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ASPECTS OF BIOETHICS

Fall Semester 2015/2016
Faculty of Humanities, AHG University of Krakow, Poland

SYLLABUS

A. Description of the course:

Over the past *circa* four decades – in fact, ever since 1971 – a new discipline, *bioethics* has been gradually taking over the subject matter, and goals and tasks that traditionally belonged to moral philosophy/ethics and, later on, to medical ethics and philosophy of medicine respectively. In the beginning, the founders of *bioethics* considered the new discipline mostly as a substitute for (bio)medical ethics, that is to say, as a “wider” (bio)medical ethics – with another name. Today *bioethics* is an original discipline or, better, an *interdisciplinary project* defined though in many various – yet legitimate – ways. That is not strange at all since many different *bioethical* conceptions have had so far ambitions to offer an ultimate determination of it.

There are some common places though within the numerous definitions/determinations of the nature and goals of *bioethics*. The first one surely is that its frame of reference, ever since it came into being, has permanently been widened. Therefore to the most of contemporary

bioethicists *bioethics* encompasses not only ethical issues of biomedicine *sensu stricto*, but also those that concern public health, environmental studies/ecology, population policy, cultural aspects of medical theories and practice, the relationship between law and ethics, and medical ethics respectively, humans and animals involved in medical experiments, and also contemporary environmental conditions of life as such etc. For that reason – and that is another distinctive feature of *bioethics* – there is no definition of the discipline/project nowadays that does not take into account its *multidisciplinary* or, better, *interdisciplinary* character. In fact, *bioethics* should – as etymology of the term suggests – ultimately be understood as: *ethics of life*.

In the course, firstly, some general ethical issues will be exposed and, then, both diachronic and synchronic aspects of *bioethics* will be examined and discussed – i.e. from the very first *bioethical* ideas and conceptions to contemporary theories and issues/topics. Special attention will be paid – in fact, this will prevail in the course – to *practical ethical* questions, problems, dilemmas, controversies etc., since *bioethics* substantially is an *applied ethics*.

B. Schedule:

Session 1

Wednesday, 04 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

- *Introducing dialogue: who are you and who am I?*
- *Discussion on how to carry out the course*
- *About evaluations*

Session 2

Thursday, 05 10 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

- *The main terms and notions of the course (do we understand each other?)*

- *On communication – in brief*
- *About knowledge in general and on some obstacles to reach the truth (e.g. the four idols of Francis Bacon; structure of our attitudes and, especially, of our prejudices)*

Session 3

Monday, 09 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

- *What is morality? A definition*
- *On attitudes in general and on the attitudes towards good and evil (right and wrong); on good and evil as such*
- *Origins of morality – from unquestioned and coercive customs to the first critical reflections on good and evil (right and wrong) – the case of Socrates*

Session 4

Wednesday, 11 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

- *What is ethics? The main conceptions relevant to bioethics (on deontology, consequentialism, and late- or post-modern ethics); examples of questions, problems, dilemmas and controversies that arise when using the conceptions in some concrete morally/ethically challenging and/or problematic situations*
- *Traditional and modern (late-modern, post-modern...) morality – origins of the difference*
- *On modernity, and on late, high, reflexive modernity, or post-modernity...in general – a short overview*
- *Classic and modern (late... modern, post-modern...) ethics: dealing with coherent, and with differentiated/heterogeneous/dispersed value systems and normative orders; on “moral pastiche” in contemporary, ever changing, unpredictable, risky... systems of human interdependence*

Session 5

Thursday, 12 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

- *What is bioethics (ethics of life)? Founders and a definition*
- *When and how bioethics came into being? On medical ethics – the birthplace of bioethics; the main principles: primum non nocere, salus aegroti suprema lex, voluntas aegroti suprema lex, informed consent, dignitas, iustitia*
- *The main issues/topics of medical ethics that determined the first subject matters of bioethical self-understanding and its frame of reference: death and dying; requests to die (euthanasia); beginning of life (on abortion); human subjects in medical research and experimental treatments; transplantation of organs; genetics – challenges of its advancements (human genome issue) etc.*

Session 6

Monday, 16 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

- *Bioethics as practical ethics, again – cases/examples:*
- a)** *Karen Quinlan's coma – on death and dying; **b)** on the first chemo-dialysis in Seattle, namely, on the first selection of those who would live ("The Seattle 'God Committee'); **c)** on medical experiments: Nazi concentration camps (Auschwitz – Josef Mengele), and the case of Tuskegee syphilis study etc.; **d)** pharmaceutical story: on thalidomide, namely on several thousands of afflicted newborns by the drug; **e)** do we need all genetic truths/predictions (e.g.: the Huntington's disease; whole genome sequencing – now what...)? Etc.*

Session 7

Wednesday, 18 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

- *Human subjects in biomedical researches, cost and benefits – an example:*
- Film: EXTREME MEASURES

– *discussion*

Session 8

Thursday, 19 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

– *Biomedical scientific advancements and their bioethical aspects (the case of Christiaan Bernard and his first patient (heart transplantation): how did Louis Washkansky really die: in prolonging his life or in a horrible agony?); Biomedical science without bioethics: on some bioethical principles, again [primum non nocere (do not harm – nonmaleficence), salus aegroti suprema lex (beneficence), voluntas aegroti suprema lex (autonomy and informed consent), dignitas (dignity) etc.]*

– *Bioethics and law – on the relationship (controversies) between law and ethics/bioethics (Nazi did it all according to the laws, didn't they?)*

– *Law and (bio)ethics today: hyper-regulation of the privacy/intimacy (of conditions at our home and our family and the most intimate relationships) – is it OK?*

– *Do we really need a total legal regulation – and surveillance?; remember G. Orwell's story?*

Session 9

Monday, 23 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

– *Bioethics and politics; **ethics of life** in a global milieu – that more often than not still systematically rejects la differAnce (Derrida)*

– *The future of bioethics: bioethics as a bridge that overcomes contemporary political, national, racial, religious, ethnic, gender etc. hostilities, hates, animosities...–for the sake of life (**as such**).*

– **Film: SOMETHING THE LORD MADE** (on science and on racial relationships – prejudices)

– *discussion*

Session 10

Wednesday, 25 11 2015 – 18.50 (150 minutes)

– TEST (if needed)

– *Students' evaluation of the course - discussion*

– *Professor's evaluation of essays (no discussion!)*

– *Farewell conventions (party?)*

C. Literature

α) Books (copies of various chapters from the following books will be available to the students)

– Beauchamp, Tom L. and James F. Childress (2001), *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, Oxford University Press, USA;

– Mepham, Ben (2006), *Bioethics*, Oxford University Press, USA;

– Pence, Gregory E. (2004), *Classic Cases in Medical Ethics (Accounts of Cases that Have Shaped Medical Ethics, with Philosophical, Legal and Historical Backgrounds)*, The McGraw Hill, USA;

β) Articles (various sources; all copies will be available to the students)

– “Consequentialism”, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/>;

– “Deontological Ethics”, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics>

– Kerbs, Raul, “Ethics in Postmodernism”, College and University, DIALOGUE, <http://dialogue.adventist.org/articles>

– Zygmunt Bauman and Edvard Bond's Critical Thoughts on Postmodern Morality, The Bauman Institute, University of Leeds, <http://baumaninstitute.leeds.ac.uk/conference>;

- Turza, Karel (2011), „Bioethics and law“, in: Ante Čović (Hrsg.), *Integrative Bioethik und Pluriperspektivismus*, Akademia Verlag und Sankt Augustin, Eischstaett, Deutschland;
- Turza, Karel, „Bioethics as meta-politics“ (co-author Sandra Radneovic) (2012), in: *Bioethik–Medizin–Politik*, Walter Schweidler (Hrsg.), Akademia Verlag und Sankt Augustin, Eischstaett, Deutschland;
- Turza, Karel, „Morality, ethics and bioethics: the main definitions, problems and challenges“ (2012), in: Zoran Todorović, Prostran, M., Turza, K. (Eds.), *Bioethics and Pharmacology: Ethics in Preclinical and Clinical Drug Development*, Kerala, India;
- Whitehouse, Peter J. (2003), “The rebirth of bioethics: extending the original formulations of Van Rensselaer Potter”, *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 3(4)

D. Evaluation

From the very beginning of the course students will be strongly encouraged to choose the topics/issues they are interested in, to analyze them, to prepare their (power point) presentations, and to expose orally their own views on the issues/topics – initiating thus discussions, and hopefully fruitful contributions to thorough understanding of the subject matter(s)*. The presentations will follow or precede the lectures, depending on the subject matter.

- Contribution of the kind brings – 60%;
- Essays (between 1500 and 2000 words) are obligatory to all students (students are supposed to submit them at the last but one session, namely on Thursday, 16 11 2015; topics will be available

* This way of work has brought about very good results in my teaching activities over the past circa 10 years (by the way, in the period I have taught 9 subjects with more than 2200 students per year).

from the middle of the course: Thursday, 05 11 2015); evaluation: 40%;

- Those who for some reasons lack sufficient points will be obliged to pass an examination test (10 questions on the main issues of the course)