

Euthanasia



Definitions of Euthanasia

Euthanasia: *The intentional killing by act or omission of a dependent human being for his or her alleged benefit.*

• **Voluntary euthanasia**: *When the person who is killed has requested to be killed.*

• **Non-voluntary**: *When the person who is killed made no request and gave no consent.*

• **Assisted suicide**: *Someone provides an individual with the information, guidance, and means to take his or her own life with the intention that they will be used for this purpose.*

Some viewpoints about Euthanasia:

Which of the two viewpoints do you agree with? Write both of the viewpoints down and say (1) why you agree or disagree, and (2) whether the argument seems to be based on some sort of religious conviction.

- (1) Many people in Britain are in favour of euthanasia because they feel that, as a free country, we as 'free individuals' have the right to decide for ourselves when to end our life.
- (2) When humans take it upon themselves to shorten their lives, or have others do it for them, by withdrawing life-sustaining treatment or give life-terminating treatment, they are actually playing God.

A Euthanasia Case Study:

A doctor, seeing his eighty-seven year old father suffering from terminal cancer of the prostate, injected an overdose of Morphine and Thiopental, causing his father's death within seconds. The court charged the man as guilty of murder because 'the law is clear that it nonetheless constitutes the crime of murder, even if all that an accused had done is to hasten the death of a human being who was due to die in any event'. In spite of this charge, the court simply imposed a nominal sentence; that is, imprisonment until the rising of the court (probably about one or two hours at the most).

Do you think that this is right? After the initial shock of someone taking another person's life, the issue of whether it was the most humanitarian thing to do still remains.

Your Task: Summarise the Case Study into about three sentences (keep it in the box to make it stand out) and then give your opinion. Think about it carefully and think about the motivations of the act, not just the value of the act itself.

Real Life Examples: Diane Pretty



- Suffered from motor neurone disease.
- She was incapable of ending her life due to her illness.
- She wanted her husband to help her die but could have faced 14 years in jail.
- She went to the High Court in England but her plea was rejected.
- She went to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. She was rejected here as well as it was against human rights.
- She died on the 11th May in 2002 of natural causes.

Real Life Examples: Dan James



A 23-year-old rugby player who was left paralysed when a scrum collapsed.

Though in need of 24-hour care, Daniel had not been suffering from a terminal disease.

He could not move from the chest down and lost the use of all his limbs. Unable to make the enormous mental adjustment from robust athlete to tetraplegic, he became convinced that he wanted to end his life. His condition, however, meant that he could not commit suicide, unless he chose the long and painful horrors of starvation. Instead, he wanted help.

He died after travelling to a Swiss euthanasia clinic with his parents in March 2007.

Give me five!



Things you
have learnt
today about
euthanasia

Which type of euthanasia is involved?

Look at the following examples and decide whether they would involve voluntary or non-voluntary euthanasia and also whether they involve active or passive euthanasia:

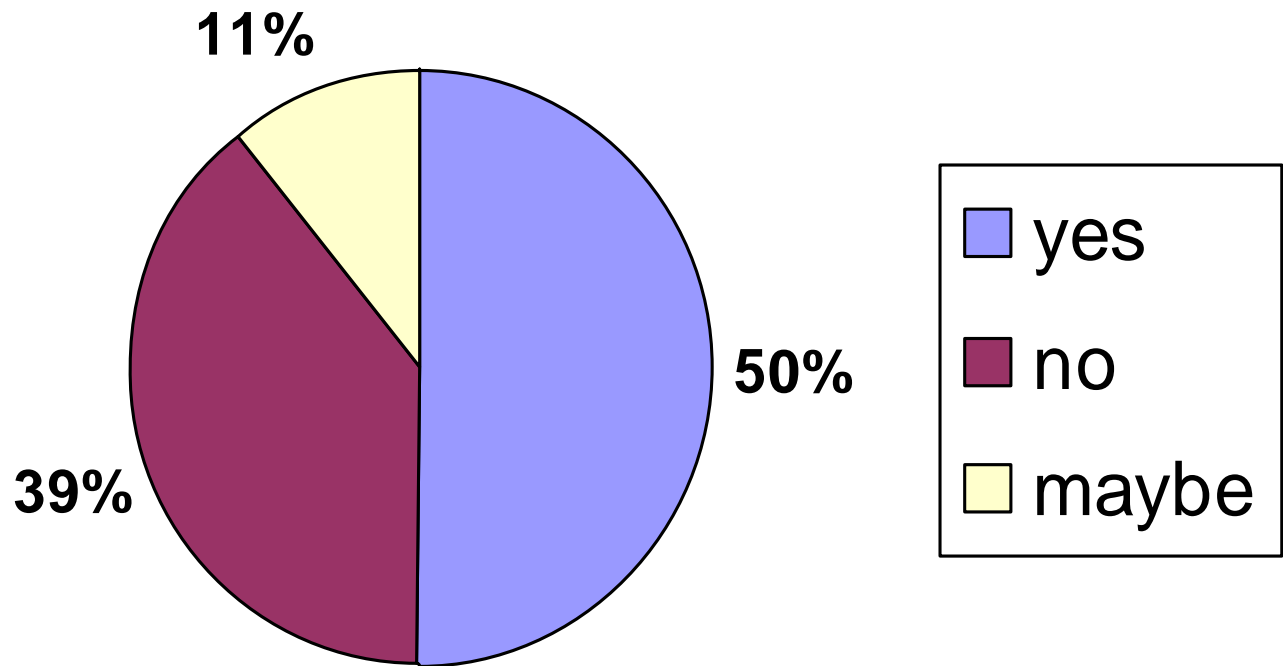
- a) A man who is in pain caused by a terminal disease asks his doctor for a lethal injection to end his pain.
- b) A child is born with a severe disability and is incapable of feeding herself. The parents ask for her not to be fed.
- c) A woman who is in hospital dying from a terminal disease asks not to be given food or water.
- d) A man is in a permanent vegetative state and his family and doctors decide it would be best if he were given a lethal injection.

Complete the grid and say why the person should or should not decide if euthanasia is the appropriate option (e.g. The person in pain may not be conscious, the next of kin might not know what is the right thing to do etc.). Consider the quote below this box too!

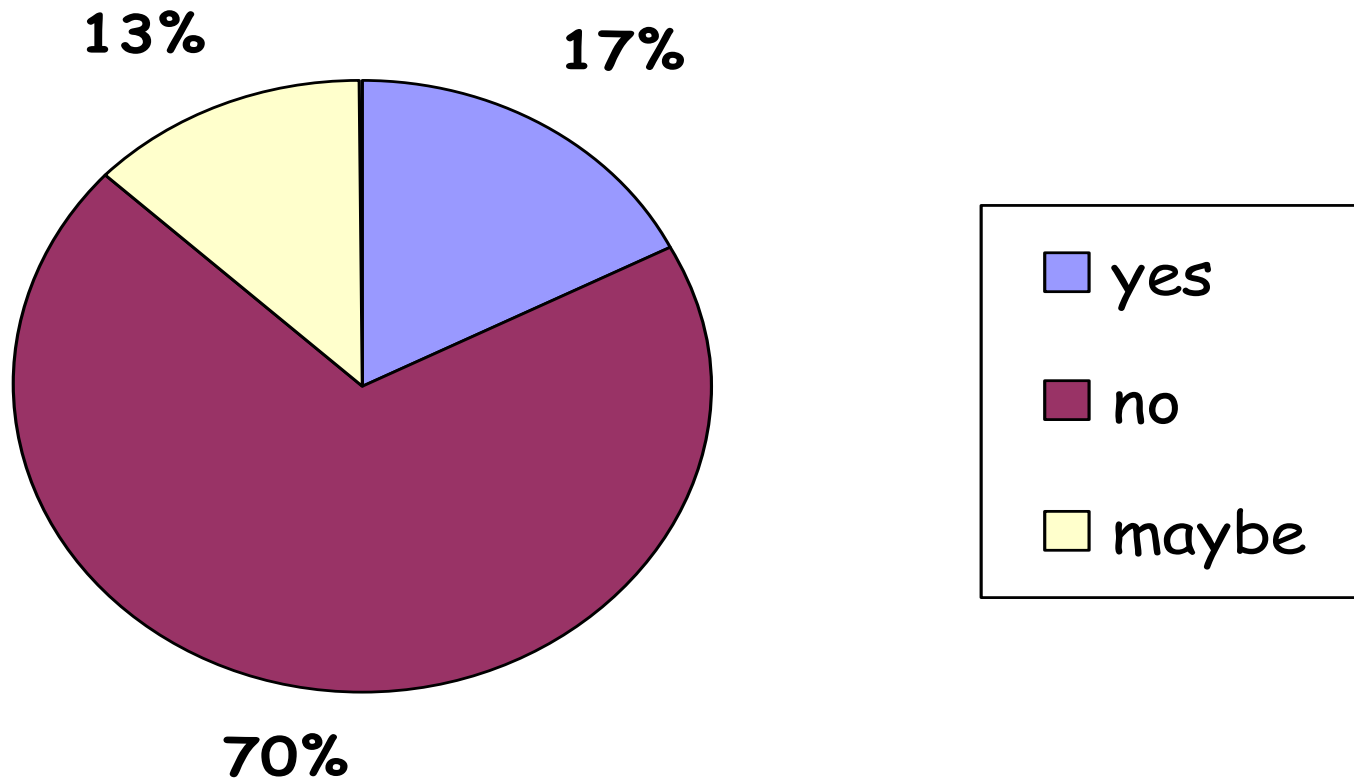
"Abandonment of Hope"

Every doctor can tell stories of patients expected to die within days who surprise everyone with their extraordinary recoveries. Every doctor has experienced the wonderful embarrassment of being proven wrong in their pessimistic prognosis. *To make euthanasia a legitimate option as soon as the prognosis is pessimistic enough is to reduce the probability of such extraordinary recoveries from low to zero.*

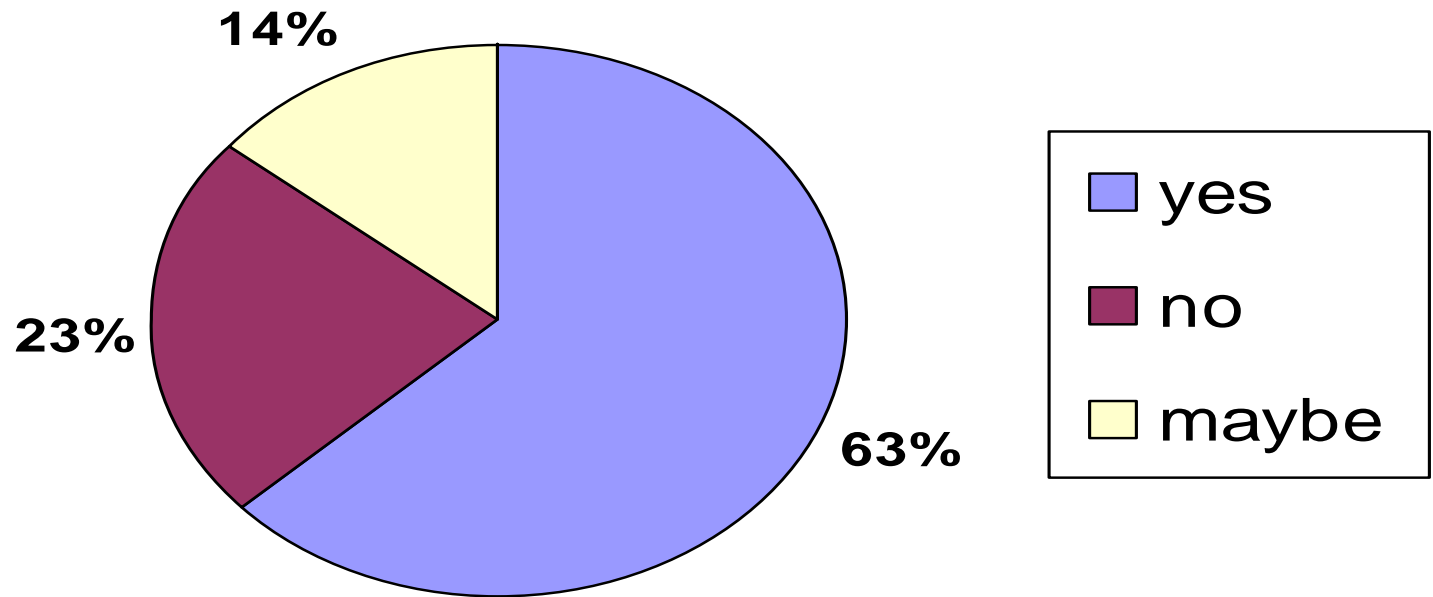
Is Euthanasia Suicide?



Are Those Who Commit It Murderers?



Should Euthanasia Be Legalised?



What Do Doctors Think Of Euthanasia?

Two thirds of doctors are against the legalisation of euthanasia and physician assisted suicide.

- 💣 Only 34% of the 3,700 doctors asked supported euthanasia – compared to 82% of the general public.
- 💣 Only 35% think they should be allowed to give their patients the means to kill themselves.

Laws around the world

- There are few countries around the world in which euthanasia is legal.
- There are just 4 countries in Europe where it is: Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland and Luxembourg

What is the law in Britain at the moment?

- At present, all forms of euthanasia are illegal in Britain.
- Suicide is legal but assisted suicide is not.
- This is to dissuade people as this is not morally accepted in this country.

Human Rights

These are the rights which each individual has and that are relevant to the case of euthanasia.

In the European convention on human rights:

- Article 2: Protection on life.
- Article 3: Freedom from inhuman treatment.
- Article 5: Right to liberty and security of person.
- Article 6: The right to a fair public hearing.

Dignity
in dying
your life, your choice

Cases In The Media That You Might Know

On television:

- Dot and Ethel in “EastEnders”.



The Consequences



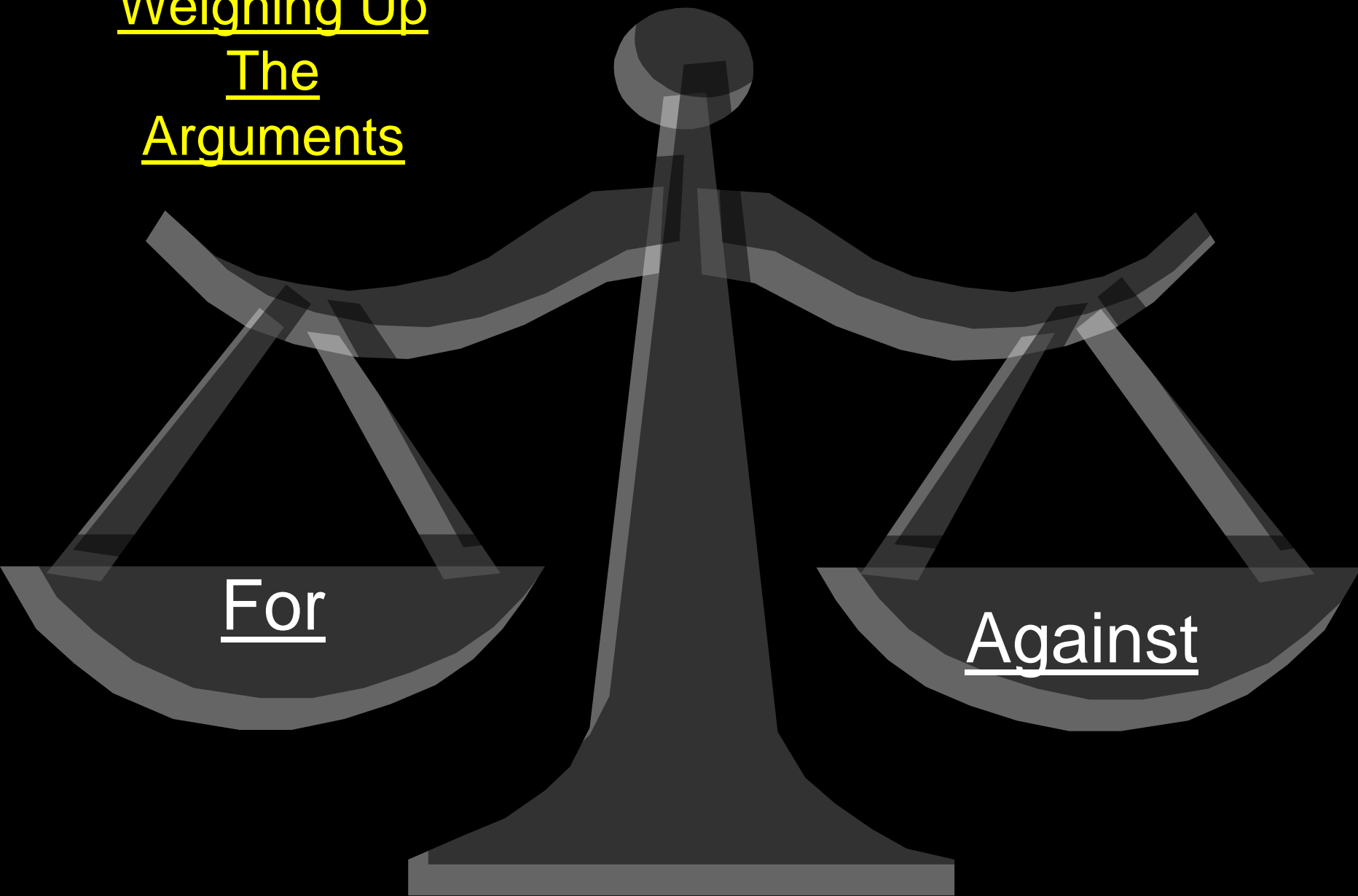
Consequences of Euthanasia

- The majority of bereaved family and friends who have lost loved ones through the means of euthanasia are able to cope with grief and post-traumatic stress reactions better, in comparison to those who die due to their illness.
- However, an unnatural death is able to cause severe grief reaction amongst those close.
- Family members in euthanasia cases have the opportunity to say goodbye, whereas this is very rare in suicide cases.

“A slippery slope”?



Weighing Up
The
Arguments



For

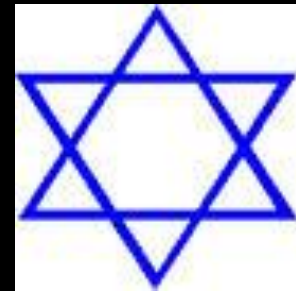
Against

Task:

Write out the questions and give FULL answers.

1. What does the word euthanasia mean?
2. List each of the methods of euthanasia and write a brief description of what it means.
3. What is the Hippocratic Oath?
4. Do you think it is fair to expect a doctor or nurse to assist in euthanasia? Give the reasons for your answer.
5. Write down what you think are the five most important arguments **FOR** euthanasia and write down the most important five **AGAINST** euthanasia.
6. What would a strict Christian think of euthanasia and why?
7. Do you think certain kinds of euthanasia are ethically better than others? Why?

Religious Views



Unscramble the key terms:

tgfi ofmr odg

pohesci

dsearc

otrcare

egmia fo
dog

yitctsna fo ilef

Now write a sentence linking these 6 terms to explain a basic Christian teaching about euthanasia

Christianity: the arguments against Euthanasia

- ✝ Life is a gift from God that should not be destroyed.
- ✝ One of the 10 Commandments is : “*Thou shall not kill*”.
- ✝ God is in everyone and every living thing. If you harm a living thing, you harm God.
- ✝ St. Paul stated ‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 6:19). This also implies that we should not destroy ourselves, as all life contains God’s Holy Spirit.
- ✝ Job refused to take his own life, arguing that we must accept suffering as we accept happiness and joy. We are free to find meaning, even in the midst of our troubles. Suffering is an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Biblical Quotes

No man dies unless
God allows it

(Job 2:6)

Love one another as I
have loved you

(John 13:34)

It is not your life to do
with as you please –
that is rebellion!

(Psalms 12:4)

The Teaching Of The Roman Catholic Church

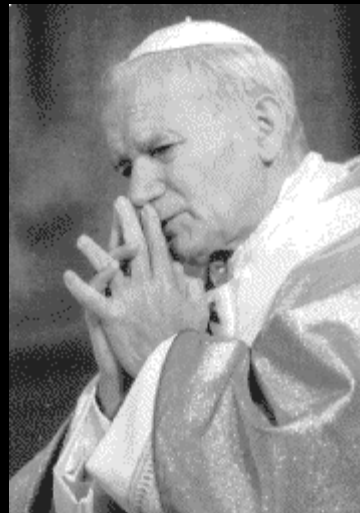
Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect. Sick or handicapped persons should be helped to lead lives as normal as possible. Whatever its motives or means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick or dying persons. It is morally unacceptable.

However, discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome, can be legitimate; it is the refusal of over-zealous treatment.

(2276-2277)- These numbers refer to paragraphs in The Catholic Catechism

“Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person.”

Pope John Paul II



Christianity: The argument for Euthanasia

- ✝ Christians respect all living things, so if someone wants to end their life that wish should also be respected.
- ✝ Some argue that Jesus commanded us to show compassion – “Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 13:34)
- ✝ Some may argue that they are fulfilling the Commandment, ‘Honour your father and mother’ by respecting their parent’s wish to die.
- ✝ Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas – Principle of Double Effect – one of the effects is intended, while the other is unintended.

Muslim Beliefs

- ☾★ All life is a gift Allah, so it is sacred and Muslims have a duty to respect it and submit to his will.
- ☾★ Only Allah can choose when a life will end.
- ☾★ The reason for any suffering will be known to Allah. He is not cruel so there must be a reason for the pain.
- ☾★ Everything has a natural shariah (a correct path or purpose given to it by Allah) so Muslims should not go against nature.
- ☾★ Muslims have a duty to care for elderly and sick people, particularly family members.

“And no person can ever die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed term.”

Qur'an 3.145

“Do not take life, which Allah made sacred, other than in the course of justice.”

Qur'an 17.33

The ECFR

- The Islamic European Council for Fatwa and Research ruled in July 2003 that 'active' and 'passive' euthanasia or mercy killing and suicide are all forbidden in Islam.
- The council ruled that the removal of life-support machines for the clinically dead is permissible.

What do Jews think about Euthanasia?

- ✧ The preservation of human life is one of the supreme moral values as life is a gift from God.
- ✧ Anything which shortens life is forbidden – only God can decide when a person's life should end.
- ✧ Saving someone from pain is not a reason to kill them.
- ✧ Active euthanasia is murder. The 10 Commandments state 'You shall not kill'.
- ✧ Another Commandment states 'Honour your father and mother'. Many Jews interpret this as meaning that ending the life of an elderly relative would be wrong.
- ✧ Job's example suggests that suffering is part of God's plan and taking a life is wrong.

"...The message of Judaism is that one must struggle until the last breath of life. Until the last moment, one has to live and rejoice and give thanks to the Creator ..."

Dr. Rachamim Melamed-Cohen

What do Jews think about Euthanasia?

- ✧ Some Jews may argue they are fulfilling their religious duty in the 10 Commandments to 'Honour your father and mother' by respecting their parent's wish to die.
- ✧ The teaching of Rabbi Isserles states that if something is an impediment to the natural process of death and the patient only survives because of it, it is permitted under Jewish law to withdraw that thing – e.g. a life-support machine.
- ✧ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach have ruled that a dying patient should not be kept alive by artificial means where the treatment does not cure the illness but merely prolongs the patient's life temporarily and the patient is suffering great pain. Pain relief medicine can be given even though it may hasten death (the Principle of Double Effect).

Hindu beliefs on Euthanasia

- ॐ Hindus believe that all life is sacred. A terminally ill person has to wait for God to decide when they will die.
- ॐ Euthanasia interferes with a person's dharma(duty) and cause the soul and the body to be separated at an inappropriate time.
- ॐ Suffering is caused by karma from a previous life. Also, whoever helps someone to die would be causing bad karma for themselves.
- ॐ Euthanasia goes against the belief of Ahimsa (non-violence)
- ॐ Some might argue that ending the life of someone going through great pain is helping them and therefore fulfils a Hindu's moral obligations.
- ॐ Keeping a person artificially alive, could be a bad deed because not wanting to lose a loved one is selfish.

Euthanasia- the Buddhist view

- ❁ Voluntary euthanasia is wrong, as it shows that the person's mind is in a bad state.
- ❁ Meditation and pain-killing drugs help a person to achieve a state where they are not in mental pain.
- ❁ Suffering is seen as a natural part of life.
- ❁ Death is not an escape from suffering because a person's karma continues into their next life.
- ❁ The Dalai Lama – “In the event a person is definitely going to die and he is either in great pain or has virtually become a vegetable, and prolonging his existence is only going to cause difficulties and suffering for others, the termination of his life may be permitted.....”

Sikh teachings on Euthanasia

- ☆ Sikhs have a high respect for life as it is a God-given gift.
- ☆ The timing of birth and death should be left in God's hands.
- ☆ Human beings should accept that suffering occurs and try to make the best of it in order to improve their karma.
- ☆ Many teachings are about caring for others and by providing good care (e.g. in a hospice) they hope that the person will not want to end their life.
- ☆ Some believe it is the quality of life that matters, not the length. Death is not the end.
- ☆ A distinction should be made between ending life and not artificially prolonging a terminal state.

God-given	Holy Spirit	Compassion	Life-support	Active
Dignity	Voluntary	Double Effect	Natural Law	Soul
Gentle	Suffering	Non-voluntary	Sanctity of Life	Ten
Euthanasia	Job	Allah	Passive	Shariah

Venn Diagram showing Christian and Muslim beliefs about Euthanasia

Christian Beliefs

AGAINST

God gave humans dominion over all creation, so they must use God's gifts to the full, including the gift of life

10 Commandments – "Do not kill"

Job refused to take his own life – we must accept suffering as we accept happiness and joy, and find meaning from our troubles

Some see suffering as an opportunity for spiritual growth and respond to it as Jesus did – in a positive way

All life contains God's holy spirit – St Paul

The sick can be cared for in a hospice

FOR

Some Christians believe that people should be allowed to die with dignity and helping them to die is a compassionate act

'Honour your father and mother' means respecting their wish to die

Principle of Double Effect – developed by Thomas Aquinas

Shared beliefs

Life is a gift from God and should be respected

Only God can give and take life

Euthanasia goes against nature and the will of God

Elderly and sick should be shown kindness and compassion

Muslim Beliefs

AGAINST

Every soul is perfect even if the body is not

The reason for any suffering will be known to Allah. He is not cruel or unfair

Muslims have a duty to care for elderly and sick relatives at home.

Summing up

- Laws

- Yes under certain circumstances in Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland.
- No in most places including England.

- Religions

- Mostly against because all life is sacred.

- Other forms of euthanasia

- Life support machines, D.N.R.'s, refusing medication, abortion.

**“Do not fear death so much,
but rather the
inadequate life.”**

Bertolt Brecht (1898 - 1956)

**“It is better to die on your feet than live on your
knees.”**

- *Emiliano Zapata*

**“As it is with a play, so it is with life—
what matters is not how long the
acting lasts, but how good it is.”**

Seneca ~ Roman Tragedy Poet

Could you?

- If a close friend or family member was suffering and wanted to die, could you help them?

