

Speech Critique (Mary Collins' speech about euthanasia)

ARGUMENTS:

Mary Collins' speech advocates the legalization of euthanasia on two main foundations: freedom of choice and humanitarian relief of pain. The use of these two contexts as the basis for her arguments results directly in a very well-balanced mix of ethos, logos, and pathos.

Since the very beginning of her speech, Mary shows the audience how the prohibition of euthanasia is against the most fundamental human rights because it denies the people's freedom to choose for themselves. Mary also addresses the humanitarian side of the issue, stressing the fact that most people who are terminally ill are going to die anyway in a short period of time, and performing euthanasia helps alleviate the pain, abbreviating the agony (a very effective mix of logos and pathos).

Before proposing euthanasia as the best solution to the suffering of the terminally ill, however, Mary spends a considerable amount of time showing the inefficiency of two possible alternative solutions: 1) chemical therapy (basically making the audience notice that the undesirable side-effects of chemical treatment almost always offset the benefits from the relief of the pain), and 2) hospice care (on the grounds of the discriminating behavior present in the hospice environment).

As a final stab at alternative life-(and also torment)prolonging therapies, Mary shows the astronomical economic costs that they impose on the family of the terminally-ill person, and she also observes that doctors performing euthanasia will not be really killing anybody. They will just be helping someone relieve their anguish.

The sources cited throughout the speech are numerous, adequate, and varied: Mary supports her thesis with documentation taken from the American Medical Association, the Department of Labor, a local poll, a court case, a book called "Last Rights," by Barbara Lowe, and also interviews with doctors and a student at Bowman Gray School of Medicine.

To sum up, her arguments are sound and effective, and show a deep interest in the subject, which, in turn, greatly helps build her credibility as a speaker. Only a couple of suggestions: I would have appreciated some statistics in regards to the number of terminally ill patients who would actually ask for euthanasia if it were legal and I would have also liked a little more information about the local poll that she mentions when she discusses the advantages of euthanasia

ORGANIZATION:

Mary's speech follows the *Monroe's motivated sequence* organizational pattern. It is comprised of five main parts: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action.

In the first part, Mary captures the attention of the audience with a quote taken from a court case, in 1891. The quote defines the right of all human beings over the care of their own person and their own lives as the most fundamental right of all. Right after this Mary shows her audience how this right is unquestionably violated if people do not have the right to put an end to their sufferings and die in peace if they want. The attention of the audience is captured even more when she says that, according to the American Medical Association, by the year 2015, 35% of the American population will have to face such life/death decisions. Direct relation to the audience is effectively established. In the "attention" part, which can be considered the introduction of the speech, Mary also offers a clear preview of the main points of the body of her speech, a device which also helps in getting the listeners' attention and making the speech clearer and memorable to the audience.

In the second part, the so called "need" part, Mary uses pathos in order to define the existence and the importance of the problem: euthanasia is not legal, and therefore, terminally ill patients cannot choose for themselves, and are condemned to live in excruciating pain the few remaining moments of their lives.

The "solution" part is divided into two sub-parts. The first one offers a rejection of two alternatives to euthanasia, chemical therapy and hospice care, and the second one shows the effectiveness and the superiority of euthanasia over any other pain-relieving method. Mary offers her audience a wide variety of actual statistics and hypothetical examples in order to prove the feasibility and the suitability of euthanasia as a solution.

In the "visualization" part, Mary turns to pathos again, and guides her audience through an imaginary car accident on Silas Creek Parkway (note the use of a familiar topos), resulting in the complete loss of almost all the fundamental vital functions. "You turn to the doctor," Mary says to her listener, "and cry 'Please let me die,' but the doctor says 'No, I can't,' because euthanasia is not legal." By showing how the world would be worse without euthanasia, the speaker establishes once again the value of her solution.

In the last part, Mary promotes action, by asking her audience to actively support her idea by writing to the American Medical Association, and asking for euthanasia to be legalized. This part is the acme, and also the conclusion of the speech, the moment where the whole speech is tied together and brought to a sense of completion.

LANGUAGE:

Throughout the speech, the language that Mary uses is rather simple and familiar. By using such language, the speaker achieves a closer contact with the audience, and the clarity of her message is also enhanced. Another relevant aspect of the use of language in the speech is the effective use of dramatic connotations: words such as "misfortune," "torment," "agonize," "excruciating pain," etc, certainly help achieving a stronger emotional impact on the listeners' hearts.

CREDIBILITY:

I would say that Mary is undoubtedly a credible speaker. However, it is important to notice that most of her credibility is derived credibility. The initial credibility that Mary has, when talking about euthanasia, is only that which originates from her sincerity and conviction, not being old enough to advocate euthanasia as one of the most important issues of her own life. It is through the effective use of statistics and research data, and, most of all, through the extensive and effective rejection of counter-arguments, that Mary obtains a higher level of derived and total credibility.

DELIVERY AND STYLE:

The extemporaneous quality of Mary's delivery is very good, and the main reason for that, I think, is the very high level of spontaneity and sincerity of her words, that makes the speech sound well organized and prepared, but neither overpracticed, nor memorized.

Close eye-contact is effectively maintained through the whole speech, and this also helps adding spontaneity and sincerity to her words. Also, establishing comfortable and constant eye contact, the attention of the audience is captured in a more direct and convincing way.

As far as Mary's vocal qualities are concerned, I found them generally good, although a little more inflection and a slightly higher volume, in my opinion, would definitely increase the speaker's clarity. Deeper diction, and the elimination of a few vocalised pauses also constitute areas for improvement.

Mary's non-verbal presentation is very good. Her personal appearance (dress, make-up, etc) is appropriate for the situation, and her posture and movements are well controlled, so that no nervousness or discomfort shows, and so is her facial expression. Her hand-gestures are very few, but this lack does not go in any way to the detriment of her message. The enthusiasm that she shows is certainly appropriate for the thesis of her speech: Mary's words are delivered with sincerity and heart-felt conviction, even though the topic of the speech itself does not allow too much enthusiasm or enjoyment.