

## **Lessons Learned from the Netherlands: Can We Prevent Euthanasia Legislation from Spreading?**

Henk Reitsema is active in the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition in Europe. In this session he will examine the current situation in relation to euthanasia in the Netherlands, looking at the change in the perception of what it is to be compassionate and how this played out in the history of how the current situation came to be and drawing out the lessons that can be learned for the rest of Europe. We will then ask whether we can prevent euthanasia legislation spreading.

**Henk Reitsema** is a member of the staff at Dutch L'Abri and one of the trustees of the international work of L'Abri. Along with his wife, he has been hosting guests at L'Abri for 20 years. He is active in the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition in Europe. His academic interests include Philosophy, Theology and Ethics. Most recently, he completed a degree in the Philosophy of Technology at the Free University in Amsterdam. Mentoring, lecturing and engaging in dialogue about the issues that confront us today form an integral part of his work at L'Abri. He has published a variety of articles both scientific and popular in the disciplines of Apologetics, Philosophy of Technology, Ethics and music appreciation.

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. Euthanasia and the shifting perception of compassion**

#### A. The weight of glory

##### 1. Hedonistic ethic

- a. The presence or absence of pain
- b. Meaning outclasses pain
- c. Com-passion

### **III. The gale force wind of culture**

#### A. Media and movies

#### B. Liberty awry

### **IV. Meaning and intent**

#### A. Word games

## **V. Historic overview of euthanasia in the Netherlands**

- A. 1973 - starting point
- B. Shifting definition
- C. Going mainstream
- D. 1991 first broad government sponsored study
- E. Infanticide the new frontier
- F. Comparative mortality in EU
- G. Absolute numbers - and counting

## **VI. The palliation paradox**

## **VII. Lessons to be learnt**

### ***Suggested Readings:***

David Jeffrey, 2007, *Against Physician Assisted Suicide - a palliative care perspective*  
B D Onwuteaka-Philipsen et al, "Trends in end-of-life practices before and after the enactment of the euthanasia law in the Netherlands from 1990 to 2010: a repeated cross-sectional survey," *The Lancet*, Published online July 11, 2012 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(12\)61034-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(12)61034-4).)

Henk ten Have; Jos V.M. Welie, 2013, *Palliative Sedation Versus Euthanasia: An Ethical Assessment*. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885392413002352>