

# Bioethics in South and Southeast Europe

## Opportunities for integrative ethical reflection on the basis of intra-cultural differences in Europe

### **Welcoming address at the conference opening\***

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues!

It has been an honor to be able to open this conference by welcoming the participants coming from 12 countries of South, Southeast and Central Europe. I would like to greet the representatives of the press whose response witnesses the public interest for this conference and its topic. I would like to greet the staff and the management of the IUC and everyone present. It is my pleasure to welcome our guest, the president of the Croatian Philosophical Society, Ivica Martinović, Ph.D.

I have been given the additional honor to be the first speaker at this opening, but I have to emphasize that it is only because I am the first one alphabetically. This conference has been initiated and developed within the project "Nutzenkultur versus Normenkultur. Zu den intrakulturellen Differenzen in westlichen Bioethik" which has been worked on within DFG- research group "Kulturübergreifende Bioethik. Voraussetzungen, Chancen, Probleme". The project manager, professor Walter Schweidler, Ph.D. invited me towards the end of the last year to participate in this conference and soon after I was involved in its development and organization as a project manager of the "Bioethics and Philosophy" project that has been carried out at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. This has been the basis of an inspirational, productive and very pleasant cooperation, which is the credit of – following Aristotle's systematization – ethical and dianoethical virtues of our colleague Thomas Sören Hoffman, Ph.D. who has been in charge of the organization. The real result of this cooperation has been a mutual organization of this conference, and it has also resulted in firm intention to continue the cooperation after this conference, as well. Furthermore, the task is to attempt to transfer its enthusiasm onto the field stated in the name and represented by the participants of this conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to point to the program task of "Europeanizing the bioethics", which has, as a regulative principle, already been formulated in the

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mentioned project "Bioethics and Philosophy". It seems that this idea most clearly outlines the final programmatic aim of our bioethical discussions, research and projects. But, in order to understand the idea of the Europeanization of bioethics correctly, three key presumptions on which it has been based should be made explicit: the first one refers to the world history reason of birth of bioethics, the second one refers to its character and the third one to the immanent logic of its development.

The main and most important reason of the birth of bioethics should be looked for in the fact that the contemporary science has lost its orientation authority and existential competence for a contemporary human. Therefore, bioethics should be primarily understood as intellectual and existential field which creates orientation within this, in principle, new situation which is highly determined by factors of scientific and technological development. The orientation can still be reached in differently set situations, different means (methods) and different levels of elaboration. So far, bioethics has provided orientation in a "new medical situation" by means of direct moral reflections (called *principalism*), and then in the more broadly set situation of globalized subject field by the means of ethical reflection within the interdisciplinary frame. In accordance with this, it is possible to differentiate two phases of the development of bioethics: the *phase of moral* and the *phase of ethical reflection*.

But since moral and ethical reflections, although necessary moments in establishing all forms of orientation, have proved to be insufficient methods for achieving orientation in the circumstances of threatening completion of scientific and technical civilization and the situation at the turn of the world historical epochs, the bioethics – following its orientation role, has become more aimed at the *philosophical historical reflection*. With this, it enters its new phase of development which will enable it to show all its orientation potentials. However, it implies the activation of not only history of philosophy but also the total Euro-continental philosophical tradition in the methodology pattern of bioethics. This clearly shows that the Europeanization of bioethics is not an internal nor institutionalized problem of European bioethics, but a constitutional and developmental imperative of bioethics as such. This raises the question: why should the extensive task of Europeanization of bioethics and establishing the European bioethical horizon be carried out by those who live or those who gather at bioethical conferences on the geographic periphery of Europe. The answer is simple: because the horizon is the most open on the periphery.

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