

“Unbearable Suffering” and Mental Illness

Amy Elyse Gordon

How does Brouwers’s case “challenge notions of what constitutes ‘unbearable suffering,’ impossibility of improvement, and ‘terminal conditions’”?

The article notes that some states in the US allow euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide while others don’t. What explains this difference in policy? What reasons might be given on either side?

The author cites Dr. Koerselman’s opinion that euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide should not be allowed in cases of psychiatric disorders because it “is not possible to distinguish a rationalized decision to die from a symptom of mental disease itself.” What does this mean? Do you agree? What does this say about a patient’s burden of proof?

Do you think Brouwers should be able to request that a doctor help end her life or do you think the doctors that refused her request were right to do so?