

KS4 RE

Ethical Debates - Euthanasia

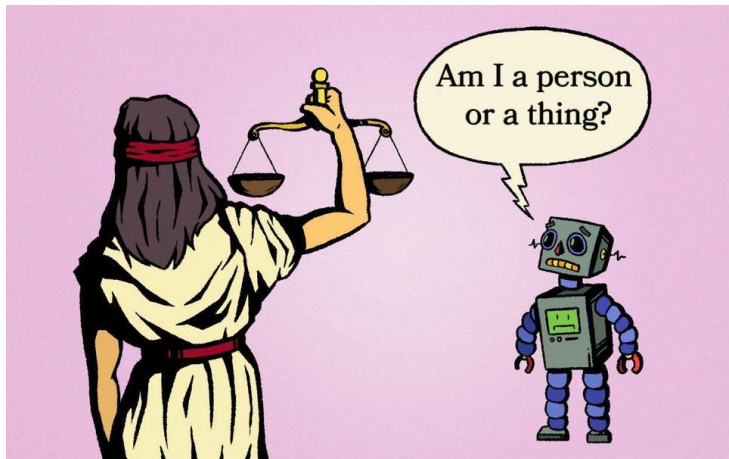
with Miss Laura

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Ethical debates: Euthanasia

- We will be looking at the ethics behind Euthanasia.
 - We will look at the different opinions from ethical believers and of different religious beliefs.



Sentience is the capacity to reason and feel pain and pleasure. Often the quality of life principle gives more moral value to beings with higher sentience.

Task: Rank these in order from highest to lowest(or no sentience).

- Newborn human baby
- Healthy chimpanzee
- 6 year old human child
- Rocks
- Adult dolphin
- Brain-damaged human baby
- Bacteria
- Goldfish
- Human being with very low intelligence (IQ lower than 70)
- Unconscious human person who has very little brain function
- Insects such as flies, wasps, bees
- Human baby at 8 months in mother's womb
- Trees and plants
- Human being with very high intelligence (IQ higher than 130)
- Adult dog

Challenge: If you had to choose to kill something with high sentience over something with low sentience, would you do so?

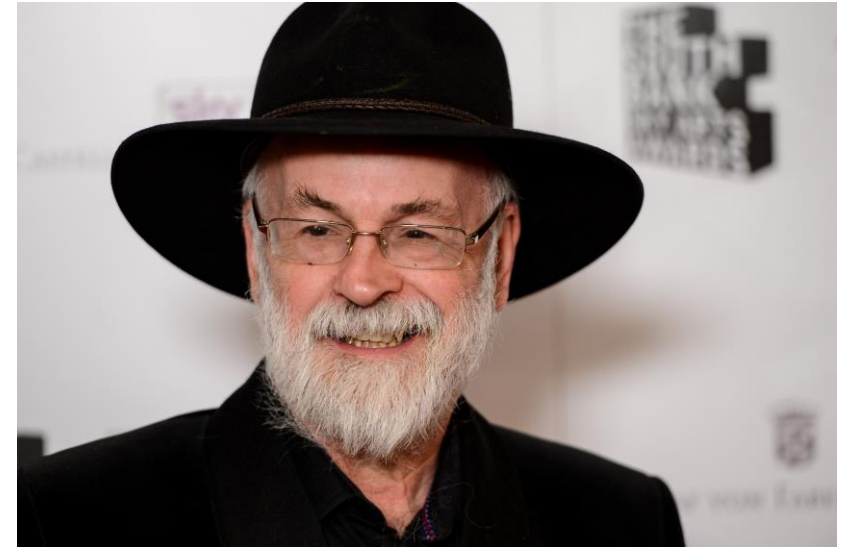
Sanctity of life is used by many religious believers when talking about human life. They use it to mean that life is God-given, conferring on it a special status and making human life sacred and worthy of the highest respect.



Euthanasia **literally** means a 'good death', but euthanasia is also called 'mercy killing'.

The idea behind both names is that a person should be permitted or assisted to die, to spare them further suffering. The suffering may take the form of physical pain or mental suffering from a debilitating disease that entails loss of dignity and total dependence on someone else.

Euthanasia is illegal in Britain and most countries.

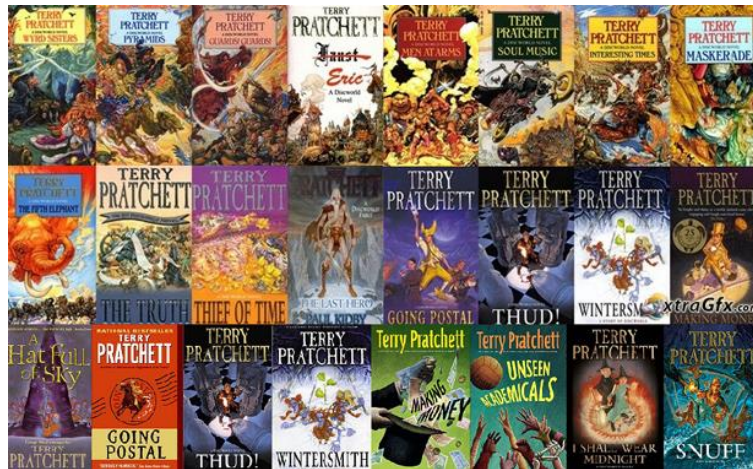


British author Terry Pratchett had been diagnosed with a rare form of early-onset Alzheimer's in 2007.

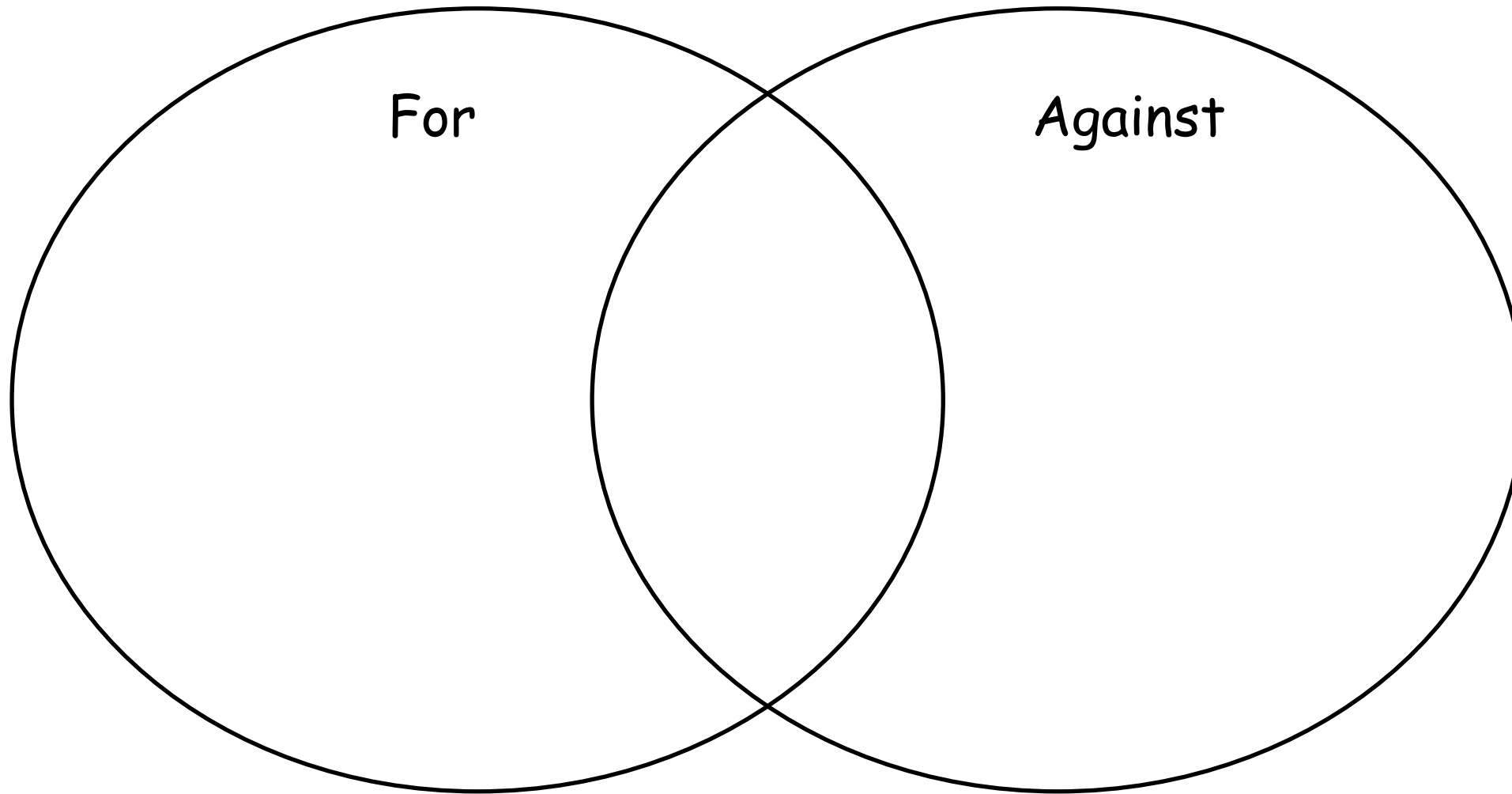
In 2011 he presented the documentary: 'Choosing to Die'. In light of his own diagnosis, Pratchett considered whether he himself would want to end his life in this matter.

Pratchett said "it should be possible for someone stricken with a serious and ultimately fatal illness to choose to die peacefully with medical help, rather than suffer".

In 2015 he died, however, not by assisted suicide, instead he died of natural causes at home.



Task: Place the different arguments on whether they are for euthanasia or against euthanasia



some might go in the middle... depending on how you argue it.

<p>Sanctity of life Human life is sacred because it's a gift from God. All human beings are to be valued, irrespective of age, sex, race, religion, social status or their potential for achievement.</p>	<p>The slippery slope Many people worry that if voluntary euthanasia were to become legal, it would not be long before involuntary euthanasia would start to happen.</p>	<p>Devalues some lives Some people fear that allowing euthanasia sends the message, "it's better to be dead than sick or disabled". The subtext is that some lives are not worth living. Not only does this put the sick or disabled at risk, it also downgrades their status as human beings while they are alive.</p>	<p>Nihilists are atheists who do not think that the body and soul can be resurrected after death. They believe that there is nothing to fear about death because one cannot experience being dead. Humanist Nihilists believe that a person lives on after death in the memories of others.</p>
<p>Is death a bad thing? If death is not a bad thing then many of the objections to euthanasia vanish. If we put aside the idea that death is always a bad thing, we are able to consider whether death may actually sometimes be a good thing. This makes it much easier to consider the issue of euthanasia from the viewpoint of someone who wants euthanasia.</p>	<p>Libertarian argument This is a variation of the individual rights argument. If an action promotes the best interests of everyone concerned and violates no one's rights then that action is morally acceptable. In some cases, euthanasia promotes the best interests of everyone involved and violates no one's rights. It is therefore morally acceptable.</p>	<p>Euthanasia may be necessary for the fair distribution of health resources In most countries there is a shortage of health resources. As a result, some people who are ill and could be cured are not able to get speedy access to the facilities they need for treatment. At the same time health resources are being used on people who cannot be cured, and who, for their own reasons, would prefer not to continue living.</p>	<p>Pressure on the vulnerable This is another of those arguments that says that euthanasia should not be allowed because it will be abused. The fear is that if euthanasia is allowed, vulnerable people will be put under pressure to end their lives. It would be difficult, and possibly impossible, to stop people using persuasion or coercion to get people to request euthanasia when they don't really want it.</p>
<p>Genesis 1:27 States that human life is made in the image of God. Life is special and must be protected.</p>	<p>Psalm 139:13 States that life is sacred from the moment of conception</p>	<p>The 10 Commandments state that killing an innocent life is morally very wrong.</p>	<p>Jesus said 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13) so dying for others is permitted.</p>
<p>Job 1:21 states 'I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothin. The Lord gave, and the Lord now has taken away'. This is used to argue that God alone has the power to create and end life.</p>	<p>Some Christians argue that to die as a martyr or a soldier is an act of Christian love.</p>	<p>Regulating euthanasia Those in favour of euthanasia think that there is no reason why euthanasia can't be controlled by proper regulation, but they acknowledge that some problems will remain.</p>	<p>Peter Singer a modern philosopher who has suggested it would be more helpful to focus on the quality of life rather than the sanctity of life when making life and death decisions.</p>

Different ethical beliefs

Task: have a look at the following ethical and religious beliefs, can you add these to your venn diagram.

Absolutist: a rule that is true in all situations

Materialists / Monists: Who argue that human beings are made of one substance, the physical body. Materialists reject the idea of life after death.

Subjective: judgements are based on personal opinion and not on any fixed rule.

Objective: judgements are based on an impartial absolute value system.

Relativist: a judgement that depends on the circumstances, there is no universal right or wrong.

Dualists: who argue that there are two aspects to human beings, a physical body and a non-physical soul. Dualists tend to believe in life after death.

Different religious beliefs

Buddhism

Euthanasia breaches the principle of non-violence (ahimsa). It therefore builds up negative kamma. The Vinaya Pitaka states: 'A monk who intentionally deprives a human being of his life, or provides the means for suicide, or praises death, or incites one to commit suicide... commits an offence entailing loss of monkhood'.

Many Buddhists distinguish between active killing and withdrawing treatment that is simply prolonging the dying process. Withdrawing treatment and allowing the person to die might show compassion (karuna) The Dalai Lama said that it is permissible in Buddhist ethics to end the life of someone who is terminally ill with no hope of recovery.

Christianity

The Bible tells Christians to clothe themselves with kindness and compassion, and ending a life of intolerable suffering may be the most compassionate thing to do. Scripture states that death is better than a miserable life.

Hospices enable terminally ill people to experience dignity and quality of life right to the end. They give the dying the sense that their lives are still sacred, whereas euthanasia denies that.

Whatever their situation, all humans are created in the image of God.

Hinduism

Some oppose all types of euthanasia, believing that it is tantamount to murder and that even in the case of life support, it interferes with the process of reincarnation. It damages the karma of both the doctor and the patient. According to the monastery at the Himalayan Academy 'all those involved (directly or indirectly) in euthanasia will proportionately take on the remaining prarabdha karma of the dying person'.

Some Hindus accept euthanasia in the case of those who are very old or very ill. They may choose to stop eating and drinking and this is seen as renouncing the world and putting it in perspective. It is viewed as a sign of great holiness.

Islam

Allah has planned the course of all lives, so the suffering of someone who is terminally ill may be part of that plan. Active euthanasia is therefore to interfere with Allah's will. 'It is Allah who gives you life, then gives you death' (Qur'an).

Islam accepts passive euthanasia, which is allowing someone for whom there is no hope to die by withholding life-prolonging treatment. Such treatment would in fact be interfering with Allah's will. 'It is Allah who gives you life, then gives you death' (Qur'an).

Judaism

Judaism opposes active euthanasia. Life is precious and God-given, so may not be deliberately terminated. A former UK chief rabbi said, "The value of human life is infinite and beyond measure, so that any part of life - even if only an hour or a second - is of precisely the same worth as seventy years of it".

Passive euthanasia may be permissible. An instance is when treatment is or would be doing no more than prolonging the dying. A commentary on the Shulchan Code states, "if there is anything which causes a hindrance to the departure of the soul...it is permissible to remove [it] from there because there is no act involved, only the removal of the impediment."

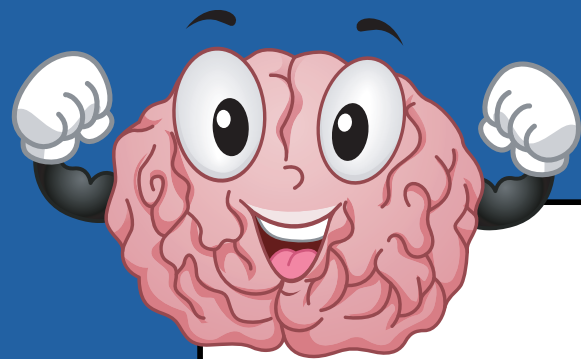
Sikhism

Sikhs see life as a gift from God and so its ending should be left up to God. Euthanasia is seen as interfering in God's plan; Sikhs should concentrate instead on caring for the person to the end. Sikhs believe that since it is a gift from God, life should be treated in a responsible way. They distinguish between ending life and not artificially prolonging a terminal state. It might be a responsible act to withdraw life-sustaining treatment in some situations.

'Only God has the right to end a life.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view.

Agree	Disagree

Challenge: Have a go at writing an essay answer to this question. Remember to include both sides of the argument and a clear conclusion.



And we're done for the day!

Want more lessons with Miss Laura?

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