

Euthanasia Summary
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Reason for Euthanasia #1: AUTONOMY / CHOICE
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“Christian” Reflections

- 1. We need to understand the nature and consequences of our CREATURELINESS.**
 - Our autonomy has limits.
 - There is this notion of a power too great for humans to safely possess – (think Garden of Eden; think Lord of the Rings!)
- 2. We also need to understand the nature and consequences of COMMUNITY.**
 - Our individuality has limits.
 - We are called to celebrate and to bear things together.

Other Reflections

- 1. We are more connected than we think.**
 - John Donne – No man is an island. There is a connectedness that is inalienable.
 - Sometimes we limit our autonomy to protect others – like suicidal youth?
 - Effect on grandchildren?
- 2. Autonomy is a fluid concept.**
 - It is open to coercion – elderly, vulnerable, depressed, grieving.
 - The most vocal calls for euthanasia are coming from those whose autonomy is, and always has been, strong. Theirs has not yet been compromised by age, illness or depression.
 - Dysfunctional families

Reason for Euthanasia #2: DIGNITY
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“Christian” Reflections

- 1. *Imago Dei***
 - Dignity is BESTOWED...it is not achieved.
 - We can (and should) bestow dignity on each other, even in the most “undignified” of circumstances.
- 2. Christianity subverts our natural understandings of who is dignified and who is not...**
 - Scripture surprises and subverts our expectations of who matters and who doesn't.
 - We see special attention given to “the least of these, the weak, the poor, the widow...”

Other Reflections

- 1. It takes time to adjust to a perceived “Loss of Dignity.”**
 - Doctors are constantly having to narrow the gap between a patient's expectations and the reality of their condition.

- When that gap is the result of a catastrophic or terminal diagnosis, that process takes much more time than the suggested “cooling off” or “reconsideration” periods that are written into Euthanasia Legislation.
- 2. Like Autonomy, Dignity not just an individual concept.**
- When our society agrees with someone’s self-assessment that their condition is “undignified” – a message is sent to EVERYONE with that condition, whether we meant to or not...
 - Even more chilling – there is good evidence from the Netherlands that a society’s understanding of dignity and value can/will change over time – (see Gerbert van Loenan’s book: *Do you call this a Life?*)

Reason for Euthanasia #3: SUFFERING
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Other Reflections

- 1. There have been huge advances in palliative care, even in the last 5-10 years.**
- Most of us (and, in fact, many doctors) are not aware of that – and so we have some outdated ideas of how people are dying...
 - Most of us are also not aware of the rights that are already available to us – i.e. to refuse any treatment; or to have a course of treatment like morphine that may result in death being hastened. Neither of these is euthanasia.
- 2. Suffering is SUBJECTIVE by definition.**
- That is why no safeguards are working, however well-worded they are – you simply can’t have subjectivity in a safeguard.
 - Once a right to die is established, that right seeks to universalize itself – that’s the whole point of a right. So it is little wonder that others (who are initially outside of the criteria) start to ask: “What makes YOUR version of suffering unique?!”

“Christian” Reflections

- 1. I need to acknowledge that this reason is the one I find hardest to “rebut”...**
- I also need to acknowledge that Christians (myself included) have said some unwise things in this space – see Gilbert Meileander’s quote.
 - All of us should be moved and sympathetic towards the extremely difficult (although thankfully quite rare) cases.
- 2. Are Christians ready to put their money (and their time and their emotions) where their mouth is...and REALLY care for the dying?**
- We need to take seriously Paul Ramsey’s challenge “to (only) care” for the dying – refusing both to over-treat on the one hand, or give up on the other. Both are formed of ABANDONMENT.
 - Wouldn’t it be incredible if the law changed (and euthanasia was allowed) but the Christian church so mobilized herself to care...that no-one wanted it?! That level of care is going to COST us.