

Ludwig Siep

Reasons and Sources of Current Bioethical Controversies

Controversies in ethical debates, either in civil society or in the normative sciences, need not be deplored. They are signs of a living pluralistic culture. However, philosophers want to know the reasons, and if possible the ultimate ones, for the seeming impossibility of reaching commonly accepted solutions. My attempt at some steps in this direction starts with a sort of map of the most important and controversial subjects and debates in recent bioethics and biopolitics (I). The lack of agreement regarding answers and solutions is often attributed to the meta-ethical differences between for instance deontology and consequentialism. In my view there are more general ways of moral thinking behind these positions which I will outline in the second part (II). Moreover, these different perspectives have deep-seated roots in the history of moral culture and moral thinking which I will trace in the third part (III). In the conclusion I will sketch a sort of mediation by way of a mutual complementation of these ways of moral thinking (IV).

I. A map of recent issues in bioethics

Being aware of my unavoidable personal perspective I hope to grasp at least some of the most important and controversial issues by dividing the debate into the following three fields: Firstly, questions of just distribution on the national and global level; secondly, questions regarding the ethical significance of human species properties; and thirdly, the relation between nature and technology.

(1) There is no doubt that questions of distributive justice concerning medical services and the access to pharmaceuticals and therapies are very high on the agenda of national and international bioethical and biopolitical debates. The most basic philosophical questions involved seem to me the following: What is the special character of health as a value

compared with other goods as for instance education, security, mobility etc.? Can a common value of justice and a duty to solidarity still be justified as requirements for modern health systems?

There is little doubt, that health is a particular value in many respects. It is an instrumental and at the same time an intrinsic value; instrumental in the sense of an all-purpose means for achieving many other goods and goals which presuppose a state of health, as for instance jobs, partnerships, travels and so on. Intrinsic since it is in itself enjoyable and a constituent, not only a condition or a means, for a good state of affairs or a good life. In contrast to its high value status it is one of the goods least controllable by our own will and activities. Almost anybody may lose it any time, even if there are big differences regarding prevention and therapy relating to status, life-conditions and financial means. Due to this dependence on external conditions there is little responsibility for losing health – at least regarding genetic dispositions, infections, organic malfunctions etc. In a society based partly on religious or communal values of charity and solidarity, partly on the enlightenment values of overcoming natural dependencies, this provides rather strong reasons for the public task of social compensation for personal disadvantage or mishap. They are even strengthened in view of a third group of conditions for health risk besides natural contingency and individual life-style, namely the social conditions. There is a wide range of such conditions more or less beyond the control of the individual from hygienic conditions in living and working places – think of mega-city smog, slums, mining, and child labor – to the factors of stress, competition and artificial environment in the modern technical civilization.

In many Western societies these social responsibilities for individual health risks have been at the source of the welfare state and of different forms and organizations of state policy and insurance systems. In the last decades they have often been changed by privatization policies especially regarding the ownership of clinics and the health-insurance systems. Of course, an efficient health-system where patients act responsibly, especially in the field of prevention, insurance, compliance etc. is required by the ethical principle of justice itself. But not every medical achievement can be organized according to the economical rules governing the production and distribution of consumer goods. One problem which should not be overlooked is the burden of too complicated technical, but also financial systems especially for elderly people or people with little technical training.

Distribution problems become more radical on the global level and here we are without the long tradition of experiences with welfare-states and solidarity institutions. Inequality and the degree of suffering are so much more dramatic than in technically advanced societies that radical measures seem required by justice and benevolence – especially since the rich countries owe their wealth at least partly to the exploitation of the formerly colonized countries.

Strict deontological or utilitarian universalism would require strong measures of international justice, as for instance taxes for enterprises and citizens in the rich countries, the refusal of patents on new pharmaceutical products, the obligatory distribution of drugs in poor countries etc. However, at least two questions of general ethical significance seem to need discussion in the first place: One is the question of equal assistance duties to every human being versus justified “agent-centered” priorities of duties and concerns. In this case that would mean a stronger obligation to the “solidarity community” of a regional or national health system and the allowance to take profit from a developed health-system before achieving equality on the global level. The second question regards the time dimension: are we obliged to risk the further scientific and technical progress of medicine in high-tech civilizations for the sake of a more just global distribution? Or can we assume permission or even a duty to secure medical progress for future generations even at the cost of suffering and unjust global distribution in the present?

I think that in every field of ethics the priority of the near social environment can be justified against a strict universal egalitarianism. However, the “far-distance” duties exist and have to be weighed against the mentioned priorities – a weighing which includes the extent of suffering and the efficacy of the means taken. I also think that the claim of present and future people to the continuance of medical research and progress is justified. However, that does not mean that the incentive for research and development has to be the present system of global patent-, licensing and trade rules. Instead, the requirement of global medical justice is a public-private partnership which ensures that every human being gains access to the best medication for diseases like AIDS, malaria, diarrhea, acquired blindness etc. This is only a very general ethical framework and it will remain controversial due to the difference of methods and perspectives to be discussed later. The specification is one of our projects in Münster in cooperation with the international Health Impact Fund of Thomas Pogge.

(2) The second group of debates concerns the ethical significance of species properties. After Peter Singer's critique of "speciesism" as a sort of racism, species properties seemed to have no say in ethics at all. But in recent years there has been much debate about the necessity of a species ethics or "Gattungsethik" reflecting on the value of species properties as conditions of morality. One may argue that there is nothing in common regarding the use of "species" by Peter Singer or Jürgen Habermas. The first as a pathocentric utilitarian regards pleasure and pain as the only relevant criteria for judging the permission or the duty to act in a certain way. To behave differently concerning human beings is to give them privilege due to properties which are of no ethical relevance. In contrast, "species ethics" in the sense of Habermas means to protect such properties of the human species against bioengineering which are constitutive for morality as such. However, they have the important problem in common whether and in what sense species properties or the belonging to a species is of relevance for morality and ethics. Recent debates in gene-technology and stem cell research regarding the permission to create chimeras belong to this question as well. The same is the case with the claim to protect species dignity (Gattungswürde) in early embryos or the transhumanist goals to overcome the limits of the human species compared with other more powerful and efficient systems.

I think that belonging to a particular biological species is indeed of ethical significance. And this in various aspects: Firstly, it is justifiable that human beings give their own pleasures and pains more weight than that of other animals; secondly, the natural dispositions of mutual sympathy and the securing of one's biological niche are needed to support moral duties and values; and thirdly, there are indeed natural properties of the human constitution which are conditions of common moral values.

There is no room here to defend these claims. Let me just distinguish them from another position regarding species ethics, namely that of Jürgen Habermas. For him morality needs natural conditions for cooperation and autonomy. The natural condition for cooperation and its virtues is a basic weakness or fragility of the human condition, which may be eliminated by biotechnical optimization. If such procedures include reproductive techniques like cloning, embryo selection or genetic engineering – especially concerning the germ line – the second core element besides cooperation, namely autonomy, is endangered. To have a genome intentionally designed or influenced by other human beings means to lose one's natural

independence from other human's intentions and actions. This requires a radical restriction of reproductive measures in Habermas' view.

I think the argument contains a tension between on the one hand the maintenance of physical fragility to secure the dependence on cooperation and on the other the claim for autonomy. Autonomy justifies the attempt to liberate the human being from physical conditions regarding disabilities, diseases and degeneration processes. This is the path of modern medicine which has been accepted even by religions with a traditionally high estimation of human suffering and the virtues accompanying it like patience, charity and trust in God. Ethics of autonomy like Kant's have held that health and good physical conditions are favorable to the execution of rational moral judgment and action. Even for autonomy in the weaker sense of guiding one's own life according to personal convictions it is at least an open question, how much physical improvement, even intentionally executed by other human beings, might strengthen the autonomy conditions.

It seems to be a question of degrees rather than of principle in which way the change of species properties and limitations improves or destroys the conditions for human morality. I agree, however, that the technical change of such properties, called improvement by its advocates, has significant consequences for morality and ethics. There are, indeed, "value aspects" of the species condition. Moral and legal values like equality, mutual understanding and reliable expectations are connected with our familiar constitution and the range of differences it allows for. The appearance of new biological groups of super-humans could endanger the basis of these values. Moreover, new dimensions of technical control of the reproduction process could undermine the natural basis for personal and cultural individualization processes.

Finally, as to the concept of "species dignity", one should remember that the moral and legal significance of human dignity in the modern legal tradition is focused on the protection of human individuals. This may be endangered by the concept of the dignity of groups or species. To be a human individual as a bearer of rights means more than just the traces of biological species properties as for instance in the fertilized egg. But one is nevertheless required to treat such cells with some respect and caution regarding their potential, once

implanted in a mother's womb, to become a human individual with increasing claims and rights. This is what species dignity requires at this stage.

(3) The third field of debate transcends the technical improvement of species properties. The technical perfection of medicine in nanotechnology, telemedicine or even synthetic biology concerns the general relation between nature and technology. Regarding these techniques one should distinguish between short and long term perspectives. In the near future they are supposed to enhance the efficacy of medical or environmental technologies or help to solve the problems concerning energy and nutrition scarcity. In this perspective they pose problems familiar from those techniques they are supposed to improve or replace. Questions of risk for human health and autonomy, or of the change of human personality may be treated with bioethical criteria well-known for instance from the so called principlism (Beauchamp/Childress).

However, the long term perspectives already in view of the research and development programs and their public or private sponsors are more ambitious. They regard nature as such from the technical perspective of the engineer as a machine to be improved and from the commercial perspective of developing a marketable product. Both allow for radical forms of human enhancement.

From an ethical point of view enhancement and improvement presuppose criteria for what is good and better for a human being. Technical improvement normally aims at performances which are either known from other systems, be they artificial like computers or natural like animals with higher capacities of perception or motion. But many of these goals are controversial in their usefulness and often not reflected in their far-reaching consequences. Certainly the market is not a completely transparent and democratic forum for settling the question about the good and the improvement of human nature. A much more general and broad discussion both on the scientific and the public level is needed. What philosophical ethics can contribute is a perspective and a method of discussing value aspects of human and extra-human nature.

One may call this view the "natural heritage" perspective. This means that nature is not simply regarded as a material for technical visions and consumer wishes. Instead, it constitutes

the basis for a great number of human values and goods achieved in the evolution of life and culture. It is also, of course, the origin of catastrophes and of the cause of hardship and suffering. As with a private heritage, mankind should accept and protect the valuable aspects of nature while trying to change as much as possible of the traits and processes which cause suffering.

II. Three ways of Moral Thinking

In the previous map of actual discussions I have named some of the positions in bioethics and have sometimes hinted at my own conception. But one has to confess that there is little agreement in questions of speciesism, enhancement, and even human dignity. Dignity for instance may be exclusively based on the relation to God, on the status of a rational moral being or on that of an independent partner of a social contract. Equally controversial is the possibility of a conflict of dignity between different human individuals or the dignity of non-human animals. These are not only “Academic” debates since they have important practical consequences for instance regarding the state’s duties to hostages in an airplane used as a terrorist weapon or the replacement of animals by human tissue in drug testing procedures.

Equally controversial questions with little hope for agreement in the foreseeable future are those regarding the treatment of human embryos. Here questions of moral status, human dignity and the permission to weigh the claims of early stages of the human life against the survival and health of later ones are interconnected. In the political arena the debates become even more fervent because emotional language like “vampire medicine” or the comparison of embryo research with death camps is used.

What are the reasons for the impossibility of overcoming these controversies? Do they prove that ethics is not a science but just a struggle of world-views and personal convictions? A first answer would be that in any normative science, not only in philosophical ethics but also in jurisprudence or moral theology different positions and models exist – and even in the empirical sciences there are controversies regarding theoretical models and basic ontological implications. But despite such differences there seems to be progress, at least in the long run, and the chance to settle disputes by experimental falsification or support.

I think that one of the reasons for the deep seated controversies in bioethics is the fact that the most important methods and positions of modern ethics have their roots in different cultural sources or origins of moral thinking. My suggestion is that the main ways of moral thinking in contemporary ethics can be traced to very old sources of moral culture. To begin with, I will characterize three ways of moral thinking which can roughly be compared with deontology, consequentialism and value or virtue ethics. In order to discover their roots we should describe them in a more general way. I will call them the perspective of unconditioned principles (1), of justifiable consequences (2) and of a valuable life (3).

(1) As to the first, it seems to me that many arguments regarding moral status, human dignity or human rights and natural boundaries for technology share the view that there has to be something unconditional in ethics, be it a principle, a law, a boundary or one or more duties. The clearest statement may be Kant's in the "Grundlegung", that there is no foundation of morals and morality without some first principle and its binding force in all situations and under all conditions. But of course Kant's moral law and categorical imperative has its root in the natural law tradition and its theory of the divine reason and will as the last source of all obligations. Although with Kant and Darwin traditional natural theology has become hard to defend, the moral proof of the existence of God as the necessary fundament of the unconditional in ethics is still virulent. But I am not arguing that only apologetic religious arguments are behind the requirement of unconditional principles. Kant assumed that practical reason is enough for the identification of unconditioned moral principles and the obligation to act according to them. Apart from autonomous and pure practical reason, some modern positions use even empirical and functional arguments for unconditioned principles. Without such principles they claim, there is no uncontroversial fundament for social order and no limit against relativism and instrumentalism regarding law and moral claims.

(2) The second way of moral thinking is concerned with "justifiable consequences" of actions as well as rules, norms, and institutions. Under this broadly consequentialist perspective I intend to subsume contractarianism, principlism, discourse ethics etc. In some of these positions even the moral status of beings which are affected by the actions or rules need not be fixed once and for all. They may not be restricted to possible contract partners or subjects capable to claim their own rights. The "moral point of view" may accept new beings whose state can be affected by human actions in a way which needs to be justified. Since these claims

need not be rights in any strict sense this way of moral thinking is not restricted to a rights-based conception of morals. The question of reliability here does not depend on the unquestionable status of principles but on the self-obligation of every moral agent to follow the rules justified by their consequences. Whether these consequences concern rights, interests, subjective or objective values like pleasure and pain or a list of needs etc. is not relevant for my distinction.

(3) The third principal way of moral thinking is mainly concerned with what is valuable in life and behavior. This ranges from the classical Greek deliberation about the good ways of life and the Christian tradition up to the modern literature of ethics counselors for self-realisation or bodily and spiritual happiness. The justification of the choice between different forms of life is neither based on unconditioned principles nor mainly on the consequences for those affected by particular actions or rules. Think for instance of Aristotle's comparison between the life of political power, economical success and scientific insight, or the Christian comparison between the active and the contemplative life or the myth of the Herculean choice between a life of luxury and an ascetic and virtuous life. If there are consequences of those choices to be justified they concern first of all the subject of these ways of life themselves, not those affected by their deeds or maxims. The criteria of justification may lie on different levels. The first level is the attractiveness of these forms of life themselves. As in the choice between jobs or group affiliations, one has to imagine whether such a life would be worth living and not to be regretted afterwards. But the attractiveness of a morally valuable life rests more on the inner satisfaction of doing things right and according to one's most basic convictions and self-expectations. On the second level more abstract criteria could be named like autarky and fulfillment as in Aristotle's argument for a virtuous life as the most important constituent of eudaimonia.

I have hinted that virtue ethics is one version of such a way of thinking. But it is normally only part of it since for many positions in that tradition there are other components of a good life as well. Among them are goals to be achieved and values to be worth living for. Think of truly sincere and courageous members of movements promoting good causes. The value and attractiveness of their life lies in the goals to be achieved, the consequences for those to be supported or liberated, but also the possibility to express and live according to one's convictions and to share them in the group.

In distinguishing these ways of moral thinking, moral perspectives or in a broad sense moral methods I do not mean to suggest that they are to be neatly separated. It has often been argued that there are consequentialist components of deontological thinking and vice versa. That virtue ethics cannot leave aside consequences as well as rights and duties is plausible as well. The same could be argued for the ways of moral thinking which I have characterized in this section. But the core element of these ways of thinking is different and hardly to be “synthesized” because they seem to stem from different sources of the moral point of view in general

III. Cultural sources for the three perspectives

For a long time, especially in the late 19th century moral philosophers tried to trace the cultural historical origins of morality or particular moral doctrines. Think of Nietzsche’s “Genealogy of morals” or Bergson’s “Two sources of religion and morality”. Since the mid-20th century these attempts seem to have been almost given up and left to ethnology, developmental psychology (for instance Piaget), and, of course, evolutionary biology. Unfortunately they often started their “archeology” of moral behavior and doctrines from a simplified picture of morality – most notably so in evolutionary biology’s notion of “altruism”. The following is only a rough sketch of three sources of moral thinking which could be an explanation for the deep-seated differences between the three perspectives distinguished in the second part of my paper.

(1) Firstly, I assume that the source of the quest for unconditional principles, rights and duties are long standing attitudes of respect for integrity, be it of persons, bodies, animals, spirits, objects or places – not only holy places but also places of retreat, privacy and intimate relations. To set limits not to be violated without any chance or need for justification and bargaining, is a way of protecting something or somebody, of demanding respect and veneration. This has been done with limits of spaces and surfaces – for instance of bodies not to be touched – or behavioral and spiritual limits – rituals not to be changed or thoughts not to be thought or uttered. The most well-known limits of this sort are taboos, but they are certainly not the only ones. Think for instance of the absolute ban on competing with gods in

Greek mythology – and the cruel punishment of Marsyas or Arachne for transgressing this line.

It seems that this origin of the morality of the unconditional is a typically primitive one. It appears to be definitely overcome in the modern times of rational discourse. Whether any limit of questioning, reasoning and the claim for justification can be set in a democratic, scientific and media society is indeed doubtful. The examples of recent discussions about incest and cannibalism may prove this. The untouchable limits of the “natural” in the ethics of sexuality or in social hierarchy have widely been given up and transformed into justifiable functions dependent on private consent or common interests.

But in my view the moral argument for the necessity of something unconditional and the emotional attitude of respect not in need of justification shows that some elements of this tradition survive. On a meta-level it is certainly to be discussed which of these elements can be justified and where the limits are to be drawn. As my arguments in the first part have shown, I do not think that many of the natural and species qualities are simply untouchable. In most cases it is rather a question of the degree and direction of changes. But human dignity as the claim not to be humiliated and forced in one’s convictions is indeed untouchable. And the justification of these limits stops with the experience that this is what belongs to human beings even if some of them did not even suffer from transgressions. I am skeptical whether any justification given by theories of rationality, self-reflection, and transcendental arguments will replace this experience. This does not mean that they are natural feelings and cannot be the result of learning and education which is certainly required for respecting the freedom of convictions and conscience. The sensibility for values and claims and their justification can be historically developed and at the same time have intuitive plausibility and motivate emotional, practical and rational respect.

(2) As to the second way of moral thinking, the justification of consequences for those affected by someone’s behavior, the “genealogic” source seems to be human cooperation and exchange in a broad sense. It includes an exchange of feelings and an understanding of common intentions. Without it there would not be any form of partnership and not even the cultural learning that according to primatologists like Michael Tomasello is so characteristic for humans in contrast to other hominids. A precondition is the faculty for empathy and the

interest in conflict settling which on the emotional level can already be found in other hominids.

However, before we reach the moral point of view as a cultural phenomenon, the demand of recognition of other being's feelings, intentions and interests must become a norm to be followed intentionally and with anticipation of consequences. Whether the origins of public norms are commands of authorities or informal mutual expectations and agreements is not decisive for my subject. It may well be possible that such commands or such contractual obligations may be protected by taboo-like limits and sanctions. Think of the rituals of gift exchanges between populations as described and conceptualized by Marcel Mauss. But here the strictness and strangeness of rituals concerns their execution, not their justification. For a common life beyond sheer subordination and bondage, it is mutually expected that claims and consequences of behavior can be justified and accepted.

It is easy to see and has long been shown by conventionalists such as Hume that agreements for cooperation can in the beginning simply rest on harmonization of behavior. It can be transformed into contracts as soon as more reliability and regularity is needed. The more autonomous the contract-partners become, the more the justification of claims and of common goals depends on the interests of the partners – “volenti non fit injuria”, as the Roman law claims. However, there are conditions for fair contracts both regarding the freedom to participate and the interests of those affected indirectly. The debate about liberal eugenics and voluntary enhancement must be aware of this as well as the discussion about private contract medicine. Here my point is only that consequentialism in the broad sense used in the second part of my paper stems from another cultural source than the morality of unconditional principles and commands.

(3) As to the origin of the third way the cultural sources are pretty clear from my above exposition. Mythology and religion, oral tradition and literature are full of examples of the search of the right and satisfying way of life for particular human beings and later on for human beings in general. To praise people for their behavior, emotions, performances etc. and to advise someone to imitate or to follow them is a source of moral thinking independent of the two others. This praise is neither only an expression of emotions nor a private recommendation as some positions in 20th century metaethics (for instance Stevenson)

mistook it. The praise for virtues and the weighing of forms of life has been objectified by the doctrines of large communities and long standing traditions. Systematic philosophies and religious and political doctrines are behind the praise of virtues, values, goals and other forms of guiding one's life.

Of course not every suggestion of dreams to pursue attractive life-styles, for instance in marketing and entertainment, belongs to morality. But how could we discuss the value of health or beneficence, professional ethics or "value-orientations" without the perspective of noble or virtuous behavior, the merits of ways of life and of goals worth of efforts and devotion? If we reduce them all to interests of individuals to be respected, we cannot scrutinize why and how people developed these interests. Modern ethical debates include the future natural and technical conditions for ways of life and even the external nature we are going to live with. Personal interests as well as moral convictions depend on individual but also on common self-understanding. And these are connected with ways of explaining the world. To some degree, this is true for all three sources of moral thinking. But the most direct linking concerns the quest for the right and valuable way of life.

Whether I am right in identifying just these three cultural sources of moral thinking or the lines have to be drawn elsewhere is not decisive. But if we are to explain the presently unbridgeable controversies in ethical debates, and avoid a narrow and one-sided understanding of morality and moral thinking, we should bear these or similar sources of our moral culture in mind.

That they have a long tradition, however, does not mean that they have to be conserved in their traditional way. It may be true that the "justifying consequences" perspective is closer to the modern liberal-democratic culture than the unconditional principle and the valuable life perspective. But in my view most adequate for modern ethics is a concept of transformation and complementation regarding them. I would like to give a few hints in that direction in the last part of my paper.

IV. Transformation and complementation

In the age of pluralistic societies and permanent change in forms of lives, norms and values nothing unconditional seems to exist. Criteria for justifying or rejecting such changes seem to presuppose only deliberations regarding consequences for the welfare and interests of individuals and groups. However, it is a necessity that different cultures and world-views form at least an overlapping consensus on a set of basic rights and duties, norms and institutions. Among them are the integrity and dignity of the human person, a growing list of human rights, rule of law, division of powers etc. But there are also unconditional moral commands and verdicts against murder, rape, sadism, racism and so on. It is important that in contrast to the tradition of taboos, natural facts or potentials are insufficient as reasons for their justification. Nor is such a justification in need of concept of reason completely independent from cultural development and experiences, as in the Kantian tradition. It can be justified that the decisive moral concepts of human personality and human rights have been “discovered” in a long history of experience with human flourishing and suffering. In this history and in its philosophical reflections, arguments from acceptable and unacceptable consequences are indeed necessary. But the normative results of these experiences are no longer open to an adding up of individual preferences or the bargaining of interests. They are in a certain sense “irreversible” because no valid argument and no free consent to alternative norms seem possible in any imaginable future still to be called “human”. In this sense one can indeed speak of “sanctity” of the human person, its integrity and its freedom, which has to be respected by human behavior and social norms. However, it must not be understood in a purely individualistic sense. The well-being, freedom and fulfillment of human persons presuppose their social existence including many activities and dependencies in civil, political, religious, artistic or other communities.

In the same sense of transformation and complementation it seems to me that the third perspective can still play a role in modern ethics. In many modern positions values are regarded as private wishes “projected” onto a completely value-free reality. But public institutions like the health system and the mutually expected behavior are based on shared values. The importance of common goals and ways of life cannot be judged without conceptions and hierarchies of values and virtues. Moreover, in view of the problems of bioethics mentioned in the first part we are in need of a framework of valuable properties for

the human body and species. Rational public decisions on the biotechnical options regarding life and nature in general even requires a conception of something like a well-ordered cosmos including diversity, flourishing and justice. In such a conception the three ways of moral thinking have to be transformed and complement each other in the way I have just outlined. That at least is my vision of overcoming deadlocks in the recent controversies in bioethics.

But even if we remain without any broad consensus regarding the problems discussed here the open interdisciplinary discussion is of great importance. Disagreements and controversies sharpen the public attention for ethical problems and the mistrust in authoritarian and paternalistic solutions – either by law or by alleged scientific expert-consensus. Modern medicine and other modern technologies shape the everyday life of individuals and societies including their self-understanding. However, every self-understanding is inevitably normative and evaluative. And these norms cannot be derived from sciences which claim to be value-free. Therefore societies belonging to the European culture of autonomy, reflection and justification need the interaction between natural and normative sciences on every level of research, academic teaching and public debate. And this requires cooperation, mutual exchange and possibly mutual criticism of institutions and researchers from different countries. This may lend our meeting and our future cooperation considerable weight for the future of bioethics and ethically justifiable behavior in our countries.