

Choosing Life over Death

In the story *Me Before You*, by Jojo Moyes, Will Traynor is an extreme sports enthusiast whose life is changed after a motorcycle accident leaves him paralyzed. Lou Clark comes into his life as a caretaker for him, and slowly gets accustomed to his bitterness. They become friends and grow closer until Lou learns what his plans are. Will plans on going to an assisted suicide facility to end his life. He has to go through long tedious operations and constantly has to keep returning to the hospital, and he tried of it all. Even as Lou frantically tries to talk him out of it and takes him on trips to show him life is worth living, she even confesses her love for him, but Will won't be stopped. He does in the end carry out his plans and leaves heartbroken Lou behind.

Physician Assisted Suicide or Voluntary Euthanasia (shortened to PAS or VE) is a treatment where the patient, under guidance of a physician, self-inflicts a lethal drug dose to kill themselves. When someone is put in the unfortunate situation where the possibility of PAS is considered, whether it be some terminal illness or immobilizing disease, they are in a dreadful situation and need to be respected. However, PAS is not the solution and its logic and reasoning fall short.

First of all, no matter the circumstances, you are a human person and that needs to be respected. Secondly, there is help for you. There are lots of modern pain-relieving techniques that allow for a more bearable life. Thirdly, the act in itself goes against the point of a physician, which is to help people. And lastly, allowing PAS starts a domino effect justifying more appalling deeds.

When it comes to human lives, all upstanding people agree that people have unique value. But people will argue that it's their life and that they can do what they want with it. This is true to a point, but we have always had laws and regulations set in place to protect the value of life, whether it be from themselves or from another. This is because humans have an inherent and immeasurable value that the act of killing goes against. You can't say you value life then go and kill someone or yourself. Your value as a human does not waver no matter the circumstances, no matter how you are feeling. Which is why people considering PAS should have their situation reassessed, because they have options and deserve them.

Modern pain relief is one these options. People will often argue that they are doing this out of compassion for the patient, as their treatments and way of life have become painful. The same people often argue that you are better off dead. Since most people alive right now have never been dead, I don't think it's fair to argue that they will be better off. Especially when we have widely available end of

life care in the form of hospice care. Even so, an Oregon Death with Dignity Act Annual Report found that inadequate or concerns about pain control was not the main reason for choosing PAS, it was ranked 6th at 31.4% while the top reasons were losing autonomy (91.4%) and inability to engage in fun activities (86.7%). Showing that people are in a tough situation and just want it over with. Another thing to think about is how up to 77% of terminally ill patients have some sort of depression. Depression is commonly a factor included in whether or not someone's judgment could be clouded, but an Oregon Assisted Suicide report stated that less than 4% of their patients are referred to counseling. Should someone who is depressed be assisted in suicide? Why are these terminally ill suicidal patients not treated with the same urgency as other suicidal people?

Another problem with PAS is how it goes against everything a physician stands for. The Hippocratic Oath, a guiding standard for physicians, states, "I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan; and similarly, I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion." A physician's objective is to protect life not to end it. PAS destroys the physician's integrity and trust with the patient. Notably, the physician has all the power and knowledge in this trust, a patient might feel pressured to do so if their physician brings it up. Especially with those who might have mental issues, they are putting a lot of trust in the physician, who could easily recommend that they choose PAS. We can see

examples of distrust in places like the Netherlands. There euthanasia, hardly far off from PAS, is legal. Patients will sign papers and carry cards with them stating that they do not want to be euthanized.

As I mentioned just before, involuntary euthanasia, is another problem with physician assisted suicide. Decreeing that a terminally ill patient isn't as valuable as another life opens up arguments for worse practices, which in turn get worse and worse. The Netherlands is again a prime example, they decided to not prosecute voluntary euthanasia. This led to euthanasia being legalized, then 3 years later children were allowed to be euthanized. Now they are considering the idea of broadening their scope. They thought of including social factors into euthanasia cases, meaning that those who were poor or had bad social skills could be euthanized. This shows how one justification leads to another, which then leads to a full decline in respect for life.

Me Before You tries to show how PAS is a good thing. I think it shows quite the opposite, it shows how selfish PAS really is. Will betrayed Lou by leaving her behind. He could have kept on living a happy life, there are places he could have stayed to relive his pain. Besides, he would have had Lou by his side. *Me Before You* shows how PAS tries to dehumanize people, it tries to show that life is disposable and doesn't really matter. Which is why we must stand up to physician assisted suicide and euthanasia, and not allow it to spread.

Sources:

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