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Culturally Sanctioned Suicide: Euthanasia, Seppuku, and Terrorist Martyrdom

Joseph M Pierre

Abstract

Suicide is one of the greatest concerns in psychiatric practice, with considerable efforts devoted to prevention. The psychiatric view of suicide tends to equate it with depression or other forms of mental illness. However, some forms of suicide occur independently of mental illness and within a framework of cultural sanctioning such that they aren't regarded as suicide at all. Despite persistent taboos against suicide, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide in the context of terminal illness is increasingly accepted as a way to preserve autonomy and dignity in the West.

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