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Bioethics Personal Reflection

One topic that we touched on that stuck with me and forced me to confront my own prejudices was disability rights. Beyond thinking about the need for ramp entrances into the majority of buildings, I did not think much about the needs of people with disabilities. I had never questioned the idea that disabled people must have a lower quality of life than people without them because of how they are or all the things they may not be able to do. After reading and discussing McBryde’s Unspeakable Conversations, I felt almost ashamed for thinking this way because I was being complicit in perpetuating a societal view that is incredibly harmful to disabled people. At the same time as taking this class, I am taking an ASL class and we watch videos about people who are deaf and or blind and how they adapt to the world around them and the society they live in. Although they may have to do things differently from most people, it does not stop them from being politicians or artists or lawyers, like McBryde. It made me understand that there is no reason to think people with disabilities should inherently have a lower quality of life than people without them.

It was also interesting to learn about physician assisted suicide and euthanasia. Before taking this class, I did not know anything about PAS or euthanasia, like what our laws are and what the difference between the two terms is. The reading about death and dignity by Quill was one that stood out to me because it gave the perspective of the medical professional put in this difficult position to enable someone who is suffering to take their life on their own terms. At the end, he mentions wondering how many professionals have taken similar actions to help people die on their own terms. I feel like this would be a great thing to research more about because our laws have not changed much since the time the article was written. It is something I am interested in reading more about in the future.

Overall, I feel like I learned a lot about each of the different issues we discussed and I thought more deeply about the arguments given on either side. It was hard to overcome my own bias to give both sides of an argument a charitable interpretation but once I did it became easier to see the strengths and weaknesses of opposite positions of every topic.