

A Cultural and Moral Vision for the 21st Century

Science and technology are value-neutral. They are one sector only of a larger human culture, overcoming the cruelties and inhumanities of raw nature and uncivilized and inhumane people. Thus, humanities studying the impact of science and technology on cultures and societies are an essential and indispensable part of human culture. Ever since Kain killed his brother Abel, we humans have used sticks, knives, ammunitions, laws and regulations, knowledge, sciences and technologies, drugs and medical interventions for good or for bad purposes, - for cultivating raw and cruel nature to become a better home for humankind and human culture or for being cruel and exploitive to humans, co-creatures, and environments. Thus, science and technology need to be guided by moral values and cultural visions. Medicine and medical research are one of the proudest fields of serving fellow humans who are in pain and despair and who need information and education, therapy, nursing and other forms of help. Therefore, the moral and cultural guidance and control of modern medicine and modern sciences, including the social sciences, is a necessary and indispensable vision for the third millennium. The Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities at Rijeka Medical University has to be congratulated to take a European and global leadership in communication and cooperation into a more cultivated and morally responsible future of research, review, teaching, and training.

In connecting the title of the new Annual to the visionary Fritz Jahr and his concept of bio-ethics, the Department focuses on a similar pioneering enterprise as Jahr did nearly a century ago. It is the vision, that Bioethics in the broadest sense is a necessary and indispensable counterpart and a guiding tool for all fields of modern Biosciences. The stronger the powers of science, technology and medicine, the more we need moral review and moral guidance and a framing into cultural and human goals of protecting and supporting life and lives, of protecting social and cultural communication and cooperation, of protecting and enriching the globe and her habitats and environments. Bioscience and Bioethics belong together the same way the head of the Centaur Chiron and his massive body belong to each other; jumping off would mean suicide: without moral control the powers of the body are dangerous and aimless, without the powers of the body, the head is powerless.

The »sanctity of life« is the foundation of Jahr's 1927 Bioethical Imperative, while Kant in 1788 named the »sanctity of the moral law« as the foundation of the Cate-

gorical Imperative: ‘The moral law is sacred (inviolable). The person is not sacred, but humankind in his person must be recognized as sacred. Everything in the entire creation, if one wants and has power over it, can be used as a means only; only the human person and with it every intelligent being *is an end in himself*. He is the subject of the moral law, which is sacred, based on the autonomy of his will’ [A156]. We need a new Categorical Imperative, not a formal as Immanuel Kant requested, but a content-rich material Categorical Imperative, - in the words of Fritz Jahr »The rule for our actions may be the Bioethical Imperative: *Respect every living being in principle as a goal in itself and treat it, if possible, as such!*«

The original term Bioethics coined by Fritz Jahr in 1927, is wider than the concepts, developed by Potter and Hellegers in the 1970’s in the United States, and even wider than the narrow contemporary focus on bioethics as a synonym for medical and clinical ethics, research ethics, or even public health ethics. Bioethics encompasses the entire world of life, even social entities such as teams, families, neighborhoods, institutions, corporations, hospital wards and hospitals, - all having internal metabolisms and interactions with their respective partners and environments. Is it correct and professional to use such a wide term as bioethics as a synonym for very precise fields of professional activity such as clinical ethics or ethics of medical research? Spinoza in his *Ethics* once said »omne esse verum quod valde clare et distincte percipio« and Wittgenstein would add »whereof one cannot speak, one must be silent«. Unclear terminology leads to unclear investigations, goals, and actions, not only in science but in the humanities and in morals as well. If ethics and every-day attitudes can learn anything from science, then that precision in definition is a priority and a precondition for clear conceptual and practical work, for communication and for cooperation. Should we really call hospital-based offices for clinical ethics »bioethics centers« or rather more precisely »clinical ethics centers«? Unclear terminology leads to unclear reasoning and acting; it is an expression of unclear thinking itself. There are different terms available for different subjects, fields, and issues: bioethics, medical ethics, hospice ethics, health policy ethics, hospital ethics, biomedical ethics, medical research ethics, physician’s ethics, nursing ethics, health care ethics, public health ethics, gene ethics, consultation ethics, environmental ethics, animal ethics – just to name a few. We must be much more precise in our terminology and in our reasoning! We call apples apples and oranges oranges and not vice versa; of course, apples and oranges belong to the vegetable family of eatable fruits. Being more precise in terminology, will free up the term bioethics to the original broad vision, – another global heritage of the European roots of Bioethics and of Fritz Jahr.

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