

Walter Schweidler and Borut Ošljaj

Natürliche Verantwortung: Beiträge zur Integrativen Bioethik [Natural Responsibility: Contributions to Integrative Bioethics]

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Walter Schweidler, Professor of Philosophy at University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (formerly at the Ruhr-University in Bochum), the editor of the Academia Verlag series „West-östliche Denkwege“ (West-East Thinking Paths; 23 volumes), and his colleague from University of Ljubljana, Borut Ošljaj, conceived a formally quite unusual book, written in a way that reminds of Ilyf and Petroff. The book, aiming at contributing to the theoretical foundations of „integrative bioethics“ (that is, of bioethics integrating various perspectives – scientific, cultural, and others – into a platform of „orientation knowledge,“ an intellectual achievement of the Zagreb school of bioethics), consists of alternating blocks of papers.

The first block, authored by Borut Ošljaj, questions metaphysics as symbolical form; dialectics of the spirit and the ethical; and the ethical conceptualisation of nothing.

The second block, by Walter Schweidler, analyses Kant's foundation of the indivisibility of human dignity; the analogy between the notion of life and its bioethical relevance; and bioethics as interdisciplinary thinking.

The third block, by Borut Ošljaj again, speaks of responsibility; historical-anthropological considerations on the origin and future of bioethics; bioethical questioning of the Post-Modernity.

Walter Schweidler, in the fourth block, offers papers on scientific reduction and technical integration; the principle of self-determination in medical ethics; definition of doctor and patient from the philosophical point of view; the problem

of altruistic research from the ethical point of view; and bioethics as socio-cultural reflexion.

In the next block, Borut Ošljaj exposes ideas on a post-secular ethics; on Hans Jonas and the possibility of a natural ethics; and on bio-ethical politics.

In the last block, Walter Schweidler writes on worldview neutrality and ethical sovereignty of the state; on bioethics and politics; and on human dignity and the unattainable.

Although the selected papers of the two authors cover a wide range of topics, there is a common thread entwining them into a strong platform for integrative bioethics. The authors, thereby, are fully aware of the difficulties met at any attempt to define bioethics, the very kind of this discipline or discourse, the expertise it requests, its aimed group, etc. Bioethics certainly offers certain charm precisely for not being precise, assembling, to use Tristram Engelhardt's words, „a rich set of images and meanings and thus help[ing] us to see relations between elements of reality that were previously separated in our vision and thought of only as disparate.“ The „philosophisation“ and thus, in a way, „Europeanisation“ of bioethics we had been exposed to (actually, the principlism of the Georgetown Kennedy Institute of Ethics school, narrowed-down to medical ethics), has been a programme of integrative bioethics since its beginnings in the early years of the new millennium. With this book by Walter Schweidler and Borut Ošljaj, the integrative bioethics has certainly gained an important and long-lasting intellectual buttressing.

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