

# EDITORIAL

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This first *Dignitas* issue of 2025 is our open edition. After a phenomenal final conference on Trinity's Deerfield campus, with many more conferences to come, this issue is a collection of past conference presenters. A Guest Editorial for this issue comes from Adam Omelianchuk, an Associate Fellow in our Academy of Fellows and plenary speaker at our 2023 conference, *The Christian Stake in Bioethics Revisited*. He provides a concise and cogent exploration of Normothermic Regional Perfusion (NRP) and how it threatens standard definitions of death. Christina Bieber Lake presented a plenary address for our 30th anniversary conference in 2023, and her book review of *The Mother Code* by Carol Stivers offers an incisive discussion on what it means to be human as AI, artificial wombs, and more threaten its redefinition. Todd T. W. Daly (Fellow in the Academy of Fellows), Elizabeth Rex, and Bryce Asberg each contribute articles for this issue that were presented as parallel papers at past conferences. Heather Zeiger, CBHD staff member and frequent conference workshop presenter, faithfully contributes a global health timeline and bioethics news stories.

Bryce Asberg, winner of CBHD's 2025 Student Paper competition, uses the Hippocratic Oath to evaluate the use of palliative sedation for existential suffering. While palliative sedation is largely accepted by physicians for the use of alleviating physical symptoms, there is debate as to whether it should be used to treat existential ones. He defines existential suffering as "suffering that occurs not directly because of physical causes but from a loss or interruption of meaning, purpose, or hope in life."

After reflection upon various arguments in support of and opposed to palliative sedation for existential suffering, Asberg clarifies his own position, finding it an "inappropriate treatment for existential suffering, because existential suffering is distinguishable from physically rooted suffering in an ethically significant way." Instead, such suffering should be treated with psychosocial restoration. He then utilizes the Christian Hippocratic tradition to argue that palliative sedation should not be practiced for existential suffering due to the Oath's recognition of the spiritual realm and its prohibition on doctors working outside of their

area of expertise. Since palliative sedation denies the legitimacy of a spiritual aspect to existential suffering, it should not be used in this regard. Further, while doctors can indeed care for patients in psychosocial and spiritual ways, palliative sedation goes beyond their area of expertise. Thus, such patients should be referred to counselors and/or pastors to meet this need.

Elizabeth Rex explores the ethical protection of human embryos in celebration of the 35th anniversary of Germany's Embryo Protection Act, and by extending this model legislation to the Nuremberg Code. This was the code of ethics established in response to the atrocities committed by Nazi doctors during World War II. Utilizing *Donum Vitae* ("Gift of Life"), a Catholic instruction on such things as assisted reproductive technologies (ART), she provides a theological foundation for the prohibition of all non-therapeutic testing on human embryos.

Based on the precepts of the Nuremberg Code—due to its foundation in "informed consent, the necessity of research for societal benefit, and the protection of participants from harm"—Bothamley opines that embryos form a population relevant for safeguarding by the Code yet currently neglected.

Further citing the section of *Donum Vitae* that informs moral law, the author demonstrates that both the Nuremberg Code and *Donum Vitae* have led to the development of Germany's Embryo Protection Act and Italy's Medically Assisted Reproduction Law. However, she also believes that this relationship should be bidirectional, with these legislative acts informing the applicability of the Nuremberg Code to the embryonic stage of human life. With most countries lacking the necessary regulation in this area, it is important to utilize this dynamic as model legislation around the world.

Todd Daly addresses the rising challenge of insomnia plaguing Americans' health, especially that of women. He seeks to meet the need for a theological understanding of sleep and sleeplessness. This requires viewing sleep through the lens of a spiritual discipline, prioritizing this lens above concern with sleep hygiene. In this, sleep

becomes a recognition of our creatureliness in comparison to God as the Creator and giver of human rest.

After reflection on the development of sleep hygiene, he shows how the medicalization of sleep has seduced us into thinking it can be brought under our control. With this developed what Simon Williams calls the "healthicization" of sleep, turning health concerns into moral ones. Thus, a thin moral force undergirds our perspective on sleep hygiene, reducing health to only what can be empirically measured. Daly also highlights the development of an unhealthy sleep economy in which "better sleep makes us more economically productive, affording us the additional income to spend on products ensuring that we sleep more efficiently and effectively."

Core to all of this is the reality that Cartesian dualism dominates the Western perspective,

leading to the idea that there is a self that can be separated from the body. His concluding theological evaluation of sleep does not negate the use of sound, scientifically backed sleep solutions, but encourages us to keep in view both the physical and spiritual dimensions of faithfulness in sleep as we relate to God.

As the Center closes its time in Deerfield and seeks a fruitful partnership with a new host institution, your continued support is a great blessing. We hope to see many of you at our 2026 conference hosted at a new institution. In the meantime, we strive to remain a distinctly Christian research center that "conducts, disseminates, and advances biblically informed, theologically rich research, analysis, and reflection on the complex and pressing ethical issues in medicine, science, and technology."