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BIOETHICS AND GEOPOLITICS – *THE WAR IN UKRAINE AS CAUSE*

Abstract

The article mainly relies on original scientific papers, and reviews of a large number of bioethical works published from the end of the last century to the present day, but it primarily leans on the reviews, critical reflections and comments of the renowned Croatian philosopher Rade Kalanj. He rightfully warned some thirty years ago that biological and genetic research had reached a level (“a borderline situation”/Jaspers) where the question of the relationship between science and ethics is raised anew, but now in a much sharper and more radical form. Today, in light of the war in Ukraine, we would add: the relationship between bioethics and geopolitics.

One of the severe consequences of the tragic events in Ukraine is the danger of exacerbating the already significant global hunger, in which, ultimately, it becomes less important whether food is natural/organic or GMO, but rather whether there is any food at all, primarily the grains. Or, on the contrary, there is an abundance of food, but only for those who have money to buy it, and their numbers are decreasing, so it remains to give them food. But in that case, the profits of global capitalism would be missing, which would certainly be unacceptable for the world’s transnational elites and practically endanger the foundations of capitalism, marking the end of the global capitalist system/order. So, a major humanitarian catastrophe is looming, supplemented by millions of refugees, not only from Ukraine but also from around the world. This situation will be exacerbated by poor economic consequences, primarily for the EU and then for the whole world, all of which includes the UN and its specialised

agencies, primarily UNHCR and UNESCO, in solving serious international problems, which certainly includes the issue of (un)acceptability of bioethical axioms for all civilisations and cultures.

Among other things, the question arises as to who will be responsible/blamed for the global humanitarian catastrophe regarding the war in Ukraine: whether, as before, only Russia, or whether the list of accused will be expanded to include “Third World” countries, primarily China and Iran? Ahead of us lies a spectrum of bioethical questions, moral dilemmas, and temptations, especially when the existence of experimental biomedical laboratories on the territory of western Ukraine is revealed, reminiscent of the horrors of Nazi biomedical experiments in World War II.

Keywords: bioethics, geopolitics, elites, ethical subject, responsibility, capitalist system, the war in Ukraine

Kada je – zahvaljujući ruskoj intervenciji u Ukraini – “preko noć” pokorio Evropsku Uniju i radikalno suprotstavio Rusiji, stvarajući od nje branu za širenje uticaja Moskve na Zapad, što će veoma skupo koštati Uniju, Vašington prebacuje fokus svojih geopolitičkih aktivnosti ka Istočnoj Aziji, gde mu se žuri da “slomi” Kinu, kao svog jedinog istinskog globalnog ekonomskog (a sve više i vojnog) suparnika. [As a result of Russian intervention in Ukraine, which “overnight” conquered the European Union and radically opposed Russia, creating a barrier to Moscow’s influence spreading westward, which will cost the Union dearly, Washington shifts the focus of its geopolitical activities to East Asia, where it is in a hurry to “break” China, as its only true global economic (and increasingly military) rival.]

(The New York Times/Нова Македонија, 14-15 јуни, 2022)

The production and use of biological and chemical weapons in wars that occurred during the 20th and 21st centuries (including the Cold War and the period after that) are nothing new in the history of modern and contemporary warfare. Therefore, we can freely refer to and reflect on bioethical works that emerged some thirty years ago, which, as such, still retain their relevance, topicality, and anticipatory nature, especially in light of the war in Ukraine. Hence, our subsequent analyses - namely, the analyses of the relationship between bioethics and geopolitics - will mostly rely on these studies and observations but will naturally be supplemented with new data, reports, and research coming from

countries that are leading in the production and use of biological weapons (e.g., the USA, Ukraine, and Russia), including bioterrorism. Since this is a relatively new subject, especially in the context of globalisation simultaneously evolving and collapsing, at the end of the article, we will briefly and informatively discuss several expert and programmatic works and documents, primarily issued and printed under the auspices of UNESCO. This allows us to already speak of efforts towards building an international strategy that we can call global bioethics (Solinis, 2015).

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Based on reviews of numerous bioethical works, the renowned Croatian philosopher Rade Kalanj warned and emphasised as early as the end of the last century that biological and genetic research had reached a level (“a borderline situation”/Jaspers) where the question of the relationship between science and ethics is once again raised, but now in a much sharper form. Today, during the war in Ukraine, we would add: the relationship between bioethics and geopolitics (Kalanj, 1997: 333-338). Namely, as we have been discussing the consequences of the war in Ukraine for months, we talk about the danger of global hunger, where, ultimately, it becomes insignificant, or less important, whether food is natural/organic or GMO; what matters is that there is none of either. This means there is no food, primarily grains. Alternatively, food is abundant, but only for those who have money to buy it, and their numbers are decreasing. Thus, we are left with the option to donate food to the hungry and poor - whose numbers are rapidly increasing, in contrast to the small number of extremely wealthy, whose wealth is rapidly increasing. This would be highly moral and humane and would definitively solve the problems of mass global hunger, poverty, misery, high mortality rates, issues that the United Nations (UN) has failed to solve since its inception and prevent humanitarian disasters.¹

However, in the event that the problem of global hunger is successfully solved, then there would no longer be global capitalism, which would be unthinkable and unacceptable for some global, transnational, and (war-) profiteering elites/classes - namely, fatal. In other words, it would mark the end/disappearance of global capitalism, i.e., the capitalist/imperial system as such, and the realisation of utopian communist ideals of paradise on Earth and a classless and wealthy global society. Of course, the contemporary world is not only far from achieving

1 In fact, this was noted by the legendary Ernesto Che Guevara as early as the beginning of the 1960s, and it was one of the main motives for his revolutionary and selfless commitment as a physician and humanitarian.

these utopian, naive, and “religious” ideas, but after humanitarian disasters in Yemen, Syria, and Afghanistan, the world is once again facing a major humanitarian catastrophe, not only in Ukraine but also more broadly. However, this time, the catastrophe will cause significant and negative economic and other unforeseeable consequences for the whole world, primarily for the EU and the countries on its borders, among other things, due to the handling of refugees whose numbers already amount to several million.

The question of who is responsible/blamed for this new humanitarian tragedy/catastrophe in Ukraine (whether, as before, exclusively Russia or if the list of accused will be expanded to include “Third World” countries, primarily China and Iran) is not the central theme of our short article because we are, first and foremost, bioethicists, and only then inevitably biopoliticians and “ideologists.” This is also because the experimental laboratories for geopolitical interests in western Ukraine are just an extension of a horizontal process that has been rolling “behind the scenes” for decades. As such, it is vertically only the “tip of the iceberg,” which has been forming since the horrors of Nazi biomedical experiments in World War II. This means that it is a great global evil that has a long history and did not begin “yesterday” and will not last until “tomorrow” but has been actualised again in the context of the war in Ukraine and, as such, is a relevant subject for our scientific and philosophical/bioethical research and the formation of our moral stances and value judgments.

Continuing with the observations of Rade Kalanj, which, although given more than two decades ago, do not lose their relevance and foresight. On the contrary, they are only supplemented and confirmed in light of the war in Ukraine, among other things, due to the aforementioned experimental biolaboratories established in western Ukraine, the existence of which has not been denied by US officials. For example, we can take the official and quite alarmed admission by the Deputy Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the US Department of State, Victoria Nuland, in the US Senate on February 8, 2022, in response to a question from US Senator Marco Rubio. As often before, to ease her response to an uncomfortable moral-geopolitical question, she skillfully shifted the blame in advance, of course, onto Russia, in case it comes into possession of these biomedical scientific discoveries and experiments and uses them in a war against the West, i.e., the EU, the USA, and NATO.²

2 Please find the detailed references below:

Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, “The Pentagon Bio-weapons”. [Online] Available at: <https://dilyana.bg/the-pentagon-bio-weapons/>. Accessed 30 January 2023; then the official website of the U.S.

With this, we rise to the level of “high politics”, or now, geopolitics/geo-strategy, which stands behind the war in Ukraine and which is evident not only to ordinary people but also to the intellectual elite and objective observers and war correspondents/journalists who have not agreed to participate in digital propaganda and mass media production and dissemination of fake news from the battlefield in Ukraine, regardless of which side they come from. Indeed, this was openly pointed out by investigative journalists from *The New York Times*, as well as some other reputable media outlets and journals, already in the spring of last year, 2022, whose views and analyses were extensively covered and discussed in several media outlets in the broader American region. Reflecting on several vital points of the newly emerging processes worldwide and the process of “globalisation fragmentation”, a common conclusion was reached that “the USA is escalating tension with Russia and China to the maximum level, weakening the unity of the West”, as a result of which “new rules and new power relations will be established, and the world we knew until recently will look quite different” (Нова Македонија, 2022). Moreover, these conclusions and observations are nothing new considering that the world-renowned German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has been pointing out and warning about such processes of disintegration and fragmentation of the West, which significantly affect the constitution of the entire international order, already at the beginning of the 21st century (Habermas, 2004). It is worth mentioning that the same great philosopher, among others, together with another great philosopher, the American Noam Chomsky, at the end of the last century emphasised the inevitable need for reform of the United Nations Organization (UN) and its branches and agencies (UNESCO), as well as its establishment on different foundations and principles than those established after the end of World War II and the bloc division of the world into spheres of influence, which caused the decades-long “Cold War” (Habermas, 1999; Habermas, 2004; Chomsky, 2004).

When we summarise all this knowledge about the processes of significant and radical changes and the inevitable and unstoppable transformation of the world from unilateral and monopolistic to multilateral and multipolar, namely the

Embassy in Ukraine, “Biological Threat Reduction Program.” [Online] Available at: <https://ua.usembassy.gov/embassy/kyiv/sections-offices/defense-threat-reduction-office/biological-threat-reduction-program/>. Accessed 30 January 2023; followed by the reference to “Ethnic bioweapon”. [Online] Available at: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_bioweapon. Accessed 30 January 2023; as well as the article by Sarah Knapton, “World must prepare for biological weapons that target ethnic groups based on genetics, says Cambridge University”. [Online] Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2019/08/12/world-must-prepare-biological-weapons-target-ethnic-groups-based/>. Accessed 30 January 2023.

multicultural world, a crucial question arises: where do we, as bioethicists, and integral bioethics in general as an essential interdisciplinary science/philosophy, stand in terms of opportunities and prospects? Where do our efforts and advocacy for prescribing ethical imperatives for humanistic, universal, global bioethics, which could potentially be acceptable/receptive to all races, all faiths, all nations, and all cultures of the world, fit in today's already global bioethics (Solinis, 2015)?! Trapped in our EU-centric and NATO-centric perspectives, we often forget that the world is not just the EU and NATO, which, through the United Nations Security Council, have so far overwhelmingly dominated the decision-making processes crucial and accountable for the present and future peace, stability, development, prosperity, and now even the survival of the entire planet.

And once again, we return to and refer to Rade Kalanj - whose proto-Marxist interdisciplinary bioethical discursive position in constructing a new individual and plural ethical subject is very close to us - who draws attention, among other things, to an aspect that, in our opinion, is philosophically/bioethically most relevant, especially if we place it in the context of the new geopolitical reality. Namely, starting from the French biomedical scientists Gérard Huber and Christian Byk (Huber/Byk, 1996), as well as from the documents of the International Bioethics Committee within UNESCO, from 1993, Kalanj criticised...

“... the belief that Europe and the United States will shape an *ethical culture* simply by creating norms, no matter how well-founded, forgetting that *radical evil has emerged precisely in those societies*, and that conclusions must be drawn from this about the current reality – this is a path that leads no further than *short-term pragmatism*. The only true path consists in allowing our ‘previous work of thought to lead us to the construction of an individual and plural subject, which precisely means an ethical subject that does not accept the understanding that humans are powerless against technology and totalitarianism, that they cannot resist teleological theoretical-ideological programming’. In dialogue with Hume, Kant, Heidegger, Levinas, H. Arendt, Jonas, Huber concludes that creating space for the construction of the subject is the fundamental condition for the possibility of a bioethical standpoint. What distinguishes today's paradigm of life, death, and survival from traditional understanding is awareness of the plural subject that functions democratically, not just as an individual captive of the ‘higher reality’ (god, supreme being, nature).”

(Kalanj, 1997: 335) (emphasis added – D.S.)

We cannot escape the impression that such reflections irresistibly remind us of the philosophical pantheism of Baruch de Spinoza: *Deus sive Natura*. And once again, we agree with Jaspers' interpretation that Spinoza refers to *natura naturans* as active nature (subject), which is personified in human individual and collective/plural active subjects, rather than *natura naturata*, passive nature (object), which is personified in all other biological species, i.e., in planetary biodiversity.³ But regardless of our free and associative interpretations of Kalanj's or Huber's views, we continue along Huber's path of asking questions, among which the most relevant question for him is whether bioethics prevails or merely illustrates the postmodern spiritual condition.

Instead of advocating for a new ethos as a decisive force for new times and a different future – as Karl Jaspers attempted to do in the early 1960s, or reviving old ideas, such as the idea of socialism, as Erich Fromm did in the mid-20th century, or Karel Kosik in the same period, or as Axel Honneth is doing today – the postmodern spirit is “filled” with negativity, depression, relativism, skepticism, disbelief, cynicism, spiritual conformism, chronic fear of the future, and a lack of new ideas, visions, and perspectives, namely a lack of the positive utopian energy. This “active” nihilism is often disseminated with the excuse, or even the threat and “accusation,” that any attempt at scientific/philosophical prediction and projection of a positive future would be merely a form of allegedly outdated ideologies, which in the course of history have brought great disappointments and caused much evil, suffering, and victims, forgetting that without positive utopian energy, namely faith and hope in a better future (read as: ideology), humans/humanity as individual/plural subjects cannot live and survive⁴ (Jaspers, 1961; Kalanj, 1997; Fromm, 1989; Kosik, 2007; Honneth, 2015).

Therefore, instead of a new ethos, our era is gripped by the “depressive ethos of the death of God” proclaimed by Nietzsche and Dostoevsky at the end of the 19th century, so that, with the desacralisation of values on one hand,

3 In this philosophical/theological context, it is crucial to emphasize that this ontological relationship between subject ↔ object has been transferred to the **female subject** (individual and collective) throughout the course of written history, which until today is still much more treated as a natural (passive) object than as a cultural (active) subject. This once again highlights the importance of **gender philosophy/ethics**, i.e., the **gender aspect** of our bioethical positions, which deserves special attention and consideration (Bosanac, 2005; Симоновска/Скаловски, 2012).

4 And speaking of the spirit of positive utopia and the subject ↔ object relationship, it is worth recalling that it is inevitable to return to and actualise again the philosophy of Ernst Bloch and **his** spirit of utopia, as well as to revise the assessments that reduced his philosophical/utopian disposition to merely being a great homo religiosus (Bloch, 1982; Bloch, 1975; Bloch, 1981).

and the elevation of dedicated illusions on the other hand⁵, the postmodern human no longer believes in the emancipatory potentials of civil society, “the enlightenment of the spirit, classless society, and all former utopias resorted to in order to legitimise or criticise knowledge and action,” as Habermas spoke of as early as the beginning of the 1960s (Kalanj, 1997: 334; Habermas, 1982). In other words, the postmodern/posthuman man no longer believes in anything or anyone, except perhaps in the unlimited power of money and private property, which further deepens the already significant pathology of everyday/social life in Western/civil society and the profound crisis of the hierarchy of humanistic values in its system where human life loses all meaning and value, a crisis that is also reflected in other, far poorer parts of the world. For decades, members and followers of the famous Frankfurt School of Critical Theorists (including Erich Fromm) have been warning about this pathology of social life, among whom Axel Honneth, a professor at Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt and Columbia University in New York, is now the most prominent (Honneth, 1994).

What can bioethics, as an interdisciplinary social theory and spiritual science about human beings, do in this global *conditio humana*?

Trying to answer this genuinely complex and multidimensional question, we again stick to some historical facts reminded by Huber, which played a significant role in shaping the bioethical paradigm today. Namely, he reminds us of the significance of biomedical ethics, which particularly came to light in 1947 when the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg exposed the horrors of Nazi biomedical experiments. However, the bioethical theme gained importance only in the last few decades, as the possibility of altering living species and human species (including genetic engineering) became entirely sure, radicalising the old theological and philosophical question of life and death to the utmost limits. Therefore, Huber rightfully brings us back to the empiricist theses of David Hume that our everyday actions can only be guided by everyday sensory experience and reflections on that experience. If our experience suggests to us that human genetic structure can be altered by scientific and technical means and that fatal, irresponsible, and adventurous eugenic projects can be based on it (as Hans Jonas also points out), then it is hard to doubt the certainty of scientific insights, regardless of the type of their self-legitimation (as Jürgen Habermas also indicates) (Jonas, 1987; Habermas, 1982). Nevertheless, “this still does not

5 Against which Erich Fromm speaks, among others.

mean that the overcoming of the postmodern situation is ensured, but that it is achievable only on the condition that ‘*previous thinking*’ about the possible disappearance of human humanity and *the advent of absolute evil* is done” (Kalanj, 1997: 334) (emphasis added - D.S.).

This pessimistic and dystopian prediction is precisely what we find in the well-known and numerous works of science fiction literature from George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Franz Kafka to the present, as well as in the anthropological works of Erich Fromm and a series of other contemporary “pessimists” and “dystopians,” whose futuristic predictions are becoming a real threat and danger. It is precisely this that leads us back to the words of Rade Kalanj, which we previously extensively quoted and consider very important and significant, even though they were expressed only concerning Gerhard Huber’s views.

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Huber’s colleague, Christian Byk, despite having more modest ambitions and being less sceptical and pessimistic, essentially thinks similarly. Crucial is his observation that bioethics is a phenomenon, a movement, and a dialogue, and as such, it is based on concrete, living individuals, people, rather than on abstract, universal principles aimed at establishing and grounding some kind of global morality, something like a new, world ethos. Since it confronts values and interests, which can unsettle and threaten the foundations of social systems, especially in pluralistic societies, bioethics becomes a political phenomenon, Byk notes, and based on what is happening in Ukraine, especially regarding bio-laboratories, we would add that bioethics is also becoming a biopolitical phenomenon, as Byk and a plethora of bioethical thinkers already observed and predicted back then (Kalanj, 1997). In conditions where the process of globalisation fragmentation is evident (as noted by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*), it is realistic to expect that biotechnological weapons will be massively used in future wars.⁶

I return to Christian Byk in this second part of my brief analysis. Namely, the question arises of reconciling legal relativism and the universal logic of fundamental human rights. Byk believes that this opposition is too artificial and that one should consider the complexity of cultural factors and the social system in which they operate. Because we live in a world of different communities, their cultural models condition the relativity of moral norms and legal rules, and what is moral in one culture may be immoral in another and vice versa. Moreover,

6 And perhaps they are already being used, and we do not even know it?!

precisely, the brief history of global bioethics shows that it is a venue not only for different types of conflicts (methodological, religious, ideological) but also for tensions conditioned by the conscious or unconscious acceptance of different cultural models.⁷ This has become very important in the new, multicultural, and multipolar world. This means that, for example, bioethics in industrialised countries calls for reflection on development but also for deepening the meaning and concrete reach of universal values, emphasises Byk. Bioethics cannot be reduced to mere “ethical procedure” that neglects the significance of values (Životić, 1969). It requires a heuristic creative discourse integrated into action, which “does not enable us to know everything we want, but still gives us guidelines for open discussions.” Understood in this way, bioethics follows the ancient *practice of dialectics*. It is the “*renaissance and continuity of humanity*,” concludes Christian Byk (Kalanj, 1997:335) (emphasis added - D.S.).

From all that has been said so far, it becomes evident that in our modern or postmodern discourse - call it what you will - we must reintroduce the concept of dialectics, not only in its ancient sense, which would be very good but insufficient, but also in the sense it has in historical continuity, all the way to modern philosophy, starting from Hegel, Marx, and Engels, through Lukács and Lenin, to Kosik and Habermas (Lukács, 1977; Kosik, 1967). If we start from the modern socio-philosophical concept of Publicness (German: *Öffentlichkeit*), then that points us precisely to the concept of dialectics as its counterpart, namely that thinking openly means thinking dialectically, namely being open (read as: free) critical minds for new/different “readings” and interpretations, exchange of experiences, and increasing interference/interdependence on a global level, but also the right to find particular, one’s own, “autonomous” directions and paths into the future. However, despite the particularisms arising from different economic interests and then from cultural differences and the cultural heritage of different national cultures and different legal and customary traditions (e.g., the meaning of family or the place and role of the church), efforts should be made to find common elements/common interests. This means that what connects us, brings us closer, and unites us should be promoted and emphasised, rather than what divides us, separates us, and opposes us, so European legislation on bioethics is not only possible but necessary, regardless of the often different and conflicting interests, and regardless of the different levels, primarily economic, and then democratic and cultural development of individual EU members, or candidate

⁷ Many authors who think similarly to Byk also warn about this, which is why we do not mention them in this short text.

countries for full membership. Not to mention that the next step should be to investigate the situation in other countries and regions of the world with large populations, which, according to the assessments of several experts, are still in an inferior position, especially when it comes to their bioethical positioning. This is all the more important since there is a noticeable absence/distance or a relatively small number of representatives from the most populous countries in the world, such as China, India, Brazil, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, etc. (Solinis, 2015). Unfortunately, as events unfold around the war in Ukraine, this distance and deliberate economic sanctions and political and other forms of exclusion/isolation of some large countries will continue to grow, which will adversely affect the possibility of implementing our global bioethical strategies, primarily through UNESCO.⁸

This also implies new/different critical evaluations and interpretations of the social and political theories of certain authors (namely as a “renaissance and continuity of humanity”), who have been known to us more as political practitioners and revolutionary leaders of a dictatorial type, rather than as social theorists and intellectuals (Horkheimer, 1988; Peri, 2000). In this sense, some may be surprised/shocked by the mention of Lenin, but let us not forget that he is also brought up by Žižek (“Žižek’s return to Lenin”), especially when it comes to the emancipatory potentials of his theory, as Žižek notes, not to mention that Lenin’s analysis and critique of imperialism/colonialism remain very relevant, as do his lucid views on the rights of nations to self-determination up to secession. Not coincidentally, his name - especially in light of the tragic events in Ukraine - is frequently mentioned, whether in a positive or negative context of international law regardless of the side that criticises or praises him (Žižek, 2018).

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... our society no longer believes in anything except bare life. It is obvious that Italians are willing to sacrifice practically everything - normal living conditions, relationships and connections with other people, work, and even friendships,

8 As for the **new world economy** itself, and in the conditions of a multipolar world, it is worth reading the latest analyses and predictions of the world scientific/economic authority, such as **Jeffrey Sachs**. And his analyses, expected to continue during the spring of this year, are “provoked” by the events/war in Ukraine, but they do not end with just a blanket condemnation of the Russian invasion and occupation, but go further in their **scientific predictions** about the architecture of the world economic system in the new circumstances of a multipolar and multicultural world, namely its “plural subjects.” Џефри Д. Сакс, „Новата светска економија“. <https://novamakdonija.com.mk/mislenja/kolumni/novata-svetska-ekonomija/>. Accessed 1 February 2023.

affections, and religious and political convictions - because of the danger of falling ill. Bare life - and the danger of losing it - is not something that unites people; on the contrary, it blinds them and divides them. (emphasis added – D.S.)

(Giorgio Agamben, 2020)

In the third part of our brief text, starting from the pessimistic observations of the contemporary Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, and when we try to summarise all of this synthetically, we can state that the current war in Ukraine raises new bioethical dilemmas, challenges, temptations, paradoxes, and problems. It hints at new bioethical conflicts (eugenics, abortion stances, contraception, euthanasia, reproductive technologies, various types of motherhood including surrogacy, organ transplantation, and commercialisation, and a spectrum of other gender issues (СИМОНОВСКА/СКАЛОВСКИ). It is evident that the war in Ukraine is not just a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and to stand exclusively and categorically on one side and grant moral and legal rights to it would mean self-deception and irresponsibly simplifying the global “moral” situation, which is radically changing and complicating, and is in the interest of some but not in the interest of others/rest (The West and The Rest). We in the Balkans could easily find ourselves (if we have not already) in the Rest (Skalovski, 2019).

The world is undergoing radical changes; the unipolar/unilateral world is increasingly fragmenting and multipolarising/multilateralising, entering into the whirlpool of a war of all against all, bellum omnium contra omnes (Hobbes). It is known that in war, the first casualty is truth, and the most significant victims are innocent people, primarily women and children, and the elderly, who make up the overwhelming majority in all columns of refugees from Ukraine. This actualises eternal questions about humanism and humanitarianism again, questions about just and unjust wars, the right to military intervention, or the inviolable right to defend one’s homeland, which in this case is not just for one side; Ukraine is not just a homeland for Ukrainians but also for other minority and neighbouring peoples who live there: Russians, Poles, Jews, Slovaks, Hungarians, etc., not to mention hundreds of thousands of mixed marriages (multiethnic and multiconfessional), who are the greatest victims in such interethnic, “fratricidal” wars. Not to mention that this necessitates a renewed critique of imperialism and post-colonialism/neocolonialism, regardless of which side it comes from. So, the question of sovereignty is legitimately raised again, especially when it is evident that globalisation has trampled and run over all of this. This especially applies

to us in Southeast Europe, who live in small and powerless states, internally very divided, struggling to preserve the historical continuity of the development of our cultural identity and political sovereignty, and who suffer the most, and even collapse, in such anarchic, chaotic, controversial, and (auto)destructive global processes. In terms of these risks of self-extinction of small nations, the “shocking” statements of the Croatian president Zoran Milanović should be understood, who points out the danger of questioning the entire Western concept of civilisation, and the statements were made precisely in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. After all, these statements may be “shocking” only to those who until now had no idea what was happening in eastern Ukraine, starting from 2014 until today, and what “provoked Russia with the intention to start this war. And it broke out!” („Ова е доведување во прашање на целиот западен концепт“. <https://novamakedonija.com.mk/svet/balkan/milanovikj-ova-e-doveduvanje-vo-prashanje-na-celiot-zapaden-koncept/>. Accessed 1 February 2023).

In other words, as humanists and bioethicists, we are facing great and difficult moral trials and challenging times, and not just because of the war in Ukraine, but much broader, deeper, and global, on all levels of morally and politically responsible decision-making, i.e., of “taking sides.” Let us not deceive ourselves or harbour illusions: whichever side we choose, some will condemn us while others will support us. We must always be prepared for this because this time, it is truly a fight for life, a struggle for bare life (Агамбен, 2014) in which no means are spared; it is a battle for the biological survival of the human species (meaning not just Italians, whom Agamben speaks of) and the future of human civilisation and culture as a whole, including the survival of biodiversity on the entire planet. We have no moral right to irresponsibly gamble with the fate of our children and future generations just to satisfy short-term, pragmatic, partial, profit-driven interests, primarily those of the global elite of the wealthy (“the fish rots from the head”), and then the interests of the military-industrial complex, arms manufacturers, war profiteers, “businessmen” and “managers,” and the motley crew of global schemers, corrupt politicians, demagogues, Mafiosi, charlatans, impostors, adventurers, mercenaries, common criminals, and psychopaths, scoundrels, and liars who disregard fundamental/humanistic norms and virtues, thereby endangering the survival of the entire human civilisation and various cultures, and regressing them into barbarism and savagery. (Мекинтаир, 1998; ДОНЕВ, 2018; ЧОМСКИ, 2021) On the other hand, all this is happening at a time when we are increasingly (even excessively) talking about some kind of posthumanism or transhumanism or even a new transhumanist ideology that

aims to create/produce (and is already mass-producing) artificial intelligence, humanoid robots, cyborgs, post-humans, etc. This together creates new bioethical dilemmas, unknowns, and uncertainties for us, which require our vigilance and attention or even render our programmes, concepts, and efforts futile, meaningless, and naive, namely impossible, i.e., utopian. We may speak on another occasion of those uncertainties.

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Here we have two of the most fundamental questions of philosophy: What should be done? And, above all, What is Man?

(German Solinis)

Knowledge is always positive, but its application may not to be.

(Federico Mayor)

The goal of bioethical activities in the global era should therefore be to address global health inequities and to reinsert a social commitment in healthcare, not as a business but as a human engagement. (emphasis added – D.S.)

(Henk ten Have)

Of course, in these opening words of Germán Solinis, the editor of a collection of bioethical articles published by UNESCO (Global bioethics: what for? Twentieth anniversary of UNESCO's Bioethics Programme, 2015), it is not difficult to recognise a quote/paraphrase of the famous Kantian philosophical questions (Was soll ich tun? Was ist der Mensch?). However, their analysis is not the content of this third part of our article, as that would be an unnecessary repetition of well-known/general topics (*locus communis*) of modern philosophy/ethics. As such, we leave them for some other occasion (Solinis, 2015).

What we have saved for the end, for a little optimism that gives us drops of hope in the sea of pessimism and dystopian predictions, namely something that fosters our positive utopian energy, which we occasionally discuss in this short article on bioethics, are the activities and efforts of UNESCO and the programmatic documents/articles and bioethical scientific works published in the last two decades (Solinis, 2015). That is why we quoted the words of the American philosopher and physician Henk ten Haven. Unfortunately, because of the events in Ukraine, these documents testify to the inefficiency of the United Nations and its specialised agencies, including UNESCO, and the urgent

need for radical reform, which we have already discussed in this short article. Moreover, new scepticism, doubt, and reservation are raised among us by the advocacy of some of its protagonists, active subjects, and individual authors who openly advocate for the creation of some kind of world/global government which should implement some global policy in the interest of all, and whose declaratively good but covertly bad intentions to rule/govern the whole world were exposed and criticised, among others, by the Russian philosopher and sociologist Aleksandr Zinoviev, as early as the late 20th century (Зиновьев, 1999).

However, let us not be overly suspicious; let us hope and briefly mention some of its optimistic, well-intentioned, and positive utopian programmatic advocacies. In other words, if we rise above a series of local and regional ethical and legal insights, which we have briefly outlined, among the numerous authors dominating the international bioethical scene in recent decades, we can highlight Georges Kutukdjian, who succinctly summarises the entire topic and rises to the level of synthetic conclusions aimed at animating and mobilising the global health, cultural, and political public by UNESCO. He notes that thanks to discoveries in genetics, neurology, and embryology, humans have, for the first time, reached an understanding of “their vital mechanisms” and that “ethical reflection is now part of the development of scientific research.” Therefore, bioethics emerged from two demands:

- a) to harness the new power of scientific progress for the benefit of “every man and woman, all of humanity”;
- b) “to clearly establish the *responsibility*, social and cultural significance of the progress of biological sciences, which is equally important for health, agriculture, nutrition, development, and the environment.” (Kalanj, 1997: 338) (emphasis added - D.S.)

In this way, bioethics transcends the deontology of specific areas of professional practice and includes reflection on the evolution of society and the balances of global development. Therefore, it encourages public debate on the choice of the future. What is essential, and Kutukdjian emphasises this, is that bioethics, although it affirms itself in the context of global reconsideration of scientific and technological progress, simultaneously confirms the imperative importance of freedom of research. It, in a word, “brings to light again the meaning of the fundamental principles of dignity, integrity, and *freedom of the human person*” (Kutukdjian, 2015: 143-146; Kalanj, 1997: 338) (emphasis - D.S.).

This is precisely the key point - the “freedom of the human person” - where we are faced with new, hitherto untried and unexperienced human situations (Fromm) regarding the freedom of choice of one’s individual existential and social existence, and the inclusion of one’s personal identity in group/collective identity, primarily in the process of education and upbringing. These “identifications” are precisely threatened today, practically hindered by scientific and technological research, experimentation with human genes and genetic engineering, among other things, with unborn children/unborn people, which as such endanger their right to choose their own life solutions freely. Such experiments are mainly carried out by medical scientists and technologists, according to the will and desire, most often, of their parents or guardians. Hans Jonas also points to and warns about this, among others, in his “ontologisation of responsibility” as the primary ethical imperative. Moreover, again, the old question arises: Do we have the moral right to this, and who gives us that right; is it God or the “god-given” ourselves?!

In other words, we are faced with a spectrum of new dilemmas, challenges, and paradoxes of freedom, which warn us that in some “human matters”, we have gone too far, namely, that in our uncritical anthropocentrism, greedy and insatiable egoism, and capitalist consumerism, we have lost all measure and boundary, especially in the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources/energy sources without which capitalism cannot survive (Baudrillard, 1970). As a result, the global technological civilisation, especially highly developed consumer societies - which disregard climate change and its consequences for the global environment, particularly human life - has definitely brought into question the fundamental human right to life and a healthy environment. This has led to degeneration due to overindulgence/obesity on the one hand (40% of Americans fall into the obese category) and the brink of self-destruction, along with the rise of mass hunger and mortality, on the other hand. The latest warnings from the United Nations, which are always relevant and are only actualised again in the face of tragic events worldwide, including the tragic events in Ukraine, urgently point to this.

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BIOETIKA I GEOPOLITIKA – *RAT U UKRAJINI KAO POVOD*

Sažetak

Članak se uglavnom oslanja na izvorne znanstvene radove, na sublimirane prikaze i kritičke recenzije velikoga broja bioetičkih radova, objavljenih u razdoblju od kraja prošloga stoljeća do danas, ali se najviše oslanja na recenzije, prikaze i kritičke osvrte i komentare poznatoga hrvatskog filozofa Rade Kalanja. On je još prije tridesetak godina s pravom upozoravao da su biološka i genetička istraživanja došla do razine ("granične situacije"/Jaspers) u kojoj se iznova, ali sada u mnogo oštrijem i radikalnijem obliku, postavlja pitanje odnosa znanosti i etike, a mi bismo danas, povodom rata u Ukraini, dodali: odnosa bioetike i geopolitike.

Jedna od teških posljedica tragičnih događanja u Ukrajini opasnost je od uvećavanja ionako velike svjetske gladi, u kojoj, u krajnjoj liniji, postaje manje bitno je li hrana prirodna/organska ili je GMO, već je važno ima li je uopće, što znači da nema nikakve hrane, prije svega žitarica. Ili, naprotiv, hrane ima u izobilju, ali samo za one koji imaju novca kupiti ju, a njih je sve manje, tako da preostaje da im se hrana pokloni. Ali u tom bi slučaju izostali profiti globalnoga kapitalizma, a što bi svakako bilo neprihvatljivo za svjetske transnacionalne elite jer bi praktično ugrozilo fundamente kapitalizma i označilo kraj globalnoga kapitalističkog sustava/poretka. Znači, na pomolu je velika humanitarna katastrofa dopunjena milijunskim izbjeglicama, i to ne samo iz Ukrajine, već i šire diljem svijeta. Ova će situacija biti dodatno pogoršana i lošim ekonomskim posljedicama, prije svijega za EU, a zatim i za cijeli svijet, što zajedno uključuje UN i njezine specijalizirane agencije, prije svega UNHCR i UNESCO, u

rješavanju teških međunarodnih problema u koje svakako ulazi i problem (ne) prihvatljivosti bioetičkih aksioma za sve civilizacije i kulture.

Između ostalih, postavlja se i pitanje tko će biti odgovoran/okrivljen za svjetsku humanitarnu katastrofu povodom rata u Ukrajini: hoće li to biti kao do sada samo Rusija ili će spisak okrivljenih biti proširen i na zemlje “Trećega svijeta”, prije svega na Kinu i Iran? Pred nama se postavlja spektar bioetičkih pitanja, moralnih dvojbi i iskušenja, posebno kada se doznaje postojanje eksperimentalnih biomedicinskih laboratorija na teritoriji zapadne Ukrajine, a koje neodoljivo podsjećaju na grozote nacističkih biomedicinskih eksperimenata u Drugom svjetskom ratu.

Ključne riječi: bioetika, geopolitika, elite, etički subjekt, odgovornost, kapitalistički sustav, rat u Ukrajini