

CMDFA ETHICS

MEDICINE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE

INTRODUCTION



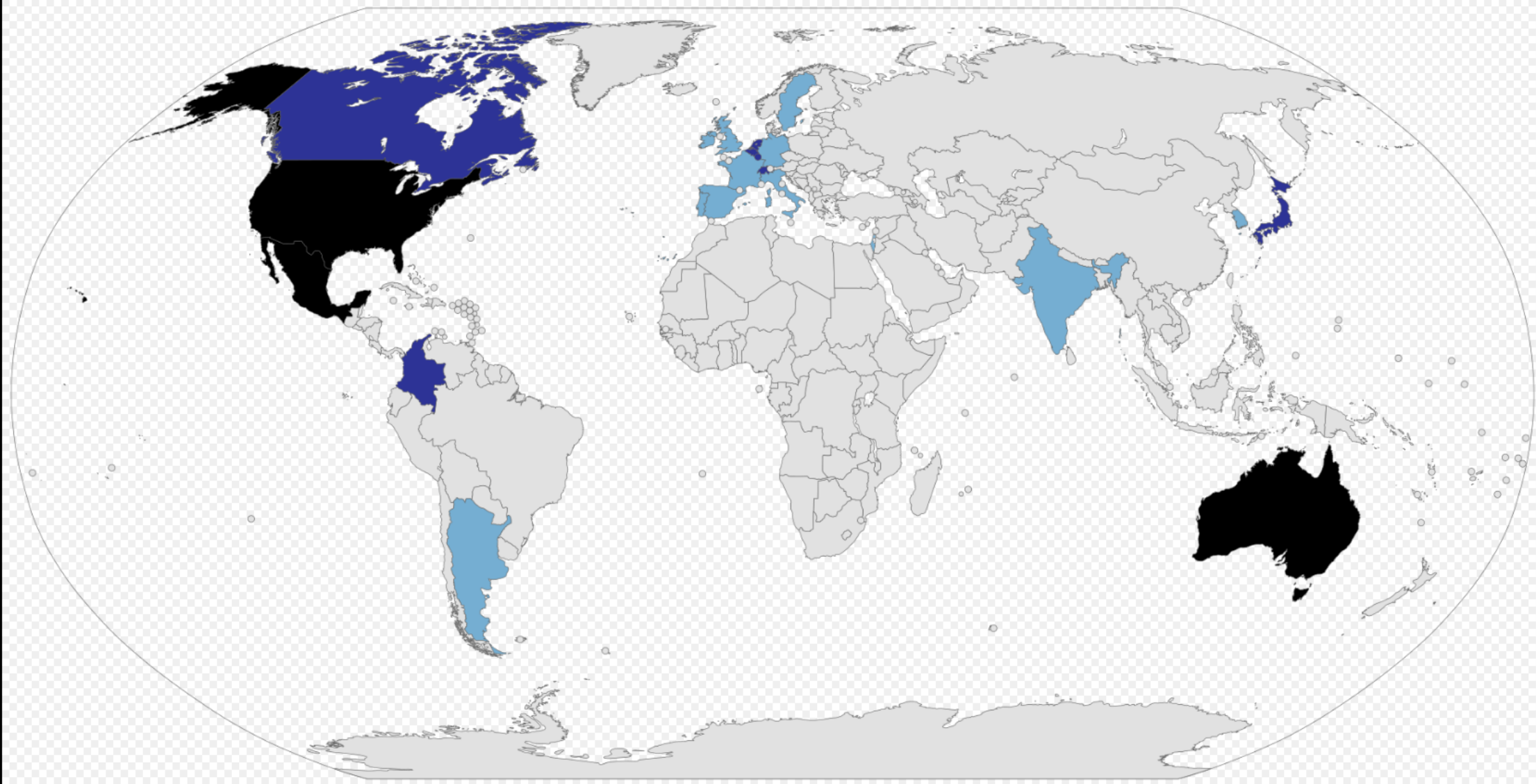
THE ISSUE'S PROMINENCE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

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- Euthanasia and physician assisted suicide in Europe and North America



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Current status of euthanasia around the world: ■ Active euthanasia is legal ■ Passive euthanasia is legal ■ Euthanasia laws vary by administrative division ■ Euthanasia is illegal ■ Euthanasia status unknown

[More details](#)

Michael Jester - See below

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- Relevant distinctions: physician assisted suicide; euthanasia—voluntary, non-voluntary, involuntary; palliative care; refusal, withholding and withdrawal of life-prolonging therapy



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 - **Euthanasia:** the intentional bringing about or hastening of death (by act or omission) in order to relieve a person's suffering. It may be voluntary, involuntary or non-voluntary.
 - **Physician assisted suicide:** provision by a doctor of drugs (or other means) for self-administration, at that person's voluntary and competent request.
 - **Withdrawal of life prolonging therapy:** the withdrawal (or withholding) of life prolonging or burdensome therapy from a dying patient in order to avoid needless suffering.

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 - **Palliative care: myths and home-truths**
 - Countering a myth: morphine and sedatives in *therapeutic* doses do not shorten life
 - Palliative care: specialised care for the dying that: affirms life; regards dying as a normal process; neither hastens nor postpones death; provides symptom relief; offers support for active living; offers support to help families cope.

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- **The personal dimension**



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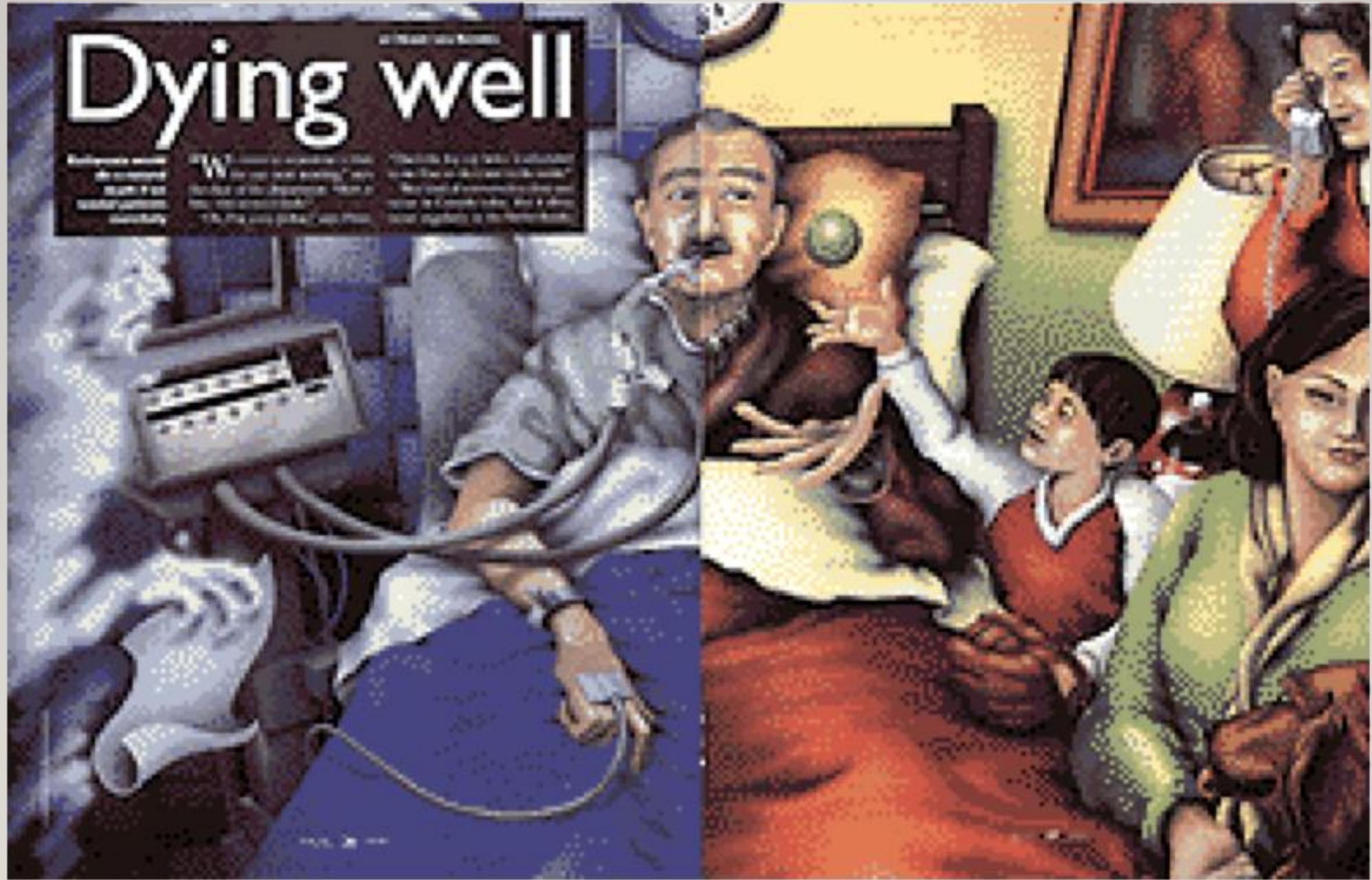
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- The personal dimension—we have good, if difficult, stories to tell. We need to tell them.

Dying well

End-of-life care is the most important part of the medical journey. How to get it right.

W... [unreadable]

... [unreadable]

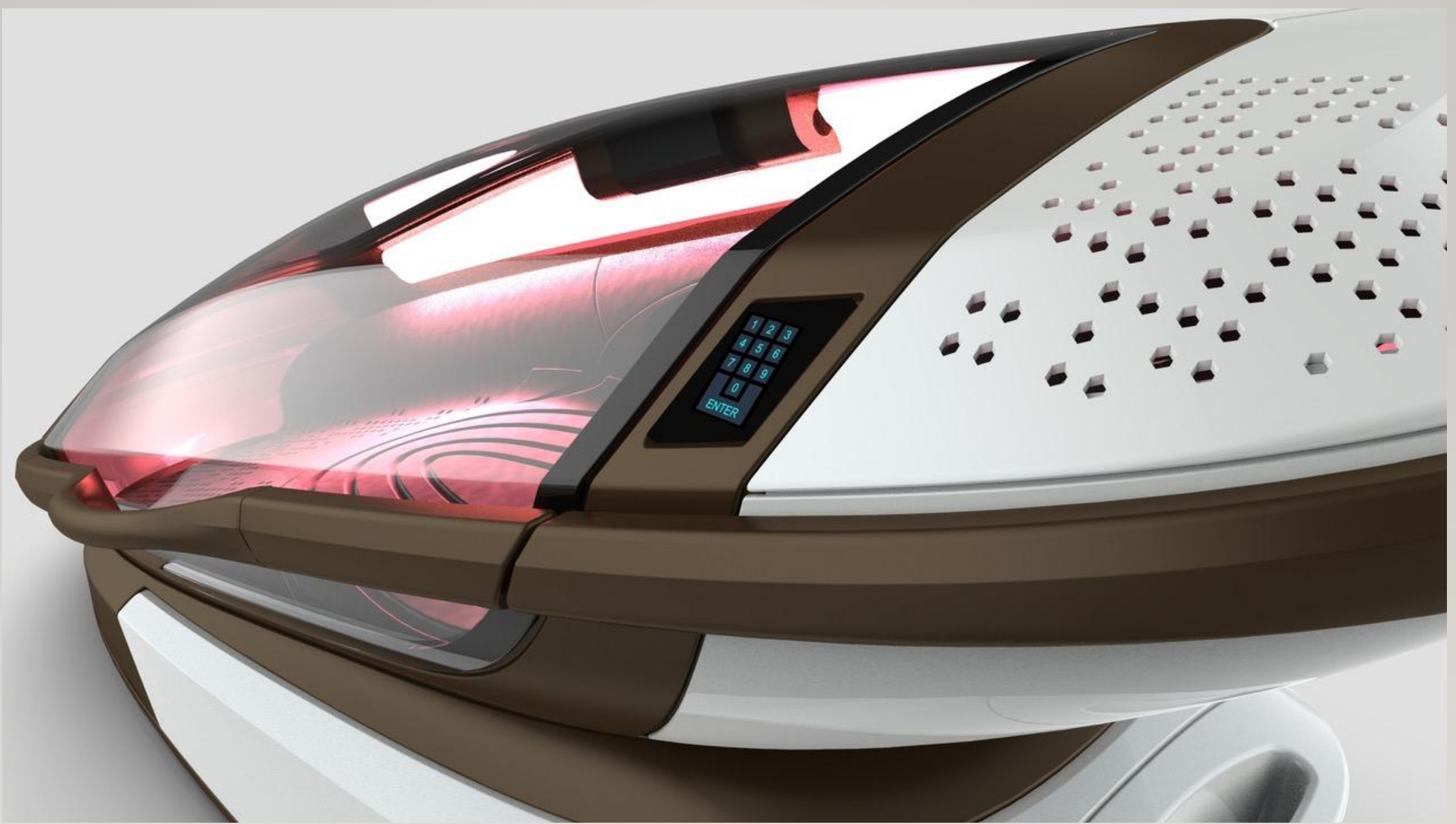


ARGUMENTS FOR EUTHANASIA



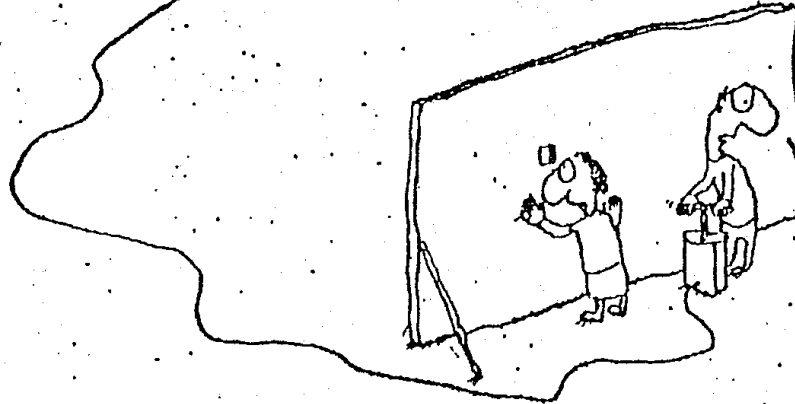
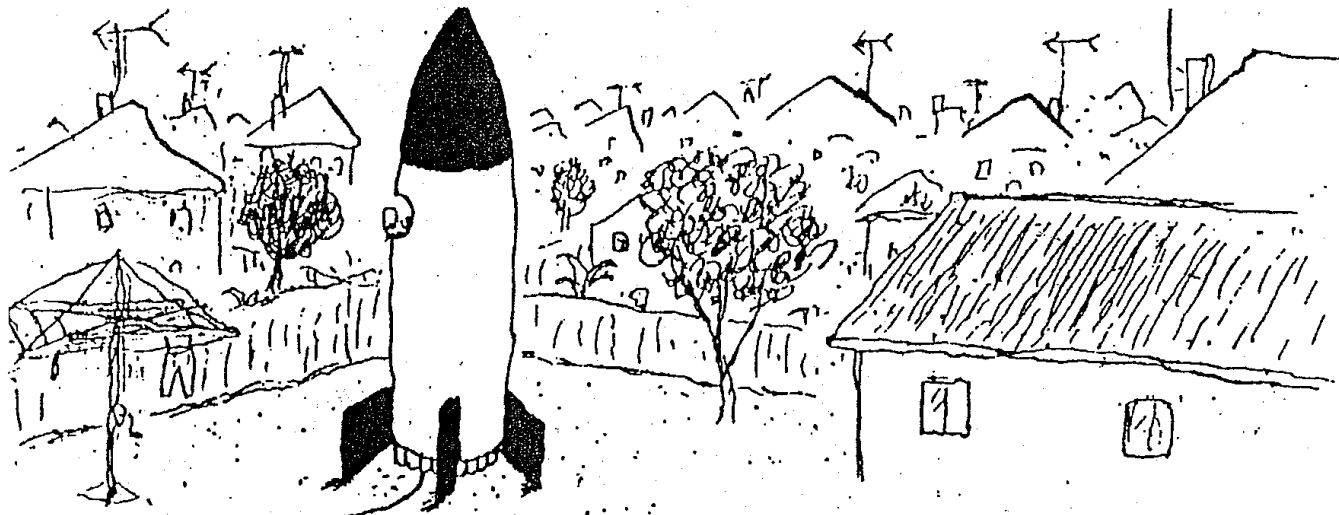
THE PRIMARY ARGUMENT: AUTONOMY

- The principle
 - A right to self-determination
 - And not interfering with the rights of others
 - It entails a 'right to die'
- Peter Singer's (preference) utilitarian alternative



SECONDARY ARGUMENTS

- Killing is (morally) the same as letting die
- Compassion dictates the alleviation of (pointless) suffering
- Quality vs quantity of life
- Utility or benefit—euthanasia is likely to have beneficial consequences, including for the weak and vulnerable



unfortunately Grandpa
has lost bowel control
so we're allowing him
to die with dignity.

Leunig

COUNTERING THE ARGUMENTS

- What do you see as the *strengths* of these arguments?
 - Why do they get so much purchase?
- What do you see as the *weaknesses* and *errors* in these arguments?
 - Give some thought to how we can (gently) help people see them.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST EUTHANASIA



THE PRIMARY ARGUMENT: THE SANCTITY (OR VALUE) OF HUMAN LIFE

- A theistic version
 - Life is God's gift, euthanasia despises that gift
 - Euthanasia violates the sanctity of human life
- A secular version
 - Humans have irreducible dignity
 - Euthanasia violates that dignity

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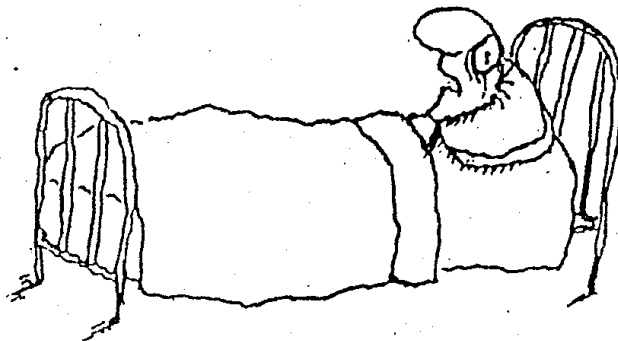
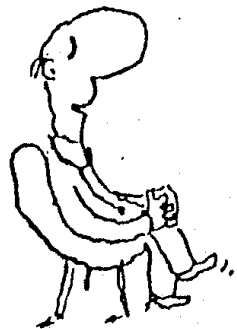
- Euthanasia is (morally) distinct from allowing someone to die
- The principle of autonomy is flawed
- Compassion motivates us to act in another's best interests; it does not tell us what those interests are.
- Utility or benefit—euthanasia is likely to have harmful consequences, especially for the weak and vulnerable

MEANWHILE, IN DARWIN....

Euthanasia is just a simple operation
like circumcision Mr. Jones. In fact
it's very much like circumcision.

At the end of your life there's a little
bit which serves no real purpose and can
cause a bit of irritation so we just nip it
off for you. You won't feel a thing.

...I've had a
[redacted] of a life so
I might as well..



Leunig

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES



TEXTS

- Genesis 1:26-31 (& 9:5-6)

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- I Corinthians 15:26, 55-57 (and Revelation 21:4)

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

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ANOTHER LINE OF ARGUMENT



'WORLDVIEW' AND EUTHANASIA

- What are human beings?

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- What does a properly formed human community look like? How does it function?

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- What are human beings?
- What does a properly formed human community look like? How does it function?
- What is the role of medicine in a properly formed human community?

MEDICINE AS 'CARING FOR THIS FRAIL FLESH'

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- Medicine exists to care for vulnerable human beings, whether they will be 'cured' or not.
- Euthanasia would illegitimately distort the (inherently moral) character of medicine in ways that other responses to suffering and dying would not.

CONCLUSION



MAKING THE CASE

- How do we effectively present this understanding of medicine, life and death?



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- Telling good stories

SOME RESOURCES

- Lysaught, M. Therese, Joseph J. Kotva, Jr., Stephen E. Lammers, and Allen Verhey, eds. *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.
- Sloane, Andrew. *Vulnerability and Care: Christian Reflections on the Philosophy of Medicine*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016.
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