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### **Postscript**

### **Register of Names**

## POSTSCRIPT

Fritz Jahr (1895-1953) rightly has been called the Father of Bioethics, as we know it. He coined and defined the term Bio-Ethik in 1926 in an article in “Das Mittelschulwesen”, impressed by comparative studies in physiology and psychology in humans, animals and plants by Wilhelm Wundt as well as by philosophical reflections about a potential soul-life of plants by Fr. Th. Fechner and others in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He transforms and expands Kant’s Categorical Imperative into a Bioethical Imperative: “Respect every Living Being on principle as an end in itself and treat it, if possible, as such”. In 1785 Kant only requested respect for “humanity, in your own person as well as in any person, on principle as an end in itself, never only as a means to an end”. “Sanctity of the Moral Law” was the basis for Kant’s Categorical Imperative; for Jahr’s Bioethical Imperative it is “Sanctity of Life”, i.e. compassion with all forms of life and living-together. While Kant’s model was formal and rigorous, Jahr recognizes the interplay between self-care and care for others and replaces the virtue of respect for the law with the virtue of compassion towards all “bios”, i.e. life and all forms of life. Of course, Jahr did not invent the ethics of bios; he refers to European and Asian traditions and gives his 1926 article “The Sciences and the Teaching of Ethics”, describing the function of natural sciences for character formation and the teaching of bioethics, the subtitle “Old Knowledge in New Clothes”.

Jahr’s life was uneventful, marked by poor health and the absence of professional and public recognition during the turbulent times of the Weimar Republic, Fascist Nazi Germany and the Stalinist rule in Eastern Germany. Paul Fritz Max Jahr, child of Gustav Maximilian Jahr, an insurance agent, and

his wife Auguste Maria Jahr, nee Langrock, was born January 18, 1895, in Halle (Saale). From 1905 to 1914 he attended the Secondary School of the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle. In 1913, the Jahr family moved to an apartment in Albert-Schmidt-Str. 8 in Halle, where Fritz would live for the rest of his life. From 1914 to 1921 Jahr studied at the Halle University in Economics, Music, History and Protestant Theology. In November 1920 he passed his teaching exams in Religion and History and in March 1921 he was ordained a Protestant Pastor. He taught at different schools in Halle from 1917 to 1925 and served as Vicar and Assistant Pastor from 1925 to 1932; in 1932 he became Pastor in Kanena near Halle. But already in early 1933 he had to retire due to poor health. The following years, during and after World War II, became quite difficult for him because of poor health and financial constraints. He had married Berta Elise Neuholz in 1932, who died already in 1947 after a long illness wheelchair bound. Fritz Jahr died in October 1, 1953 at the age of 59. In his last years, he resumed private cello lessons to augment his meager pension.

Fritz Jahr did not write voluminous monographs like other original thinkers such as Kant. His publications are short as a good sermon should be, right to the point, ready for practical application and further development by others. Surprising is the breadth and width of his topics ranging from criticism of Esperanto as a formal and static language to that of the hierarchies which he found in churches and elsewhere, from animal ethics and plant ethics to environmental protection and to the recognition that social interactions and communities are not much different from natural biotopes, when individual life depends on give-and-take interaction with others and on good interacting and integrating complexes in struggling for life together. In a translational study to the 5<sup>th</sup>

Commandment, 1934, he surprises the reader with three steps for the implementation of the 2500 year old rule today: (a) a Golden Rule, (b) good care for one's own health and the health of the family and public health, (c) the Bioethical Imperative. It is not surprising that Pastor Jahr includes in his concept of integrative life also the invisible worlds discussed in religious traditions, – a vision which today can find support in quantum physics and multi-world models.

While Jahr's vision was without any remarkable success in his times, the term Bioethics was re-invented nearly 50 years later by Van Rensselaer Potter as the "Science of Survival" (1971). But Jahr had gone further than Potter by including human environments and human bio-topes, such as communities and teams in factories and offices, in his concern for successful and harmonious decision making. There are always informed and educated choices and responsible decisions to be made between self-care and care for others, as he outlines 1929 on the interaction between egoism and altruism.

During the last 40 years the term bioethics unfortunately was quite often used synonymously with the term medical ethics. Most contemporary medical ethics, focusing on respect for patient autonomy and social justice, based on the US Belmont Report (1979) with its emphasis on the three principles of "respect for persons, beneficence, justice", as well as the teachings of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics did not differentiate between "bioethics" and "medical ethics". It was Eve-Marie Engels, who in an article "Bioethik" in Metzler's Lexikon Theologie, 1999, outlined the various branches of bioethics in reference to Fritz Jahr. Hans-Martin Sass published a brochure on "Fritz Jahr's Bioethischer Imperativ" 2007 with the Bochum Zentrum fuer Medizinische Ethik and an article in the "Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal" 2007, 17: 297-

295. International Conferences in Rijeka (Croatia) 2011 and in Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Halle an der Saale (2012) recently made Jahr's integrative and integrating vision of the "ethics of bios" a prime topic in the development of the foundations of future global bioethics.

This English language edition mirrors the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Werkausgabe 2013 by Lit Publishers.<sup>1</sup>

I.M.M. H.M.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Brazilian translations of most of Jahr's publications have been published in "Revista BioEthiKos" 2011, 5(3):242-268; 242-268; Croatian translations by Rinčić, I. and Muzur, A. are in "Fritz Jahr i rađanje europske bioetike" Zagreb: Pergamo 2012. Spanish translations will be published in „Aesthetika“ 8(2), 2013; other translations are under way.