

Case Study on Death and Dying

Name

Course

Instructor

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Introduction

Different religions try to explain why people become ill and why suffering exists. Also, religions have developed views about how people should respond to suffering. One of the issues addressed by different religions is how patients suffering from terminal illnesses should respond to the problem. The issue of whether or not euthanasia should be carried out on such patients has been a major topic of debate by different religions (Miller, 2012). The views of different religions towards diseases, suffering and euthanasia vary, but in some cases, they are similar. This paper presents a comparison of the religious views of Christianity and Hinduism towards disease, suffering and euthanasia. The views of the two religions are applied in an ethical analysis of the case of George, a man who is developing a terminal illness that will result in a lot of suffering and death.

Worldview of Christianity and Hinduism

Christians have several views about the cause of suffering, whether or not the suffering is associated with illness. The first view of Christians is that people suffer because they are sinful. Precisely, suffering is sometimes a punishment from God for the sins that people have. This view is based on biblical teaching in Gal. 6:7-9, which states that people reap what they sow, and they suffer because of their foolishness (Miller, 2012). According to Christianity, God sometimes inflicts suffering on the people that He loves as a way of disciplining them. God requires all people to follow His teachings, and whenever they fail to do so, He uses suffering to discipline them. The second view of Christianity is that suffering, just like joy and peace, is part of human existence. This view is based on the argument that even Jesus suffered. Another view is that God uses suffering as a way of testing the faith of Christians. During the time of suffering, the faith of Christians may be shaken. As such, Christians believe that God uses suffering to test the strength

of their faith. The Christians believe that withstanding suffering strengthens their faith (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

Just like Christianity, Hinduism recognizes that suffering is part of human existence. However, Hinduism teaches that one of the causes of suffering is attachment to the earthly things, such as land and money. According to Hinduism, people also suffer due to sticking on desires for worldly things. In that case, suffering occurs due to the desire to change things that cannot change (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). The concept of Karma is also used to explain the source of suffering among people in Hinduism. Hindus believe in reincarnation. In the perspective of Hinduism, the souls of human beings are attached to physical forms existing on earth. When a person dies, he can be born as a human being or take another form, such as the form of a cow or a dog. If a person dies after doing bad, then he is likely to suffer in the next life. As such, the concept of Karma is based on the idea of cause and effect. When a person does bad things presently, the concept of Karma states that suffering can still occur in this life (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

Ethical Analysis

Question One

The views of Christianity and Hinduism towards suffering can be used to explain the situation being faced by George. George has been diagnosed with a terminal illness called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) that does not have a cure. Although he can live another ten years, most people diagnosed with the illness live for 3 to 5 years. The problem with the disease is that it causes a lot of suffering since it affects the ability of patients to speak, eat, breathe and move. As a result, George will be wheelchair-bound after the development of the symptoms of the illness.

One of the explanations that would be given by Christians is that George's illness and suffering might be a form of punishment for engaging in evil deeds. The case George has not involved in evil deeds; Christians might argue that George's illness and suffering are meant to test and strengthen his faith in God. The Christians might also argue that what George is going through is part of human existence (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). Similarly, the Hindus might argue that George's suffering is part of human nature. However, the Hindus might argue that George's disease and suffering are direct repayments of doing bad things either in the current life or in the past life before reincarnation. Also, the Hindus might argue that George's illness and suffering are as a result of attaching himself to earthly things that are harmful (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

Question Two

Although George has been diagnosed with ALS, the severe symptoms of the disease have not emerged. The knowledge about the effects of the disease has led him to start evaluating his life currently and his life with ALS. He fears losing independence after the emergence of the symptoms of the illness. He feels that the disease will lead him to become a prisoner of his own body. He also feels that he will lose power and dignity and will be going through torture. In short, George thinks that he will lose the value of his life after the emergence of the symptoms. Christianity, however, holds the view that life is valuable in the eyes of God even during the time of sickness.

A Christian would advise George to pay attention to the purpose that God has in his life and focus on developing a positive relationship with God (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). A Christian would argue that enhancing relationship with God will help to improve the value of George's life even during the time of suffering. Hinduism attaches value of life to an individual's deeds. Under Hinduism, George can maintain or improve the value of life if he takes the remaining time to

purify himself. Under Hinduism, purification involves doing end of life activities, such as repenting and correcting bad deeds done previously. To maintain the value of life, George should develop a good relationship with people that are close as long as he is still able to do so (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). Most likely, he will get support from people that will recognize his deeds.

Question Three

After pondering about the suffering that he will go through, George has been contemplating euthanasia. One of the values embedded in Christianity that George should consider is that life is sacred. As such, only God should take it at the time of His wish. Also, the Christian bible teaches that life is a gift from God, and thus, it is precious (Norris, 2009). Further, Christianity teaches that the life of every human being, even during the time of suffering, has a purpose.

In addition, the Christian bible states the body of a human being is a temple of God, and thus, it should be treated with dignity at all times. Based on the aforementioned moral values, a Christian would ask George to avoid taking his life through euthanasia. Similarly, Hinduism teaches that human life is valuable and should be respected (Norris, 2009). According to Hinduism, however, taking own life through euthanasia or any other means can negatively impact Karma. Precisely, taking own life can lead to suffering during the next life.

Question Four

Instead of performing euthanasia, George can consider other available options, based on the teachings of Christianity and Hinduism. Christianity recognizes the importance of the presence of medical approaches that can be used to reduce suffering. However, Christianity is against the idea of using treatment options to prolong life (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). Under the

Christian teachings, George can opt for medical support in palliative care that will not prolong life but will reduce suffering. Although Hinduism teaches that lengthening life through treatments or performing euthanasia can increase Karma, the Hindus believe that it is justifiable to hasten death in extreme conditions (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). If George decides to follow the teachings of Hinduism, he can perform euthanasia in case his suffering becomes worse.

Question Five

In my view, both Christianity and Hinduism give helpful teachings about human suffering. The teachings of the two religions provide psychological support to people that are suffering and offer hints to optimal solutions to the suffering. In the case of George, the teachings of the two religions can guide him when making decisions about his life. Initially, however, the teachings might not make a lot of sense to George, considering his situation. George needs first to meet with health professionals that will help him accept the reality about his disease. For instance, he can talk about it with professional counselors. Doing so will help to increase the stability of his mind and enhance the ability of his mind to receive religious teachings. In addition to considering the religious teaching, George needs to consider other influential factors, such as the law. In my view, treatment meant to enhance reduce or eliminate suffering in George will be an optimal option for George.

References;

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