

Fritz Jahr's Bioethical Imperative 1927

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Bioethics in the Real World

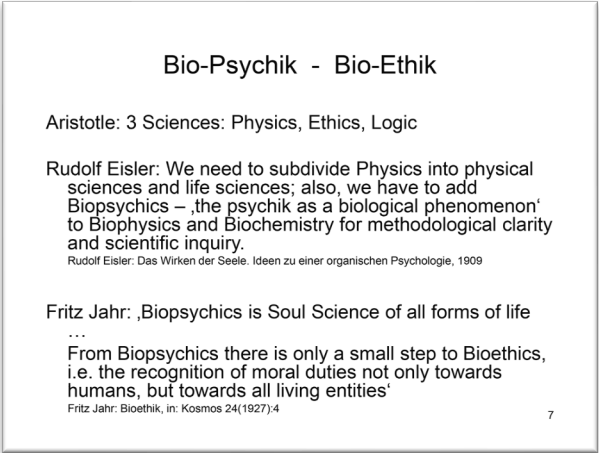
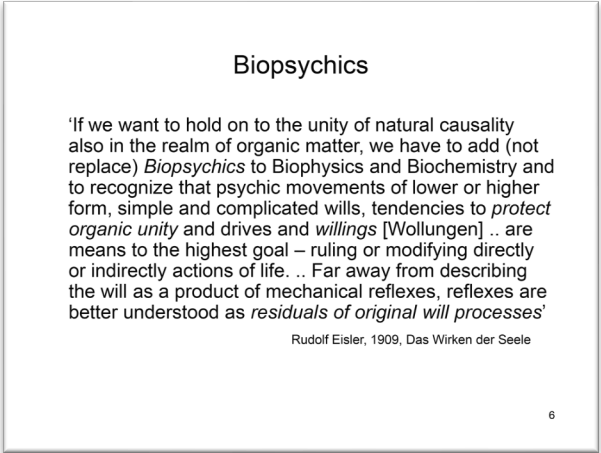
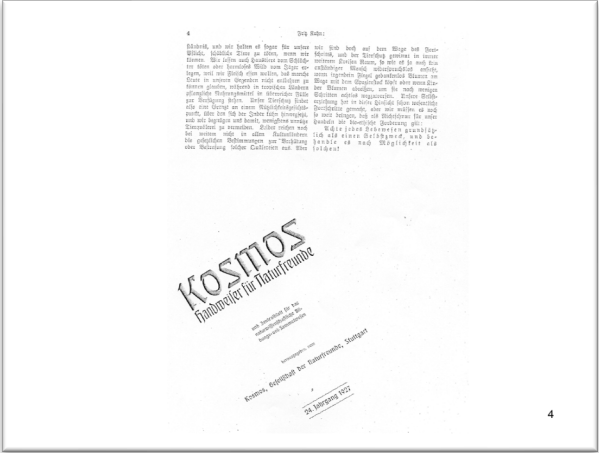
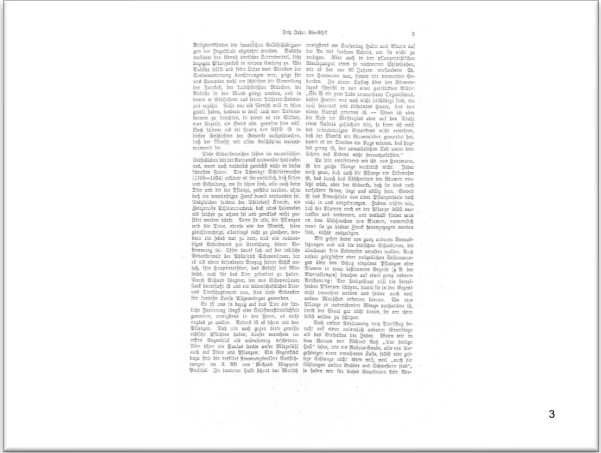
AN EARLY 1927 EUROPEAN DEFINITION OF BIOETHICS AND ITS PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Hans-Martin Sass

1. FRITZ JAHR'S DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF BIO-ETHIK

2. THE BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE

3. BIOETHICS EDUCATION, CONSULTATION AND COMPETENCY



DEFINITIONS OF BIOETHICS

'The systematic study of human conduct in the area of the life sciences and health care, in as far as this conduct is examined in the light of moral values and principles'
Warren Reich, 1995

'The principles of bioethics can reasonably be stated as: autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice'
Beauchamp, Childress, 2001

The systematic study of human conduct in the area of the life sciences and the personal, professional and public moral commitment and conduct towards all forms of life, in as far as this conduct is examined in the light of moral values and principles
Fritz Jahr, 1927

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PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF BIOETHICS

- (1) Bioethics is a new and necessary academic discipline and a profession.
- (2) Bioethics is a necessary moral attitude, conviction and conduct.
- (3) Bioethics recognizes and respects all life and living interrelations and interactions in nature and culture.
- (4) Bioethics has legitimate obligations in personal and professional settings: in the public sphere, in education, consultancy, public morality, and culture

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FRITZ JAHR: FOCUS OF BIOETHICS

1. Science and Ethics
2. Moral Sentiment and Cultural Tradition
3. Duties towards Non-human Life
4. Duties towards all Living Environments
5. Compassion is the Content of the Golden Rule
6. Personal Health Care Ethics and Public Health Ethics
7. Ethics and the Media
8. Methods in Ethics Consultation and Education

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE I

Science and Ethics

- (1) *The Bioethical Imperative guides ethical and cultural attitudes and responsibilities in the life sciences and towards all forms of life (1927).*

The Bioethical Imperative is a necessary result of moral reasoning based on empirical physiology and psychology of humans, plants, and animals; as such it needs to educate and steward personal and collective cultural and moral attitudes and calls for new respect and responsibilities towards all forms of life.

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE I-1

'First of all, there are the basic similarity of humans and animals as probands in psychology. Psychology is not limited to humans any more today, it applies the same methods to animal life; and as there is a comparative anatomic-zoological research, there are highly educative comparisons between human and animal souls. Indeed, also the beginnings of plant psychology can be recognized. Even beginnings of plant psychology appear. ... Under these circumstances it is only consequent when R. Eisler in summarizing uses the term Bio-Psychics (soul science of all life forms). - It is only a small step from here to *Bio-Ethics*, i.e. the assumption of moral duties not only towards humans but to all living beings as well'.

Jahr, 1927, Bio-Ethik. Kosmos 24:2

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE II

Moral Sentiment and Cultural Tradition

- (2) *The Bioethical Imperative is based on historical and other evidence that 'compassion is an empirical established phenomenon of the human soul' (1928)*

'Compassion with Animals seems to be an empirically given phenomenon of the human soul'

Jahr, 1928, Tierschutz und Ethik, Ethik 4:100

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE II-1

'Whose love is large enough to transcend the limits of human-only and sees sanctity in the most miserable creature, will recognize and cherish sanctity also in the poorest and lowest of his human brothers, and he will not reduce it to a specific social class, an interest group, a party, or anything else.

On the other hand, insensible cruelty to animals is evidence of a cruel character, which may as such become dangerous towards his human environment'

Jahr, 1928, Tierschutz und Ethik. Ethik 4:100

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE III

Cultural and Moral Duties towards Non-human Life

(3) *The Bioethical Imperative strengthens and complements moral recognition and duties towards fellow humans in the Kantian context and should be followed in respect of human culture and mutual moral obligations among humans (1928)*

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE III-1

'In sum, the guidance for our moral actions has to be the *Bio-Ethical Imperative: Respect every living being, including animals, as an end in itself and treat it, if possible, as such!* And if someone does not want to accept the absolute validity of such a rule in as far as animals and plants are concerned, he should - repeating what was said before - in recognition of the moral obligation towards human society in general nevertheless follow it'.

Jahr, 1928, Tierschutz und Ethik, Ethik 4:102

'The moral law is sacred (inviolable). The person is not sacred, but humankind in his person must be recognized as sacred. One must act to treat every person as an end and never as a means only' Kant 1788

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE IV

Struggle for and interdependence in life

(4) *The Bioethical Imperative has to recognize, to steward, and to cultivate the struggle for life among all forms of life and natural and cultural living environments.*

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE IV-1

'Our entire life and activities in politics, business, in the office and the in laboratory, in the workshop, in the farm fields are .. not based on love in the first place, but many times on competition with other competitors. Quite often we are not cognizant of this fight as long as we proceed without hate and in a fair, legal and accepted manner. Similarly, as we cannot avoid the fight with our fellow humans, we cannot avoid the struggle for life with other living beings. Nevertheless, we will not want to loose the ideal of responsibility as a guiding point, neither for the first nor for the latter' Jahr, 1928, Tierschutz und Ethik. Ethik 4:101

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE V

Compassion: Content of the Golden Rule

(5) *The Bioethical Imperative implements compassion, love, and solidarity with all forms of life as a content-rich principle and virtue into the 'golden rule' and into Kant's Categorical Imperative, which are reciprocal and formal only (1934).*

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE V-1

Golden Rule and Categorical Imperative:

'These and similar definitions only give a formal indication for a 'good' action. The motive could be, despite of such an indication, even crude egoism, i.e. a mutual contract: Do nothing to me, then I will nothing do to you ... Love is the implementation of the moral law.. More than 2000 years before Schopenhauer the 5th Commandment has recognized from a broader perspective the benefit over loss (of such a commandment) under the perspective of sanctity of life and life's expressions. Therefore the Imperative 'You shall not kill!' We know from Jesus, that the 5th Commandment does not only prohibit killing, but all bad deeds towards others, even the bad word, the bad attitude'

Jahr, 1934, Drei Studien zum 5. Gebot, Ethik 11:184

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE VI

Bioethics: Health Ethics and Public Health Ethics

(6) *The Bioethical Imperative includes obligations towards one's own body and soul as a living being among others.*

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE VI-1

Health Care Ethics:

'How have the duties towards oneself as mentioned in the 5th Commandment to be fulfilled in concrete?'

'By not taking one's own life, by not shortening it, hurting or endangering, by not weakening one's health by unchaste behavior, excessive eating and drinking, rage, frivolous foolhardiness and daredevilry etc. Especially important are the protection of sexual cleanness and the avoidance of abuse of alcoholic beverages. – As to the first, the New Testament judgment is particularly clear: if you commit fornication, you sin against your own life'

Fritz Jahr, 1934, Drei Studien zum 5. Gebot, Ethik 11:185

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE VI-2a

Personal Health Ethics and Public Health Ethics:

'He who fulfills moral duties towards oneself correctly, avoids hurting others as well. We can demonstrate this in regard to the already mentioned issues of sex and alcohol: He, who follows the vice of indecency runs the danger of hurting himself bodily and mentally. Sexual diseases as well threaten. Bu weakness and sickness cause that victim to become more or less a burden to the community, thus hurting all. If he has offsprings, he damages those by making them to inherit a weak and sick nature, which in turn cause burdens and damages to the community'

Jahr, 1934, Drei Studien zum 5. Gebot, Ethik 10:185

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE VI-2b

Personal Health Care and Public Health Ethics:

'He, who protects his own life from being hurt, fulfills at the same time his obligations towards the community. Similarly with alcoholism: He, who is dependant on alcohol, may risk severe bodily and emotional dangers. And in doing so, he not only hurts himself, but his family, his offsprings, his volk, his race. And, again, he, who protects himself from damage, does good to his 'neighbor', to his entire volk, indeed'

Jahr, 1934, Drei Studien zum 5. Gebot, Ethik 10:185

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BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE VI-2c

Special issues

A Case for the Chamber of Physician's Committee:

'Shall a girl, which was made pregnant against her will by a criminal, be requested to give birth to a child, to which she is not bound by anything, which might have character traits which would only bring her sadness and sorrow? Here, one has to judge very carefully in using responsibility in its fullest sense'

Jahr, 1928, Social and Sexual Ethics in the Daily Press

Ways towards a Sexual Ethos':

'Developing and strengthening ,moral intuition', esp. care of the sense of shame, of emotional and not only rational education, Pflege of true religion, physical exercise, true relationship between work and recreation, ,early to bed and early to rise'

Jahr 1928, Ways towards a Sexual Ethos

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ETHICS AND THE MEDIA

'And if you believe that the press media is only motivated to create a public opinion or at least strongly influence it, then from an ethical perspective it becomes even a *duty* to contribute towards development of attitudes and convictions according to one's best knowledge and conscience'.

Jahr, Soziale und sexuelle Ethik in der Tageszeitung, Ethik 4, 1928

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ETHICS CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION I

'Do not teach inflexible subjective ethics. Strictly avoid camouflaging preconceived opinions under the veil of so called objectivity and by misusing so called interactive teaching (Arbeitsunterricht).

Methodologically it is not allowed to only present preferred facts and to suppress or to refute disliked facts or to turn them around at one's own will.

Different attitudes and convictions always have to be recognized.

Different attitudes and convictions including their benefits and mistakes have to be presented evenhandedly and without tendency (Do not look at one through rosy glasses and at the other through black glasses).

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ETHICS CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION II

'Presenting a personal opinion always should be done without putting obligations on others; also, one should not forget to present the shortcoming of one's own conviction. –

Instead of tendentious manipulation of attitudes, pupils should be given every opportunity to develop their own attitude and conviction, respectively giving them objective material for developing their own attitudes and convictions later'

Jahr, 'Gesinnungsdiktatur oder Gedankenfreiheit', Die neue Erziehung 12, 1930

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THE 5TH COMMANDMENT AS BIOETHICAL IMPERATIVE

The 5th Commandment:

'This all shows the universal importance of the 5th Commandment, which needs to be employed in regard to all life. Rewriting the 5th Commandment results in the Bio-ethical Imperative: Respect every living being on principle as a goal in itself and treat it, if possible, as such!'

Jahr 'Gesinnungsdiktatur oder Gedankenfreiheit?', Ethik 11, 1934

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