

A Semantical Investigation on Physician Assisted Suicide in Canada between 1993 and 2015

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Abstract : The Supreme Court of Canada rendered unconstitutional the sections of the Canadian Criminal Code which prohibited the Physician-assisted suicide in February 2015. However, in 1993, the same Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Physician-assisted suicide should remain absolutely prohibited. In the light of these historical facts, we will explore how the Supreme Court of Canada was able to make two different decisions 20 years apart. To understand how Canada could rule so differently between 1993 and 2015 about Physician-assisted suicide, we will analyze the content of the Supreme Court of Canada decisions' discourse of 1993 and of 2015. Our preliminary results indicate that A) the patient autonomy (or the personal choice) has taken over the idea of the preservation of life (or the sacred character of life) in 2015. B) That between 1993 and 2015, the physician is seen differently by the Judges; like an abusive murderer in 1993 and like an objective evaluator in 2015. C) That the patient is seen as a victim in 1993 and more like a hero in 2015.

Keywords : physician-assisted suicide, patient autonomy, choice, sacred character of life, dignity

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