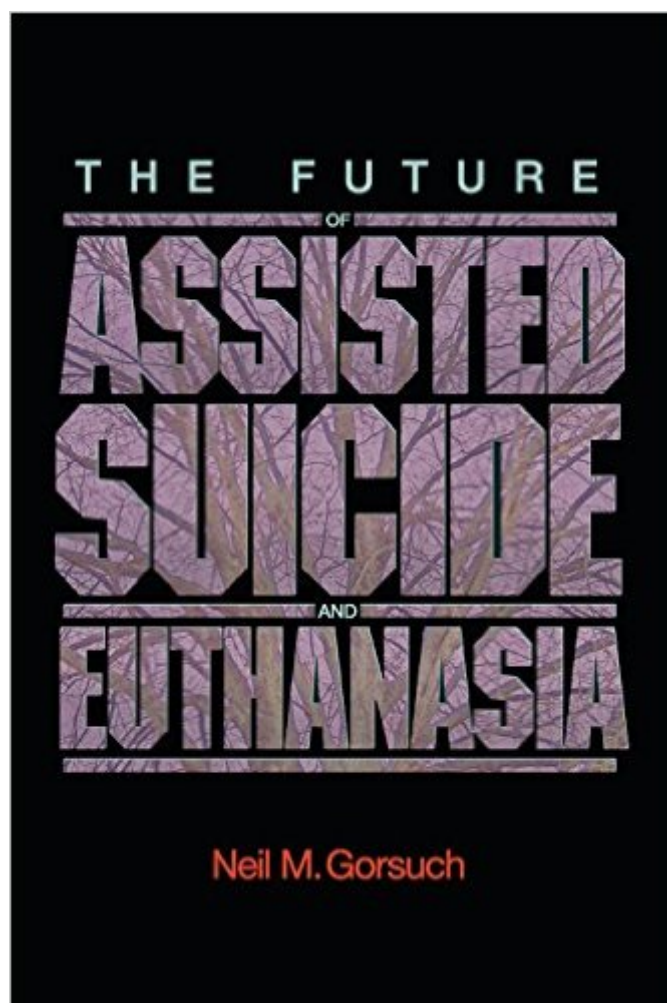


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The Future Of Assisted Suicide And Euthanasia (New Forum Books)



Synopsis

The Future of Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia provides the most thorough overview of the ethical and legal issues raised by assisted suicide and euthanasia--as well as the most comprehensive argument against their legalization--ever published. In clear terms accessible to the general reader, Neil Gorsuch thoroughly assesses the strengths and weaknesses of leading contemporary ethical arguments for assisted suicide and euthanasia. He explores evidence and case histories from the Netherlands and Oregon, where the practices have been legalized. He analyzes libertarian and autonomy-based arguments for legalization as well as the impact of key U.S. Supreme Court decisions on the debate. And he examines the history and evolution of laws and attitudes regarding assisted suicide and euthanasia in American society. After assessing the strengths and weaknesses of arguments for assisted suicide and euthanasia, Gorsuch builds a nuanced, novel, and powerful moral and legal argument against legalization, one based on a principle that, surprisingly, has largely been overlooked in the debate--the idea that human life is intrinsically valuable and that intentional killing is always wrong. At the same time, the argument Gorsuch develops leaves wide latitude for individual patient autonomy and the refusal of unwanted medical treatment and life-sustaining care, permitting intervention only in cases where an intention to kill is present. Those on both sides of the assisted suicide question will find Gorsuch's analysis to be a thoughtful and stimulating contribution to the debate about one of the most controversial public policy issues of our day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gorsuch, who has a law degree from Harvard and a doctorate in legal philosophy from Oxford, has written an erudite scholarly work that has the advantage of being accessible to a broad educated public. He argues that human life has intrinsic value and effectively dismantles arguments for the legalization of assisted suicide and euthanasia. His analysis is completely rational and secular, not relying on any religious argumentation. He provides cogent analyses of the major legal cases in the US and Britain relating to assisted suicide and euthanasia. This is a must read for anyone interested in this issue. No matter what your position in this debate, you will need to understand and engage his arguments.

Legal scholar, and now Federal Appeals Court Judge, Neil Gorsuch has written a comprehensive study of the legal and moral issues in the physician assisted suicide debate. This is the right book at the right time because the practical consequences of mindless "reform" have been largely ignored in the current discussions. The author's detailed descriptions of what has actually happened in Oregon and in the Netherlands which have legalized assisted suicide are especially helpful. The author also presents medical evidence from respected sources including the Journal of Clinical Oncology showing that the major motivation behind physician assisted suicide is not unbearable pain but clinical depression. Generally those favoring physician assisted suicide are on the most liberal side of the American political spectrum. But Gorsuch convincingly argues that the intellectual roots of their proposals are actually from Social Darwinism, the American eugenics movement, and the National Socialist Party of Germany of the 1930's. Adolph Hitler is directly quoted on page 36. What is publicly presented as a civil right involving "personal autonomy" would in practice present a serious threat to the safety of the most vulnerable members of society. Gorsuch quotes with obvious approval the 1994 British House of Lords study which argued that it would not be logically possible to frame sufficient safeguards to guarantee that all "voluntary" suicides would in fact actually be voluntary. A "reform" which completely rejects the traditions of Western Civilization and makes homicide legal is not one which should be adopted without consideration of all the facts. Our author calls the debaters away from the realm of theory, speculation, and one liners--and back to the real world.

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