

THE EUTHANASIA DEBATE THAT WE HAVE NOT HAD IN SPAIN

Before you read the text, think about these questions, and answer them on a piece of paper. Your teacher will correct it as if it were a composition (you needn't write a lot). Alternatively, you can write your answers in the spaces provided here (we recommend you write them first using your usual word processor, then copy and paste them here).

- a) Do you have a firm opinion about euthanasia? Are you in favour or against it?
- b) Could you give three arguments to support your opinion?
- c) Do you think it is a very serious matter?
- d) Do you think there has been enough debate in Spanish society before passing the law to make euthanasia legal in Spain?

Part 1

The arguments for assisted suicide:

1. We need it - 'the compassion argument'. Supporters of assisted suicide believe that allowing people to “die with dignity” is kinder than forcing them to continue their lives with suffering.
2. We want it - 'the autonomy argument'. Some believe that every patient has a right to choose when to die.
3. We can control it - 'the public policy argument'. Proponents believe that assisted suicide can be safely regulated by government legislation.

The arguments against assisted suicide:

1. Alternative treatments are available, such as palliative care and hospices. We do not have to kill the patient to kill the symptoms. Nearly all pain can be relieved.
2. There is no “right” to be killed and there are real dangers of “slippery slopes”. Opening the doors to voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide could lead to non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia, by giving doctors the power to decide when a patient's life is not worth living. In the Netherlands in 1990 around 1,000 patients were killed without their request.
3. We could never truly control it. Reports from the Netherlands, where euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are legal, reveal that doctors do not always report it.
4. The assumption that patients should have a right to die would impose on doctors a duty to kill, thus restricting the autonomy of the doctor. Also, a 'right to die' for some people might well become a 'duty to die' by others, particularly those who are vulnerable or dependent upon others.

After reading part 1 of the text, answer these questions:

- e) Do you think this is an informative (objective information) or argumentative (subjective opinion) text? Why?
- f) Did you find among the arguments for and against euthanasia in the text any of your own arguments?
- g) Did you find any arguments (for or against) that you had not thought about?
- h) Had you heard any of the arguments against euthanasia before in the media (newspapers, TV or the Internet)?
- i) The literal meaning of “slippery slope” is “pendiente resbaladiza”. What does it mean in a figured sense in the text?

Now, read part 2 of the text.

Part 2

What about compassion?

The pro-euthanasia and assisted suicide lobby will often present the view that helping someone else to end their life is the most loving and compassionate thing to do. But surely the most compassionate thing to do is to care for a person at the end of their life and to show them that their life has tremendous value regardless of age or abilities.

Palliative care is an area of healthcare that focuses on relieving and preventing the suffering of patients. Britain is the only country in the world where palliative care is a recognised medical specialism. Further, in a recent survey by The Economist Britain was ranked first in the world for quality end-of-life care. The survey took in 40 OECD and non-OECD countries, including the USA, the Netherlands, Germany and France.

What about the most vulnerable?

Changing the law to allow euthanasia or assisted suicide will inevitably put pressure on vulnerable people to end their lives for fear of being a financial, emotional or care burden upon others. This would especially affect people who are disabled, elderly, sick or depressed. Some would face the added risk of coercion by others who might stand to gain from their deaths. Fear and anxiety would be promoted rather than individual autonomy.

Baroness Ilora Finlay of Llandaff Professor of Palliative Medicine & Crossbench Peer declares: "We should not forget that laws are more than just regulatory instruments. They also send powerful social messages. An assisted dying law sends the subliminal message, however unintended by legislators, that if we are terminally ill taking our own lives is something we should consider."

- j) **VOCABULARY.** Find words or phrases in the text which are synonyms of these:

1. opinion
2. without a doubt
3. without relation to; independently from; without taking into consideration
4. concentrates
5. avoiding
6. besides
7. classified
8. included
9. permit
10. load, problem
11. above all, mainly
12. old
13. additional
14. obtain a benefit
15. encouraged
16. instead of
17. strong
18. unconscious, hidden
19. committing suicide
20. think about carefully

Voluntary activity: view a 28-minute documentary on palliative care (in Spanish):

MORIR EN PAZ: Cuidados Paliativos vs. Eutanasia

Has your opinion on euthanasia changed after reading this text and watching the documentary? Are you not sure?

You can read more about this issue here:

<https://care.org.uk/cause/assisted-suicide#s:forAndAgainst>

Sources:

MORIR EN PAZ: Cuidados Paliativos vs. Eutanasia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4JPYmuBkbg>

Adapted from:

<https://care.org.uk/cause/assisted-suicide/arguments-for-and-against-assisted-suicide-and-euthanasia>

<https://care.org.uk/cause/assisted-suicide#s:forAndAgainst>

Read more:

<https://care.org.uk/news/2021/02/why-euthanasia-is-on-the-rise-in-belgium-and-the-netherlands>