

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Narcis Dorin Ion, *Carol al II-lea al României. Un Rege controversat [Carol II of Romania. A Controversial King]*, 5 vol., Onești, Magic Print Publishing House, 2020, 2021, vol. I – 316 pp., vol. II – 512 pp., vol. III – 304 pp., vol. IV – 432 pp., vol. V – 574 pp.**

About Carol II, the King of Romania for a decade (1930-1940) much was written and most often biased. If researchers were more interested in the political aspects of his reign, the press wanted to highlight in great detail the private life of the King, so scandalous and with an outlet to the public today. It is no wonder that the King who ruled Greater Romania when it fell apart, remained the most controversial of the 4 Kings that the Romanian state had.

The most complete monograph of King Carol II, *Carol II of Romania. A controversial King*, signed by the historian Narcis Dorin Ion, was recently published in five volumes by the Magic Print Publishing House. The edition has an introduction signed by Academician Răzvan Theodorescu, with the title “A Hohenzollern with national specific”.

We have in front of us a complete monograph that, in the approximately 2000 pages, goes far beyond the initial intention – that of being a monograph of King Carol II – being, in fact, a monograph of Romania from the ‘30s, a “fresco of the era”, as the author calls it. The era of King Carol II was one and one controversial by the facts and moments that marked it, and the author does not circumvent any of them, on the contrary: “I have not obscured any of the controversial aspects of the life and activity of the sovereign, but I sought to present them integrated in the broader, Romanian and European framework, in which they happened” (p. 9). This was also the main intention of the historian, of the historian totally dedicated to his vocation, to try a presentation as objectively as possible of the subject being treated, without the personal passions in which we are all tempted to fall, at least sometimes. On the contrary, the work abounds in information – many found for the first time in a history book dedicated to this period – about all the dimensions of King Carol II’s life and about the Romanian political, economic, social, cultural life of his time, which all come to compose the overall image of the era before the outbreak of the Second World War, in the space of Greater Romania. The author has no biases and does not exclude from his presentation people, facts, information, even if sometimes they come to surprise us and modify our perception of the era or of some public figures. It is the deeply engaging exercise towards history, that of presenting the facts as they were; the facts cannot be modified, only the way in which each generation is changing, through perceptions, understandings and interpretations of these facts, events, etc.

The life of King Carol II is presented in all its complexity, considering both public and private life. It is an approach that wants to decipher “as much as possible, the character of the third Romanian sovereign, analysing the two aspects of his life: the private life and the political life, in other words, King Carol as a complex character and adventurer of his era and as the dominant politician of interwar Romania” (p. 17). The two aspects are deeply intertwined in the activity of King Carol II, his private life influencing his decisions in public activity. It is an aspect often circumvented in analyses of the public activity of politicians, although the influence in their private lives – formal or informal – can have a weight comparable to that exerted in the sphere of their public interaction.

The five volumes were ordered chronologically, covering the entire life of the Romanian monarch. The first volume covers the period from the birth of Carol II until May 31, 1932, the date of resignation of the government led by Nicolae Iorga, the second volume continues until the beginning of 1938, the third volume deals with the years 1938-1939, the fourth volume is dedicated to the year 1940 and to the period of exile in the life of the King (1940-1953), so that the last volume to capture aspects less revealed from the reign of King Carol II.

The first volume deals with the childhood, youth, exile and the first part of the reign of Carol II. His birth – in 1893 – brought joy to the royal family of Romania, being the first prince born in the country and baptized in the Orthodox religion, because he ensured the continuity of the monarchy. His childhood was marked by the figure of King Carol I, his parents being young and very young (his mother, the future Queen Maria, not being even 18 years old when she gave birth to Carol) and traveling a lot abroad. Long deprived of the affection of his mother and father, he was extremely spoiled by King Carol I and Queen Elizabeth. King Carol I was the one who dealt closely with Prince Carol's education, his choices not always being the most appropriate in choosing the preceptors, as evidenced by the description made by the author of the volume.

Carol's youth was "full of passions", the volume recounting at length the prince's adventures, including his marriage to Zizi Lambrino and the agreement reached by the royal house with her for the dissolution of the marriage. The tumultuous private life, which for the young prince meant the pursuit of happiness, tried to be staved off by his mother, the one who would arrange his meeting with his future wife, Princess Elena of Greece and who reminded him, whenever she had the opportunity, about the "sense of honour and duty" (p. 62) that a future ruler of a nation must manifest. The result was an unhappy marriage, with Carol quickly returning to the adventurous and fickle life, determined, at least in part, by the medical condition from which he suffered. He then met Elena Lupescu, a queen of easy mores, who would remain by his side for the rest of his life. He gave up definitively the Throne of Romania for her, creating instead "legends... to cover the indignity of his deed", as Constantin Argetoianu said (p. 67), about the real reasons of his gesture. Carol II always considered that his private life concerned only him and was not willing to sacrifice his personal happiness, as he understood it, for the good of the state and the nation, a conception that he followed all his life, despite criticisms levelled against him.

The work renders by days and hours – a singular approach in the Romanian historical literature – the course of the unfolding events that led to Carol's return to the country and his proclamation as King of Romania, starting with the restoration period of 1930. With the precision of a metronome, the entire operation planned by Carol is recounted step by step, as well as the support he enjoyed in different circles of power in Bucharest in order for the operation to succeed. The royal restoration is further analysed through the prism of the political parties and their leaders, of the press of the time – domestic and international – but also of the population that was waiting enthusiastically and full of hope for the beginning of a "new era" (p. 191), in the midst of the great economic crisis of the times.

The "new era" expected by the population began, however, with the creation of the *camarilla*, formed around the King and Elena Lupescu – after Carol II managed to bring her secretly into the country – and which soon became, as Constantin Argetoianu said, "the highest institution of the reign of King Carol II" (p. 192). The work presents all the members of the *camarilla*, politicians, industrialists, intellectuals, journalists or simple friends, some of whom sincerely believe that the new King will reform the country; others, profiteers of the relationship with the King and Dudaia. The relations between

them, friendships and conflicts are presented in detail, they are revealing for the circle of intimate power of King Carol II, who dreamed of reforming the state at will.

An opponent of the traditional political parties that had either opposed his coming to the country or had tried to impose his separation from Elena Lupescu and which were trying to push him to respect the strict constitutional framework, Carol II permanently sought a formula of government without them. He managed to impose the idea of a government of national union together with the government of Nicolae Iorga-Constantin Argetoianu (1931-1932), resulting in a failure of government in a very difficult economic period. This will make him give up this idea in the next period and return to collaboration with the political parties, but he adopted another tactic, that of undermining these parties from the inside and discrediting them if they did not obey and follow the policy he wanted.

The period of King Carol II's reign between 1930 and 1938 is broken down by the author into two main chapters, called "The Constitutional King (1932-1938)" and "The Proud King (1930-1938)", which characterize the two sides of the King's life: public and private life. The reader can capture by himself, from the first chapter, the evolution of the Romanian political life in these years, in which the King was part of the constitutional norms, with all the informal deviations which become less significant if we refer to the international and European context, with the number of dictatorships constantly increasing in the European states. The succession of governments, the relations with political parties, including the far-right party, the major events that took place during this period (the riots of the railway workers, the strikes of railway workers, the assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca, etc.), the festive manifestations that the King implemented are rendered from the perspective of archival documents and testimonies of the time, revealing the intimate and real nature of political acts, the way in which political life unfolded "behind the curtains", beyond the eyes and ears of curious journalists, the dynamics of power relations in the highest structures of the state or the way in which political decisions were made with an impact on the whole country.

His conception of the King's role within the political system in Romania and the way he thought about the evolution of the Romanian state in the international context of 1938 are defined in the interview he gave to the British journalist Alexander Levey Easternman in January 1938, which turned into a volume published in 1942. In this interview, Carol II claimed that: "In Romania, the role of the sovereign is not that of the monarch from other countries. In other countries, the King must do what his ministers tell him. Here, ministers are doing what I tell them. Why? Because of the parties and the politics in this country. The only component of the state that can maintain a strict line of demarcation between them and that keeps the balance is the King. That is why there is a difference between the role of the monarch in my country and elsewhere."

The "proud King" of these years recounts the relations within the Royal Family of Romania, a family with whom he bore grudges for his removal from the throne succession in 1926. His first victim was his mother, Queen Maria, the character with the greatest authority within the royal family, whom Carol II isolated "from the public stage and would impose on her a strict regime in relations with politicians, which deeply grieved her" (p. 321). The same treatment was applied to his sisters and to his brother, Prince Nicolae and of course to his wife, Queen Elena, the mother of the heir to the Throne, with whom he refused to reconcile, at the expense of his passion for a woman of easy mores, Elena Lupescu. Even with the Great Voivode of Alba Iulia Mihai, his son whom he had removed from the head of state in 1930, the relationship was a tense one and marked by a "difficult communication" (p. 480) and so kept in memory all his life by King Mihai I.

The third volume of the monograph is dedicated to the two years of royal authoritarian rule or royal dictatorship (as defined by some authors), the volume covering the years 1938-1939. The establishment of the Carlist regime took place in an extremely difficult domestic and international context for democracy. Internally, the Legionnaire movement was gaining an increasing adhesion among the Romanians and the democratic parties continued their old antipathy developed over two decades, refusing to see the broader context of the political struggle. This is what Carol II remarked a few years after his abdication: "The establishment of the new regime in Romania was the signal of a fierce struggle to save the country and to put an end to an evil that was increasingly taking on more worrying proportions" (p. 7). Externally, democracies still survived in several western European countries, with the rest of the European states becoming dictatorships one by one. Romania was among the last countries to adopt this form of state leadership.

The creation of all the instruments of the new political regime is detailed in the third volume. The establishment of the state of siege, the suspension of the constitution of 1923 and the adoption of the new constitution, the dissolution of associations, groups and political parties, the administrative reform, the creation of the National Renaissance Front etc. are analysed from all points of view, of the King, of the chroniclers of those years or of the archival documents. Another major feature of the regime occupies a wide space: the relationship with the Romanian far right. The most important and controversial ones are not circumvented: the trial of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, his murder, the assassination of Prime Minister Armand Călinescu followed by the decimation of the Legionnaire movement.

A significant dimension of King Carol II's actions in these years – properly rendered in the volume – was the diplomatic activity, accentuated as Nazi Germany increased its territorial claims at the expense of its neighbours, which culminated in the outbreak of World War II, by attacking Poland on September 1, 1939. The King's attempts to find diplomatic solutions, given that Germany's pressure was continuously increasing on the Romanian state and its revisionist neighbour, Hungary, was manifesting itself more and more aggressively, were doomed to failure; but they remained recorded in the annals of the history.

The fourth volume deals in detail with the year 1940, the year of the territorial losses of Romania and of the abdication of King Carol II in the subchapter "The Deposed King (1940)" and the period of his exile in the subchapter "The Wandering King (1940-1953)".

King Carol II celebrated 10 years of his reign on June 8, 1940, the intellectual elite of the country paying homage to him for the "glorious reign", along with the press and, of course, the politicians who surrounded him. At the end of the same month, however, the drama of the Romanian state, built with so many sacrifices by the previous generations of politicians, began, with the coming of the Soviet ultimatums for the cession of Bessarabia. This was followed by the loss of a large part of Transylvania, following the Vienna Diktat, which sealed the fate of the Romanian King. He sought the solutions to get out of the impossible situation in which the Romanian state found itself, so he appealed to General Ion Antonescu to lead the government, which was invested "with full powers for the leadership of the Romanian state" (p. 226), suspending the constitution of 1938 and dissolving the Parliament. However, General Ion Antonescu quickly requested his abdication, on behalf of the entire political class and the entirety of Romanians. On September 6, 1940, King Carol II abdicated as head of the Romanian state, in favour of his son Mihai, as "everyone found him guilty of destroying the territorial integrity of Romania" (p. 231). On the night of September 7, Carol II, accompanied by Elena Lupescu

and his suite, left by train from Băneasa Railway Station, the road being not without adventures; in this case, in Timișoara Railway Station, the legionnaires tried to assassinate the King, as evidenced by the archival documents and memoirs of the time (p. 253). Thus, ended the reign of the King who had ruled Romania for 10 years, a Romania that he took over in the middle of the economic crisis and led it to the highest economic growth of the interwar period, in 1938, a Great Romania that he left torn apart by its revisionist neighbours.

“The Wandering King”, the second subchapter of the volume, recounts the journey of Carol II in exile. After a stopover in Portugal, the King lived for three years in Mexico, between 1941 and 1944 (from there, he even tried to negotiate with the Soviets for a possible return to the throne; unfortunately for historians, the pages of Carol II’s *Daily Notes* were broken by Elena Lupescu..., an attempt doomed, of course, to failure, p. 291), then went to Brazil (1944-1947), and later settled in Estoril, Portugal, where he died on April 4, 1953. The entire subchapter recounts the life of the King in exile, his plans, his monotonous life, his relations with his son, etc., until the funeral organized in Portugal and his posthumous return to the country in 2003, to be reburied at the Curtea de Argeș Monastery with his family.

This subchapter also has a summary of the monograph translated into English.

The last volume of the monograph, volume 5, is a novel one that captures hypostases often circumvented from the biography of King Carol II and which has three major subchapters: “The Soldier King (1930-1940)”, “The Diplomat King (1930-1938)” and “The Founding King (1930-1940)”.

“The Soldier King” presents the relationship that Carol II had with the Romanian army, he being “interested, since childhood, in the army and in the military uniform, a passion that was instilled in him by King Carol I himself” (p. 9). He had a military training, attending the Military School in Iasi and became a second lieutenant in the 1st Mountain Troops Battalion at the age of 16, and then went through the entire military hierarchy, finally becoming a marshal of the Romanian Army in 1930, immediately after returning to the Romanian Throne, through a law that he initiated and promulgated himself.

About this relationship, the historian Narcis Dorin Ion writes that: “During his reign, the Romanian army was a constant preoccupation of King Carol II, as a result of a passion that came to him from his childhood and youth, but also of a military education that any heir to the throne had to fulfil at that time. The taste for uniforms and decorations, which so many times he drew personally, the festive gestures that he manifested like no other in the history of the Romanian Dynasty, the sincere concern for the modernization and endowment of the army, his direct involvement, since his youth, as an aviation inspector, in solving specific problems in the field – all these made Carol II look at the army’s problems as an important part of his mission as King, seeking to fulfil it honourably” (p. 11). The King was a supporter of all branches of the Romanian army, including military education, police and gendarmerie, not forgetting to pay homage to the heroes of the nation who fought and gave their lives on the battlefields. Eloquent is the table with the budget allocations for the endowment of the army during the time of Carol II, which ranged between the percentages of 13.23% in 1930 and 25.9% in the budget year 1934/1935 (p. 77).

The subchapter also presents at length the criticisms that were brought to the endowment of the army and its functioning by General Ion Antonescu in 1934, from the position of chief of the General Staff from which he resigned in December 1934 as a result of the rejection of his plans for the renewal of the Romanian army.

Carol II’s efforts to endow and modernize the army did not, however, have the expected results; the Romanian army still suffering multiple material shortages, in 1938, one of



the reasons being the favouritism he practiced for the appointment of generals to leadership positions, most of them being incapable men who were masters at pleasing the King.

The diplomat King captured “the passion for foreign policy and international relations, but also a very special power of analysis, which showed a vast knowledge in this sensitive field. The King had fantastic intuitions about diplomatic alliances and events on the world political scene, which Western leaders did not see as clearly as he did” (p. 83). However, his intuitions and his ability to analyse the international political scene did not help him or the Romanian state, given the catastrophe of 1940. His weaknesses made him deprive himself of the greatest Romanian diplomat of all time, Nicolae Titulescu, “jealous of the diplomatic success of the Foreign Minister” (*Ibid.*). After his removal, he took over the position of representing the Romanian state abroad, becoming “the most visible King of Romania abroad” (*Ibid.*). He carried out an intense diplomatic activity, both in Central and Eastern Europe, through the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente or Poland, but also with the great European powers, traditional allies of Romania, France and Great Britain.

The entire diplomatic action of King Carol II (but the years 1939-1940 are missing from the volume) was carried out in the difficult years that preceded the Second World War. As a middle state, Romania’s means of action were limited, the decisive games being played by the great powers of the time. Romania, located in a geopolitical space at the intersection of the interests of the great powers, could not influence the evolution of events at the level of the European continent. Could Romania better defend its interests; did it have other foreign policy alternatives? The answer to these questions is mostly related to the counterfactual history that emerges from any serious analysis of the foreign policy of the Romanian state during this period.

Most of this volume is dedicated to the Founder King, the King who created and supported Romanian culture in its multiple dimensions. We have in front of us, in this subchapter, a King deeply involved in the cultural work of Romania, which has bestowed upon him the name of “the voivode of culture”. As the author of the monograph notes: “No matter how loathed he may have been, in his epoch and in posterity, and no matter how many sins he may have had, in private or public life, one thing cannot be denied about King Carol II: his irrepressible cultural vocation and the incessant patronage that he has practiced since his youth, in this so sensitive field of our spiritual life” (p. 181).

He got involved and supported countless fields of Romanian culture and art, befriending writers, artists and leading intellectuals of this period; he created institutions to support culture; he cultivated the activity of the Romanian Academy; he built palaces and castles; he was a close friend of the Romanian Orthodox Church; he supported education, at the level of university, gymnasium and high school education. He got involved not only at the level of the country’s “big” culture, but also approached popular culture, inaugurating, for example, cultural homes.

Many cultural works that have been preserved from his era are landmarks for us today, even if some of them were banned during the communist period. The pleiad of intellectuals and people of culture who managed to create in these years, including with the support of King Carol II, is impressive and defining for Romanian culture as a whole.

The entire monograph of King Carol II/of Romania in the fourth decade of the last century is a work that impresses with the vastness and variety of sources used. We have a wealth of information in the five volumes, of unknown or lesser known details of the era of King Carol II. All are combined under the sign of serving historical truth and guided by the basic principle of the study of history, that of understanding the historical context. The historian must understand the era he is studying and present his perspective based on this understanding. Other humanities generally have a different perspective;

they take on concepts, current theories or current doctrines and then they apply them to different historical epochs, which is a questionable endeavour at least, since societies change so much, in all their dimensions, from one era to another. Can we use all the scientific instruments accumulated so far to study previous historical epochs? For some areas yes, but for others, no, because we will come to unrealistic conclusions, precisely because the specifics of a historical era are not considered.

Nor can the era of King Carol II be reduced to simplistic perspectives, such as black or white. The era itself is a complex one, as is the main character of the monograph. But this work comes to present us all the aspects of this era and the entire personality of the monarch. King Carol II should be neither hated nor adulated; we need to understand what happened, how and why it happened during that time, and whether it is possible to learn from what he has done well for the country, and bypass its mistakes. It is the only way to avoid the famous quote “Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it!”, without passions and without biases!

The historian Narcis Dorin Ion comes to our aid in this regard also through the harmonious and useful way in which he combines the extremely extensive documented information with the visual, suggestive and complementary information. Almost every page of the five volumes contains one or more photos synchronized with the information rendered in writing, high-quality photos also coming from the multiple sources to which he had access.

There is also another dimension of the work that we want to highlight here. The monograph of Carol II, itself, can be the object of study for many other disciplines. Because it can be a very useful tool for political science (regarding the evolution of democracy in the ten years of Carol II's reign, for the structure and intimate nature of political power in Romania, for the study of the political and cultural elites of those times, etc.), for sociology, political and cultural works, for volumes of political psychology, to list only a few fields in which the monograph can be useful for studies as objective as possible of this period in the history of Romania.

Finally, a special mention for the way the monograph is written. It has an exciting and incisive style – specific to the author, by the way – that invites you to go through it, despite the huge number of pages. It can thus be travelled not only by historians, by specialists in various fields and by people of culture, but also by the general public, passionate about history, an audience that has not diminished over the years, even if the national history has tried to be marginalized or bagatelized in today's society.

**CRISTINA VOHN**

**Florina Lepădatu, *The Role of Social Media in Public Diplomacy: Comparative Study between the Romanian and Chinese Embassies*, “Ion I. C. Brătianu” Publishing House, Bucharest, 2022, 223 p.**

Being perhaps at the forefront of *the* new generation of Romanian China connoisseurs, Florina Lepădatu manages to put forward an unconventional approach to the study and research of 21<sup>st</sup> century Romanian-Chinese relations. Representing her dissertation submitted to Tsinghua University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Journalism and Communication, this book puts forward *new ways* of approaching Romanian-Chinese relations as a whole. And through these *new ways*, represented by social media and/ in public diplomacy, it is obvious that we have

come to acknowledge a new paradigm which previously has been unconventional in relation to Romania and China. In other words, this book represents a new stage in the study and research of Romanian-Chinese relations that reflects a holistic and innovative resolution to advancing knowledge around a bilateral relation that has undergone a transformative phase for the past two to three decades.

As stated by the author herself, the conscribed objective of this book is “to explore the role played by social media” in daily diplomatic activities undertaken, on one side, by the Embassy of Romania in Beijing, and by the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Bucharest, on the other side. This exploration implied a simultaneous conduct of a series of “in-depth interviews” with Romanian and Chinese stakeholders in July 2019. The results of these interviews are illustrative because, overall assessing, this book has a strong theoretical foundation and a good methodological overture. For example, content analysis (referred to as one of the research tools) and the “in-depth interviews” are put forward and “discussed” further through the “theory of excellence, dialogic communication and filtered through soft power and national image [which] helped in answering to all the research questions”. Consequently raised, these research questions aim to depict what are the precise “expectations and goals” established by the two diplomatic missions in Bucharest and Beijing within social media, what is the extent of their engagement in online dialogue, how are the two diplomatic missions *empowered* by digital diplomacy, and “what is the power of social media over diplomacy” in a diplomatic establishment. All these are of particular interest indeed due to the fact that the specialised literature, as the author recognises, “is almost inexistent”, and the results are self-explanatory.

Among major findings, this book reaches the conclusion that both Embassies are attached to *old public diplomacy*. Florina Lepădatu argues in this regard, based extensively on an initial assertion belonging to James Pamment (2013), that “the use of social media... is not a strategic use of engagement with the public”. In addition, Florina Lepădatu claims that *old public diplomacy* “is based on a careful understanding and cultivation of relationships in foreign countries, including networking strategies for incorporating like-minded people into policy objectives or influencing key nodes”. Therefore, the Embassy of Romania, according to the author, practices “mediated public diplomacy” in China which represents the “strategic management of communication content”, and focuses on the promotion of economic and cultural cooperation. She suggests that Romanian diplomats in Beijing are engaging with the Chinese public through social media only 21% of the time, whilst the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China, in a similar fashion, rarely uses social media to engage with the public.

Finally, structured into eight different chapters, this book represents a departure in what could be regarded as digital diplomacy connected to both diplomatic establishments of Romania and China, respectively. It builds an association of concepts and applies theories that previously have not been prominent in the case of Romanian-Chinese relations. Thus, it is of utmost importance to recognise that this book represents the first research that discusses digital diplomacy in the context of a Romanian diplomatic mission abroad, as well as the first research to analyse the use of social media by the Chinese diplomatic mission in Romania. Beyond any doubt, Florina Lepădatu contextually acclimatizes the study and research of Romanian-Chinese relations, advancing *new ways* that have had to be updated and adapted for the new informational and digital era of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**RADU SAVA**



**Maria Sinaci, *Bioetica și ameliorarea umană. O perspectivă filosofică* [Bioethics and Human Amelioration. A Philosophical Perspective],** Foreword Ioan Biriș, Bucharest, Eikon Publishing House, 2021, 282 pp.

*Bioethics and human amelioration* bring to the specialized and less specialized public a conceptual clarification of bioethics, as a foundation for more applied approaches to the concept, a contribution to contemporary knowledge, through the proposed syntheses and through personal ideational contributions.

We note with amazement that this new field already marks half a century since Van Rensselaer Potter's definition of bioethics, described as a new scientific discipline designed to combine "knowledge of biology with that of human value systems." Behold, "time is running out of patience" and "the future is here." It is topical that bioethics includes an argument about moving from "is" to "ought" represents a real stunt, a naturalistic fallacy (see the disjunction argued by Hume). A bioethical criterion based on biological wisdom could ameliorate it (Waddington). The book underlines, unlike Potter, that the very knowledge of "is" is a solid foundation for the desired wisdom of "ought." Each generation fights for survival anchored in the present, but this should be fully comprehended as also valid over the present generation or over generations, building a future. The present without the future is likely destroyed. As a result, observes Maria Sinaci, commenting on Potter's argument, a collective wisdom of mankind is needed to provide a program of "evolutionary development", of a cultural type, going beyond what is immediately useful, for a long-term development and value of continuity, starting from responsibility. As value carriers, people have this value laden horizon of the future by optimally harmonizing or "administering" the biological, psychological and social plans. This is where ethics capitalizes on the tools of ontology.

The conceptualization of the person is central to bioethics. Peter Singer expands on this notion of the person in his *Practical Ethics* by addressing topics such as animal rights and equality. Thus, themes such as hunting and killing animals, the status of the human embryo and foetus, human life, wealth and poverty, domestic and foreign status, the environment, the dynamics between ends and means, the scope and normativity of moral acts are still among the big problems of humanity. Peter Singer ontologically expands the scope of ethical responsibility to maximal biological coverage – animals are beings and persons.

The capacity to suffer becomes the criterion for appreciating the equality between beings and the responsibility towards the being. A being that has the capacity to suffer is a being endowed with moral justification, presupposing rationality, communication, etc., with multiple consequences. In the experiment done by Allen and Beatrice Gardner, the chimpanzee "Washoe" demonstrated that he learned 350 different signs and correctly used around 150 signs, the vocal equipment necessary to reproduce the sounds of human language, being the key to the limitations in communication and relationship, for "Washoe" was able to recognize himself in the mirror, having a self-consciousness. Other experiments increased the number of signs used – one gorilla ended up using 1000 signs, referring to past or future events, proving self-awareness and a sense of time. On this line of argument, Singer considers some non-human animals to be persons.

Darwin argued once those well-marked social instincts (for example, with parental and filial affections), which denote the presence of moral sense and animal consciousness. Personalist bioethics answers the question of how can we better comprehend the scope of ethics beyond the human universe and how we should conceive of this wider preoccupation. If the established indicators for a descriptive matrix of the person (self-awareness, temporal sense, communication skills, an observable level of self-control) are met then the expansion of the concept of the person would imply an inclusion of ethics in biology if not a reduction of ethics to biology, since ethics cannot account alone for all areas of interest in biology.

In the perspectives of Roberto Poli and Peter Singer there are people who do not belong to the *homo sapiens sapiens* species. Representatives of conservative ethics include the foetus among human beings, while those of liberal ethics do not recognize it as such. While Singer addresses the aspect of potentiality, considering the foetus as potential life, Maria Sinaci shows “The argument will then take the form: Premise 1. It is wrong to kill a potential human being; Premise 2. A human foetus is a potential human being; Conclusion. That is why it is wrong to kill a human foetus.” (p. 33) Singer considers the defence of life and the enhancement of responsibility normative directions for life and personalist bioethics, too. However, Poli criticizes his position, on the basis of Singer’s presuppositions: the indicators for humanity selected by Singer (self-awareness, orientation in time and others) do not necessarily provide sufficient and necessary information for defining the concept of “person”, and they are not found in the whole field of life. Poli believes that the appropriate approach must be based on an ontology of the levels of reality, on a deepening of the study of emotional acts. This is the foundation from where an ethics of the person (a value bearing person) can be best conceived. Only in this way does ethics remain “in its due place”, as a field “added” to the biological, and, *of a completely different nature than the biological*, because it has a spiritual nature. For the author is important to remember that the specifically human spiritual dimension is, as Poli has also emphasized, a domain of authentically ethical values, namely, a zone for choices between good and evil (as well as between virtues and vices).

Is a unitary, universal, or global bioethics possible, or, can we talk about a path toward bioethical pluralism? “Libertarian” bioethics deals with the issue of euthanasia (often reduced to the well-known phrase “My body, my choice!”, quite suggestive in itself). Authors such as Ronald Dworkin, Robert Nozick, Judith Thomson, John Rawls, T. M. Scanlon, and Thomas Nagel have argued in favour of the individual’s right to choose in “intimate and personal” matters, against the attitude of medical paternalism. Maria Sinaci offers the exciting example of the argument in *Pharmaceutical Freedom: Why Patients Have a Right to Self-Medicate* (2017), by Jessica Flanigan, based on the philosophy of John Locke, a follower of the right to life based on an individualism of the bodily self.

Thus, people have the right to decide how to end their life, precisely based on their right to life. Individualism understood via a core self-deciding attitude constitutes the hard centre of human rights, located in the area of self-affirmation, through freedom of choice and consent (p. 36). In the context of the libertarian ethical and philosophical-political perspective, Nozick clearly expresses not only those entitlements that derive from rights, but also the idea of self-ownership: the right of the person to choose herself, or, to choose not to sacrifice herself (for the benefit of another or others) in relations with others and also in relation to the state. We have a certain dignity of individual moral status that gives due weight to individual ethical choices. Others, such as Michal Trčka, highlight the social fabric that interprets certain major decisions as not exclusively individual issues – for instance, a person’s decision to be euthanized affects others, too (practitioners, medical staff, relatives, acquaintances and friends), while raising questions about the specificity of the human social consensus. But Maria Sinaci rightly observes, as does Mark D. White, that others, affected or not, cannot know someone’s interests and have no say in the matter (“How do economists, for example, know what my interests are?”).

Economic models are extremely limited in relation to the complexities of the individual person and life. It is the philosophical view that naturally governs the field of human ethics. In this sense, a more promising model is that of Hans Vaihinger; a model based on distinctions between presumptions, hypotheses and fictions. Human motivation is often well described by mental images that also have a regulative, not computational, functional aspect. Fictions are such regulative mental images that produce real emotions and can lead to valid ethical decisions. As a parenthesis, we believe that such mental images with regulative functionality underline the important role that mental experiments

have in philosophy. By virtue of such mechanisms, moral acts are in the “nature” of man, a subjectivity that does neither cancel nor prevent human intentionality (J. Searle) that can also be oriented both towards objects and objectivity and also towards images and emotions, affirming *the inherent subjectivity of social facts*. Interpreting J. Searle’s contribution, the author also shows that “social facts (including moral ones) cannot be understood without the presence of intentionality”. Moreover, very important aspect, “the moral instantiation of the good is produced by the act of language, there are no pre-existing judgments” (p. 42).

Feminist bioethics highlights certain issues of power and politics, in connection with analytical levels such as “male dominance” and “female subordination”. Feminist-type ethics started from the claim of women’s equality with men, to then focus on the claim of difference, “feminist bioethics focusing on the reflection on gender differences”. Carol Gilligan shows the differences in the different course of moral development in the case of women and in the case of men. Women are evolving towards a morality of responsibility, based on care that takes much of the importance of the male discourse of rights and individualism, both orientations generating specific moral attitudes. We find a concept of *Liebespflichten* (duty, “care” towards love) as well in Kant and in Heidegger there appears a concept that may seem similar, care – *Sorge*, the basis of *Dasein*’s authenticity. However, the author identifies an analytical nuance: this kind of care (in *Sorge*) is an anxious care, leading to *Fürsorge* (solicitude), although there is in Heidegger also another kind of care (*Besorgen*, care) closer to Carol Gilligan’s. Michel Foucault is concerned with *le souci de soi*, a concept with Socratic, Stoic and Christian reverberations. The interpretation of the relationship as responsibility is approached and developed by the bioethics of responsibility associated to the theme of care, but also, even more strongly, with the theme of survival (responsibility towards oneself) than with the theme of social responsibility.

Science and technological progress revise and reform certain ethical perspectives, in accordance with the complexities of contemporary times, profiling more and more the danger of man becoming his own danger, his own evil. An interesting “heuristic of fear” comes to outline specific ethical issues (p. 51). *Tractatus technologico-ethicus* (Hans Jonas, in a work we may interpret as an answer to Wittgenstein I or as an answer to Ernst Bloch and the principle of hope) makes responsibility the main ethical stake of humanity, expressed in forms, attitudes and actions, all of which indicate a refusal of the higher ranking of *homo faber* at the expense of *homo sapiens*. But is this a real danger? To what extent can we really do without knowing? What exactly is there to defend here? Is *homo sapiens* endangered by technological civilization, or something else, the stake of an authentic *Dasein*? Nevertheless, that’s a related, huge discussion to be reserved for another time.

The contemporary climate described by acute insecurity leads to the questioning of Kant’s categorical imperative, to readjust to the new type of human action. But how? Maria Sinaci proposes the formula: “Act so that the consequences of your action are compatible with the permanence of an authentic human life on earth!”, with the variant “Do not compromise the conditions for the indefinite survival of humanity on earth!” We have here a type of responsible pragmatism, with special and current ethical values. The ethics of the future, M. Sinaci shows, is “centred on responsibility towards posterity” and it emancipates itself from reciprocity in the sense of a concern for the evolutionary perpetuation of the species. But wouldn’t this ethical orientation towards the perpetuation of the species support all sorts of ethically questionable utilitarian arguments? How much can we emphasize this ethic of responsibility towards the future? The author offers an interesting argument based on the imperative of responsibility, grounded thus ontologically and metaphysically, in the sense of an emphasis placed on the principle of responsibility meant to bring people closer, in the sense of “making them co-responsible, to strengthen relations between generations and between species”.

Whitehead's thesis about the connections that give the unity of nature and the ground of knowledge is discussed in terms of an "anti-Humean ontology and epistemology". Bertrand Russell capitalizes in a relative consonance with Whitehead the connection between perceptions and structures, the notion of nature presenting as many valences and many ambiguities ("movement, becoming or growth, cause or effect, nature as art, practical or theoretical relationship, entities or the connections, etc."). Nature is, after all, everything that is not produced by man, and the rise of *homo faber* is, from this perspective, the rise of a destructive potential. The creative condition of man (see the discussion of "capabilities" and "functions" opened by Martha Nussbaum and see also, in our view, the argument for the singularity of man in Lucian Blaga) sets in play emotions, creative decisions and actions, practical reason (formative of conceptions of the good and a plan of life), the sense of belonging (joy social interactions, opportunity to exercise the right to self-respect, to oppose discrimination), relating with care and empathy to other species, play (being able to play, yes to have recreational activities, to be able to laugh) and the control of one's environment (ecological, economic, social, political freedoms, decisions and actions). All these aspects describe well enough the human response to a human condition of perpetual vulnerability. But the ethical evaluation, "good" or "bad", associated to a state of affairs transcends the natural-artificial dichotomy, as the author states (p. 83).

The problem of the good cannot be dissociated from the problem of the ethical-moral "better". The amelioration, improvement of the human condition and ethical practice can (potentially) take place at any realized and investigated value level of the person as a bearer of values; as a universe structured by value priorities, we might add. We can consider that when Th. Nagel emphasizes moral motivation, the act of choosing, moral judgment, obligations, constraints, the aspect of utility, advantages or losses, values associated with perfectionistic goals, or the individual commitments, he also underlines a fragmentation of value that complicates the analyst's view of the process of human improvement. We can detect, like Bochenski, ontological entities grouped into three categories (things, properties and relations) transformable into "levels" of human improvement. The author aptly concludes: "these disputes and fears cannot be solved from an ethical point of view only by referring to the means of improvement, to the biotechnological possibilities, while there is a need for clarifications at the level of society in relation to the ideal human person that is desired. In other words, any and all ethical clarifications are dependent on the criteria of humanity" (p. 128).

Will the new biotechnologies contribute to building a more ethical world by improving moral reasoning, the author asks, opening particularly current discussions? Should one also ask whether biotechnological methods can be validated as ethical methods? Will the bio-technologically-enhanced man still (still) be human or is she to become a (bio-)artefact? In the light of the ethical issues identified in the book the reader senses the overwhelming reverberations moral bio-enhancement can raise: the promotion of abuses, the potential violation of individual freedom, issues of personal identity and the undermining of autonomy, the indeterminacy of moral diversity and moral debates, the overestimation of results, the underestimation of secondary effects, a new eugenics by "designing" moral children and embryonic selection, the risk of the obligation of moral improvement over time, the compromising of freedom with the best intentions of ensuring moral improvement, including of the freedom to err and act immorally (p. 195).

Maria Sinaci proves through this impressive research dedicated to bioethics, the complexities and ethical problems developed around the tragedy and difficulties of the assumed human universe, leaving behind the simplicity of the antequated maxim *memento mori*, in the structuring of moral authority and ethical action, of the self-worth and engaged in an examination maximalist, body and spirit.

**HENRIETA ȘERBAN**