

EUTHANASIA IN ISLAMIC VIEWS

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Abstract

We describe two of main sources have been used to find Islamic views towards euthanasia through in this paper as a result of an annual research: First, the Islamic primary source, Holy Koran, which is the most important and reliable source for finding Islamic perspectives, second, religious opinions and decrees (Fatwas) from great Muslim scholars, which are called Mofti Al-AazaminSunni tradition and Ayatollah Al-Ozma in Shiite tradition. These Fatwas are important because of the jurisprudential nature of such bioethical topics in Islamic communities.

Keywords: Euthanasia, mercy killing, assisted suicide, islamic

Introduction

According to our three main sources, we can classify our findings, to three parts: euthanasia in Holy Koran, in Fatwas or religious rulings of Great Muslim scholars, and in other text including codes, regulations and scientific articles. We can classify related verses to two parts: 1. Verses on the sacredness of life. We mention two related verses: a.

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

“ If anyone kills a person -unless it is for murder or spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed the whole people”.Verses on that death is the exclusiveaction of God, here we also mention two verses: a“ .When their time comes they cannot delay it for a single hour nor can they bring it forward by a single hour”. b“ .And no person can ever die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed term”. The popular Egyptian scholar Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, recently issued a fatwa, or religious ruling, equating euthanasia with murder, but allowing the withholding of treatment that is deemed useless.

Euthanasia: An Islamic Ethical Perspective

Islamic jurisprudence, based on a convincing interpretation of the holy Koran, does not recognize a person's right to die voluntarily. The Islamic arguments against euthanasia can be summarized in two main reasons: 1-Life is sacred and euthanasia and suicide are not included among the reasons allowed for killing in Islam. And 2-Allah decides how long each of us will live and two verses support this reason. According to Islamic teachings, life is a divine trust and can't be terminated by any form of active or passive voluntary intervention.

All the Islamic scholars regard active euthanasia as forbidden (Hiram) and there is no difference between Sunni and Shiite schools. The moment of death, ajal, is under the control of Allah and the human has no say in this matter; the human cannot and should not attempt to hasten or delay the ajal. The prohibition on life applies equally well whether for self, suicide, or others, homicide or genocide. The concepts of autonomy, freedom and individual choice does not apply here for these two reasons:

A. life does not belong to the human; and

B. taking life will cause harm to the family and society in general.

An individual's freedom of choice is constrained by the harm it causes to others. Justifying the stance of advocates of euthanasia on the basis of other factors such as economic concerns, consideration of resources that could otherwise be utilized by other patients and

death with dignity does not seem plausible because of crime nature of mercy killing in Islamic point of view.

Of course, we have to exclude the situation in which the life support equipments are switched off from a brain-dead person, aimed to use them for saving the life of a live person. As a conclusion we can say that the Islamic position is that life belongs to Allah. It is He who gives and takes away life. No human can give or take it. Muslims are against euthanasia. They believe that all human life is sacred because it is given by Allah, and that Allah chooses how long each person will live. Human beings should not interfere in this. There are two instances, however, that could be interpreted as passive assistance in allowing a terminally ill patient to die and would be permissible by Islamic law: Administering analgesic agents that might shorten the patient's life, with the purpose of relieving the physical pain or mental distress, and withdrawing a futile treatment in the basis of informed consent (of the immediate family members who act on the professional advice of the physicians in charge of the case) allowing death to take its natural course. If a patient is medically presumed dead through what is known as brain death, switching off the life support may be permissible, with due consultation and care, especially when it is clear that the life support machine becomes of no use for the already-dead patient or in the case of organ and tissue donation for saving another persons' life which is a routine practice in Iran and some other Muslim countries. Regarding end-stage demented patients, they should be considered as completely human being and according to Islamic teachings; their life is sacred and should not be taken.

Islam and Euthanasia

Physician not only has a duty to relieve the physical ailments of his patients, but also has to consider his mental and spiritual needs as well. The safeguarding of the human life, which is the greatest of god's creation, after Allah himself, is entrusted to the physicians. The physician-patient relationship in the Islamic countries mostly leans on the belief that a physician always does the best for his/her patient and always protects life. This belief has established the myth of the "little god" physician in these countries, and has added to the honor and respect and also amount of trust that people bestow on physicians. The role of a compassionate physician is to protect his patient from death at all costs. In fact the regulations governing the practice of the medical profession stipulate that the physician must practice his profession for the benefit of the individual and the community and respect the life, safety and dignity of his patients. New advances in medicine and biotechnology have increased the controversies regarding such ethical issues as euthanasia; physician assisted suicide, or mercy killing. The medical profession in the past dealt only with the issue of saving lives, but it has now been forced to deal with the of subjects such as mercy killing and ending the life in not only an ethical and professional way but step into the realms of philosophy and religion as well. Euthanasia which is defined as the deliberate killing of a person for his own benefit in order to relive him of enduring pain and suffering has raised many moral, ethical and religious questions. Such questions include: are we ever allowed to kill a terminally ill person who is in sever and debilitating pain? What do different religions have to say about such an act? And under what circumstances, if any, Islam in particular allows the performance of euthanasia?

The word euthanasia derives from the Greek words "euthanatos" meaning good death or easy death. Euthanasia in fact means ending a patient's life according to certain principles and under certain circumstances, where medicine can not cure or provide a life of acceptable quality. The popular Egyptian scholar Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, recently issued a fatwa, or religious ruling, equating euthanasia with murder, but allowing the withholding of treatment that is deemed useless.

Conclusion

Euthanasia has to be legalized. So ends the surgeon's contribution. A typical case of suicide. One isn't able to bear a depressing and burdensome situation. Under intensive stress one sees the best way out of such a situation as one's own death, accomplishing it by one's own hand, without any external help (an unassisted death). Such a person did not ask for the termination of his life, no other person was involved. In was suicide, not euthanasia; not even assisted suicide. Besides cancer there can be many different reasons for which one might commit suicide. This story illustrates the kind of conceptual inaccuracy that can be in play. The forester was not suffering extreme pain, and he could possibly have been cured. If his story is an argument for euthanasia then any trying situation in life would qualify for euthanasia, leading euthanasia to be a first and not last resort. While most would argue that one is free to commit suicide any time he/she assesses his/her life as a burden and meaningless. But suicide has here nothing to do with euthanasia.

Good Death Within Its Historical Context and as a Contemporary Challenge:

A Philosophical Clarification of the Concept of "Euthanasia" proceed with care, but it need not to be decisive in determining the rightness or wrongness of the act. We need, therefore, to address the question of what it is about euthanasia that distinguishes it from, or places it in a separate category to, say, self-killing or murder."Even a discussion which distinguishes between euthanasia and suicide is not necessarily free of conceptual inexactitudes by using terms such as "active euthanasia", "passive euthanasia", "direct euthanasia", "indirect euthanasia", "help in dying" as synonyms for euthanasia, "mercy killing" (German "Gnadentod") as another synonym for euthanasia, and other terms such as "voluntary euthanasia", "involuntary euthanasia", active action causing death (action commissions), passive action (non-acting) causing death (action omissions, ("killing", "letting die" ("allowing to die"), usage of "ordinary"/"extraordinary" means, "intending death", "foreseeing death" (to foresee that an unintended death will occur). Not only is the term "euthanasia" connected with considerable semantic unclearness, but it is also used and abused in various cultural and historical contexts – so for instance, in Germany the term "euthanasia" (Euthanasie) is used to refer to the abuse of the Nazi regime during that period (eugenic euthanasia), while the term "Sterbehilfe"² is used in current euthanasia debates. This use of unspecified terminology - with the term "good death" being used to subsume many very diverse situations and meanings – and including the use of single terms with diverse connotations (e.g. "assisted death" or "dignity") is quite common in these debates. So semantic clarifications are therefore a necessary prerequisite for any ethical reflection on euthanasia to take place. However one of the obstacles for a meaningful discussion of euthanasia is its semantic deficiency. The non-addressed poly semantic that is present hinders understanding, reinforcing superficiality and creating misapprehensions. For instance if one makes use of the old-fashioned "active" and "passive" euthanasia terms, which can still be found in the literature, then the use of one and the same denotation, namely "euthanasia", for ethically entirely different situations (killing by high doses of opiates and allowing to die when the terminally ill person is dying, without causing dysthanasia) is considerably problematic – not only from the semantic point of view.

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