Discussion Post Prompts: Physician-Assisted Death

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1   Attitudes and Practices of Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide in the United States, Canada, and Europe

Possible discussion post topics

1. What differences are there between the rigorous definition of euthanasia and the rigorous definition of physician-assisted suicide? Is that a morally significant difference? Or to put the question another way: would it make sense for *exactly one* of euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide to be morally permissible? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think that euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are always morally permissible? What about sometimes permissible? Why or why not?

2   Active and Passive Euthanasia

Possible discussion post topics

1. How would you summarize Rachels' second argument against the conventional doctrine, the argument from irrelevant grounds? What is wrong with the conventional doctrine, according to this argument? What problems with that doctrine does Rachels' thought experiment, about babies with intestinal blockage and Down syndrome, bring to light?
2. What do you think of Rachels' thought experiment about Smith and Jones? Do you agree that there is no morally significant difference between Smith's actions and Jones' actions? If so, why? If not, why not?

3   Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers' Brief

Possible discussion post topics

1. Why do the authors reject the two versions of the Court's slippery slope argument against euthanasia? What is wrong with the theoretical version of that argument, according to the authors? What is wrong with the practical version? Do you agree that these versions of the slippery slope argument fail?
2. What is the Solicitor General's argument against legalizing euthanasia? What is wrong with that argument, according to the authors? How might the Solicitor General respond

to the authors' criticisms? How might you defend the Solicitor General, or how might you argue against the Solicitor General's argument?