



**Hanna Hubenko**



**Hans-Martin Sass**

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## **Interview with professor of philosophy Hans-Martin Sass November 15-18, 2020**

*Hans-Martin Sass, Honorary Professor of Philosophy (Ruhr University, Bochum, Germany). Founder and board member of the Centre for Medical Ethics (CME), Bochum, Germany. Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University, Washington, DC. Honorary Professor of the Bioethics Research Centre, Beijing. He has written more than 60 books and pamphlets, more than 250 articles in professional journals. Editor of the Ethik in der Praxis/ Practical ethics, Muenster: Lit. Founder and co-editor of the brochures "Medizinethische Materialien", Bochum: ZME. He has lectured in Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, France, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and Taiwan. The interview devoted to exposition of the concept of bioethics in America and Germany, as well as the professor's attitude to the idea of the integrative concept of bioethics. The concept of integrative bioethics has been developed in different countries, a component of this concept is the idea of the need for discussion on bioethics in various sectors of society (not only medical). Equally important in this concept are the definitions of bioethics and the bioethical imperative proposed by Fritz Jahr in 1926. The scientist's article, which was discovered in 1997, contains a new format of bioethical ideas, as well as a valuable opportunity to enhance understanding the term of bioethics as an integrative science. Interview has been conducted by Hanna Hubenko as a part of the joint international course «Integrative*

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*Bioethics». At the meeting it was discussed the experience of cooperation and plans for the future. Cooperation and feedback between scientists remains an unconditional prerogative, also in a pandemic situation (to be continued).*

**Key words:** *bio-ethics, integrative bioethics, culture, transdisciplinary interaction.*

**HH: You have been called the founder of Integrated Bioethics. Can you tell me about the cooperation with other research groups; how had this all been?**

**HMS:** I came to Bio-ethics relative late in my professional life. After high school graduation I studied literature, philosophy, and geography in order to become a teacher. One of my early teaching projects was related to fables. I used fables from Aesop and others, also made up my own animal stories to elicit responses from pupils in elementary school and kindergarten in the age group of 4 to 7 years. It was fascinating to recognize the philosophical and narrative capacity of these young kids. I later used a similar method when teaching medical ethics at the Bochum university: At the beginning of each class I told a 'story', which was somewhat related to the topic of the day. But I never did interpret the story or made reference to it. So, I let everyone have her or his own opinions; but I was aware that the students discussed among themselves.

**HH: Since when did you get involved with integrative bioethics?**

**HMS:** In my philosophy classes at Bochum University, I always tried to connect real issues to epistemological and logical ones in particular to actual or previous political ones. Being in close contact with medical professors and mine and mine students' interest in practical anatomy studies; I developed a small series of lectures for students of all faculties. When I was called to teach at Georgetown University in Washington DC, my assignment as a European scholar was to teach Hegel and Marx, and here came into contact with other professors such as Bob Veatch and Edmund Pellegrino who were instrumental to develop medical ethics, which what was only later called bioethics. I worked on Advance Directives and issues of brain-death, and the right to die. I also worked and published in China on medical ethics.

Just a village and a city are more than houses and acres, streets and shops, so is bios integrated in more than one ways. And the coherence of the village depends on a multitude of integrated factors, too many to list them all. But there are risks to integrative life, fun, happiness, and stability, – i.e. bioethics and biopolitics. In a lecture at the European Society for Arts and Sciences last year I also list a number of adverse modern risks which threaten the integration and coherence of individual bodies within collective or political bodies [Sass, H.-M. 2020]. I just mention five modern risks, which were not there 500

or even 50 years ago: 1. The world is very integrated and pandemics travel around the globe;

2. Electricity is essential for modern life, nothings goes without it, heating, lighting, telephone, television; we don't need an atomic bomb to destroy our integrated political bodies, just sabotage of the electric grid or individual businesses such as hospitals, governments etc;

3. Big national and international distribution centers such as supermarkets are more vulnerable than the product of a farmer next door or the village merchant;

4. The internet is wider than the bios of a village, just religions in the past, the fascinating contents and interactions are in competition with the village neighborhood, I might forget my geographical home and live just in my digital home;

5. I might mix up integrated biotopes in geography and cyberspace.

**HH: How can we understand the term 'bioethics? How do you understand it?**

**HMS:** The term Bioethics was first used by Fritz Jahr, a protestant teacher in Halle an der Saale who in 1926 in an article in 'Die Mittelschule' proposed the «Bio-ethical Imperative: Respect every Living Being in general as an end in itself and treat it, if possible, as such». In 1927 he published a similar article in the very widely read «Kosmos» journal. This term bioethics was new and encompassed philosophy, ethics, and public policy of health care matters. However, we still used the term medical ethics, so I did in my publications in the USA, China and Japan. But, after reading by accident Jahr's articles about Bio-ethics, I mentioned it in a conference in Zürich, and published a small German brochure «Fritz Jahr's Bioethischer Imperativ» (Bochum 2007) and an English article «Fritz Jahr's Concept of Bioethics» (Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal 17, 2007). Since then I and most authors in medical ethics use the term bioethics. The term bioethics had been used 1970, without knowledge of Jahr's writings by Van Rensselaer Potter, an oncology researcher in Madison Wisconsin 'to emphasize the two most important ingredients in achieving the new wisdom that it so desperately needed: biological knowledge, human values.

**HH: Is the concept and vision of bioethics the same in all cultures?**

**HMS:** The vision of respect for all living being is much older than the terminology. In the Upanishads, 2500 years ago, the slogan 'tat tvam asi – this is also you', i.e. the Godly cosmos, the plant, the animal, the fellow and maybe suffering human, these are all connected. Respect and even sacrifice are expected from each and every one of us. Just as Buddha in one of his former lives recognized a hungry tigress with her hungry babies and offered himself for her food. We find in all religions the respect for life and for other people. The Old Testament summarizes the hundreds of religious rules in one major rule

'love God and your fellow human as yourself', Jesus and St Paul had precisely the same teaching despite many differences in religious schools and churches, then and now.

**HH: You are the founder and the member of the Center for Medical Ethics in Bochum, where I enjoyed to be studying in 2015 with your support. How is the Center now?**

**HMS:** The Center in Bochum was closed 3 years ago. Its tradition continuous in the 'Center for Applied Ethics, Zentrum fuer angewandte Ethik' in Erfurt, Germany, under leadership of Dr Arnd May, who had been at Bochum before. The Center for Applied Ethics, according to their website, consults primarily in person-to-person communication for Advance Directives and teaches a variety of experts supporting patients and their families.

**HH: How do judge the expansion of bioethics beyond the field of medical ethics? And what about areas of urban bioethics, feminist bioethics, global bioethics? Why are we witnessing these developments?**

**HMS:** Cities and houses are not just stones and houses, the live as humans live, enjoy, suffer and compete. It is a natural development when sciences, practices, and cultures grow as the demands and practices require. I am very much in favor of these developments.

**HH: Are there critical voices towards Bioethics? Who is a bioethicist? Who should be entitled to teach bioethics?**

**HMS:** There might be some schools of bioethics which are inflexible in methods and tactics and these should be criticized from a practical point of view. Any woman or man can be a 'bioethics', it does not depend on a regulated curriculum of studies. Practice and practical wisdom are more important. As a practical and goal-oriented craft everyone can be teacher of bioethics and in bioethics.

**HH: During the Covid Pandemic you have invited scientists all over the world to discuss the actual situation? What are they discussing?**

**HMS:** With my colleague Martin Woesler in Bochum and Hunan Normal University in China, I have collected 18 articles in German 'Medizin und Ethik in Zeiten von Corona' and 38 articles in English 'Medicine and Ethics in Times of Corona' from authors all over the world. You, Hanna Hubenko, contributed to both volumes. Topics include triage, clinical committees and public health strategies, cultural differences in approaching health care issues and pandemics, personal responsibility and authors come from all continents. These two books are just published by Lit Publishers in Muenster, Germany, and in Zürich, Switzerland. The detailed discussion of these books would require another book! Both books are delivered to the authors right now and the discussion will start soon in the media and also in many related academic fields. Dear Hanna Hubenko, thank you for being an author in both books and thank you also for this interview!

**References:**

Sass, H.-M. (2020). *Health and Happiness of Political Bodies. Biocultures, Businesses, Biopolitics*. Zuerich: LIT Verlag

**Ганна Губенко. Інтерв'ю з професором філософії Гансом-Мартіном Зассом. 15-18 листопада 2020 року**

Ганс-Мартін Засс, Почесний професор філософії (Рурський Університет, Бохум, Німеччина). Засновник і член правління Центру медичної етики, Бохум, Німеччина. Почесний старший науковий співробітник Інституту Кеннеді Джорджтаунський Університет, Вашингтон, округ Колумбія. Почесний професор науково-дослідного центру біоетики, Пекін. Він написав більше 60 книг і брошур, більше 250 статей у фахових журналах. Редактор серії *Ethik in der Praxis / Practical ethics*, Muenster: Lit, засновник та співредактор брошур «*Medizinethische Materialien*», Бохум: ZME. Читав лекції в Аргентині, Австрії, Бельгії, Болгарії, Бразилії, Канаді, Китаї, Хорватії, Чехії, Індії, Ірані, Ізраїлі, Італії, Японії, Франції, Нідерландах, Філіппінах, Польщі, Португалії, Росії, Іспанії, Швейцарії, Тайвані. Інтерв'ю присвячене висвітленню поняття біоетики в Америці та Німеччині, також ставленню професора до ідеї інтегративної концепції біоетики. Концепція інтегративної біоетики отримала розвиток у різних країнах, складовою даної концепції є ідея про необхідність дискусії з питань біоетики в різних сферах суспільства (не тільки медичній). Не менш важливими у цій концепції є поняття біоетики та біоетичного імперативу, запропоновані Фрітцем Яром (1926). Оприлюднена в 1997 році стаття вченого містила новий формат біоетичних ідей, а також можливість розуміння біоетики як інтегративної науки. Інтерв'ю провела Ганна Губенко в рамках спільного міжнародного курсу «Інтегративна біоетика». На цьогорічній зустрічі, було обговорено досвід взаємодії та плани на майбутнє. Безумовною прерогативою, у ситуації з пандемією, залишається співпраця та зворотній зв'язок між вченими (далі буде).

**Ключові слова:** біоетика, інтегративна біоетика, культура, трансдисциплінарна взаємодія.

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