

Discussion Post Examples and Comment Examples

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1 Discussion Post Example for “Why I Hope to Die at 75”

Emanuel claims that living well beyond age 75 has serious drawbacks for one’s family. Though I agreed with some of his reasons for this claim, I disagreed with others.

For instance, Emanuel writes that older parents’ expectations and demands place a significant burden on their adult children (p. 5). According to Emanuel, the burden is so significant that quite often, adult children would be better off if their parents died once they reached 75 years of age. I disagree with this. Though this might be true in some rare cases, I think that it is usually false. In most situations, the parents of adult children—though a bit of a burden on those children—are not nearly as much of a burden as Emanuel suggests. They are not so great a burden that their children would be better off if they were dead. So I found this part of Emanuel’s argument unpersuasive.

2 Comment Example for the Above Discussion Post

I liked this post: it got me thinking about whether Emanuel was right to claim that living beyond 75 is often really bad for one’s family. I am not sure whether I agree with either the post or Emanuel, however. I do not know of any studies which explore the question of whether elderly parents of adult children are a significant burden on those children. Perhaps elderly parents are often a significant burden, as Emanuel suggests. But is there any empirical data to confirm this? Could someone point me to the relevant studies? Or perhaps elderly parents are often not a significant burden, as this post suggests. But again, is there any empirical data which supports such a view? So perhaps we should not draw any definitive conclusions just yet. And perhaps we should read Emanuel as simply bringing a potential problem to our attention: elderly parents of adult children may well place a significant burden on those children. The next task is to conduct some studies to see if that is so.

3 Discussion Post Example for “The Badness of Death and the Goodness of Life”

In this post, I summarize Broome approach to determining the badness of death.

Broome argues that to assess how bad a particular death is for someone, we must do three things (p. 6). First, we must compute how good this person's life actually was. Second, we must compute how good this person's life would have been if they had lived longer. Third, we must compare those amounts of good.

Here is how Broome uses all this to determine the badness of a particular person's death. If the first amount of good is significantly lower than the second, then this person's death is quite bad. For if this person had lived longer, then they would have had a much better life. If the first amount of good is only slightly lower than the second, then this person's death is bad, but only slightly so. For if this person had lived longer, then they would have had only a slightly better life. And if the first amount of good is higher than the second, then this person's death is not bad at all. Their death benefits them: for if they had lived longer, then their life would have been, overall, worse.

4 Comment Example for the Above Discussion Post

Thanks to the person who posted this: it is a really nice, clear summary of Broome's approach to the badness of death. That part of the reading confused me, so I appreciate that this post clarifies it.

I wonder what a person's life would have to be like, in order for their death to actually benefit them. Presumably, if someone was constantly being tortured, then death would be better than continuing to live. The pain of the torture would make a longer life worse than a shorter one. But what other things might make death beneficial?

This seems like an important question because it crops up in medical contexts all the time. For instance, there is lots of debate over whether euthanasia—which is when a sick person asks their doctor to end their life—is morally permissible. Often, people ask to be euthanized because they are in a lot of pain, or they are really depressed. I wonder whether Broome's approach to the badness of death could help us determine the conditions under which euthanasia is morally permissible.