

Dr. Rogan refused to turn off the father's pacemaker, because he thought it would be no different from smothering the father with a pillow.

- a. Would it have been permissible for Dr. Rogan to turn off the pacemaker (when asked)? If it were permissible, would it also be obligatory? Why or why not?
- b. If it seems permissible/obligatory for Dr. Rogan to turn off the pacemaker, ask yourself if would have been permissible/obligatory for Dr. Rogan to smother the father with a pillow, if asked to do so by the mother. Why or why not?
- c. What would be the overall best thing for Dr. Rogan to do, out of the following options: do nothing, turn off the pacemaker, or smother the father with a pillow? If we don't know for sure, think about expected utility – what are the likely possibilities, which is most likely, and how good or bad is each?

Some definitions

active euthanasia: killing a patient with the intent of alleviating the patient's suffering*

passive euthanasia: letting a patient die with the intent of alleviating the patient's suffering*

* there may be multiple intentions, but this must be one of them

inherent metaphysical difference between x and y : a non-moral difference that holds between all x s and all y s, and is due to "built in" differences between x s and y s.

inherent morally relevant difference between x and y : a "built in" moral difference between all x s and all y s; all else being equal, an act's being an x rather than a y makes it worse or more wrong.

Rachels' argument

1. There is no inherent metaphysical difference between killing someone and letting them die.
 - a. Killing is choosing to cause the death of another; some cases of letting die involve choosing to cause the death of another.
2. There is no inherent morally relevant difference between killing someone and letting them die.
 - a. For some pairs of cases that differ only in whether they involve killing or letting die, there is clearly no moral difference between the two.
3. In the medical context, killing someone is typically less bad than letting them die.
4. Thus, whenever* passive euthanasia is permissible, then active euthanasia is also permissible (if consented to), and whenever passive euthanasia is obligatory, then active euthanasia is obligatory (if consented to).

* There may be exceptions for odd cases – e.g. were aliens to threaten to blow up an orphanage if active but not passive euthanasia is performed.

Should we only look for *inherent* morally relevant differences?

- Some cats are as intelligent, socially integrated, and happy as some humans.
- Thus, there is no inherent, morally relevant difference between all euthanasia of cats and all euthanasia of humans.
- Thus, there is no moral difference between *any* euthanasia of cats and euthanasia of humans.

Is there generally a morally relevant difference between active and passive euthanasia? If so, what?

The interaction between euthanasia and consent

Is it ever permissible to passively euthanize a patient (including withdrawing treatment)? to do so without the patient's consent (but without refusal)? to do so when a patient refuses?

Is it ever permissible to actively euthanize a patient? to do so without the patient's consent (but without refusal)? to do so when a patient refuses?