

1st International Conference EuroBioNethics

Fritz Jahr and European Roots of Bioethics: Establishing an International Scholar's Network

In Rijeka and Opatija, 11–12 March 2011, we witnessed a special academic and cultural event: conference on the problems of bioethics. Let us say in the beginning that the conference was rather small in dimensions of time and number of participants, but very significant in the importance of the task of shaping European bioethics. The aim of this text is to show at least something of that importance.

First day of the conference took place in Rijeka, at the Faculty of Medicine. In the greeting words on behalf of the organisers, Professor Amir Muzur from the Department of Social Sciences and Medical Humanities at Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka pointed out the importance of bioethical research especially in the context of European culture, and in that frame a special place belongs to the German theologian Fritz Jahr who coined the term 'bioethics' in 1927. This information, and let alone other important implications and strength of thoughts, obliges us to the serious job of broadening the horizons of new views on the problems of contemporary human living. On behalf of the host spoke Professor Alen Šustić, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka, and he wished special welcome and stressed the importance of debate on the problems of medicine in social surroundings. On behalf of the Board of Croatian Science Foundation spoke Professor Stipan Jonjić who also stressed out the importance of conference like this for the development of Croatian science and its recognition in the European intellectual framework.

The first day of the conference was structured in five sessions. In the first, named "Opening lectures", two lectures were held. The first, "Fritz Jahr (1895–1953): a sketch for biography", was given by Amir Muzur, in which author outlined some important data on the life of Fritz Jahr, as well an insight of the intellectual processes which led to the birth of idea of bioethics. Author also gave the sketch of the research of Jahr's thought, and outlined its reception. Second lecture in the first session was given by Hans-Martin Sass under the title "Translational ethics: how to translate tradition into the future?". The author stressed the link between science, culture and ethics especially in the context of the problems of health care and the conservation of life. In that context, the author drew attention to Jahr's interpretation of the 5th commandment as a display of a hermeneutical model which translates classical traditions into the 3rd millennium.

In the second session, named "European bioethics", we heard four presentations. First, "Integrative bioethics as an original SE-European 'product'", was given by Ante Čović, in which author presented the idea of integrative bioethics – which has been conceived in the area of Southeast Europe – in three aspects: as a program, as a project, and as a concept. Author also gave an outline of substantial dimensions of integrative bioethics, both in the thematic

and methodological aspects. Second paper, “The actuality of thoughts of Fritz Jahr in bioethics education or Why Fritz Jahr advocates character education”, was presented by Nada Gosić. In that paper author tried to achieve two goals: first, she gave an explanation for reasons and motives for character education, and second, intention to show how the pluralism of values, ideas, scientific and extra-scientific initiatives, forms of ethical behaviour, application of ethical standards, rules and principles – are component parts of Jahr’s thought. Third lecture was given by Iva Rinčić under the title “European bioethics institutionalization in theory and practice”, in which author tried to show the role of institutions in modern European society, as well as to explain the process of institutionalization as a process of establishing different normative and organizational institutions. In that light author gave the outline of Fritz Jahr’s recommendations for institutional bioethics. Last paper in the first session “Bioethics, law and European construction” was given by Christian Byk in which author tried to show the influence of law on the development of bioethics. On the other hand, in the context of discussion on the European bioethics, author stressed that European bioethics is just an example of the important role of law in the construction of Europe.

The third session, “European culture, philosophy, and science as forerunners of bioethics (I)”, also had four lectures. First, “Tracing the roots of the European bioethics to the Ancient Greek philosophers-physicians” was given by Eleni Kalokairinou. In that paper author presented an outline of problems of connection between ancient medicine and philosophy. Author gave special attention to the problem of ancient deontology, as well as to the determination of the very essence of medicine. Most important dimension of this paper was outlining the thoughts of Hippocrates, Galen and Celsus, as well as the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle who had helped medicine become independent of divine thought. Second lecture by Ivana Zagorac, “St. Francis of Assisi: bioethics in European Middle Ages”, gave a sketch of the life of probably the most popular Christian saint. Also, author outlined the thought of St. Francis especially stressing his relations towards life and egalitarianism as his central thought. Regarding this, St. Francis can be considered as the first forerunner of European bioethics. Third lecture was given by Igor Eterović under the title “The categorical imperative of Immanuel Kant in the light of the bioethical imperative of Fritz Jahr“. In the presentation, the author described some similarities between Kant and Jahr especially pointing out to same cultural and religious heritage. Certainly, Jahr got the inspiration for his bioethical imperative from Kant’s thought, of which the author gave the comparison. Last presentation in this session was titled “The importance of Charles Darwin’s theory for Fritz Jahr’s conception of bioethics” and it was given by Eve-Marie Engels. In this presentation, the author gave a sketch of the importance of scientific insights into the relationship between human being and nature. That was also Jahr’s idea – similar to Darwin, he has made the claim that humans should redefine their relationship towards nature, and especially they should stop consider themselves as an absolutely dominant figures in the natural horizon of being.

First afternoon session, named “European culture, philosophy, and science as forerunners of bioethics (II)”, began with José-Roberto Goldim’s paper “Albert Schweitzer, a bioethical precursor”, in which he outlined the thought of Albert Schweitzer, especially his *Reverence for Life*, which is based, according to author, in virtue ethics because it is another kind of love for life. Author stressed that we must recognize importance of Schweitzer’s thought

for the future of European bioethics. Second paper, entitled “Hans Jonas’ integrative philosophy of life as a foothold for integrative bioethics”, was given by Hrvoje Jurić in which he has considered Jonas’ ethics of responsibility and attempt to establish a philosophical biology which were both the mark on the path of developing *integrative philosophy of life* in centre of which stands ethically connoted philosophy of nature, based both on the results of contemporary natural sciences and theological speculations. Unfortunately, the third lecture “Bioethics and anthropological medicine: the early history” was not held because the author Fernando Lolas Stipke was not able to attend the conference. Marija Selak held the last lecture in this session under the title “Philosophy of Karl Löwith as a precursor and incentive to the idea of integrative bioethics”. In this paper author gave contribution to the discussion on the relation between bioethics and philosophy of history in the thought of Karl Löwith.

In the last session, “European bioethics outside Europe”, we witnessed two presentations. First was given by Ricardo Andrés Roa-Castellanos under the title “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” in which author displayed a web of connections between K. C. F. Krause, a Masonic mathematician, St. Francis of Assisi and Fritz Jahr. Author managed to illustrate the strength of dialog which can also be of use in bioethics. Last lecture was given by Natacha Lima – “The perspective of bioethics in Latin America following Jahr’s guidelines”. In the lecture, besides the importance of Jahr’s thought and the influence of his thought on current bioethical discussions, the author stressed the role of film usage in the processes of education as a new pathway of thinking.

The continuation of the conference, which took place the second day at the Grand Hotel *Četiri opatijska cvijeta* in Opatija, included discussion on various topics, moderated by Amir Muzur and Hans-Martin Sass, and presentation of many current activities. The most important thing was discussion on the *Rijeka Declaration on the Future of Bioethics* for which the all the participants agreed to be written and signed as an important intellectual marker on the path towards European bioethics.

To sum up, the conference was very successful event which has most certainly collected many bioethical thinkers from around the world and has contributed in making European bioethics a visible marking on the world bioethical map.

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