

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

BEGINNING OF BIOETHICS TEACHING IN HUMANITIES

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Bioetika pojednává o etických aspektech ochrany člověka a jeho života a jako samostatný vědní obor vznikla na začátku sedmdesátých let minulého století. V České republice byla bioetika zavedena jako povinný vyučovací obor poprvé na Teologické fakultě Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci v roce 1990.

Klíčová slova: Bioetika; morálka; Hippokrates; Kennedyho institut etiky; Teologická fakulta Univerzity Palackého; Hastings Center

Nowadays science is characterized by gradual differentiation of its fields. One cannot master all pieces of knowledge gained over the generations, and for that reason, an individual cannot integrate them either. In past centuries many new science disciplines have been established. What is typical for the twentieth century, however, is not only the disintegration of the various disciplines, but also their concentration in the newly created areas of science. One of the resulting fields is Bioethics.

What does Bioethics stand for?

Bioethics is usually understood as a *field of science, which deals with ethical aspects of biomedical research, including the application of its results*. At the same time bioethics is a part of ethics, i.e. science for human acting with regard to its specific human nature. A newer and better definition of the term Bioethics is as follows: *Bioethics is a field in science dealing with the ethical aspects of protection of man and his life, and human behavior in relation to life environment*.

The terms *ethics* and *morality* may be understood differently. Ethics is defined usually as a theory of morality. This definition includes philosophical opinions on morality, on moral consciousness, and on behavior. Morality stands for the specification of rules of conduct and of conventions binding on the individual conscience.

Bioethics has been developing dynamically and it is not surprising that each of the researchers understands Bioethics from their own point of view. Some researchers claim that Bioethics is the ethics applied to medical problems and issues related to the value of life. At the same time there are authors who strongly disagree with the focus on issues of medical bioethics.

The Origins of Bioethics

Emphasis on the ethical issues of human behavior can be found as far back as in Plato's (428–348 BC) beliefs, from whom Augustine of Hippo had drawn much of his inspiration. Aristotle (348–322 BC) became not only Plato's disciple but also his critic. Aristotle taught that matter (soma) and form (spirit) belonged to all living beings. Every living being is characterized by the ability to move without any external cause. It can be said that life is movement. Thomas

Aquinas adopted many of Aristotle's philosophical and scientific opinions and thanks to him we know them.

Without a doubt, the first bioethical codex was the so-called Hippocratic Oath, although the term Bioethics was unknown at the time of its origin. If we can dare to judge by the preserved writings only, people had been paying no attention to such "useless" topics as reflections on the essence of life for more than one thousand years. The knowledge of philosophy and natural sciences was preserved almost only in monasteries. People would not be able to find out "the dawn of bioethics" without the work of Albert Magnus (1193–1280), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and William of Ockham (1285–1349).

The development of modern medicine is based on simple but scientific experiments conducted by Gregor Mendel, a monk and abbot who lived in Brno. Mendel's "Laws of Inheritance" are recognized to this day. Charles Darwin, who lived nearly at the same time as Gregor Mendel, brought significant knowledge from another, but no less important field.

The Beginning and Development of Bioethics

The term Bioethics was used for the first time in 1971 by the biologist *van Rensselaer Potter*. He defined the role of Bioethics as well: using the findings of biological sciences to serve to improve the quality of life. The first bioethical institution in the world is considered to be *The Hastings Center*, which was founded in 1969 under the name of *Institute of Society Ethics and the Life Science*. This important research and learning centre is a publisher of the broadly respected bioethical magazine *The Hastings Center Report*.

In 1971 *The Kennedy Institute of Ethics* was established in Washington, D.C. at Georgetown University, and The Center for Bioethics was opened there. This prominent academic institution published the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* in 1978. A new edition of this book, consisting of five volumes, was printed in 1995. The quarterly *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* is one of the most prestigious journals in Bioethics. In 1979 Tom Beauchamp and James Childress published the *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, which is considered to be the fundamental bioethical publication up to this day.

At the beginning of the 90s there were more than 100 bioethical institutions in the world. There are four reasons for the unusually rapid growth of bioethics: the accumulation of new and important pieces of knowledge in medicine and biology, the introduction of technology to medicine, the interdisciplinary nature of bioethics and the growing interest of students and scientists in ethics. Many critical issues of bioethics should be considered not only by medicine and biology, but also by sociology, psychology, ecology and other disciplines.

The Introduction of Bioethics to the University Study Curriculum in the Czech Republic.

Comprehensive knowledge of bioethics was introduced to the Czech Republic after the so-called "Velvet Revolution". In 1990 four participants from Czechoslovakia took part in a bioethical symposium that was held in Dubrovnik, Croatia (Yugoslavia at that time). The Hastings Centre was the organizer of this meeting. The symposium gave an opportunity to the participants not only to get acquainted with the most important bioethical issues, but also to get in touch with outstanding personalities and to get access to literature.

The Palacky University, Faculty of Theology was the first university institution to offer lectures in Bioethics in the Czech Republic. In 1990 Bioethics became a part of a curriculum of the fifth year of study, with a subsidy of two hours a week. By concurrence of circumstances,

the participant of the Bioethical Symposium in Dubrovnik was entrusted with teaching Bioethics and had been giving lectures there for two decades.

At the Bioethical Symposium in Dubrovnik it was decided that the first European conference on Bioethics would be held in Prague in 1991. The Hasting Center was the main organizer and the writer of this article was in charged of the coordination of the conference. One of the outcomes of the Prague Bioethical Conference was the interest of the Hasting Center's scientists in the Czech Republic. The co-founder and executive director of the Hasting Center, Daniel Callahan, became an external teacher of the Charles University, Faculty of Medicine, and later on an honorary doctor.

Shrnutí

Počátky bioetiky jako součásti vzdělávání v humanitních oborech

Za světově první bioetickou institucí se považuje Kennedyho institut etiky (Kennedy Institute of Ethics), založený ve Washingtonu v roce 1971. První bioetické symposium v Evropě se uskutečnilo v roce 1990 v Dubrovniku a jeho čeští účastníci se přičinili o zavedení výuky bioetiky na českých vysokých školách. V roce 1991 proběhla v Praze I. evropská bioetická konference (First European Conference on Bioethics).