



## Book Reviews

Iva Rinčić, Amir Muzur

Fritz Jahr and the  
Emergence of European  
Bioethics

Lit Verlag, Zurich 2019

Amir Muzur, Iva Rinčić

Van Rensselaer Potter and  
His Place in the History of  
Bioethics

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In 2015, three years after their first co-authored book entitled *Fritz Jahr i rađanje europske bioetike* [*Fritz Jahr and the Emergence of European Bioethics*] published in the series “Bioethics” by the Croatian publisher “Pergamena” from Zagreb, the authors, Amir Muzur and Iva Rinčić (University of Rijeka, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Health Studies), published in the same series a new one, entitled *Van Rensselaer Potter i njegovo mjesto u povijesti bioetike* [*Van Rensselaer Potter and His Place in the History of Bioethics*]. In 2019, both monographs were slightly re-edited from the original written in Croatian, translated into English and published by the eminent publishing house Lit Verlag.

In the monograph *Fritz Jahr and the Emergence of European Bioethics*, the authors present the results of multiannual research of the biography and opus of Fritz Jahr (1895 – 1953), a German theologian and teacher from Halle. Fritz Jahr is considered to be the author who in his article from 1926 used the term ‘bioethics’ for the first time. The book is divided into two parts, while the appendix contains a chronological overview of Fritz Jahr’s publications, including lists of their

translations into several languages. Among them on the list are translations into Croatian, which were translated by Amir Muzur and presented in the Croatian edition. The English edition does not include these translations, or the image material or the text of the “Rijeka Declaration on the Future of Bioethics”.

Based on the research of archival sources stored in Jahr’s hometown, Halle an der Saale (Germany), the authors, Iva Rinčić and Amir Muzur, bring in the first chapter a biography of this Protestant pastor and elementary school history and religion teacher. The second chapter gives an overview of all Fritz Jahr’s short articles discovered so far. The next one, analysing Jahr’s article on education, discusses the impact of pietism on Jahr’s ideas, with special reference to his 10 principles of education that confront those of August Hermann Francke, one of the spokesmen of Protestant pietism. The first part of the book ends with a discussion on the influence that an insufficiently known German intellectual, lawyer Ignaz Bregenzner, the author of the “first scientific animal ethics”, could have had on Fritz Jahr. The second part of the book, entitled “The second birth of bioethics”, initially presents, as the authors call him, the “second inventor” of bioethics, Van Rensselaer Potter and his significance for the development of “American” bioethics. Furthermore, it brings the circumstances under which Potter’s bioethics originated and how it developed later, especially in the context in which the “new medical ethics”, led by the Kennedy Institute of Ethics in Washington, was promoted. The next chapter presents the gradual progress, not without a presence of resistance, of post-Potterian bioethics in Europe, i.e. the development of European bioethics and its institutionalisation. The successive sections of the book detail the development of bioethical trends and its research groups in Croatia, but also its impact on the development of bioethics in Southeast Europe. Following the earlier chapters, the role of Croatian bioethicists in spreading Fritz Jahr’s discoveries is discussed. Moreover, in this section, an analysis

of the conceptual differences between Jahr and Georgetown bioethics are given. The second part of the book ends with an overview of several visions of the development and the future of bioethics.

As the authors Amir Muzur and Iva Rinčić state in the preface to their book *Van Rensselaer Potter and His Place in the History of Bioethics*, after researching the life and work of Fritz Jahr, it seemed logical to proceed and explore the life and work of another “father of bioethics”, Van Rensselaer Potter (1911 – 2001). Van Rensselaer Potter of the University of Wisconsin was a biochemist-oncologist by profession but a humanist by conviction, who had long been considered a scholar who coined the term ‘bioethics’. Despite the later discovery, one could say of the “European cradle” of this word, Potter’s ideas have not lost their relevance. Conceiving “global bioethics” in the late 1980s, Potter sought to move bioethics beyond North America to other continents and cultures. Potter’s contribution to the content and methodological foundations of integrative bioethics was significant.

Analysing the original archival material of Potter’s legacy, including manuscripts, correspondence, and photo archives all kept in the McArde Laboratory in Madison (USA), furthermore, the records of the interviews with Potter’s associates and his family, and the legacy of Ivan Šegota (1938 – 2011), one of the first among Croatian bioethicists with whom Potter had contacts during the last years of his life, the authors offered Potter’s biography to the reading audience. The new English edition of this book has minor changes in its content regarding the Croatian edition. First of all, it also lacks image material and does not contain a list of Potter’s bibliography. Nevertheless, the English edition does not lose its importance. Especially due to the fact that now Potter’s biography is becoming globally available.

Hence, thanks to its authors, this monograph is a *homage* to Potter’s life and work. However, it also represents an opportunity for Potter to gain recognition in his homeland at least posthumously.

However, even if such recognition would fail, the English translations of these two monographs will inevitably confirm the authors’ contribution to promoting Fritz Jahr’s ideas and understanding of Potterian bioethics. Furthermore, it will provide a broader audience with a safe starting point for a better understanding of the development path and future aspirations of bioethics in Croatia and its surroundings.

**Robert Doričić**

**Norbert Walz**

## **Philosophie als Abstraktionskritik**

### **Überlegungen zum Leitmotiv der Marxschen Kritik und seiner philosophischen Fundierung**

**Königshausen & Neumann,  
Würzburg 2019**

Books and articles on Karl Marx’s theories have been cursed with a Tantalean task of distancing themselves from distortions brought on by a multitude of “Marxisms”, especially the ones that are built on ideologies. Norbert Walz tries to avoid the problematic aspects by consulting authors from different fields – humanist Marxism, value criticism, critical theory and new works on Marxist theory (p. 9). In broadest strokes, the book deals both with materialistic and idealistic points of Karl Marx’s work, interpretations of knowledge as mirrored objectivity, and the thesis that the social being defines consciousness (p. 11). Marxism, therefore, is not understood as a complete or defined theory with a single interpretation, but its contents and meaning are taken as transitional or changing with time, as they changed in Marx’s work. Since the book’s main topic is the position of philosophy in Marx’s overall *opus*, it can only be characterised as *developing*. Even though his theory is grounded in philosophy, his stance on its value and necessity has changed throughout the years.

Marx’s theory covers history and historical analysis, the critique of ideological forms of societal morality, politics and laws that legitimise property and employment relationships but intertwine as critique of the State and the “religion of everyday life” (pp. 11–12). Usually, the main focus of most researchers regarding Marx’s critique is the political economy, and the philosophical terms, ideas and methodology are left out. The critique of societal interactions cannot be understood in its entirety only from the prospect of political economy. It is important to note that the foundation of economic and societal critique is based on philosophical thought. Engels and the protagonists of the Second international used this powerful foundational tool not to ground the movement but to legitimise Marxism as a worldview (pp. 11–12).

The book is divided into seven parts, with a “Foreword”, “Summary” and a “Bibliography”. The chapters in the book are organised in the following order: “Introduction” [“Ein-