

The Borja Institute of Bioethics*

Fritz Jahr, an “imperative bridge”, from the Past to the Future

Not a few times Fritz Jahr and his thinking remain as a curiosity for erudite people when the roots of Bioethics are addressed, drown in the Anglo-Saxon media ocean, and we forget the “bridge” from past to future that Fritz Jahr’s Bioethical Imperative poses:

“Respect every living being on principle as an end in itself and treat it, if possible, as such!”

Some claim that Fritz Jahr is the foundational author of Ecology, but not of Bioethics. A thorough study of his reflections takes us to consider if this Imperative is not a panoramic view anticipating all the currents of thinking that have prevailed in Bioethical discourse in the last 50 years.

In a simple phrase, he combines deontological and consequentialist approaches and, above all, approaches from ethics of responsibility. Furthermore, he considers word views and traditions from a global perspective, staying away from comfortable cultural reductionisms. We should think about, without previous ideas, if Jahr’s Bioethical Imperative is more “human” than Kant’s Categorical Imperative, in which some could see some speciesist prejudices, absent in Fritz Jahr’s thinking.

Thanks, Fritz!

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