

Life and Ethics.
Bioethical and biopolitical debates from the perspectives of Orthodox Theology

Summary

Through its ubiquity and value, life is a reality so complex and also so intimate that it defies any attempt to objectify or simplify it. However, as the ultimate ground of existence of the living beings, it also represents the final goal of all our efforts for knowledge. Therefore, this is probably the most generous but also the most demanding research topic for the dialogue between the theological and the scientific knowledge. From the outset, the major difference between these two types of knowledge is given by their position towards the origin and the meaning of life: for the theological knowledge, these are found in the Being which is ontologically transcendent, is the source of the entire existence and it not only shares life (John 10:10), but is life itself (John 14:6) the only Life, which is absolute and limitless; for the scientific knowledge life is a quality of the matter, autopoietically emergent through self-organization, i.e. the property of a special subset of the set of entities that make up the universe or nature, while its meaning, if any, remains virtually unknown. If theology recognizes both transcendent life and consequently the imminent, natural life, contemporary science recognizes only natural life in the only light that it holds: the light of the human reason. From this epistemological difference arise more heuristic, value, moral or ethical differences. The present thesis is about the confrontation between the moral attitudes of theology towards life and those of science, understood not as a method of knowledge, but rather as an ideology and attitudes based on it.

This is the synthesis of the research conducted over a decade, as continuity and development of the work done to write my Ph.D. thesis (presented in 2004). Beginning under the auspices of the moral crisis of the post-communist period in our country, especially the serious phenomenon of abortion, it focused at first on the anthropological and moral issues of procreation. Then, after attending one of the local joint committee on bioethics of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the research included other issues of bioethics of immediate theological and pastoral importance, such as organ transplantation and definition of death on neurological criteria. Since 2010, the opportunity offered by a postdoctoral scholarship on health and ethics policies, the personal concern for the theology-science relationship in health and bioethics has expanded on one of the most common self-destructive behaviors, namely the substance consumption and, in general, the phenomenon of addiction and hence, on the wider relationship between Church and state, respectively between religion and politics.

In this extension of the investigation I have not abandoned the initial issues, but I tried to deepen the various aspects related to them. The overall unity of the entire process is given by the analysis of the epistemological, axiological and moral universe of the concept of life- which is in the centre of the contemporary bioethical and biopolitical debates- from the Orthodox theology perspective.

In accordance with the criteria for writing the habilitation thesis, the present paper is divided as follows. The first part is devoted to presenting the main research conducted in the post-doctoral period which is not structured chronologically but by the tripartite scheme of existence that we owe to Saint Maximus the Confessor (*Ambigua*, 10). The triad “life - good/bad life- eternal good/bad life” provides a suitable structure to achieve taxonomy of life from a theological perspective, as it includes ontological, anthropological and moral aspects. The Maximian triad with the three classic areas of bioethics (the beginning of life, the course

of life and the end of life) generates a matrix with nine areas in which I arranged in order the research to date.

The justification for the choice of the triad and for generating the corresponding matrix in the context of the methodological problem of the relationship between the various disciplines of the Orthodox theology dealing with the research on life is followed by the detailed presentation of the studies which already occupy the areas dealt with in the taxonomic matrix. The studies realized cover a range of topics: “the beginning of life” (prenatal anthropology, “reproductive health”, demography), the course of life (organ transplantation, definition of addiction and the ethics of the services for recovery, ethnicity, the political philosophy of bioethics and the Church-State relationship) and the “end of life” (the neurologic definition of death). Of these, I particularly present 10 publications which are most relevant for my professional activity, according to the criteria for drawing up the habilitation documents. These are, in chronological order:

1. „*Herman Tristram Engelhardt și cheia biografică a bioeticii*” (Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 2005);
2. „Transplantul de organe și argumentul creștin-ortodox al iubirii” (*Revista Română de Bioetică*, 4/2009);
3. „Transplantul, o înrudire?” (Ed. Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2009);
4. „The Orthodox Church-Run Program for the Treatment of Addictions in Romania”, în *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 1/2013);
5. „An elusive partnership. The Orthodox Church and the substance abuse health care system in Romania” (*Social Research Reports*, 23, 2013);
6. „Centrarea pe persoană în programele pentru recuperarea din adicție ale Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (*Revista Română de Bioetică*, 1/2013);
7. Pastorație, filantropie, servicii sociale? Biserica și provocarea adicțiilor” (*Revista Teologică*, 1/2013);
8. The role of case management in the assistance for substance use disorders in Romania” în *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, 3/2012);
9. „Addictions as passions. Ancient wisdom for modern issues” (Современная Зарубежная Психология/Journal of Modern Foreign Psychology 1/2014);
10. *Eseuri de bioetică* (Ed. Universității “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2009; Ediția a 2-a, revăzută și adăugită, Ed. ASTRA Museum, Sibiu, 2013).

The areas of the taxonomic matrix which are not covered yet form the contents of the next part of the thesis, namely the one dedicated to the personal development plans, i.e. the projects for the future. In this section I present some ongoing research and the possible directions to continue and develop them.