

Reading Questions for February 20

These questions cover an article by James Rachels called “Active and Passive Euthanasia” and an article by Lindsey Bever titled “Brittany Maynard, as promised, ends her life at 29.” The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

Today we’ll start by looking at an article by James Rachels, which argues in favor of active euthanasia. On Wednesday we’ll look at a response, then on Friday we’ll look at a response to the response. Meanwhile, both today and Wednesday, we’ll take a look at particular cases of euthanasia. Today’s case involves a woman named Brittany Maynard.

*Questions:*

1. Rachels starts on page 288 by introducing the distinction between active and passive euthanasia. What is this distinction? What did the AMA in 1973 think about the distinction? What does Rachels think about it?
2. What is Rachels’ first argument (see pages 288-9)? Is it plausible, why or why not?
3. Starting on page 289 in the paragraph beginning “One reason why ...” Rachels offers a pair of cases involving characters named Smith and Jones. What does Rachels say about these cases and why? What do you think about what he says and why?
4. After reading the article about Brittany Maynard, do you think euthanasia was morally acceptable in her case? Why or why not?