

## 1<sup>st</sup> international conference "Fritz Jahr and European Roots of Bioethics: Establishing an International Scholar's Network"

Although the history of bioethics, if compared to the histories of other similar disciplines, is short, no one could claim any more that it is boring (Jonsen, 2000)<sup>1</sup>. Almost abandoned merits of Van Rensselaer Potter, due to narrowing his idea of global bioethics to medical ethics, clinical bioethics, or pure legislation, several years ago received a new momentum and bioethics entered a completely new phase of its development. Much of this we owe to the research and articles of Hans-Martin Sass, publishing studies since 2007<sup>2</sup> about Fritz Jahr (1895-1953), the German theologian and humble teacher who, in 1927, was the first to use and conceive the term "Bio-Ethik" in journal *Kosmos*. Although some oral presentations (Löther, 1997)<sup>3</sup>, as well as papers mentioning the Jahr legacy had been done even before the year 2007

<sup>1</sup> Albert Jonsen, "Why Has Bioethics Become So Boring?", *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 25 (6/2000), p. 689-699.

<sup>2</sup> Hans-Martin Sass, "Fritz Jahr's Bioethischer Imperativ. 80 Jahre Bioethik in Deutschland von 1927 bis 2007", *Medizinethische Materialien*, Heft 175 (Juli/2007), p. 1-33.

Hans-Martin Sass, "Fritz Jahr's 1927 Concept of Bioethics", *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 17 (4/2007), p. 279-295.

Hans-Martin Sass, "Bioetički imperativ Fritza Jahra. 80 godina bioetike u Njemačkoj od 1927. do 2007. godine", *Bioetički svesci*, (61/2008), p. 5-44. (translated by Suzana Jurin)

Hans-Martin Sass, "Asian and European Roots of Bioethics: Fritz Jahr's 1927 Definition and Vision of Bioethics", *Asian Bioethics Review*, 1 (3/2009), p. 185-197.

Hans-Martin Sass, "A cultural and moral vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century", *JAHR - Annual of the Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities/JAHR – Godišnjak Katedre za društvene i humanističke znanosti u medicini*, 1 (1/2010), p. 9-10.

Hans-Martin Sass, "Bioethics as a European Innovation. Fritz Jahr's 1927 Concept of Bioethics", in: Antje Gimmler (ed.), *Vernunft und Innovation: über das alte Vorurteil für das Neue; Festschrift für Walther Ch. Zimmerli zum 65. Geburtstag*, Fink, Paderborn 2010, p. 369-377.

Hans-Martin Sass, "Bio-Ethics. Reviewing the ethical relations of humans towards animals and plants (Translation and Postscript of Fritz Jahr)", *JAHR – Annual of the Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities/JAHR – Godišnjak Katedre za društvene humanističke znanosti u medicini*, 1 (2/2010), p. 227-231.

Hans-Martin Sass, "Postscriptum and References – The Father of Bioethics (1895-1953)", *Medizinethische Materialien*, Heft 186 (November/2010), p. 24-32.

<sup>3</sup> Rolf Löther, *Evolution der Biosphäre und Ethik*, 6<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Deutsche Gessellschaft für Geschichte und Theorie der Biologie, Tübingen, Germany, 1997.

(Löther, 1998<sup>4</sup>; Engels, 2001<sup>5</sup>, 2004<sup>6</sup>; Goldim 2006<sup>7</sup>), before Sass, little was known about Jahr's idea, specially of his concept of Bioethical Imperative, broadening and revising Kant's categorical imperative from only humans to animals and plants.

Having established preliminary cooperation with Hans-Martin Sass, as well as with the insitutions he is affiliated with (Kennedy Institute of Ethics – Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA and Center for Medical Ethics, Ruhr University, Bochum, Germany), the group of Croatian bioethicists from University of Rijeka - Faculty of Medicine (under supervision of Amir Muzur) applied in October 2010 to Croatian Science Foundation for a international scientific project on exploring Fritz Jahr' work and European roots of bioethics. Having started in February 2011, this project has developed several main activities, one of the first being the organization of international conference with eminent world experts either with the interest in or already recognised in the field related to European approach to bioethics. As emhasized in the Preface to the Abstract Book, this mini-conference, attended both by some of the major bioethics scholars and by representatives of younger generations, "has never been intended to become a meeting of "Jahrologists": on the contrary, Fritz Jahr has primarily been conceived as a symbol of the reappraisal of our common, unsufficiently explored European tradition" (Muzur, 2011)<sup>8</sup>.

The first day session of the conference (March 11, 2011) was held at University of Rijeka - Faculty of Medicine. The session started with the greetings of the invited guests (Alan Šustić- Dean of the University of Rijeka - Faculty of Medicine, Stipan Jonjić - member of the Board of Croatian Science Foundation etc.), folowed up by the opening lectures. Amir Muzur (Rijeka) presented preliminary results of the arhive-databases research from the city of Halle, hometown of Fritz Jahr, exposing the most important facts of Jahr's biography. Those details, still not known to broader public, might not only explain the sources of Jahr's ideas, but also enlighten Jahr' crucial motivations. Hans-Martin Sass (Bochum/Washington/Beijing) gave a lecture entitled *Translational ethics: how to translate tradition into the future?*, dealing with the hermeneutic character of the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment, and Jahr's translation of

<sup>4</sup> Rolf Löther, "Evolution der Biosphäre und Ethik", in: Eve-Marie Engels, Thomas Junker and Michael Weingarten (eds.), *Ethik der Biowissenschaften: Geschichte und Theorie – Beiträge zur 6. Jahrestagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Theorie der Biologie (DGGTB) in Tübingen 1997*, Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, Berlin 1998, p. 61-68.

<sup>5</sup> Eve-Marie Engels, "Die Herausforderung der Biotechniken für Ethik und Anthropologie", in: Christof Gestrich (ed.), *Die biologische Machbarkeit des Menschen*, Wichern, Berlin 2001, p. 100-124.

<sup>6</sup> Eve-Marie Engels, "O desafio das biotécnicas para a ética e a antropologia", *Veritas*, 50 (2/2004), p. 205-28.

<sup>7</sup> José Roberto Goldim, "Bioética: origens e complexidade", *Rev HCPA*, 26 (2/2006), p. 86-92.

<sup>8</sup> Amir Muzur, "Preface", in: Amir Muzur and Iva Rinčić (eds.), 1<sup>st</sup> international conference EUROBIOMETHICS Abstract Book, Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities, University of Rijeka - Faculty of Medicine, Rijeka, 2011, p. 7-8.

this classic work with his 20th-century interpretation, as well as with the possibility of its application in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium.

First part of the conference was followed up by the session called European bioethics. Ante Čović (Zagreb) presented the integrative bioethics as an original South-East European product, in three main aspects: 1) as a programme; 2) as a project, and 3) as a concept. According to Čović, in its substantial dimension, integrative bioethics is characterized by a broad field spanning from moral dilemmas in medical practice and biomedical research, to ecological issues, the role of science and technology in modern civilisation and debate upon the nature of our society, but also toward theoretical foundation of a new universal-historical epoch. The presentation *The actuality of thoughts of Fritz Jahr in bioethics education or Why Fritz Jahr advocates characted education* was delivered by Nada Gosić (Rijeka), aiming to explain the reasons and motives for character education, and to actualise Fritz Jahr's approach to the current conception of contents, methodology of implementation, and methods of evaluation in the education. Iva Rinčić gave a lecture on the issue of bioethical institutionalisation. After comparing recent American and European experiences, and finding some theoretic stronghold of institutions (Arnold Gehlen's theory), Rinčić concluded with Jahr's ideas on institutions, emphasizing the possibilities for the Bioethical Imperative to be interpreted as new method of interrelations in the institutions. Last presenter in this session was Christian Byk (Paris), dealing with *Bioethics, law and European construction*. According to Byk, the binding character of legal norms to the free development of science and technology in Europe has led to conclusion that the role played by the law in the elaboration of European bioethics is at the same time an example of the importance of the law European construction as well.

The next morning session was dedicated to *European culture, philosophy, and sciences as forerunners of bioethics (I)*. Eleni Kalokairinou (Nicosia/Thessaloniki) had a presentation *Tracing the roots of the European bioethics to the Ancient Greek philosopher-physicians*, devoted to Hippocrates, Galen, and Celsus who had laid the foundations of a modern discipline, today known as Bioethics. Beside them, Kalokairinou explored the work of philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle, who had helped medicine become independent of divinity and divine thinking. Ivana Zagorac (Zagreb) traced bioethical ideas in European Middle Ages by analysing the ideas of St. Francis of Assisi, whose charismatic figure may helped him be considered one of the first forerunners in European bioethics. The line of European forerunners was continued by the ideas of Immanuel Kant, whose categorical imperative was presented from different perspectives, but with the emphasis on Jahr's Bioethical Imperative by Igor Eterović (Rijeka). The last morning session was the one devoted to scientific insights into the

relationship between the human being and nature, named *The importance of Charles Darwin's theory for Fritz Jahr's conception of bioethics*, held by Eve-Marie Engels (Tübingen).

The second part of the session *European culture, philosophy, and sciences as forerunners of bioethics (II)* started with a presentation by José Roberto Goldim (Porto Alegre): *Albert Schweitzer, a bioethics precursor*. Although one of the greatest thinkers and social activists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Schweitzer is often unjustifiably omitted from bioethical debate. Goldim's main aim was to highlight Schweitzer's importance for the history of bioethical ideas. Taking into consideration the reaching, exploring, and theoretical basis of European approach(es) to bioethical problems, Hrvoje Jurić's (Zagreb) presentation was devoted to Hans Jonas integrative philosophy of life, with special regard to his ethics of responsibility, but also to Jonas attempt to establish philosophical biology (as a new philosophy of human, nature and life). Jonas also developed the integrative philosophy of life, as pointed out by Jurić, showing what pluri-perspectivity and integrativity in bioethics actually has to mean. According to the programme, Fernando Lolas Stepke (Santiago de Chile) was supposed to give a presentation on *Bioethics and antropological medicine: a early history*, but unfortunately was not able to attend the conference (his paper, anyhow, will be published in the special edition of the JAHR journal). Marija Selak (Zagreb) enriched the discussion of European forerunners with presentation *Philosophy of Karl Löwith as a precursor and incentive to the idea of integrative bioethics*, while Ricardo Andrés Roa-Castellanos (Bogotá) gave the presentation entitled *Bioethical common factors amid Krause's masonry and Saint Francis' of Assisi appeal to respectful dialogue, nature and understanding: Jahr's dialogue beyond the age of "enlightenment" and the "dark" ages*, turning to the unknown theoretical strongholds of Fritz Jahr's work and providing a new perspective to bioethics about respect for life, productive dialogue on differences etc. Final exposé of the first day was Natacha Lima (Buenos Aires), giving presentation on perspectives of bioethics in Latin America following Jahr's guidelines, pointing to the "conversations" between different disciplinary fields occurred after the introduction of "Bioethical thinking" in many life aspects. The first day of the conference ended with dynamic final discussion and most interesting remarks, affirming the organizers' starting idea of the importance and necessity of such a meeting.

The second day of the conference (March 12, 2011) was held as a workshop in Opatija (moderators Amir Muzur and Hans-Martin Sass). Many previous and future activities were presented. Hans-Martin Sass reported on the forthcoming conference of the European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare (to be held in Zürich in August 2011) and on the publications of Fritz Jahr's works. Ante

Čović reported on the on project of integrative bioethics in South-East Europe and five doctoral thesis defended at University of Zagreb - Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Marko Tokić, Sonja Kalauz, Mile Marinčić, Iva Rinčić and Tomislav Krznar), Amir Muzur referred on "Rijeka Declaration on the Importance and Future of Integrative Bioethics", special edition of the JAHR journal, web site of the EUROBIOMETHICS project, as well as on options of future meetings of the group, while Iva Rinčić presented the idea and so-far-accomplished activities of establishing the "Fritz Jahr's Award for European Bioethics Research and Promotion".

Although this conference was the first to explore the work of Fritz Jahr and European roots of bioethics, many important results were achieved: the establishing of the network of scholars' (EUROBIOMETHICS), the founding of the basis for future communication and scientific cooperation, but also the opening of a new platform for the most needed dialogue and respect of cultural differences in modern world.

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