



## Recensión

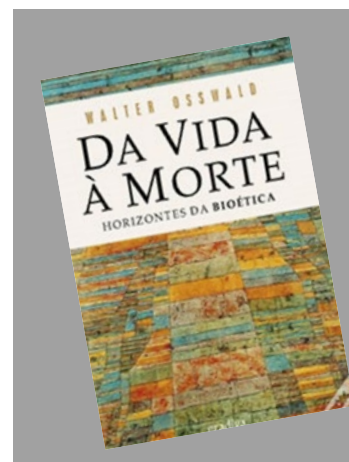
### Da Vida à Morte Horizontes da Bioética

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The author attempts to encompass the overall framework of Bioethical reflection by presenting concrete problems into different themes resulting from the multiple capacities for intervention in life and the cosmos that technical and scientific progress has provided. It is emphasized that Bioethics presents itself as the ultimate possibility of building a civic, transdisciplinary, and universal ethics that enhances the rights and dignity of human beings.

It is important to notice that Bioethics also has limits in its application as it runs the risk of being instrumentalized according to each person's interpretation, which is why we must always maintain a sharpened critical judgement. The author provides us with a work that allows teaching Bioethics in a detailed yet, simultaneously, simple way to those who are already dedicated to this field and to those who wish to start dedicating themselves in this area. It is an easy-to-read book that captivates the reader with the delicacy of its words. The author helps the readers to weigh the scientific facts and their ethical implications maintaining fidelity to moral principles but without losing the flexibility of a free reflection. This book reflects the coherence between thinking, acting and being.

A deeper look into this book confirms this is a work of two horizons: the first, of temporal order which follows the evolution of Bioethics before Bioethics itself by pointing out some of its current paradoxes and integrating a prospective view, shaped by solid knowledge of the past and the present; and the second horizon, a spatial one related to the multiplicity of spaces that Bioethics occupies due to the range of topics covered and its relationship with the environment, health or religion.

The book begins with a preface of acknowledgement from the author to his Masters in Bioethics and his family, with a delicacy that makes the reader want to dive more into the world of Bioethics. The book is divided into thematic areas.

"Bioethics: Horizons and Limits" discusses what Bioethics represents to our attention and analysis as well as the origin of the word and its meaning, limiting the assignment of different meanings depending on the person, the ends, the means, and the courses of action themselves. It also addresses, historically, its relationship with the Hippocratic Oath and medical ethics and how Bioethics has evolved and emerged until the present day through several conflicts and consensuses. The context of Bioethics in society, in law, and in governance associated with scientific progress, the definition of Man, the humanization of healthcare settings, costs and ecology are framed.



“Bioethical Questioning and the Catholic Perspective” discusses the issues surrounding the relations between religions, reflecting on the influences and acceptance of Christian inspired Bioethical thoughts in the vast world of contemporary ethics, while seeking to ensure that positions are grounded in arguments not derived from faith. In fact, there is no space for a fragmentation of Bioethics in geographical nor religious terms and a large secular of lay Bioethics which would lead us to a moral relativism that invalidates any assessment of what is good and what is bad, or what it’s right or wrong. There are different perspectives on how to think about Bioethics that must be considered in their own rationale, including the voice of those who have a belief, for generating consensus and to ensure that Bioethics remains true to its origin, maintain the perspective of Bioethics as a bridge to the future. Paraphrasing Van Rensselaer Potter, what matters is to serve humanity; and Bioethics is not an opposition to scientific research, but it contributes to maintain the service to humanity.

“Health has no price but has costs” explores issues regarding the right to health and the scarcity of resources and sustainability through the concepts of rationing, rationalizing and containing. It is very important to discuss the right to health because it has been called into question in society, considering the scarcity of available resources and the escalation of prices not only regarding the level of innovative treatments but also in terms of continuity of care provided especially for chronic, progressive and incurable diseases. These issues are discussed straightforward pedagogical manner. The succession of measures for rationalization, cutting waste and rationing, ensuring distributive justice is raised in favour of the National Health Service. These issues cannot overlook clinical research which is essential for improving healthcare and quality of life, but it poses specific ethical issues such as the fair price of medications and issues related to ethics committees, recognizing that the basic conscience of investigators is not enough to prevent irregularities and possible ethical violations while conducting clinical research. The trial of double concealment is a very problematic issues, from an ethical analysis, and can be aggravated when the comparison term is a placebo.

“Medicine and Ethics, a Permanent Dialogue” explores issues related to Hippocratic Medicine and its evolution until nowadays, which is the time of evidence-based practice. At this point, there was also room to develop ethical issues regarding screenings and therapeutic continuous innovations. The enormous advances seen in recent decades in technology and medicine have generated ethical problems, shaking the naive conviction that deontological codes crafted by medical honour provide answers to all new problems, soothe consciences, and clarify all doubts. Hence, ethical debates are not only focused on persistent issues concerning abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide but also on issues concerning the use of stem cells or medically assisted procreation techniques. Additionally, there is a noticeable devaluation of the attention that should be given to the individual in the helping patient-healthcare professional relation, that must be established with empathy.

“Autonomy and Paternalism: In clinical practice and research” encompasses topics such as the informed consent that must be carried out in research protocols and therapeutic relationships based on trust and truth until death. The medicine practice is beneficial but cannot be impositive. However, promoting the principle of respect for autonomy does not aim to pass all responsibility in the decision-making process to individuals but rather to inform them so that they can make informed decisions, protecting them for treatments, experiments and research they do not wish to undergo.

“Challenges of Vulnerability in Research” focuses on vulnerability as an important characteristic, and at the same time, as a condition. Vulnerability is an inalienable part of the human being and condition. It may be common for some researchers to abdicate ethical responsibility, adopting a merely technical attitude, since the research is participated by competent participants, the informed consent must be presented written, and the Ethics Committee must make decisions about approval or disapproval of studies that do not consider vulnerability properly. There still exists poor sensitivity to realise subjects are still vulnerable although they



have given a written informed consent. There is a lack of understanding of what vulnerability truly is and there is an inability to recognize it, which can culminate in the rejection of the principle of vulnerability itself. At this point, Bioethics is emphasised as a factor of discernment of what is convenient or not to dignity, freedom, and the autonomy of the person. Many times, the informed consent may be used not to protect individuals but to protect researchers and healthcare professionals, which is very censurable since it is not the aim of the informed consent.

“Questions about the Beginning and the End of Life” is based on the ethical issues that emerge from the moment of preconception to issues related to palliative and end-of-life care. Palliative care is a human right and ethical discussion about euthanasia and other assistance in dying for minors and patients with dementia is imperative. There is a strong emphasis on the deficit of access to palliative care—since neonatal to elderly—resulting in unbearable suffering which leads to wishes on hastening death by euthanasia or (assisted) suicide. Even though when palliative care is available that does not guarantee that suffering is palliated properly in every patient. It does not remove the justification for palliative care patients to still wish to hasten death. It advocates the importance of having advance directives in the form of a living will and/ or nomination of a healthcare proxy so that patients ensure their wishes are respected in advanced stages of the illness when they may no longer be competent to decide.

The author ends the book with a very particular subject “Brief praise for silence”. Silence is the most necessary element for us to listen our conscience so that we can discuss and participate in ethical deliberations about ethical issues that surround us daily.

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