

Foreword

In 2002, Francis Fukuyama published an extensively discussed book entitled *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*. The American thinker pointed out in his study that one of the most distinctive elements of our era is the biotechnology revolution, which involves the search for new applications of science and technology to modify living organisms: microorganisms, plants, animals and humans. Almost every day, media around the world provide new information on genetic modification of animals and plants, creation of transgenic organisms, new ways of obtaining stem cells, etc.

Fukuyama says we are now entering a historical era in which biotechnology will be able to change the characteristics of the human species. Consequently, there is a serious risk that in the future humanity will face a “posthuman world.” It would come if, using modern technologies, we were to modify the essence of man, i.e. his nature. Until now, man has been transforming the world around him; today he is given the opportunity to interfere with the very nucleus of his own identity. It is therefore essential today to defend the concept of human nature on which human rights are based. If we abandon the category of human nature, we put the human person and his future into the hands of scientists, who would sometimes

want to interfere with our identity without any restrictions, creating a “brave new man.”

The current issue of *Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae* is titled “Contemporary Bioethical Challenges” and is a thematic collection of articles which examine issues relating to the geneticisation of human life, the ethical principle of double effect, the ethics of environmental virtues, the conscience clause, the moral aspects of combat sports, the professional ethics of pharmacists, palliative care. In this age of biotechnology revolution, bioethical reflection is of particular importance as it helps develop a moral assessment of new issues related to the rapid development of genetics, microbiology or medicine.

In a sense, it is bioethics that makes it possible today to rediscover the foundations of humanity and the essence of human being. Wherever adequate anthropological concepts are lacking, emphasizing the dignity of the human person, there is a risk of treating man not as a value in itself, but as a means in a utilitarian pursuit of various kinds of goals. Misapplication of biology and medicine may threaten human dignity. Which is why bioethics should ensure that the good of man always prevails over the good of society and science.

Andrzej Kobyliński
Guest Editor