

METABIOETHICS

(Beyond Bioethics)

Principles

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Combining ethics and life is hardly a recent enterprise; it is the root of all ethics and moral theology that have existed since the beginning of time. Nonetheless, the term bioethics is a recent addition and it has a particular meaning in our times: ethics applied to modern medicine. In this study, following a short introduction on global ethics and a refresher on the origins of bioethics (its starting point) and 'metabioethics', I shall attempt to summarize two current trains of thought on bioethics, which I refer to as closed to transcendentalism and open to transcendentalism, focusing on the foundations, meaning, principles and consequences of each one. In relation to bioethics closed to transcendentalism, I shall explore some areas of post-modern thought, including their consequences for bioethics in the so-called 'New Paradigm'. I believe this will provide the doctors attending this Congress of European Catholic Doctors some answers regarding the reasons behind the complicated situation that modern medicine finds itself in with regard to ethics.

Introduction

It is noteworthy that today, in March 2007, searching for the term 'ethics' on the Internet throws up 92 million pages on the subject,

and 4.5 million on bioethics. This is a clear sign of popular interest in this subject nowadays. Looking through a few of these pages revealed the following key writers and fundamental concepts: Hans Jonas and the ethics of limit, Raimundo Panikkar and participatory ethics, Edgar Morin and the ethics of the country as the fatherland, Juliano Pontara and the ethics of the face, various NGOs focusing on the ethics of sustainable development, UNESCO and consensual, pluralist, multicultural, procedural bioethics replacing traditional medical ethics. And in particular 'the new ethical paradigm', which we will investigate further.

The key concepts and new terminology profiled include virtual, globalization, multimedia networks and education, ethical hypertexts, censorship, privacy, virtual community, active citizenship, pluridisciplinarity, transparency, participation, communication, cultural diversity, ethics of results, pragmatic ethics, global ethics and universal ethics.

There is a particular need for global ethics, since we live in an age of globalization. People, capital, goods and information are moving in ever greater numbers across political and geographical frontiers. There are new technologies dominated by information technology and productive and financial standardization. Consequently, territorial relations have grown up, there is a dense network of international networks, free-market capitalism has globalized, new economic, financial, social, political, cultural and of course ethical relations are needed. Hence the focus on global ethics, and the claim by some that traditional ethics are no longer capable of regulating the new world growing up around us. These new ethics must be compatible with the modern technological world, and not past ages. We anticipate human-scale ethics, which will naturally not transcend humanity, remaining on the same plane without accepting old myths already superseded by higher beings that govern human conduct. Within these parameters, we shall attempt to investigate the problems presented by the new bioethics.

1. The origins of bioethics

The origins of bioethics can be found in Giuseppe Antonelli's book written in 1891 and entitled 'Medicina Pastoralis in usum Confessariorum'. Numerous codes of medical ethics appeared in the 20th century, and there is no doubt that Pius XII, with his addresses to doctors, is a precursor to modern bioethics.

It was J. Fletcher who first started to deal with bioethical issues from a subjective point of view in his book *'Moral and Medicine'*, published in 1954. The innovation in this book was that, instead of following the traditional method by which our actions are guided by the commandments of God's law, he spoke of the rights of humans, drawing conclusions that conflicted with the commandments. He argued, for example, that people had a right to control birth, thus legitimizing contraceptives. His principle was that neither the rule nor the will of God can be seen in these events, and therefore each individual should do as he sees fit.

Some people place the origin of bioethics somewhat earlier at the 1947 Nuremberg Trials at which Nazi criminals were convicted of carrying out genetic experiments. Others believe that bioethics originated when the issue of transplants and consensual organ donation was first encountered, in particular the heart transplant carried out by Dr Barnard in December 1967. And for some the beginning came with the discussions on the problems of P. Berg's discovery of DNA in 1971.

However, the first people to begin talking about bioethics were two Catholics, a doctor and a philosopher named Hellegers and Callahan, who founded two centres of bioethics around New York in the USA, namely the *'Hastings Center'* in 1969 and the *'Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics'*. The *'Kennedy Institute of Ethics'* was set up in 1971.

The key year was 1968, and the key document is the Encyclical *'Humanae Vitae'* by Paul VI. A. Hellegers, a member of the then Pontificate Commission of the Family, opposed *'Humanae Vitae'*, and the aforementioned centres were founded in search of a bioethical code that was independent of the teaching of the Church. They initially spoke of ecumenical centres, before secularizing and denying any link between bioethics and theology. A. Hellegers brought together researchers such as L. Walters, T. Beauchamp, J. Childress and W. Reich, and theologians such as B. Häring, R. McCormick, C. Curran, S. Hauerwas, J. Fuchs and the Protestant P. Ramsey. Callahan later attempted to return to a bioethical code with religious roots. There were other attempts in this direction from Catholics both in the Kennedy Institute and later Georgetown University's *'Center for the Advanced Study of Ethics'*. The key

figures to be considered here are E.D. Pellegrino, D.C. Thomasma, B. Ashley and K. O'Rourke in the USA.

The term bioethics was first used by **Van Rensselaer Potter** in his 1970 article '*Bioethics, the Science of Survival*' and his 1971 book '*Bioethics: Bridge to the future*'. The number of centres of bioethics has multiplied since then, with UNESCO setting one up and many more being established in hospitals.

2. Starting point

Bioethics has been defined in many different ways. I have chosen the one taken from the W.T. Reich's Encyclopedia of Bioethics as a starting point:

'The systematic and profound study of human conduct in the area of life sciences and healthcare, in the light of moral values and principles'¹

It is a scientific study that is ordered on the basis of fixed principles, and therefore reaching its ultimate causes with them. The study necessarily constitutes a cross-disciplinary dialogue as it covers the range of modern healthcare and life sciences. Nowadays such sciences are highly advanced: biogenetics, genetic engineering, environmental sciences, ecology, sociology, anthropology (naturally) and all modern medical sciences. The study is relational and holistic. Structurally speaking, it is a systematic study of human conduct in the field of life sciences and healthcare from a biological, economic & financial, family, community & social, legal, regulatory, political, national & international, mental, psychological & cultural, and therefore, religious and necessarily ethical perspective, which needs to be considered in all of its complexity in the light of moral principles and values. In this sense we can assert that medicine has progressed more in the last fifty years than it has in the last fifty centuries, and not just scientifically and technically.

In this context, the fundamental problem in bioethics is the issue of principles. Being the scientific study of human conduct in the field of life sciences and healthcare according to moral principles and values, the natural question is: what values and what moral principles? The answer in a Catholic context is not difficult, but

¹ Encyclopedia of Bioethics, The Free Press, New York, 1978, vol I, XIX

biogenetics is developing a great deal in a non-Catholic sphere, primarily in Protestant and positivist areas, where neither moral principles nor values are clearly identifiable. Ethical positivism is particularly restrictive, and it is often impossible to speak logically and at depth on such principles. It is evident that illogical bioethics is an absurdity. If we seek such depth beyond pure formal, prescriptive or regulatory bioethics, we come to a place that we could call 'metabioethics', which would constitute the starting point of bioethics. I will set out below a brief description of the main points underlying 'metabioethics'.

3. 'Metabioethics'

To start with, we can say that in general terms we are going to encounter two types of bioethics: one open to transcendentalism and the other closed, both deeply rooted in the interpretative thought of the world. Over time a series of different positions have grown up, resulting in these two types of bioethics today, one closed to transcendentalism and the other open. These key schools of thought constitute what we have called 'metabioethics', beyond bioethics, its roots, and the original thought that has resulted in the positions we see today. Without taking on complex oriental thought, but remaining in the western cultural sphere, we will find two ways of thinking that are more or less directly contradictory in relation to the ethical point as the logical consequence of its psychological work. Both ways have had great successes as well as great failures.

There are two schools of western thought, the understanding of which depends to a certain degree on different ethical conceptions: 'being and becoming' and 'being and thinking'. The history of thought includes a series of concepts by which the relation between the two schools and the response given to each member of each school determines the ethical position adopted. Thought is always qualified and rarely entirely exclusive, but eventually the two schools result either in bioethics closed to transcendentalism or bioethics open to transcendentalism. From another point of view, we could say that this gives us 'objective' bioethics or 'subjective' bioethics.

I. Bioethics closed to transcendentalism

1. Being and becoming

In classical Greek antiquity we find Parmenides and Heraclitus. The Parmenidian concept of 'εἶναι καὶ πάντα' (one and all) immobility and the Heraclian concept of 'πάντα ρεῖ' (everything evolves), mobility. Brilliant classical Greek thought brought together these two dilemmas under Aristotle withhylomorphism. Many centuries later, confronted with nominalism, Saint Thomas Aquinas said of 'ens est id quod est' (a being is that which is), the objective reality. On the other hand, Duns Scoto affirmed 'ens est id quod potest esse' (being is what can be) the simple possibility. This line of thought relies heavily on the aforementioned nominalism of William of Ockham, for whom the universal was merely an utterance, and as a result there are no universal truths, nor universally mandatory rules. Roberto Grossetete of the Oxford School said that the 'metaphysical' essence of things is light, and from a burgeoning empiricism came the thinking of both Bacons, Hobbes, Locke and Hume.

2. Thinking and being

The watershed came with René Descartes, or rather his epigones. The dilemma is: **because being is I think it or being is because I think it?** If we accept the first part of the dilemma, there is an objective truth. If we accept the second, the truth is what I accept it to be.

It is in the context of the second part of the dilemma that much of modern thinking has been forged, which has had a marked impact on ethics as it represents man's absolute autonomy, and it is man who ultimately decides what is true and what is false, what is good and what is bad. This absolute autonomy can also be seen in other key points of Cartesian thought, in the 'clear and distinct' thoughts that concern only substances: God, conscience and extension. The basic condition for something to be considered a substance is its **absolute independence**. Descartes explains that '*est id quod ita existit ut nulla alia re indigeat ad existendum*' (that which exists in this way is that which needs nothing else to exist). This Cartesian conception leads subsequently to the absolute independence and autonomy of man. Man himself is absurdly his own project. His own current reality is his future project, and in the best case scenario, according to the 'pious atheist' Engels, his project will be the myth resulting from the multiplication of his own desires until mathematical infinity.

For his part, Kant, in denying the possibility of reaching the 'noumenon', extends ethics to a formal and collective autonomous subjectivity with his 'categorical imperative'. In turn, Hegel gave political substance to this subjectivity when he put the ultimate realization of the 'spirit' in the State. Subsequently, Engels and Marx, 'made Hegel walk on his feet' with dialectic materialism, finding a single source of morality in the autonomy of the consequent historical materialism, the classless society.

3. Staticness of nature

The conclusion is purely subjective ethics opposing the objectivity of nature, which is no longer considered to be real. As a result, 'objective' ethics based on nature are deemed to be the fruit of ignorance and out of fashion. And this is where experimental science comes in, as it is assumed that they necessarily reject the concept of nature as a static entity. Especially in the field of medicine, it is said that until recently we were in the field of the observable, while now all action is done in the field of the 'manipulable'.

Moving from the scientific to the religious, even the Protestant Christian conception strongly challenges the very concept of nature, at least human nature, as it considers it to be essentially corrupt. If nature is thus, it is logical that it cannot determine the rule of morality.

4. Current trends

Against this background and in consideration of its logical development, today we see six trains of thought, especially developed in the field of ethics and that can be easily applied to bioethics, specifically:

Eclecticism, which accepts any asserted behaviour, regardless of its system, context or reason.

Historicism, in which the truth changes according to its suitability to the particular stage of history it is in.

Scientism, which maintains that the only acceptable truth is that which can be tested in a scientific field.

Pragmatism, in which ethical decisions should be taken on the basis of usefulness alone using the cost / benefit ratio, and taking the majority opinion as guidance when doing so.

Nihilism, which simply rejects the possibility of reaching objective truths.

5. Post-modernity

In view of the ethical importance of post-modern thought on biogenetics and in order to better understand the 'New Paradigm', we will set out below the key points of this thought system.

I shall start with a summary of the basic positions of the writers who I believe to be the foundation of post-modernity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Lyotard and Vattimo².

For **Nietzsche**, God is dead and the only moral authority is the super man with his will to power. There are no fixed, universal values and no chance of knowing them³.

Heidegger believes that a higher being exists, but that he is ineffable, and expressed using language and not thought, as thought is an interpretation of language and there are as many different interpretations as there are languages, and therefore they are not true. The only possibility is obscure mystic knowledge. Technical knowledge has objectified and falsified the world⁴.

For **Wittgenstein**, truth can be found in language when what it says of fact can be scientifically proven using the same logicity as language. Values, as they are not facts, cannot be suppressed. As logicity is also a value and therefore not a fact, it also cannot be demonstrated. Furthermore, account must be taken of the difference of languages, the 'game' of languages: technical, playful, political, poetic, affective, etc. In each game, language has a different meaning. No common denominator can be found in these language games. The only objective of philosophy is to classify the different games that exist. Its function is therapeutic: to reduce to ordinary everyday language what we express in other language games. God

² Cfr. I Sanna, *L'Antropologia cristiana tra modernità e postmodernità*, Brescia, 2001, 160-161

³ Cfr. F. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo, Wie man wird was man ist, Trad. italiana: Come si diventa cio che si è*, Milano 1965, 80-117

⁴ Cfr. M. Heidegger, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, Pfullingen 1953, 76. Essere e tempo, Milano 1976, 168-178.

means that we see that many things depend not on us but on them. God is everything in the world that is independent of our will⁵.

With regard to earlier writers, **Jean-Francois Lyotard** affirmed that 'metanarratives', i.e. the universal synthetic thoughts of modernity such as illuminism, Marxism, Christianity, capitalism, etc. that provide a comprehensive synthesis, are ineffective and incomprehensible. They have no validity whatsoever. Knowledge can only be expressed in language games and consists of studying instability, which he calls 'Paralogy'. Only 'mininarratives' are valid, which are accepted by a temporal consensus of interlocutors, whether it be in the international, political, affective, sexual, family or cultural field. This results in a plurality that cannot be reduced to the unitary, that is not universal. It is an anarchic invention of language. Metaphysical universality is simply a myth. There is no possibility of synthesis between the heterogeneous of the linguistic game. Post-modern thought dehumanizes man before rehumanizing him in instability⁶.

Gianni Vattimo is a philosopher from Turin who interprets Nietzsche and Heidegger on the basis of nihilism. According to Vattimo, being has no objectivity, and as a result is not universal. All that exists is now, history does not exist, it has finished, nothing new is left. Knowledge is not realized and does not obtain truth. We can only know half of the truth, which is therefore a half truth. The tool by which we arrive is rhetorical, poetic and aesthetic feeling. Homo sapiens becomes 'homo sentimentalis'. It is like when someone sees a picture and interprets it according to his different feelings, which means that it is subject to many different interpretations. This is truth, each individual sees it according to his own aesthetic and poetic feelings and expresses it with different language games.

Television, for example, gives us a set of images, but it is not possible to find a single and universal base that unites them. Reality is in the crossing of different images, their mixing without a central point. Society consists of emancipating oneself from reality, from difference and in the explosion of multiplicity. That is to say: the universal being, the stable foundations, metaphysics have reached

⁵ Cfr. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus lógico-philosophicus*, Torino, 1964, prop. 6,52, 521, 41, 42, 4311; *Ricerche filosofiche*, Torino, 1967, 124, 130-132. *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus e Quaderni*, 1914-1916, prop. 8,7,16.

⁶ J-F Lyotard, *il postmoderno spiegato ai bambini*, Milano 1987, 28: *La condizione postmoderna*, Milano 1981, 6,20-24, 69-76, 98-122: *Postmoderno e filosofia*, 410

an end. God exists in as much as he is perceived as the god of the book, the scriptures and tradition, but he is no longer a god of immutable dogmas, he is a poetic and aesthetic god that each individual creates for himself. In particular, he is not the god of the Catholic Church. Thus Christianity secularizes and reaches its end. Man follows the path from its centre to an unknown destination 'X'. He has no need for the extreme security provided by an ancient magical myth: God. The world is a game of linguistic interpretations within a set of determined limits. This new thought is known as 'weak thought', which is the only thought possible, and which opposes the supposed 'strong thought', which is merely a myth, a fable superseded by post-modernity⁷.

An attempt to structure post-modern thought according to the ideas of these writers could be summarized in the following points:

5.1. Suspicion of man and his thought

The fall of the great syntheses of modern thought. Thought has become weak. Reference is made to the tragedies caused by the ideologies of modernity that have caused millions of deaths and acts of barbarism. Strong thought belongs to primitive, barbarian eras of humanity, which have now been superseded.

5.2. Dominion of aesthetic rationality

Irrationalism, 'homo sapiens' becomes 'homo sentimental'. In modernity man deified reason and returned to strong thought, causing atrocities such as Auschwitz to be committed. Now we only accept the relativism of conflicting thought, incarcerated in language.

5.3. Relativism

Replaces any aspiration for a rationally ordered world. Scientific rationality is replaced by aesthetic rationality. Scientific rationality was based on mathematical and logical principles, on the principle of identity and contradiction, on the reiterability and verifiability of events. These principles have no validity, we need to find another

⁷ For Vatimo's work, see: G. Fornero, *Postmoderno e filosofia*. 411-420; *Il Postmoderno e le sue filosofie*, in *Le Filosofie del novecento*, ed. G. Fornero-Tassinari, Milano 2002, 1204-1214. Cfr. G. Vatimo, *La fine della Modernità, Nichilismo ed ermeneutica nella cultura postmoderna*, Milano 1985, 9-30, 189; *Credere di credere, È possibile essere cristiano non ostante la Chiesa?*, Milano 1996, 25-26; *Dopo la cristianità, Per un Cristianesimo non religioso*, Milano 2002, 57-58; *Filosofia al presente*, 26; *La società trasparente*, Milano 1989, 11-17

basis: aesthetics. Aesthetic rationality is based on the intensity of feelings, emotions, admiration and contemplation and the authenticity of experience, the sensitive and affective dimension of human love, of personal decisions and instinctive reactions. For post-modernity, truth is not adjusting to reality, but interpreting it in a temporalization of the being. There is nothing but instrumental reason: plural, incredulous, playful, ironic, destructive, inclined to superficial trends of curiosity in a phenomenology of signs and appearances. Truth is replaced by a game of images, ontology by semantics, determination by indetermination, transcendence by immanence, concepts by metaphor. Instead of the principle of causality, we adduce the principle of the relation between phenomena. It is absurd that religion should be unique, in place of God we put a generic divine being. We reach theoretical nihilism, an ethical relativism, and not a state of moral regulation.

5.4. Nihilism

Nihilism is the philosophy of nothing. beings, things, value and principles are all denied and reduced to nothing. It is the officialization of the destructive trends that exist in society. It is particularly associated with Nietzsche. Nietzsche distinguishes two types of nihilism: good and bad. Good nihilism consists of destroying all of the values of the past to build the new values of the superman. Bad nihilism consists of waiting patiently for the old values to end and not replacing them with the values of the superman. We cannot know the truth, merely changing points of view. Will can do no good. As god is dead, there is absolutely no regulatory point of reference. History cannot have an intrinsic self-realization. Everything is fleeting and temporary, and as a result we cannot assume any serious commitments. It proclaims 'ontophobia', it is the desertification of everything. Objective truth is replaced with 'points of view'. Life has no value as it is not unrepeatable, it changes in reincarnation, and therefore we can trade in it with cloning, spare embryos, eugenics, euthanasia, etc.

5.5. Suspicion of the future

Everything is decay, fragmentation and chaos, there is nothing eternal and immutable. The present is the crossing point of past and future, and it is the only thing that counts. There is an omnipresent crisis of temporality and historicism, the past is like photographs in a museum, fragments of semblances and images. History and past

are marketable objects that can be consumed and exchanged. Future plans are impossible.

5.6. Return to mystery and pseudo-religiousness

There is no God, merely gods, many saviours and religions have replaced the one saviour God. Religions with no god and no church are explored. They speak of mystery, but in a purely superficial way, of darkness and obscurity.

This is particularly apparent in the 'New Age', whose 'creed' is summarized by Jean Vernet in what he calls 'The Ten Commandments of the New Age', which are as follows: (1) You shall await with impatience the era of Aquarius, (2) You shall believe in the Great Change, (3) Your conscience shall awaken attentively, (4) You shall care for your body actively, (5) You shall follow the masters respectfully, (6) You shall believe completely in the irrational, (7) You shall faithfully venerate the Goddess Gaia (the Earth), (8) You shall rigorously refute existing religions, (9) You shall talk of the spirits naturally, and (10) You shall laugh at death serenely.

This religion prefers man to become god and not for god to become man. God is not a person but the highest vibration of the cosmos or the highest expression of transcendental consciousness. Truth is belief: 'It is true because you believe it' or 'truth is what feels right to you'. Each individual has an inner light. There is no blame or sin, redemption, expiation or grace. Evil does not exist, so no one is responsible for evil. We need not fear death, because there is reincarnation, not resurrection. The religion consists of projecting one's own expectations, it is a made-to-measure religion. It is the religious 'weak thought' of a secularized and individualist society. It rejects Christianity completely.

5.7. The principle of difference

There is no unity, only fragmentation, society splits into different groups, associations, movements. This replaces the solidity of the political party, the individual and the nation.

5.8. Tolerance

The rapid communication available to today's society makes it multi-cultural and multi-racial. It is a society without equilibrium.

5.9. The world

Starting as all-encompassing ecologism which means sustainable development, often referred to as 'green peace', it arises as a reaction to the perverse effects of technological domination. The central affirmation is that man depends on nature, nature does not depend on man.

The world has no meaning or value, it has no objectives imposed upon it. It is demystified. It no longer exists as a creation of God, but as a universe or universes, infinite worlds subject to the sciences, which are called upon to discover and dominate them and, if successful, exploit them. The world is uncertain and fragile, and its future is unforeseeable. It is merely a deposit of things and objects, there is no divine order in the laws of nature. The sciences do not look at the construction of man, but at his progress as such. Man moves towards a practical goal, such as increasing his well-being, eating better, living better, etc. without any ethical evaluation. Technology and knowledge are driven by economic interest and commercial contracts. Giving free of charge is entirely suppressed. The scope of expectation is limited to the temporary and the immediately accessible.

5.10. Man

Social life is restricted to economic and political spheres. Man feels lost with no chance of integration. He has no feeling or direction. He is a 'tourist', a 'vagabond', a 'moral stranger'. The function of feeling was previously provided entirely by religion, which is now relegated to private life alone, without any economic or political involvement. Man puts himself in the place previously occupied by God.

Nihilism arises in the field of philosophy, relativism in epistemology and morality and pragmatism in daily life. Man is no longer the centre of the natural world that, under God's control, dominates all things, but merely a small part of nature, like plants and animals.

We speak of the four ages of man: in the modern age we professed subjectivity as the source of truth and freedom as supreme control, it was the era of the 'third man'. Now we have passed into the culture

of the 'fourth man'. The 'first man' was the man of Greek philosophical culture, the 'second man' was the man of Christian mediaeval culture, the 'third man' modernity's scientific man. Now we see the 'fourth man', the man of consumption and audiovisual. We no longer refute philosophy or religion or science, but use them as linguistic games in the pyrotechnic kaleidoscope of a knowledge that is no longer monologic, but pluralist and dissipated: 'God is dead, but you can still believe in God, the two things are essentially the same'⁸. We reach total indifference and syncretism. So post-modern man remains alone, weak, poor and insecure. In losing God, he has lost his own identity. He is 'like a vagabond crossing the desert who knows only the tracks left by his own footprints, blown away by the wind as soon as he walks away'⁹.

The first and second men were a balance synthesis of history and metahistory. This synthesis was destroyed by the third man, who replaced religion and philosophy with science. With regard to the history of humanity, it affirms that there is no valid past or history. There is no past or future, we live only today, in pleasure and for pleasure, and therefore it is worth being strong and unbeatable.

Suffering, especially in its final phase, is not pleasant or good or useful to anyone, therefore it has no meaning and should be eliminated by any means possible (suicide, euthanasia, etc). Supermen, which Engelhardt calls 'cosmopolitans' and who are the experts in biogenics, are invited to effect the elimination, helping the patient 'to die with dignity'.

The fourth man is a man without quality. He has moved on from the technology of need to the technology of desire. He feels only desires that content and satisfy, no longer needs. He can do this particularly well through the most suitable technology available: audiovisual media. Philosophical knowledge belonged to the first man, religion to the second, science to the third and expressive knowledge to the fourth. There is a confusion between face and mask, history and fable. The communication media create this confusion such that finally not even fable exists. This is the new knowledge, it is the knowledge of art or aesthetics. Thus is formed radical man. This radical man professes total, possessive, anarchic individualism, and manifests himself in a series of denials: anti-family, anti-military, anti-clerical, anti-party and anti-state. He places absolute value on

⁸ G. Morra, *Il quarto uomo*, Roma 1992, 11-23

⁹ I. Sanna, *L'Antropologia cristiana tra modernità e postmodernità*, Brescia 2001, 337

spontaneity, with the socio-political consequence of sexual liberation, homosexuality, feminism, abortion and divorce, opposition to lunatic asylums, prisons, concordats, abolition of religious teaching, etc. He is the man of radical anti-culture.

For this man, person is not the same as individual. Person is merely a set of activities and properties, such as mental operations, self-awareness, sensitivity, communicative capacity and symbolic representation. If these activities are not present, you are not a person but merely an individual. So, for example, if you kill a man who is not conscious, you are not guilty, as you are not eliminating a person but an individual. This explains the legality of destroying embryos, therapeutic cloning, eugenics, euthanasia, etc.

The only evil is repression. No one should restrict anyone. In place of the expression 'we are all sinners' we have 'we are all perfect'. Each individual is the measure of good. This means that everyone can use everyone and everything else to fulfil their own desires. This makes us entirely free. We have only rights, no duties. Public power is only legitimized by the principle of utility. Happiness is the same as well-being and pleasure that does not consist of fulfilling needs but desires, consuming objects, things, experiences. Consumerism is the new god, nothing can exist but it.

Radical man has no limit but the contract. The law does not bind him because it is intended for the common good, which is denied. He only accepts the contract in reciprocity and only if it is beneficial. Contracts that are not beneficial are not renewed. And when the disadvantaged party rebels, the strong uses any type of force to suppress the weak. This legitimizes the production, sale and indiscriminate use of all types of weapon, and maximum sophistication is achieved. We move from the defence of the rights of man to the defence of the man of rights¹⁰.

¹⁰ For a summary of post-modernity, cfr, Isaías Dies del Rìo, *Postmodernidad y nueva religiosidad*, RelCult XXXIX (1993) 59-63. M.P. Gallagher, *Parlare di Dio all'uomo postmoderno. Linee di discussione*, ed. Poupard, Roma 1994, 5,7; *Fede e cultura*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1999, 103-108; 124-125; G. Bruni, *Dire Dio agli uomini d'oggi*, ed. Poupard, Roma 1994, 26-27; G. Fornero, *Postmoderno e Filosofia*, Torino 1994, 411; N. Abagnano-G. Fornero, *Ecologia*, Torino 1994, 335; I Sanna, *oc.* 220-236; Ch. Tayllor, *Il disagio della modernità*, Roma-Bari 1994, 12-14; G. Mucci, *La diffusione dell' Individualismo*, CivCatIII (1997), 468-477; R. Cesarani, *Raccontare il postmoderno*, Torino 1997, 140-145; D. Harvey, *La crisi della Modernità*, Milano 1993, 63; Gatto Troci, *Nomadi spirituali*, Milano 1998, 17; Ch. Siniscalchi, *Il dio della California*, Roma 1998, 33-34; G. Filoramo, *Il risveglio della gnosi ovvero diventare dio*; Roma-Bari 1990; J. Vernet, *La nuova era*, Roma 1998, 111-123; F. Vollpi, *Nichilismo o nihilismo*, Dfil 756-758; A. Santucci, *Nichilismo*, EncFil III, 890-891; V. Posenti, *Terza Navigazione, Nichilismo e Metafisica*, Roma 1998, 352-353; G. Ardisone, *Il postmoderno*,

The environment in which this man lives is the developed world of high technology, in which the rich countries wish to dictate the rules for all to follow, as part of computerized economic globalization, to live at the expense of the world of the excluded, poor countries that only exist as potential for exploitation and investment, either in raw materials or cheap labour. Investments are held by anonymous joint stock companies in which the sole motive is greater economic gain in line with market variations, regardless of the economic turmoil caused in poor countries as a result of the flight of migratory capital.

As a result, we have 'science without conscience' as an expression of 'homo potens', the master of life and death, who nonetheless continues to fear death and tries to disguise it, decorating bodies at luxury funerals, painting their faces with smiles. Despite everything, experience proves that deep down 'homo potens' has turned into 'homo pavidus', although he often denies this.

6. The 'New Paradigm'¹¹

Post-modern thought as a consequence of subjectivist trends has become a frame of reference for decision making in all areas of human conduct, and especially in biogenetics. This frame of reference, which we shall now attempt to summarize, is what is being referred to by some as the '**New Paradigm**'.

6.1. Authors

This 'New Paradigm' is especially present in the United Nations, UN, WHO and UNESCO, and is particularly driven by three NGOs: 'Women's Environment and Development Organization', '**Earth Council Greenpeace**' and 'International Planned Parenthood Federation'. This forms the 'New Ethics' or 'Global Ethics'. Some of its key points are set out below.

6.2. Sustainable development

Milano 1998, 28-32; Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Oxford-Cambridge 1993, 240; Dotolo, *Secolarismo e Nichilismo nella Fides et Ratio*, Cinisela Balsamo 199, 270; S. Latora, *La ripresa del primato dell'Etica*, Cinisela Balsamo 1994, 125-126; M. Mckeever, *Postmodern with a difference*, StMore 37 (1999)185-214; R. Fratallone, *L'etica teologica e le istanze della postmodernità*, Ciniselo Balsamo 1994, 76-77; G. Chiurasi, *Il postmoderno*, Torino 1999, 18-22; S. Cremaschi, *Ecologismo*, ENCFSU, 243

¹¹ The development of what is called here the 'New Paradigm' is taken from Kim Yersu, 1999. *A common Framework for Ethics of the Twenty first Century*. UNESCO, Division of Philosophy and Ethics. Cited November 15, 1999, at www.unesco.org drg philosphyandethics.

The world of today cannot continue as it is. Following the end of the Cold War, we find ourselves with unsustainable ecological situations and we are moving towards the total degradation of the planet as a result of contamination by all manner of toxic waste, including radioactive waste. This is leading to continuous malaise that cannot continue. We need to achieve global well-being.

Such global well-being is only possible through global development, but not the sort of development we have seen so far, which can no longer be sustained. We have to achieve SUSTAINABLE development; development that does not degrade the planet and that through harmonious development creates well-being for all and is centred on the people.

6.3. Quality of life

Global well-being through sustainable development is the objective of the new global ethics. It is the convergence sought by the 'New Paradigm'. Such global well-being also constitutes what is known as QUALITY OF LIFE, which is defined as 'like the perception of the individual of his position in life, in the context of culture and the value system in which he finds himself, in relation to his goals, expectations, standards and interests'. It is a broad-ranging concept affected in a complex manner by personal physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relations and relationability with the key points of the individual's environment (WHOQOL). Quality of life covers six areas: (1) Physical health, (2) Psychological health, (3) Independence, (4) Social relations, (5) Environment (economy, freedom, security, information, participation, environment, traffic, climate, transport, etc.) and (6) Spirituality, religion and personal beliefs. The basis is individual autonomy and self-determination. There is no need for social duty.

6.4. New spirituality

The different religions around the world have not been able to create such global ethics, and therefore we have to replace them with a new spirituality intended to create global well-being through sustainable development. Nature, the earth (known as 'Gaia') is divine and inviolable. Man is just another element that can only be understood in harmony with the earth. This is not a new religion, but a new spirituality. Existing religions concern themselves with the

other life, this spirituality concerns itself with this earthly life. It is a godless, secular spirituality, and its ultimate objective is the viability of the current world and the well-being of man in it.

Nonetheless, this new spirituality does not reject valid elements of the different creeds, but incorporates them into the global ethics. Thus, from the religions of the indigenous American communities it takes respect for nature and the need for interaction between nature and man, from Judaism it incorporates the concept of sanctity, from Buddhism it borrows serenity and impassiveness, from Hinduism it incorporates respect for animals, from Islam it takes the virtue of justice and from Christianity it takes charity and compassion.

Despite the above, all religions are equally unable to resolve the ecological problem, they do not provide valid responses for this era of globalization. We must fight against the supposed hegemonies and dogmatic hierarchies that wish to impose their own points of view. The objective is to forge a common framework of conduct that identifies the fundamental ethical principles for the emerging global society. It is a question of effectively dealing with overpopulation, industrialization, degradation of the environment, institutional incompetence, environmental contamination, food production, social injustice, religious and other extremism, intolerance and social exclusion. The new spirituality transcends all other spiritualities and religions, challenging and replacing them because such spiritualities and religions are bastions of resistance against some of the values and objectives of the 'New Paradigm'.

6.5. Values

The values of free enterprise, national sovereignty, religions, dogmas, natural law and traditional values must be rejected as they are irrelevant and have created an ethical vacuum. Now is the time for new values, which are the only values that will make it possible to live in peace.

The values of the 'New Paradigm' are those that inspire a culture of peace: love, companionship, camaraderie, sharing, caring, consulting on decisions, participative democracy, decentralization, negotiation, positive arbitration and awarding processes, no war, respect for life, freedom, justice and equity, mutual respect and integrity.

These ethics are based on five pillars: human rights and responsibilities, democracy and elements of civil society, protection of minors, commitment to the peaceful solution of conflict and transparent negotiation, and inter-generational equity.

The problems to be solved are split into four different categories: the first concerns the readjustment of man and nature, the second the meaning of happiness, life and plenitude, the third examines the relationship between the individual and the community, and the fourth deals with the balance between fairness and freedom.

These new ethics are independent of dogma and natural law, redefining the connection between ethical praxis and knowledge. This connection is not causal, like in the sciences, but situational. That is to say: we do not need apparent rules to govern conduct, but the current conduct will constitute the rules for future conduct. The problem is generating consensus so that people accept these new global ethics, and to do so people need to be encouraged in the most effective way.

The three foundations on which these new ethics and spirituality are based are human rights, healthcare for all and education.

Human rights are based on the absolute equality of all men. To achieve this, the only acceptable method is population stabilization on one hand and the massive transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor on the other. For some supporters of these ethics, capitalism is the root of all evil, and opposing economic globalization is a requirement of the new order. They say that we have to create a new common living standard for everyone. They respect cultural diversity, while striving to set up a universal culture.

Health for all requires eight elements: health education, adequate nutrition, clean water, basic care, mother & baby health, immunization against the major infectious diseases, prevention & control of local endemic diseases, suitable handling of illnesses and common disasters, access to essential medicine and reproductive health. This right is included in social security, involves eradicating poverty, social global equity and is carried out by international government. It requires consideration for education and democratic trends.

Education must be education for all, and the content of the basic curriculum for the people is divided into four categories: social and economic development with an emphasis on social demographics, environment and ecosystem with a special focus on the relationship between people and the environment, sexuality and personal relationships, and family and well-being. Emphasis is placed on human rights, sustainable development, gender equality, health security, participation, governability, techniques for reaching consensus, global citizenship, peace, environmental protection and reproductive health. This education needs to be holistic and is the key to ensuring general acceptance of the 'New Paradigm'. As it is necessarily interdisciplinary, it involves a complex process. It is necessarily formal and informal.

7. Principles of bioethics closed to transcendentalism

All of the above serves as a framework for principles of bioethics closed to transcendentalism. This type of bioethics, which some call 'subjective' or 'autonomous', has formulated some general guiding principles to enable human conduct to be studied in the fields of life sciences and healthcare. There are three such principles, as follows:

- 1. *The principle of autonomy***
- 2. *The principle of benevolence (or non-malevolence)***
- 3. *The principle of justice***

The principle of **autonomy** means the freedom of the moral agent, which means that an action is good if it respects the freedom of the moral agent and others.

The principle of **benevolence** means that we should always do good and avoid evil.

The principle of **justice** means that we have to give to each person what he is entitled to.

8. Origin of these principles

As these bioethics do not have any objective rules per se, it is difficult to justify these principles. Some have attacked them, saying they have exceeded '*American principalism*' (in reference to where they were formulated). However, others justify them, saying that they were formulated experimentally, observing the positive and negative results of the actions undertaken in the field of bioethics, and synthesizing the consequences of these results. Much of the

background against which these principles were drawn up comprises the thought previously referred to as 'post-modern'. The following explanations are often provided directly in support of the principles of benevolence, autonomy and justice:

8.1. Evolutionist theory

The evolution of the species continues after the appearance of man, and man continues to evolve not only naturally but also culturally. Consequently, every stage of history gives rise to different culture and ethics. In the current time, bioethics is synthesized in these principles.

8.2. Subjectivist theory

It is not possible to know values, each individual must act as he sees fit, which gives rise to the aforementioned principles.

8.3. Contractualist theory

As the subjectivist theory would lead us to absolute relativism, the theory must be applied with consensus, i.e. reaching a common agreement and acting in response to the majority opinion, something like a social contract between members of society. Everyone agrees with these principles.

8.4. Clinical theory

However, it is not always possible to reach an agreement, so each case should be examined individually, proceeding in the manner deemed most suitable.

8.5. Utilitarian theory

If you ask what is the most suitable action, they respond with the utilitarian theory of cost / benefit: do what costs the least and provides the best result.

8.6. Theory of the new principles of post-modernity

Some (Peter Singer) believe that we do not have to stick with the old principles, but invent new ones. For example, we do not simply have to stick with the principle 'do not kill', instead adopting the principle

'do not kill unless you decide to do so freely and take responsibility for the consequences'. The principles offered can be used as ethical principles provided that each individual does so freely and takes responsibility for the consequences.

8.7. The resulting issue

As we can see, all of the explanations given above result in relativism, not only in asserting the supposed origin of the principles, but also in examining them. In fact, the principle of autonomy means acting with freedom, but means that those that do not have freedom, such as the disabled, children, foetuses and embryos, should not be taken into account.

Furthermore, the principle of benevolence means doing good for others, but what is good? What is really good for a person? Unless we know objectively what is good for a person, we cannot do them good. The same applies to justice: what is each person actually entitled to?

The principles offered, considered on their own, are inexplicable. It is often said that these principles must be understood as *current principles*, merely as principles of action and not '*prima facie*' principles, i.e. theoretical principles, but the issue also underlies principles of action. Why should I act in a given manner if it is not reasonable?

Furthermore, when these principles conflict with one another, which should take precedence? For example, if the principle of autonomy conflicts with the principle of benevolence, which in turn conflicts with the principle of justice, which one should we follow? A further principle is needed to unify them and resolve potential conflicts. The principle of autonomy and freedom when you come up against the good of a third person, and the good of the third person is limited when it comes up against the entitlement of another person, although ultimately the principles do not specify what that entitlement is. As a result, some people have turned to what is known as narrative ethics, recounting only the cases that succeed one another and acting in accordance with prior behaviour. Alternatively, some adopt what is known as '*feminine perception*', i.e. what the individual's sense of goodness deems appropriate. This approaches another criteria known as 'virtue', i.e. people with sufficient virtue can decide what is good and what is bad. Virtue is

understood to mean acting according to honest reason. Honest reason is similar to the classic concept of objective bioethics, which we will speak of later.

II. Bioethics open to transcendentalism

1. Values of the 'New Paradigm'

It is right to react against environmental degradation, and it is also correct to realize that development has limitations and that development that fails to take account of the degradation that it causes in nature should not be supported. Furthermore, it is also right to seek well-being and to ensure the well-being of as many people on the planet as possible.

It is also correct to ensure quality of life, especially when this means awareness of one's position in the overall situation, both ecologically and culturally in the broad sense, which includes economic, social, religious, political and educational cultural aspects.

It is right to defend human rights and to support social minorities, democracy, equity between men, i.e. fundamental equality, for men and women, adjusting the relationship between man and his environment, the relationship between the individual and the community. It is right to support social justice, and the economic injustice in the world today is plain for all to see.

Health for all is an essential requirement, at least in its basic forms, and education for all is also a necessity.

2. Key anti-values

2.1. Anti-values in post-modern thought

The frame of reference for identifying the anti-values of the 'New Paradigm' has to be post-modernity, since this is where the ethical position of the 'New Paradigm' is rooted.

The first anti-value we see is scepticism, i.e. the negative response to the critical issue: we cannot achieve valid universal knowledge, there are no objective truths, the principles on which knowledge is based are not valid. The principle of identity and contradiction does

not work, neither the mathematical principle nor the principle of verifiability are valid, and neither is the historical reason.

These statements leave nothing but a total subjectivism in which the only thing left for human relations is the power of the contract, provided that the party it favours has the strength to ensure compliance by the weaker party.

In the field of science, only instrumental reason is valid as it offers utility for its supposed beneficiary. The only value that is accepted is the value of utility for the strong, in which utility means satiating every instinct and the resulting pleasure. As a result, there are no obligations, merely the right of the strongest, who is the party who can successfully exercise it. Man is not realized through his needs but acts to satisfy his desires. Absurdly he wanders with no direction, no destination. It is a project of nothing.

A distinction is made between human being or individual and person. In any case, rights are only exercised for the person, not the human being or the individual. One is a person only when one behaves as such in the complex world of relationships and mental, conscious and social operations. If at a given moment anyone is unable to behave in this way, he stops being a person, simply a human being or an individual, stripped of any right that could be considered a human right. Hence the questions about the right to life of a fertilized egg, the human statute of the 'pre-embryo' or embryo, the denial of the right to abortion, the prohibition of eugenics and euthanasia, etc.

The deep reasoning based on the initial principles, the intuition of essence and whatever is beyond that which is empirically provable is rejected as a 'metaphysical fable', classified contemptuously as 'strong thought' and confirmed as an era superseded by the subsequent development of three other thought systems, where the new improves upon and removes the old. These three thought systems that supersede metaphysical thought are religious thought, scientific thought and, above both, 'aesthetic' thought.

Now let us examine the anti-values found in the principles of the 'New Paradigm'.

2.2. Anti-values of the 'New Paradigm'

The most important anti-value is that the 'New Paradigm' apparently presents itself as a new spirituality that replaces all religions, as these are unable to preserve the ecosystem. It essentially constitutes a new secularist religion, a godless religion, or rather a religion with a new god: the earth itself, which is known as Gaia. Man is subordinate to such divinity.

The values that underpin the 'New Paradigm' are subordinated to this divinity, which represents the ultimate ecological value of sustainable development. Within sustainable development, the ultimate ethical objective is well-being.

Naturally it is in complete denial of Christianity and the fundamental historical fact of Christianity: the Incarnation of the Word, the redeeming death of Christ and his glorious resurrection. Accepting such historical fact would cause the premise of the 'New Paradigm' to collapse.

This does not mean that the values set out in the 'New Paradigm' would also collapse, as they are values that are not alien to Christian thought, indeed they are demanded in it. Since Genesis we have spoken of 'homo sapiens' and 'homo faber' and their need to be reconciled. Man is not the despotic master of nature, but a wise worker who controls it in observance of its laws.

We do not accept the 'New Paradigm' because it denies God, the other life and especially Christ as the only saviour.

We accept gender equality, but not in the sense of homosexuality and the destruction of the family. We accept birth control, but not the destruction of birth, which is what is planned with the culture of death applied in particular in the third world.

Well-being is not the same as happiness. Christ does not make us empty promises of total well-being in this world, but happiness. The crux of any religion, or spirituality in the words of the 'New Paradigm', is its solution to the issue of death, which the 'New Paradigm' does not have at all as it simply does without it and everything that comes with it, especially suffering, pain and illness. Christ is alone in providing a satisfactory solution from his glorious cross in the resurrection.

One of the major issues of the 'New Paradigm' is that everything has to be based on a consensus that does not arise from objective truths, but subjective opinions, which means the consensus sought is artificial. Such consensus is entirely vain, and that is why ethics or bioethics based on the 'New Paradigm' have no substance.

For this reason, I shall go on to set out the objective foundations of a true system of ethics that build man, in contrast to the 'New Paradigm'. There is no doubt that when we speak of ethics or bioethics, we are always talking about a path to be travelled, and no one travels a path just for the sake of travelling, but to reach a destination. This destination cannot stand alone, because if this were the case there would be no point in travelling any path, even in a figurative sense. Nobody strives to achieve what he already has. The destination of the path, despite what is claimed gratuitously by post-modernity, is the destination offered both by Natural Law and Christ's Law, and it has not been superseded at all. It is a destination that is based simultaneously, although in different ways, on the nature of man himself and the Revelation that we have received from God. It is what has been enunciated in the history of thought as Natural Law and the historical fact revealed by Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

3. Being and thinking

As in our examination of bioethics closed to transcendentalism, we shall begin with the response to the issue of 'being and thinking' and the connotations offered by the response to the other issue: 'being and becoming'.

With regard to the school of thought that objectivizes ethics, we find ourselves in the Aristotelic-Tomist position that is essentially assumed in the teachings of the Catholic Church, without forgetting the valid elements found in the subjective discourse we have spoken of, and all of the enriching contributions made to it by the Catholic Church.

In this school of thought, truth consists of compliance of thought with the object. It is not man's thought that creates reality, but the existence of reality that creates the possibility of contemplation. The moral criteria by which we determine whether an action is good or bad is undoubtedly man, human nature, but taken in its full complexity, which means its openness to transcendentalism.

Morality consists of the path to realization of the 'human project', but this path not only does not exclude the transcendental model from man, but necessarily includes it. No one can simultaneously be his own present and his own future, and as such man does not create morality, but is transcended by it, it is there and finds man 'ob-stat'. It is not that the subject is not involved, on the contrary: it is the subject who travels and, to some extent, determines the path, but not entirely in accordance with his own volition, there are rules that transcend him.

The full independence between the three clear and distinct substances considered in Cartesian thought leads to the total closure of each of them, and ultimately to the closure of the human being into himself. With no opening, no relations, full independence, he becomes a closed circle who dies in his own sterility.

Man has autonomy to enjoy his freedom, but this autonomy, this self-regulation, is not absolute. Man in his limited reality, in continuous construction, has to be open to a model that transcends him.

4. Bioethics as a project

When we speak of life sciences and consider correct human conduct in light of experimental science manipulating life, the question encompasses the following factors: human life, scarcity of human life, increase of human life, improvement of human life, the way of achieving such an improvement and the methods to be avoided. Finally, we find the need-satisfier combination. This means that there is a vital subject that wishes to improve and, if it wishes to improve, it must travel a path and, if it has to travel a path, it has to plan it and, if it has to plan it, it has to know first where it is going so that it can plan it. In life, we have to know what life is, what is the most appealing life, which routes should we travel and which should we avoid for taking life instead of giving it. Bioethics arises in this context as a project for the construction of man through life sciences and healthcare.

5. Technology and bioethics

In other words, the scope of ethics per se is the finality. To better illustrate the point, let us assume technological neutrality (as there are no neutral sciences as each science means analysis and

synthesis, and synthesis cannot be neutral). If we can imagine technological neutrality, enclosed within itself, we can say that according to the laws of the laboratory (hypothesis, experimentation, thesis, new hypothesis, new thesis and new experimentation) the scope of technology per se is merely possibility, while the scope of ethics is finality. This means that technology left to its own devices can create or destroy man, technology per se is blind, regardless of how advanced or marvellous it may seem. Biotechnology per se is blind and ambivalent.

6. Intelligent project

Consequently, for true bioethics that give us rules of conduct in the fields of healthcare and life to exist, the first thing we have to ask ourselves is what project of man is envisaged when manipulating the fields of healthcare and life. Curiously, while having a project suggests intelligence, it also suggests weakness, as a project is the intention to improve a reality that appears to be imperfect, otherwise we would not have projects to improve it. Genuine bioethics must be a project to improve human life itself, which incorporates all life sciences and healthcare as its intelligence, that 'intus legere' (intellect, inner reading) that every analysis considers the synthesis of arrival that can not be anything but the construction of human life.

7. A 'better self'

For a vital project to work (as with any other project) it must incorporate as fully as possible the vital reality it intends to improve and the 'better self' that it intends to achieve. This 'better self' is simultaneously goal and finality and the model that we intend to reproduce. These two realities determine a trend, a path, an 'ethos' of 'self' to 'better self'. And this path is ethics, and bioethics in our case. Here we find rules that cannot be merely formulations or imperatives outside the self, but real constructions of the 'self' itself, which gradually brings it towards this 'better self', increasing its vital density.

8. Historical formulation

They say that people who do not know history run the risk of repeating it. In the past, great advances were achieved with great efforts, and if current science and technology is so advanced in the field of healthcare and life, it is because it has built on this growing

continuity of effort, which ultimately equates to humanity. It is true that these achievements were accompanied by great errors and accommodations for past ages that it would be wrong to repeat. But the achievements remain as values that we inherit and that make us greater than our ancestors. There is much truth in the humble saying: 'We are dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants'.

This allusion to the philosophy of history applies in our case as everything in the past, albeit in contexts that are quite different and distant from the conquests of science and technology today, was studied and formulated in the most exacting manner. In the most stringent synthesis, we could summarize the saying with expressions that should be entirely valid today: ethics is a consequence of metaphysics: if nature has an objective, then it supports an anthropology in which man is presented as a being with an objective, and thus walking towards that objective. Ethics describes this journey towards the objective. But if we do away with metaphysics, there is no objective and no anthropology, and therefore no ethics.

9. Nature and Natural Law

It has been claimed that nature can no longer be admitted as its concept is something static and closed, and that it does not tally with the current meaning of science, especially medical science, which is no longer about what can be observed but what can be manipulated. However, there is an error with this understanding of nature: the static concept is not its true concept. It may help us to better understand its objective meaning if we consider the classical concepts of 'Natural Law'.

Natural Law is often defined in three ways: 'Ratio vel voluntas divina, ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans' (Divine will or reason which requires the conservation of the natural order and prohibits it from being disturbed), 'Participatio legis aeternae in creatura rationali' (The participation of eternal law in the rational being) and 'Lumen intellectus insitum nobis a Deo per quod cognoscimus quid agendum et quid vetandum' (The light of understanding instilled in us by God that shows us what to do and what to avoid).

10. Nature as activity: Order

It is in the first definition that we find the key to understanding nature: natural order. Order is the absolute opposite of inactivity. It has traditionally been defined as 'Parium dispariumque rerum apta dispositio' (The correct placement of odd and even things), making it a relationship that demands extremely intense activity. It understands disparity and tends towards unity as a convergence of difference. It is Parmenides and Heraclitus together. Order contains a firm conviction of finality and exemplarity. It requires transcendence because it includes a model towards which there is constant evolution. The current age is characterized by increasingly complex analytical processes, but lacks the synthetic process that would bring analysis towards an objective that is none other than construction of man himself. The result of the synthetic process is known as order.

This is what we called the 'human project'. This model is a volitional and good, as well as being logical and true. It is the profound truth and love of man himself, that is not conceived as a mathematical quantitative multiplication of the projective desires of man, but as something that simultaneously goes beyond and fills him completely and is expressed in the definition as divine will and reason. Entering thus the realm of divinity means entering the chiaroscuro world of mystery, as complying with this law means participating in full, which brings happiness and fills man with life, as by doing so he participates in the so-called eternal law (second definition), i.e. the transcendental model, a transcendental model that is by no means mechanically static, but that has also become immanent in the unrepeatable history of the Incarnation of the Word. This is the light that provides a clear view of the construction itself (third definition).

11. Freedom

This is ethical theory and ethical practice in a package open to the true concept of freedom, which does not consist simply in doing what one wishes, but of that attribute of will that guides it towards self construction. In this sense, the criteria of morality is man himself in his full complexity and not within the limits of his own inability to build himself and his enormous capacity to destroy himself. This complexity brings him awareness of his own reality, which means being relational, open and thus starting and walking, i.e. opening himself freely to the Other, which in this case is the plenitude of Force, Truth and Love, which is precisely God. Through the freedom of man in his project of construction, he is always open to the forces

of the genuine progress of biotechnology to verify ever more his vital plenitude, in constant harmony with God, with all humanity and with the entire environment.

12. The revelation

Such open, 'objective', real and limitless ethics in Catholic thought lead to full communication with God the Omnipotent Father who realizes in us the Truth of his Son by his Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection. He fills all of our aspirations through the Path that is Christ, in the fullness of the Love of his Spirit. Catholic Ethics and Bioethics are Jesus walking within us to his Father through his death and resurrection, through the Love of the Holy Spirit. Bioethics is therefore the Spirit walking in us along the pathways of life sciences and healthcare. 'Those that are guided by the Spirit are the children of God'. The Spirit instils in man the capacity to walk towards the total construction of Christ, which are the virtues, and determines understanding of Christ himself as the path through the causeway of the Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Catholic bioethics is as follows:

'The systematic and profound study of the conduct that constructs man through life sciences and healthcare when walking in Christ towards the Father, fullness of life, with the strength of the Holy Spirit.'

This theological vision signifies a profound and structural dialogue with all of the sciences and technologies involved, with all of the unifying schools of thought of the analyses provided by the different philosophies and theologies, also in dialogue with other religions, bearing in mind that it is a study of conduct, and as a result it cannot remain in the realms of reflection, but must actually be realized as a guiding light in the difficult solution of the problems that arise with genetic engineering.

13. Principles of open bioethics

As we were saying, bioethics open to transcendentalism is the construction of life itself. In the Catholic conception, it is a theandric construction in which divine and human action are intertwined. Translating these principles into action gives us the following formulation:

1. **Human life is created by God.** The human person is created by God, it came from Him and it must return to Him and to his exemplary and final cause. Man is the image of God, part of the Body of Christ, a citizen of the people of God.
2. Human life is received by humanity, not in ownership, but in **administration**. Human life is inviolable from conception until its natural end. The dignity of the human person is inviolable. This is the basis of anthropology and bioethics.
3. Human life may only originate in **marriage** and only in the conjugal act.
4. Partners are not the cause of human life but the **instruments** of God in the communication of such life.
5. The only explanation of life and its only source is the **dead and resuscitated Christ**. From Christ the human person is capable of reflection, is in himself **finality** and can never be taken as a means. Suffering and death, if considered with the death of Christ, are the only source of life.
6. The human person has **freedom and responsibility** which he must exercise to reach fulfilment. There is no freedom without responsibility, which means respecting the freedom of others.
7. **Totality** is greater than the part, and sometimes we must renounce the part in the interests of totality.
8. The human person is **caring** and must work for the common good.
9. In this context we accept and justify the three principles of the subjectivist bioethical principle: **autonomy, benevolence and justice**.
10. The human person is the synthesis of the universe and is who gives reason to all that exists. Modern biomedical **science and technology** must serve human life and not vice versa. They are for constructing human life, not destroying it.

Gdansk, 11 September 2008.

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