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## The moral entrepreneur

Hans-Martin Sass is the prototype of the moral entrepreneur. In the early days of bioethics there was a small group of individual experts who always took the lead, initiated projects, organized meetings, and launched edited books. Meeting with Hans-Martin always resulted in at least one new idea and activity. He therefore played a great role in promoting the new discipline in Germany. But at the same time, he had a much larger scope in mind. From the start he was involved in the European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Health Care (ESPMH), established in 1987. He proposed to host the fourth conference in the University of Bochum. After the inaugural conference in Maastricht, the Netherlands, ESPMH had conference in Aarhus, Denmark (1989) and Czestochowa, Poland (1989). The theme for the Bochum conference would be: Consensus formation in healthcare ethics. Ironically, the preparations for the conference elicited an enormous protest movement in Germany. Bioethics was considered as a suspect activity partly due to the negative image of Peter Singer so that people assumed that it was an intellectual tool for facilitating euthanasia and mercy killing of handicapped newborns. Bioethics was also considered as an instrument to introduce new technologies into the field of healthcare and to open up the health market for American 'innovation.' Hans-Martin informed us that on the Bochum campus students became more active and even aggressive, so that he was anxious for the upcoming conference. In fact, as perhaps naïve Dutchmen, Gerrit Kimsma (ESPMH treasurer) and I (Secretary of ESPMH) could believe such resistance against a peaceful discipline as

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bioethics. We decided to make a trip to Bochum and inspect the situation ourselves. We were surprised about the level of activism of diverse groups. Planning meetings of students, disability groups, ecologists and anarchists were ongoing. The walls of university buildings were covered with graffiti and pamphlets. It was easy to imagine how the conference hall could be blocked. Bioethicists had to climb over blockades of wheelchairs (in German its sounds even more aggressive as “Krüppel Kommandos”) to listen to paper on consensus formation. Soon the decision was made to move the conference to Maastricht, not far from Bochum, but in another country where protesters would not go so easily around. Apparently, Hans-Martin was not too much affected. The conference with the theme he had imagined did take place and was successful, resulting in a book in the Philosophy and Medicine series. The events also seemed to harden his conviction that bioethics was an important interdisciplinary platform for cooperation. Since then, he has published a long series of works demonstrating what we can learn from ethical discussions in other countries such as the US and China, as well as the other way around, i.e. what European approaches can bring to the world.