

Editor's Preface

Elvio Baccarini

Faculty of Philosophy
University of Rijeka

We hope that a new issue on bioethics, while we are in a period of something heavily resembling as an inflation of debates on this topic, may still be useful. The issue tries to offer a rather various range of prospectives on bioethical issue. The attempt consists in putting together some typical western approaches to the debate, with some discussions of non-western approaches to the field.

The paper by Snjezana Prijic-Samarzija approaches one of the main issues in bioethical debate, i.e. the moral status of the embryo. In her discussion, she applies the results from scientific researches, as well as some metaphysical instruments. In her opinion, science indicates relevant data to discriminate between various stages in the development of the embryo. By making use of these data and of the metaphysical discussion on the sorites paradox, she argues mainly against the continuity argument as a support to the thesis that fertilization is the moment when full moral status is acquired. Her conclusion is that this argument is not successful in showing that embryo research and embryo experimentation are morally impermissible.

Roberto Mordacci discusses the new, liberal approach to eugenics. Contrary to the old eugenics, related to some higher goals (like, e.g. the race, etc.), the new liberal eugenics is related to the individual rights. Liberals think that there is no problem in eugenics, provided that it is regulated by rules of fairness that guarantee the equality of opportunities. Mordacci thinks, on the other hand, that there are dangers in the permissibility of the application of genetic enhancement. The main danger is represented by the fact the normative model of a perfectly healthy individual may become too powerful in the social perception, and become as a reason of discrimination against people departing from this perfectionist model.

Michael Cheng-tek Tai discusses the problem of euthanasia and withdrawal of therapy from the Taoist perspective. He argues that, from this perspective, artificial life that relies on external means is not harmonious with nature. This is a reason to question the morality of keeping a permanently non conscious person alive by external means. However, this does not imply that all attempts to cure illness in un-natural. Only futile treatments, from the Taoist perspective, are un-natural, while medical procedures that can restore health are not un-natural.

Iva Sorta-Bilajac discusses the issue of female foeticide and infanticide from the Sikh perspective. She offers a description of the Sikh culture, principally as related to moral issues. In this tradition the religious beliefs explicitly underline that the moment of conception is the rebirth of a fully developed person who has lived many previous lives. Each human being is born with a purpose and his birth is never accidental. Abortion sends the soul back into the karmic cycle of rebirth. In coherence with the general approach, the Sikh Gurus condemned the practice of female foeticide and infanticide, while the neo-Sikhs departed from the tradition in relation to prenatal diagnosis and sex selection.

Simone Pollo discusses about the practice of experimentation on non human animals. He tries to suggest an approach to animal welfare in alternative to the dominant, mental state approach. Pollo finds his approach richer and looks for its roots in the utilitarian conception of good life as elaborated by the utilitarian J.S. Mill. According to this approach, welfare, i.e. human welfare as well as non human welfare, is promoted by conditions in which individuals can fulfill self-development, and try to achieve their particular good life.

Corrado Del Bò makes use of Feinberg's analysis of the right to life and of Hohfeld's legal terminology to trace a distinction between euthanasia and assisted suicide. To this it is related a normative distinction between the two practices. The conclusion is that the justification or the refusal of them is not related. The author, in this paper, is not arguing for, or against, any of the two practices. He wants to offer a possible guideline to explore the issue.

Elvio Baccarini discusses the book by Raphael Cohen-Almagor, *The Right to Die with Dignity*. Among the many topics valuably discussed by Cohen-Almagor, while sharing most of the views and the general approach, Baccarini chooses to discuss the definition of autonomy, Dworkin's argument, and about moral conferring features.