

Introduction

Why the “Crazy Ape”?

The Second International Conference on Bioethics in the New Age of Science (BNAS) was held at the University of Szeged (Hungary) on the 10th and 11th of May 2018. The University of Szeged is the alma mater of the Nobel Prize winner and scientist Albert Szent-Györgyi, well known for his pure scientific work and his discovery of Vitamin C, but also for being a humanist thinker. Already a recognised scientist in 1957, he wrote an article in *Science* entitled “Science, Ethics and Politics” [1] discussing how far should science be allowed to go in order to support politics, while commenting on the line beyond which scientists should stand up for their own ethical beliefs. As he was examining the correlation between science, morality, and politics, he should be considered one of the first Hungarian unofficial bioethicists. His recognition of the importance of ethics in education supports this argument: “we need an educational system based on the real understanding of moral, aesthetics, and spiritual values” [2] (p. 28).

In the following decades, he wrote and debated on the responsibility of science within the cold war, and whether science could or should provide any solutions for the war. One of his most famous books is entitled *The Crazy Ape*, which also inspired the title of this volume. In this short book, he especially wanted to shape the moral perspective of the world’s youth. During the Vietnam War, under the shadow of the Cold War, and the threat of a possible nuclear crisis, he discussed the fundamental question of the technological progress of mankind. Are we more than technologized apes, who now have the potential to destroy the environment? “Will mankind be able to survive the machinations of present-day men who often appear to act more like crazy apes than sane human beings?” [2] (p. 4). Although this subject may seem old fashioned (and his answers on this sometimes seem a bit idealistic today), the questions raised by him still remain fundamental at the gate of the post-human world.

Contributions to the book

This book is mostly composed of selected papers from the Second International Conference in the New Age of Science (BNAS), with some contributions from additional scholars. It is divided four main parts: (1) Ethical Challenges in Enhancement Technologies; (2) Bioethics, Anthropology, Psychology, and Philosophy; (3) Globalization and Environmental Ethics; and (4) Ethical and Legal Challenges in Medicine and Research.

The book opens with a colourful article by Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (“Dignity of Apes, Humans and AI”), which also echoes the title of the book: the dignity of (the crazy) apes. Half a century ago, Albert Szent-Györgyi was focusing on the potential problem of technology in the hand of the evolutionary- (but not morally-) selected creature; by now, society is facing human-created technology (transhumans, AI) which will possibly overcome the age of apes.

In the second contribution in the volume, Vivien Szútor continues the investigation into human dignity in relation to the rapidly-evolving genetic engineering, mainly focusing on legal aspects. The special emergent point of this essay is the discussion on therapeutic cloning.

The second part of the volume gathers papers which investigate a series of bioethical questions from a broader anthropological and psychological perspective.

Attila Dobos, in his paper “Please geben vôte consentimiento! - Informed Decision-Making in Intercultural Context” stresses the intercultural and linguistic context of moral decision-making processes. Furthermore, the author also discusses this thought provoking-issue in the context of medical informed consent.

Daniela Reisz and Alexandra Anghel introduce a challenging discussion, arguing that information (especially information provided by the most sophisticated technologies such as MRI) can create an unexpected side effect: fear. The authors thus mainly debate on autonomy and the beneficence principles in the modern medical settings. The paper includes many case reports which portray the shortcomings of excessive neuroimaging. Based on Kantian philosophy, the authors support the position that knowledge is beneficial only if one has the possibility to cope with it.

Florin Lobonț, in his paper “Children’s Bioethics, Theory of Attachment and P4C,” continues the discussion on a similarly hot

topic: the autonomy of children and how it could be incorporated in legal and ethical frameworks. The most engaging point of his argumentation is that it tries to extend the attachment theory to the socio-cultural level.

Lobonç's contribution is followed by a stimulating political perspective in which Mihai Murariu highlights the possibility of a society needing simplifying solutions when it becomes complex. The author reasons that the amplification of insecurity within globalised societies opens the path towards new totalitarian movements.

Further on, the ever perplexing debate of the psy-complex (psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatry) is presented by Attila Bánfalvi. In his paper "Psy-complex: Out of the Techno-Scientific Paradigm?", the author investigates the basis of this debate, namely the ontologically different types of body and psyche perspectives.

The last contribution to this part belongs to Sorin Grigore Vulcănescu who reviews intercultural differences and solutions regarding end-of-life decisions in a board summary of the contemporary legal and ethical challenges of euthanasia. The study incorporates the most recent legislative changes worldwide, highlighting that this is rapidly-changing field and that there is a global tendency in the process of the legalisation of euthanasia.

The third part of the volume is comprised of studies which investigate ethical issues regarding globalisation and the environment.

Ferenc Hérány investigates environmental ethics in relation to Christian anthropocentrism ("A Critique of the Environmental Ethical Critique of the Christian Anthropocentrism"), while Dejan Donev steps away from anthropocentric ethics and discusses ecocentrism, a philosophical approach which considers all elements of the biotic community as integral parts of the system.

Matthew J. Crippen and John Salevurakis then investigate the ethical, political, and economical perspectives of animal hunting in Southern Africa. Following a utilitarian perspective, they put aside the usual prejudices, and expose an uncommon perspective on hunting, arguing that it can be advantageous for both preserving wildlife and for the local population.

This part is closed by Ivica Kelam who discusses the historical development and complex ethical debate on genetically-modified food,

emphasizing the controversial interests and forces behind the development of complex regulations on genetically-modified food.

The final part of the volume is dedicated to healthcare. Anamika Krishnan investigates the applicability of the UDBHR's global bioethical guideline in India, a country distorted by bioethical issues. The paper presents the actual discrepancy between the legal system and UDBHR in India.

Further on, Kartina Aisha Choong and Mahmood Chandia discuss the bioethical issues surrounding patients in a permanent vegetative state especially those with different religious heritages. The authors highlight vital theological questions on consciousness and the meaning of life, while also debating on practical matters related to the issue, such as secular law and financial outcomes.

Narine Harutyunyan, in her study on reproductive autonomy and genetic technologies, covers a highly debatable topic which originates in advanced medical technologies. Should preimplantation sex-selection for obviously non-medical reasons be allowed? The current demographical crisis in China should warn us that finding the balance between the most basic bioethical principles (autonomy and non-maleficence) has never been as difficult as in today's technologized era of reproductive medicine.

Gergely Tari, Csaba Hamvai and András Perbíró make a short overview of the medicalization of childbirth, while presenting their own field investigation in Hungary. The paper includes the most relevant findings of this research focusing on the non-medical causes of negative childbirth experiences, claiming respect for reproductive autonomy.

The research is followed by the study authored by Csaba Hamvai, Gergely Tari and Melinda Csenki which deals with the issue of prophylactic mastectomy as demanded by the patient. The authors outline the most important legal and bioethical assumptions associated with prophylactic mastectomy on demand, illustrating them through a case study of a clinical case. They argue for the necessity of shared decision-making between doctor and patient and, based on this, they recommend several guidelines

Engaging in the field of medical education, Coralia Cotoraci, Alciana Sasu, Mircea Onel, and Cristina Ghib-Para investigate truth disclosure in medical settings. They try to summarise medical students'

understandings of truth disclosure while presenting the differences between students' perceptions based on their various cultural backgrounds.

This study is followed by a lucid overview of the debate on advertisements in pharmaceutical marketing. Miroslav Radenkovic et al. argue that doctors should always consider evidence-based medical facts and medical scientific knowledge in order to avoid prescribing specific drugs uncritically.

The volume ends with a coherent study by Adél Tóth, who discusses whether researchers in the biomedical field should disclose research results to participants of studies on human subjects. The author provides a balanced overview of the pros and cons of the different approaches, and also summarises the common points of the different approaches.

Final remarks

The Bioethics of the "Crazy Ape" collects a wide range of bioethical topics. Bioethical questions are eternal by nature, although our technologized times transform old issues in forms never before experienced. Just like the famous scientist Albert Szent-Györgyi believed in his time, we also believe that all the contributing authors recognised their moral responsibility in adding new approaches to the continuum of each debate. Although this responsibility has become increasingly complex, we must avoid to become barriers of the scientific development. Bioethics as an applied field of philosophy should always try to establish a framework for a sustainable world: in daily clinical practice, in cases of human experiments, and (not the least) in the natural environment.

[1] Albert Szent-Györgyi, "Science, Ethics and Politics" *Science*, New Series, vol. 125, no. 3241, pp. 225-226, 1957.

[2] Albert Szent-Györgyi, *The Crazy Ape*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1970.

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