

PHIL 226
Biomedical Ethics
Week 9

Exercise 3, Nov. 22
Exam Nov. 29
This week: Abortion,
 ethanasia.
No electronics.

1

Ethics and Culture

	Individualist	Collectivist
Religious	West Christian	Buddhism? Islam?
Non-religious	West Philosophy	China Confucius

2

Ethics and Emotions

Cognitivism: Ethical judgments should be based on reasoning about consequences and/or rights and duties.

Emotivism: Ethical judgments are merely expressions of emotional preferences.

Synthesis: Judgment is both cognitive and emotional, and is most effective when they interact.

Reason without caring is empty, but caring without reason is blind.

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Abortion Options

Abortion is the deliberate termination of a pregnancy prior to fetal viability.

1. All abortion is immoral.
2. Abortion is moral if it is necessary to save the mother's life.
3. Abortion of early pregnancies is moral.
4. Abortion is never immoral.

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Consequentialist arguments for abortion

Unwanted pregnancies cause great distress.

Requiring tribunals to make decisions causes stress and late abortions.

Illegal abortions cause medical problems.

Unwanted children cause social problems.

Consequentialist arguments against abortion

The fetus never gets to experience anything.

Women who have abortions feel guilty about it.

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Rights-based arguments for abortion

Women have a right to choose: autonomy, security, control of body.

The less than 5-month fetus is not a person, because it is not sufficiently developed (Sumner).

The fetus is not a person, because it has no relations to other people except the mother (Sherwin).

Rights-based arguments against abortion

The fetus is a person from conception, because that is when the soul enters. Hence the fetus has a right not to be killed.

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Discussion question

- Nancy is a fifteen year old girl who has accidentally become pregnant. She is 3 months pregnant. She does not want to have a baby.
- Is it ethical for Nancy to have an abortion?

Kinds of Euthanasia

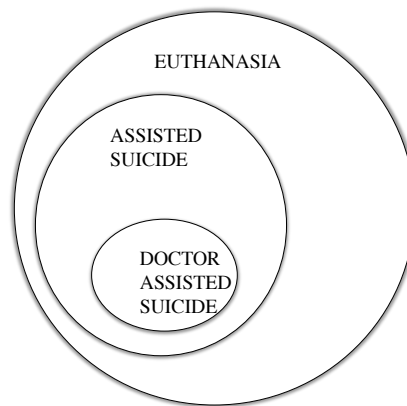
- Euthanasia : Killing the hopelessly sick for reasons of mercy.
- Passive: Letting them die.
- Active: Causing their death.
- Voluntary: Causing their death at their request.
- Involuntary: Causing their death against their wishes or interests.

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Kinds of Euthanasia

	voluntary	involuntary
active	e.g. physician-assisted	Nazis · wrong
passive	Die with dignity · right	Medical neglect

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Consequentialist Arguments for Voluntary Euthanasia

It alleviates the suffering of the person requesting to die.

It reduces distress for others perceiving the suffering.

It reduces health care costs.

Consequentialist Arguments against Voluntary Euth.

It may lead to premature death and loss of valuable experiences.

Practicing it may lead to the devaluation of life.

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Rights-based Argument for Voluntary Euthanasia

A person has a right to die as well as a right to live, so respecting autonomy requires supporting suicide.

Rights-based Arguments against Voluntary Euthanasia

A person's autonomy may be compromised by doctors or family members who want them gone.

A person has a duty to stay alive.

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Slippery Slope Argument against Voluntary Euthanasia

If we allow voluntary euthanasia,
then other kinds of killing will be accepted.

Objection: Slippery slope arguments are weak unless there is
substantial justification tying the THEN to the IF.

**Arguments that Passive Euthanasia is no Better than
Active Euthanasia**

Rachels: Passive Euthanasia may involve more suffering.

Quill: The foreseen effects of both kinds of euthanasia are the same.

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Discussion question

- Joe has terminal cancer and is in a great deal of pain that drug treatments do not reduce. He asks his physician, Nancy, to give him a large enough dose of a sedative drug to kill him.
- Should Nancy prescribe the drug?