
GLOBAL BIOETHICS

PERSPECTIVE FOR HUMAN SURVIVAL

Edited by **Brunetto Chiarelli**



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Global Bioethics – Perspective for Human Survival

Edited by Brunetto Chiarelli

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Bioethics and Modern Technology: Reasons of Concern

Rolando V. Jiménez-Domínguez and Onofre Rojo-Asenjo
*Centro de Investigaciones Económicas, Administrativas y
Sociales (CIECAS) del Instituto Politécnico Nacional
México*

1. Introduction

Today's world technology, more than any other human activity, is transforming our lives, our habits and life styles, the ways human beings relate to each other; it creates our material wealth and the bases of our progress and modern civilization, that is to say, our economy. It is not improper to say, in a word, that modern technology makes our world. However, this abundant source of benefits is not free from inconveniences, some of which may seriously endanger fundamental aspects of nature and human life [Arthur, 2009; Kelly, 2010].

Thanks to the scientific and technological advance during the last 150 years, infant mortality has been enormously reduced and life expectancy of people has almost doubled. We have found effective treatments for many diseases which were before mortal, and the hygiene conditions of most of the world population have been considerably improved. This has brought at the same time a huge growth of this population, which has grown from one thousand million at the middle of the nineteenth century to almost seven thousand million beginning the second decade of the XXI century, what is giving rise to serious difficulties in providing adequate living conditions for every human being. Antibiotics have saved countless lives while making it possible for new and incredibly virulent bacteria to evolve. The convenience of e-mail turns into communication overload; face to face contacts are being substituted by screen to screen communications. Even our most publicized inventions can turn on us. Contradiction seems to be the name of the game: the past century was history's deadliest, in terms of humanity's technological capacity for organized violence. And yet life expectancies in the industrialized world, as mentioned, rose to approach eighty years.

Nuclear energy developments have encountered useful applications in the generation of electric energy for many regions of the earth, as well as applications in the medical fields, but at the same time have created the possibility of massive annihilation of all kinds of creatures, including the human, and the destruction of ecology at large. Genetic manipulation is associated with our hopes for attainment of a life free of diseases and other sufferings, but it is also opening possibilities of interventions in the natural evolution processes of living organisms with unpredictable consequences. Any prediction based on the genetic determinism is nowadays strongly questioned, since there are no reasons to accept that the characteristics of a living organism are only determined by their genes [Ho, 1998].