

Bioethics

Bioética

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<https://doi.org/10.36105/mye.2022v33n1.07>

Guerrero Martínez, L. (Coordinator). *Bioethics (Bioética)*. Universidad Iberoamericana, México. 2018, pp. 192.

This book explores bioethical issues relatively less studied than the classics of clinical Bioethics. Thus, biotechnology is approached from an existential hermeneutic perspective using Kierkegaard, Gadamer, Habermas and López Quintás. A text by Ronald Greene on designer babies and their ethical implications. Euthanasia and suicide seen from Kierkegaard's point of view and closes with two chapters on the ethical problem of how we should treat non-human animals using in one case mainly Nussbaum and in the other mainly Derrida.

The first chapter «A hermeneutic-existential vision of Bioethics in the face of the innovation of Biotechnology» (pp. 23-72) by Rafael García Pavón considers the correct ethical approach to the problem of biotechnological interventions. The chapter thus addresses this in two main sections. The first explains the general existential hermeneutic-hermeneutic ethical method where, starting from the reflection on Kierkegaard and Gadamer, Dr. García

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Reception: August 15, 2021. Acceptance: September 12, 2021.

Pavón tries to show how: *An applied ethics, as bioethics would be, in order not to be a «knowledge at a distance» implies that it can be placed in the existential situation, contemporaneously, of the decision-maker, thus being a form of hermeneutic-existential from the dialogue between these two thinkers* (p. 29).

In Kierkegaard the crucial of an ethics is to reach a singular individual, a person. The ethical decision is a prudential existential decision where there is a balance between arbitrariness and dogmatism. With Gadamer we find similarities with the Danish author, as García Pavón points out, he also goes against relativism and rationalism. With respect to the authors he comments: *Synthesizing these two conceptions... we could say that the idea of applied ethics and bioethics as hermeneutics obeys to this linkage of the hermeneutic circle of the linkage in a process of interpretation, where the moral agent must necessarily be involved between the product of a universal reflection and the contingencies of the concrete situations in time* (p. 43).

And what about biotechnology? In the second section, the notion of innovation and that of human creativity are discussed. Technological innovations must be integral in order to respect human dignity. Technological innovation cannot be carried out only with pragmatic criteria and thus think that it is equivalent to creativity, since the latter is broader: creativity implies understanding links of a non-pragmatic order in what is done, in such a way that a true innovation should contemplate those human links that transcend the pragmatic. Liberal eugenics would go against an authentic sense of human creativity. García Pavón points out in the conclusions of his chapter: *...the above proposal aims to reinsert the process of innovation in its existential character, as a character proper to human beings, as a basis for decisions on biotechnology. This implies that it is not an absolute value, but an integral part of the existential and hermeneutic dynamics of integrating in a systemic communication... the decisions we make as human beings for the full development of our nature* (p. 69).

Ronald M. Green's, in «Designer Babies» (73-95), discusses the risks of genetic manipulation in children. He points out five risk

areas: a) Health risks; b) Effect on the family environment; c) Freedom and self-esteem; d) Social justice and the last item; e) Playing God: referring to the naturalness or not of these procedures according to the religious vision that defends the existence of a human nature.

In «Kierkegaard: The hope of dying despair and euthanasia» (97-113), by Benjamin Olivares, *Soren Kierkegaard's theory on despair and his condemnation of suicide is presented and explained and, based on this same theory, a distinction is established between suicidal desire and waiting for death* (p. 97) the latter being acceptable. Kierkegaard, as the author of the chapter points out, shows that the suicidal desire is rather a fear of life than a lack of fear of death. The goals that are often presented in suicide as liberation from pain and power over oneself are misleading. The key reflection is that there is a value in itself to the existence of all people.

The last two chapters deal with the treatment of animals. In «Reflections on respect for animals», by Luis Guerrero and Leticia Valadez (pp. 115-145), the problems of the limits and scope of animal care are raised. The positions of Peter Singer and Martha Nussbaum are analyzed. The authors summarize well the anti-speciesism stance of the former and the theory of capabilities as the foundation of respect for animals of the latter. The key in Singer's defense of animals is the idea that the ethical key is the capacity to have suffering and/or pain related to the interests of the species: *If it is considered wrong for human beings to suffer pain, it must equally be considered wrong for other animals to suffer pain, even more so if it is human beings who cause that suffering* (p. 123).

With respect to Nussbaum the difference with Singer is that he argues that nonhuman animals also possess capacities that must have conditions for flourishing: *...it is good that living beings –complexes— persist and flourish as the kind of things they are. Second, animals are beings with capacities to promote their own good. Third, animals are capable of leading dignified lives* (p. 128). What are the rights derived from capacities? They are, according to Nussbaum: a) Life; b) Physical

health; c) Physical integrity; d) Senses imagination and thought (animals require spaces free of overcrowding that generate boredom, for example); e) Right to have emotions; f) Right to have life projects; g) Right to have the right to establish relationships and affective bonds with other animals and humans; h) Right to interact with other species; i) Right to play, and j) Right to control over one's environment (which would be achieved with human guardianship over animals). The authors argue that there should be a responsibility towards animals in their care without oversimplifying the differences and similarities with humans.

In «Human edification of animals. A proposal from Bioethics as inclusive ethics and formation» (pp. 147-188), by Catalina Elena Dobre and Lourdes Velázquez, an analysis is made of how man's relationship with nature should be. The authors show that the term «bioethics» originally alluded to man's relationship with nature as a whole. They also show how various thinkers have defended animal rights. They review various religious and philosophical positions on how animals should be treated. The authors consider that the key to animal abuse stems from the negative use of the term «anthropocentrism»: *...this term refers to the philosophical, religious, cultural and legal orientation in which the image of the universe as a function of man prevails* (p. 159). On the other hand, they propose that rather than a «dominator», man's relationship with nature should be that of a «guardian». The authors analyze in particular Derrida's position on hospitality, which deconstructs the idea of human superiority over animals. Hospitality is not limited only to the human world but is expandable to dealings with animals: *...true hospitality must be... that which welcomes, that which receives the animal in its condition of being different* (p. 167). Hospitality is the opposite of violence. Man must welcome the non-human, animals among them, as true strangers. The authors give several examples of violence against animals. They point out that although there are undoubtedly differences between humans and animals, we humans must nevertheless take responsibility, which means, above all, not inflicting unneces-

sary suffering on animals. What is the solution proposed by the authors? They point out that it is key to understand that Bioethics implies the relationship with all beings in the natural world and a bioethical education must be provided in which one learns to be responsible with that world to which man himself belongs: *Educating the child to be able to live relationally and establish, as an adult, a community, and implicitly an inclusive society; educating for an inclusive society and educating for human becoming is done by awakening in him the awareness of difference and how this difference is appropriated and understood through the ability to maintain the bond with nature and animals* (p. 184).

The book is very detailed and careful in the exposition of the different authors without losing clarity in the exposition, which allows to go into the topics and thinkers in a rigorous and clear way. The book is an example that bioethics is not reduced to clinical ethics and that classic bioethical topics, such as biotechnology, euthanasia or the treatment of animals, can be discussed with new thinkers and approaches that provide new ideas to bioethical problems.

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