Beyond the Facade:
Ethical and Cultural Implications of Release in *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of release[1] in *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, analyzing both its surface meaning and its true nature while drawing comparisons to real-world euthanasia. In the novel, release is presented as a peaceful transition, justified through euphemistic language and cultural rituals. As a result, the community perceives it as an honorable practice rather than an ethical dilemma. However, Jonas's[2] discovery of its true nature—revealing that it is, in fact, a form of euthanasia—exposes the moral emptiness of his society and highlights the dangers of institutionalized death. This study explores four key aspects: the surface meaning and deeper reality of release, the psychological impact on those who perform release, the cultural mechanisms that justify it, and its connection to contemporary ethical debates on euthanasia. Particular attention is given to Canada's Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD[3]) program, which has expanded its eligibility to include non-terminal patients and those facing economic hardship. While *The Giver* does not explicitly reference real-world euthanasia policies, its critique of institutional control over life and death resonates with the ethical concerns surrounding MAiD. By comparing *The Giver*'s release with real-world euthanasia, this paper highlights the risks of prioritizing societal efficiency over individual dignity and prompts a critical examination of the moral complexities inherent in state-sanctioned end-of-life decisions.

1. Introduction

Lois Lowry is a celebrated author of young adult fiction, renowned for her ability to craft stories that delve deeply into complex moral dilemmas within structured societies. Among her most acclaimed works is *The Giver* (1993), a novel that earned the Newbery Medal for its profound exploration of individuality, conformity, and the ethical compromises required to maintain a seemingly perfect society. Over the years, *The Giver* has become a cornerstone in discussions of dystopian literature, inspiring readers to reflect on pressing ethical questions related to societal harmony and personal freedom. Its impact extends beyond literature, as it has also been incorporated into educational curricula and was adapted into a feature film in 2014, further broadening its audience.

Set in a seemingly utopian society, *The Giver* portrays a world free from pain, hunger, and violence. However, this tranquility comes at a significant cost: the suppression of emotions, the eradication of individuality, and the systematic use of euphemistic language to mask morally reprehensible practices. Central to this system is the concept of release a term that conceals the community's

reliance on euthanasia as a method of population control and conformity enforcement. Jonas, the protagonist, is selected as the Receiver of Memory and is tasked with inheriting the collective memories of humanity's past. Through this process, Jonas uncovers the true nature of release prompting him to question the moral foundations of his world and ultimately reject its dehumanizing structure.

Scholars have extensively analyzed the thematic elements of *The Giver*, particularly its critique of societal control and the ethical dilemmas posed by practice of release. Alison Nicole Roozeboom examines release as a linguistic and ideological tool designed to desensitize the community to its ethical implications. She argues that the euphemistic framing of release is central to maintaining compliance among residents, as it cloaks an act of violence in a veneer of necessity and benevolence (Roozeboom 26). Roozeboom further contends that the community education system, strict social norms and information concealment instill a sense of obligation and obedience or maintain a state of ignorance and suppress critical thinking and ethical enquiry (Roozeboom 24). This creates a populace that not only accepts release but perceives it as an integral component of societal harmony.

However, while Roozeboom's analysis effectively highlights the systemic role of release as a mechanism of control, her work leaves certain areas underexplored. For instance, the psychological and moral conflicts experienced by those who perform release, such as Jonas's father, are largely overlooked. Similarly, the cultural mechanisms that justify the practice as a normative part of community life—through rituals, traditions, and euphemistic language—deserve further examination. Furthermore, Roozeboom's study offers limited discussion of how release parallels real-world ethical debates, such as those surrounding euthanasia and selective termination, and how these parallels enhance the novel's relevance to contemporary discourse.

This paper seeks to address these gaps by examining release through four underexplored perspectives: (1) the surface meaning and the true meaning of release, (2) the psychological and moral conflicts faced by those who execute it, (3) the cultural and linguistic frameworks that justify its existence, and (4) its resonance with contemporary ethical issues. This study will compare *The Giver*'s depiction of release with contemporary euthanasia debates, focusing on Canada's MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying) program. While *The Giver* was published more than 20 years before MAiD's legalization in 2016, the novel anticipates ethical dilemmas that have since emerged in real-world euthanasia discussions. Canada presents a compelling case study due to its rapid policy expansion, including eligibility for non-terminal patients, individuals with disabilities, and those facing socioeconomic hardships. By analyzing these real-world issues alongside *The Giver*'s depiction of release, this study aims to uncover the multifaceted implications of institutionalized death and the risks of policies that, even when framed as compassionate, may inadvertently devalue human life.

2. Meaning of Release
2.1 The Surface Meaning of Release

While the introduction establishes the thematic significance of release as a mechanism of control

in *The Giver*, it primarily outlines the concept at a broad level, emphasizing its role in maintaining societal order through euphemistic language and systemic desensitization. To delve deeper into this mechanism, it is necessary to first examine how release is portrayed within the community. By analyzing its various manifestations—punishment, the release of the elderly, and the release of newchildren[4]—we can uncover the ways in which the community frames and justifies this practice. This section will explore how release is depicted and how its ambiguous nature ensures that residents remain unaware of its true implications, reinforcing the very system of control.

To answer this question, we can examine three distinct contexts in which release is employed—as punishment, as a ritual for the elderly, and as a means of eliminating newchildren who fail to meet community standards. Despite their differences, each of these instances shares a key characteristic: ambiguity. The lack of transparency surrounding what happens after release—described simply as going to "Elsewhere"—allows the community to sustain its control without the burden of ethical reflection.

First, punishment by release is portrayed as the ultimate consequence for individuals who fail to conform to societal rules. This form of release instills fear among residents, ensuring strict adherence to regulations. The narrator states, "For a contributing citizen to be released from the community was a final decision, a terrible punishment, an overwhelming statement of failure" (3). By associating release with personal failure or moral inadequacy, the community leverages it as a deterrent against dissent or rule-breaking. This punitive aspect is particularly effective because it influences not only the individual but also the collective mindset. Residents internalize the fear of failure and ostracization, creating an environment where obedience is the only path to security.

In stark contrast, the release of the elderly is celebrated as a moment of honor and closure. It is described as a joyful farewell offering a sense of gratitude for their contributions. The ceremonial nature of this practice reinforces its positive framing. When an elderly woman describes the release of Roberto, she enthusiastically says, "This morning we celebrated the release of Roberto," and adds, "It was wonderful" (39). This celebratory framing allows residents to view the release of the elderly as a dignified and inevitable part of life, shielding them from the reality that it is, in fact, a euphemism for euthanasia. The ritualization of release effectively conceals its dehumanizing nature and prevents residents from questioning its morality.

Lastly, the release of newchildren is perhaps the most emotionally charged form of this practice. Infants who fail to meet the community's strict developmental or health standards are released under the guise of maintaining societal perfection. For Nurturers[5] like Jonas's father, this act conflicts with their caregiving role, yet it is rationalized as a necessary sacrifice for the greater good. Jonas's father describes his duties when identical twins are born: "No, I just have to make the selection. I weigh them, hand the larger over to a Nurturer who's standing by, waiting, and then I get the smaller one all cleaned up and comfy. Then I perform a small Ceremony of Release and—" (171). This detached description underscores the routine nature of release, even when it involves such morally fraught

decisions. The use of the term "Ceremony" further sanitizes the act, framing it as an orderly and even kind process. However, Jonas's eventual discovery of what release truly entails—lethal injection followed by disposal—reveals the chilling reality behind this euphemism.

Through this examination, it can be seen that releases may differ in form and subject matter, but in all cases they are expressed with deliberate ambiguity and function as a tool to shut down residents' doubts. What these releases have in common is that their essence is made invisible to the population. The ambiguity of the release maintains order in the community and prevents residents from questioning them. Thus, we can conclude that releases are not merely a means of population control, but are at the core of the control system that sustains this dystopian society.

2.2 The True Meaning of Release

In the previous section, I analyzed how release is portrayed within the community, highlighting its function as an instrument of social control through euphemism and ritualization. In this section, however, I shift my focus to the nature of this practice. The carefully maintained illusion of release as a peaceful transition is shattered when Jonas uncovers its grim reality. This revelation serves as a turning point, both in his personal transformation and in the novel's broader critique of societal complacency. By examining Jonas's emotional and moral awakening, I will explore how *The Giver* exposes the ethical emptiness of the community, the dangers of emotional desensitization, and the power of language in shaping perception.

While the community views release as a peaceful transition, Jonas's realization reveals the disturbing truth behind it: release is a euphemism for euthanasia. This revelation occurs during a pivotal moment in the novel when the Giver[6] shows Jonas a recording of his father releasing one of a pair of twin infants. Up until this point, Jonas had believed the smaller twin would be sent to "Elsewhere," a place he had been taught to associate with a benevolent, peaceful destination. However, the recording shatters this illusion, unveiling the clinical, emotionless process of administering a lethal injection: "As he continued to watch, the newchild, no longer crying, moved his arms and legs in a jerking motion. Then he went limp. His head fell to the side, his eyes half open. Then he was still" (187); "The little twin lay motionless. His father was putting things away. Folding the blanket. Closing the cupboard" (187); "His father loaded the carton containing the body into the chute and gave it a shove" (188). This moment profoundly impacts Jonas, triggering a moral awakening that drives his eventual rebellion against the community. Watching his father—a figure he had always trusted and admired—carry out such a mechanical and inhumane act forces Jonas to confront the ethical void underlying his society. His visceral reaction, described as "Jonas felt a ripping sensation inside himself, the feeling of terrible pain clawing its way forward to emerge in a cry" (189) signifies the beginning of his rejection of the community's moral framework. He exclaims in horror, "*He* [Jonas's father] *killed it* [the newchild] *! My father killed it!*" (188), as the stark reality of release sinks in. For the first time, Jonas feels the full weight of emotions such as grief, anger, and betrayal—emotions the

rest of the community is incapable of experiencing.

The Giver explains that this inability to comprehend the ethical implications of their actions stems from the community's systematic emotional desensitization. Through the use of emotion-suppressing pills and the eradication of memories, the community ensures that its residents, including Jonas's father, remain ignorant of the true nature of their actions. The Giver emphasizes this when he says, "Listen to me, Jonas. They can't help it. *They know nothing*" (191). This statement underscores the dehumanizing effects of a society that prioritizes conformity and order over compassion and individuality. By stripping its citizens of the capacity to feel deeply or think critically, the community creates a controlled environment where atrocities like release are carried out without moral conflict.

Through Jonas's eyes, *The Giver* critiques the dangers of linguistic manipulation and moral complacency. His realization of the true meaning of release marks a pivotal moment in the novel, as it shatters his trust in the community's moral framework and forces him to confront its hidden brutality. This revelation also acts as a turning point in the narrative, shaping Jonas's journey and the novel's central themes. It compels him to recognize the inherent corruption in his society and drives him to seek change. His rebellion, sparked by this newfound awareness, became a symbol of resistance against dehumanization and conformity. For readers, the scene raises profound ethical questions about the value of individual life, the moral compromises made for societal control, and the perils of sacrificing morality for efficiency.

By exposing the brutal truth behind release, *The Giver* invites readers to reflect on the ethical dilemmas faced in both the fictional world and the real one. It serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of desensitization and the dangers of prioritizing collective stability over individual integrity. This duality forces readers to grapple with complex questions about humanity, ethics, and the fragile balance between freedom and order.

3. Psychological Impact on Executors

The previous section explored how Jonas's discovery of the true nature of release serves as a pivotal moment in both his moral awakening and the novel's critique of societal control. However, Jonas is not the only one affected by the reality of release. This chapter shifts focus to those who carry out the act of release—specifically, Jonas's father—and examines the psychological impact on the executors themselves. While the community's structure conditions its citizens to accept and perform release without emotional conflict, subtle contradictions in Jonas's father's actions suggest that some level of suppressed moral awareness exists. By analyzing his behavior, as well as the reactions of other community members, we can explore the tension between obedience and latent emotional conflict, revealing the cracks in the community's rigid control.

This chapter mainly examines the psychological state and emotions of Jonas's father, who performs the release of newborns, focusing on how his actions drive Jonas to rescue Gabriel[7] and escape the community. Jonas's father, who had always loved caring for children since his youth, was assigned

the role of Nurturer. He took pride in his job and found fulfillment in his work. Within the community, release is understood as a transition to "Elsewhere," and while considered a somber event, it is not seen as inherently unethical or harmful. However, the release of a newchild, particularly one who has done no wrong, poses a unique challenge for Nurturers like Jonas's father. It is portrayed as a distressing act that leaves Nurturers feeling a sense of failure (54-55).

Although the community suppresses emotions, preventing individuals from feeling sadness or guilt about sending a newchild to "Elsewhere," there are signs that Jonas's father finds the act of release difficult and wishes to avoid it. For example, he takes Gabriel, a newchild with developmental delays and sleep issues, home to care for him, attempting to shield him from being released for being "Inadequate" (54). This decision reflects a subconscious emotional resistance to the act of release, even if he is unaware of it. Jonas and his family embrace Gabriel's presence, finding it a positive addition to their household.

The conflict arises when Jonas's father must perform the release of one of a pair of identical twins based on their weight, as dictated by community rules. On the evening before the scheduled release, Jonas's father speaks about the procedure with casual ease: "Then, I performed a small Ceremony of Release and—" (171). When Jonas asks, "And somebody else comes to get him? Somebody from Elsewhere?," his father cheerfully replies, "That's right, Jonas-bonus" (172).

At this point, Jonas, unaware of the true nature of release, believes his father's words. Jonas also holds to the community's value that lying is prohibited, so he trusts that his father's explanation is truthful. However, when the Giver later shows Jonas the recording of his father's actions, the truth of release is revealed. Instead of being sent to "Elsewhere," the lighter twin is injected in the forehead with a lethal substance. Jonas watches as his father disposes of the lifeless body, saying, "Bye-bye, little guy" (188). This devastating revelation shatters Jonas's trust in his father and exposes the euphemistic facade of release. Overcome with horror and rage, Jonas realizes that release means death and refuses to return home.

Analyzing Jonas's father's behavior reveals a stark contradiction: before release is officially decided, he demonstrates care and a desire to protect Gabriel, even bringing him home to provide extra attention. However, once a release decision is made, he carries out the task with mechanical efficiency and emotional detachment. This duality suggests that Nurturers are not entirely devoid of emotions, but Nurturers are instead caught between the community's rules and their suppressed feelings.

The fact that Jonas's father lies about the nature of release to his family also raises questions. The community's prohibition against lying and its emphasis on truth suggest that he knowingly misleads Jonas and Jonas's sister Lily by describing release as a benign transition. If Nurturers truly lacked emotions, there would be no reason to fabricate such comforting narratives. Jonas's fatherly care for Gabriel and his reluctance to release the twin further support the idea that some level of emotional conflict exists within him, despite the community's conditioning.

The psychological impact of release is not limited to Nurturers. Jonas's mother, a high-ranking official in the Department of Justice, also exhibits signs of fear and unease. For example, when a repeat offender faces release, she admits, "I feel frightened, too, for him" (11). Her reaction suggests that even those tasked with upholding the community's rules experience moments of emotional conflict and fear regarding release.

These examples indicate that the community's residents are not entirely devoid of emotions. Instead, they experience a conflict between their conditioned obedience and suppressed feelings. Nurturers like Jonas's father illustrate how this psychological tension manifests in their actions and decisions. While the Giver states "Listen to me, Jonas. They [the residents] can't help it. *They know nothing*" (191), these examples suggest otherwise. The lie about release being a transition to "Elsewhere" and the emotional care shown for Gabriel imply that some residents possess a latent sense of empathy or moral awareness, even if it is suppressed by the community's structure.

4. Cultural Justification of Release

The previous chapter examined the psychological impact of release on those who carry it out, particularly Jonas's father. His actions revealed a subtle but significant contradiction—while the community conditions its citizens to accept release without emotional conflict, certain behaviors suggest suppressed moral awareness.

This chapter examines how linguistic manipulation and euphemistic framing justify the practice of release within the community. As previously discussed, release, in reality, signifies euthanasia or killing. However, the community's residents perceive it as a peaceful and positive act, thanks to a cultural framework that suppresses critical thinking and ethical questioning. Education and ritualization play pivotal roles in desensitizing residents to the true nature of release and embedding it as a normative and even celebratory practice.

Among the three types of release, which are the punitive release, the release of newchildren, and the release of elderly, the release of elderly citizens stands out as "a wonderful ceremony" (145), rather than a punishment. The linguistic manipulation is particularly evident in these cases, as both the released individuals and their community view it as an honorable farewell.

In the community, elderly citizens live in the "the House of the Old" (35). When they reach a certain unspecified age, they are released. This process is presented as a culmination of their contributions to the community and an opportunity to honor their lives. Jonas learns about the release of an elderly man named Roberto during his volunteer work at the House of the Old. A resident named Larissa describes the ceremony as follows: "This morning we celebrated the release of Roberto," she told him [Jonas]. "It was wonderful" (39). She further elaborates on the details of the ceremony: "Well, there was the telling of his life. That is always first. Then the toast. We all raised our glasses and cheered. We chanted the anthem. He made a lovely good-bye speech. And several of us made little speeches wishing him well" (41). She then adds, "You should have seen the look on his face

when they let him go" (41).

This description portrays release as a joyous and respectful occasion, reinforcing its positive connotations within the community. However, Larissa's response to Jonas's question about what happens after the release reveals the cultural ambiguity surrounding its true nature: "I don't know. I don't think anybody does, except the committee. He [Roberto] just bowed to all of us and then walked, like they all do, through the special door in the Releasing Room. But you should have seen his look. Pure happiness, I'd call it" (41).

The ceremony for the release of elderly transforms the act of euthanasia into an event imbued with gratitude and respect. Through years of ritualization, the community ensures that release is perceived as an act of appreciation and honor, effectively masking its violent reality. Larissa's description demonstrates how both the released individuals and the audience view it as a joyous and meaningful moment.

However, while release is celebrated, its details remain shrouded in mystery. Residents are intentionally kept ignorant of what happens after the person to be released is taken into the Releasing Room. This deliberate lack of transparency reinforces the euphemistic framing of release as a benign transition rather than a violent termination.

The ambiguity surrounding release is further complicated by the conditions of the elderly in the House of the Old. While residents may face minor physical limitations, such as requiring assistance with bathing, they are not depicted as severely incapacitated or suffering from advanced age-related conditions. This raises questions about the true motives behind the timing of their release. For instance, the elderly residents Jonas encounters are not bedridden or mentally incapacitated. Instead, they seem relatively healthy, albeit slightly frail. This suggests that the community's system prioritizes efficiency and resource management over the well-being of individuals. By releasing elderly citizens before they require extensive care, the community avoids the burden of long-term healthcare, thereby ensuring that resources remain focused on the collective good.

Fiona, Jonas's friend, is assigned as a Caretaker of the Old, highlighting how labor is allocated to support the elderly. However, the system's underlying goal appears to be minimizing the need for such caregiving roles by releasing individuals before they reach a point of dependency. This approach reflects the community's broader utilitarian philosophy, where efficiency and harmony are prioritized over the intrinsic value of individual lives.

5. Fiction and Reality: Connecting Release to Ethical Issues in the Real World

The previous chapter explored how linguistic manipulation, and cultural rituals obscure the reality of release allowing the community to perceive it as a peaceful and even honorable practice. This system of justification ensures that residents do not question the ethical implications of release reinforcing the dystopian society's control over life and death.

However, when we compare this fictional framework to real-world euthanasia practices,

significant ethical and procedural differences emerge. While both involve the termination of life under the guise of reducing suffering, real-world euthanasia is governed by strict legal and ethical safeguards, emphasizing patient autonomy and informed consent. Yet, as contemporary debates on euthanasia reveal, there are growing concerns about how systemic pressures—economic hardship, social inequality, and inadequate healthcare access—can distort the meaning of "voluntary" euthanasia.

This chapter examines the similarities and differences between release in *The Giver* and euthanasia in the real world, exploring the ethical dilemmas posed by each. Building on the discussion of cultural justification in Chapter 4, this section will assess how real-world euthanasia, despite its intended safeguards, sometimes mirrors the troubling aspects of release particularly when external pressures influence an individual's decision. By analyzing studies from Canada's MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying) system, we will investigate whether economic and systemic factors compromise the ethical foundation of euthanasia, drawing parallels to the dystopian implications of release.

Lois Lowry's *The Giver* portrays release as a practice that superficially resembles real-world euthanasia but diverges fundamentally in its ethical and procedural framework. Both involve the notion of a "painless death," yet their implementation reveals critical differences. Real-world euthanasia emphasizes patient autonomy, requiring informed consent and rigorous ethical oversight. Conversely, in *The Giver*, release entirely disregards the individual's will, prioritizing communal efficiency and harmony over personal dignity.

Release in *The Giver* aligns with the concept of active euthanasia, where life is terminated through direct medical intervention, such as an injection. However, the process excludes any consideration for consent or self-determination. For instance, the release of newchilden or the elderly is depicted as means to preserve societal perfection and to efficiently eliminate lives that do not conform to the community's stringent standards. This focus on collective efficiency highlights a stark contrast with the principles of real-world euthanasia, which aim to uphold individual dignity.

In countries where euthanasia is legal—such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, and some U.S. states—strict conditions are imposed to ensure ethical practices (Kodama 27). However, ethical concerns regarding the scope and implementation of such policies have long been debated. Although *The Giver* was published over two decades before the legalization of Canada's MAiD, its depiction of institutionalized death and the prioritization of societal efficiency foreshadows many of the ethical debates that have emerged in contemporary euthanasia policies.

Canada's MAiD program, despite being a relatively recent development in global euthanasia legislation, presents a compelling case for comparison due to its rapid expansion and increasingly broad eligibility criteria. Unlike euthanasia laws in many European countries, which primarily focus on terminal illnesses, Canada's MAiD extends eligibility to non-terminal patients, including individuals with disabilities and those facing socioeconomic hardships. This shift has raised critical ethical questions regarding autonomy and coercion, particularly in cases where financial constraints and

inadequate social support may influence a person's decision to seek euthanasia.

Examining Canada's MAiD alongside *The Giver*'s depiction of release allows for a deeper exploration of how institutional policies—whether in fiction or reality—can, even when framed as compassionate, risk devaluing individual life. Although Lowry did not base her novel on Canada's euthanasia policies, the concerns raised by MAiD exemplify the broader real-world anxieties surrounding the intersection of euthanasia, systemic pressures, and the potential for ethical compromise. As Mami Kodama highlights, Canada's approach differs from other nations in three key aspects: (1) the categorization of both active euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide under the singular term MAiD, blurring distinctions between end-of-life care options; (2) the expansion of authority beyond physicians to include nurse practitioners in performing euthanasia; and (3) the MAiD's "unbearable suffering" requirement is appended with the words "cannot be alleviated under conditions that the patient considers acceptable" (Kodama 44-45). These factors illustrate how legislative shifts, even when implemented with the intent of patient welfare, can lead to ethical gray areas where economic and systemic pressures shape individual choices.

The release in *The Giver* serves as a striking metaphor for the dangers of a society that prioritizes collective efficiency over individual dignity. While the novel does not explicitly reference contemporary euthanasia policies, its critique of dehumanization and the risk of institutionalized life-and-death decision-making remains highly relevant to ongoing debates about euthanasia, particularly in cases where external pressures may distort genuine choice. The novel compels readers to critically examine not only dystopian governance but also real-world policies that, if left unchecked, could compromise the intrinsic value of human life.

6. Conclusion

The Giver presents a dystopian society where the concept of release is carefully constructed through euphemistic language, cultural reinforcement, and psychological conditioning to maintain social order. Initially perceived as a benign transition, release is ultimately revealed as a method of institutionalized euthanasia, exposing the ethical void at the core of the community. Jonas's moral awakening and rebellion underscore the critique of a society that prioritizes efficiency over individual dignity.

By examining the psychological impact of release on its executors, the cultural justification that normalizes the practice, and its broader implications in real-world euthanasia debates, this paper has highlighted the novel's relevance beyond fiction. The analysis of Canada's MAiD system further demonstrates how external pressures—such as economic constraints and inadequate social support—can blur the ethical boundaries of euthanasia, mirroring the themes explored in *The Giver*. While Lowry did not base her novel on contemporary euthanasia policies, the ethical dilemmas she presents remain strikingly relevant. The expansion of MAiD eligibility to non-terminal patients, individuals with disabilities, and those facing socioeconomic hardships raises urgent questions about autonomy

and coercion, echoing the concerns embedded in the novel's portrayal of release.

Ultimately, *The Giver* serves as a cautionary tale, urging readers to critically examine the mechanisms through which societies justify life-and-death decisions. Whether in fiction or reality, the risks of institutionalized euthanasia highlight the need for ethical safeguards that protect human dignity and ensure that the right to die does not become an obligation to die. By drawing connections between *The Giver* and contemporary euthanasia debates, this study underscores the importance of maintaining ethical vigilance in policies that govern end-of-life decisions, ensuring that compassion does not become a means of systemic devaluation of life.

Notes

1. In *The Giver*, release refers to the community's euphemistic term for euthanasia. It is used to describe the termination of individuals who no longer conform to the community's standards, including the elderly, infants who fail to meet health standards, and criminals. The act is portrayed as a necessary procedure to maintain societal harmony and efficiency.

2. Jonas is the protagonist of *The Giver*. Selected as the Receiver of Memory, he is entrusted with preserving the collective memories of humanity's past. Through this process, he discovers the true nature of release and begins to question the ethical foundations of his community.

3. The following information on MAiD is based on Mami Kodama's *What Is Happening in Countries Where Euthanasia Is Legal* (2023).

4. The term newchildren refers to infants born within the community. The community has strict standards for child development and health, and infants who fail to meet these standards are often released. The term reflects the depersonalization of individuals in the community, reducing them to mere components in the society's effort to maintain perfection.

5. A Nurturer is a designated caregiver for infants and young children in the community. Jonas's father, as a Nurturer, is responsible for the early care of newchildren. Nurturers are tasked with ensuring that children grow up according to the community's strict guidelines, including deciding which children should be released based on physical and developmental criteria.

6. The Giver is a central character in the novel, serving as the Receiver of Memory. This role involves storing and transmitting the collective memories of the past to the community's Receiver. The Giver is responsible for guiding Jonas through the process of understanding the truth behind the community's practices, including the moral implications of release.

7. Gabriel is an infant in *The Giver* who struggles to meet the community's developmental standards. Jonas's father, a Nurturer, temporarily brings him home in an attempt to prevent his release. Eventually, Jonas forms a deep bond with Gabriel and decides to escape the community to save him.

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