful to the solitary reader, they are most useful when the reader can benefit from the interaction of group discussion.

Using this book and others in the series should help readers develop basic reading and thinking skills. These skills should improve the reader's ability to understand what they read. Readers should be better able to separate fact from opinion, substance from rhetoric and become better consumers of information in our media-centered culture.

This volume of the Opposing Viewpoints Series does not advocate a particular point of view. Quite the contrary! The very nature of the book leaves it to the reader to formulate the opinions he or she finds most suitable. My purpose as publisher is to see that this is made possible by offering a wide range of viewpoints which are fairly presented.

David L. Bender
Publisher

Introduction

"Until there are standards defining the propriety and legality of euthanasia, and clear procedures for dealing with criminal charges in mercy-killing cases, physicians and family members will continue to make life-and-death decisions without the backdrop of laws that supervise, regulate, and protect."

Derek Humphry and Ann Wickett, *The Right To Die*, 1986.

At any one time, over 10,000 patients in the United States are in a permanently vegetative state. In addition, thousands of profoundly handicapped infants are born each year. As life-sustaining medical technology continues to improve and lengthen the process of dying, those numbers will steadily increase. How should society deal with these people on the edge of life?

Well-publicized euthanasia cases such as those of Karen Ann Quinlan and Baby Doe have shown that most decisions concerning medical treatment can no longer be made in private behind closed hospital doors. Courts and government agencies have intervened to such an extent that many people believe the US must determine a consistent policy for health care providers, terminally-ill patients, and the patients' families. In the Netherlands the courts now allow doctors to practice euthanasia for their patients who request it. According to the Society for Voluntary Euthanasia, approximately 2,000 people requested physician-administered lethal injections in 1985. Should the US create a similar policy?

Rita Marker of the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force is one of many who respond to this question with an emphatic "No." Marker contends that passive euthanasia, or "letting die" is already a widely-accepted practice in hospitals and nursing homes. This makes legislation regarding active euthanasia, or "mercy killing," unnecessary. Marker and others therefore argue against a formal policy of state-sanctioned mercy killing. Marker comments, "Killing, whether called 'aid-in-dying' or any other deceptive name, is still killing and no law can make it right."

Supporters of euthanasia, however, counter that allowing doctors to administer a lethal dose is much more merciful to dying patients than allowing them to die slowly and painfully from a

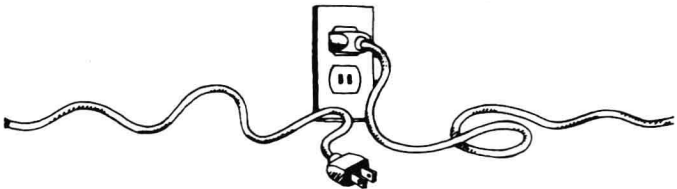
terminal disease. Derek Humphry, who founded the pro-euthanasia organization the Hemlock Society, contends that people must have the right to determine their own deaths: "People are a lot brighter, a lot more educated, a lot more autonomous than they used to be. People want to make their own decisions, and we are seeking . . . to give them a vehicle to make their own decisions."

Everyone must die. And almost everyone comes to a point where they, or a loved one, knows they are dying and must decide what action to take. The authors in this book base their opinions on arguments from various academic disciplines including medicine, religion, law, philosophy, economics, and politics. In *Euthanasia: Opposing Viewpoints*, these questions are debated: Is Euthanasia Ethical? What Policy Should Guide Euthanasia? What Criteria Should Influence Euthanasia Decisions? Who Should Make the Euthanasia Decision? and Is Infant Euthanasia Ethical? The authors' disparate views provide a good starting point for examining the controversial issues surrounding euthanasia.

1 CHAPTER

Is Euthanasia Ethical?

EUTHANASIA



Chapter Preface

A common objection to legalized euthanasia is the assertion that it would lead to a devaluation of human life. Opponents contend that legalized euthanasia would force medical professionals and patients' families to judge the worth of others' lives. In addition, once euthanasia becomes acceptable for the profoundly ill, they believe, the less seriously ill, the handicapped, and the mentally retarded may also be targeted for death. Opponents of euthanasia often cite the historical example of Nazi Germany to support this view. The Nazis implemented a policy of killing the mentally retarded, the infirm, and the elderly. Eventually they used this policy as a precedent for killing Jews, homosexuals, and others. Anti-euthanasia forces believe these kinds of atrocious and unjustified killings can happen again if euthanasia is legalized.

Euthanasia supporters consider this argument invalid. They contend that the massive and indiscriminate killing in Nazi Germany cannot be compared to carefully implemented policies to allow euthanasia in selective cases. Such an absurd comparison, these people argue, should not prevent a humane and compassionate policy of euthanasia for people in intractable pain.

The authors in this chapter debate the ethics of euthanasia. On both sides, the issue of whether or not euthanasia can become a "slippery slope" leading to the devaluation of human life, is integral.

"The case for euthanasia rests on three fundamental moral principles: mercy, autonomy, and justice."

Euthanasia Is Ethical

Margaret Pabst Battin

Before doctors begin to practice medicine, they take a vow called the Hippocratic Oath which states that they will always work to relieve suffering and will never purposefully end a life. Many proponents of euthanasia argue that the Hippocratic Oath must be redefined so that doctors may disconnect the life-support systems of brain-dead and terminally-ill patients. In the following viewpoint, Margaret Pabst Battin, an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Utah, writes that doctors have a higher obligation to relieve pain than to preserve life.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to the author, what is a doctor's most important duty?
2. In Battin's opinion, when is it more merciful to withhold medical treatment than to provide it?
3. Does the author believe pain can always be controlled? Why or why not?

Margaret Pabst Battin, "Euthanasia," in *Health Care Ethics: An Introduction*, Donald VanDeVeer and Tom Regan, eds. © 1987 by Temple University. Reprinted by permission of Temple University Press.