

DEFINITION OF BIOETHICS

Dejan Donev

*History of Ethics and Bioethics at the Institute of Philosophy
Faculty of Philosophy under Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje,
N.Macedonia*

■ ABSTRACT

This article offers a critical scholarly review of Roman Globokar's *Bioetika* (2025), published by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Ljubljana, with particular emphasis on the conceptual and methodological framework developed in its first chapter, "Definition of Bioethics." The analysis examines Globokar's reconstruction of the historical development of bioethics, especially the distinction between Van Rensselaer Potter's holistic and ecological conception of bioethics and the predominantly biomedical Georgetown tradition associated with Beauchamp and Childress. Particular attention is given to Globokar's attempt to move beyond a narrowly clinical understanding of bioethics toward an integrative ethics of life encompassing environmental responsibility, social justice, global health, non-human life, ecosystems, and future generations. The review further considers the book's engagement with European philosophical traditions, personalist anthropology, and Christian theological perspectives, as well as its treatment of the institutional development of bioethics in Slovenia. The article argues that Globokar's principal contribution lies in his effort to reconnect bioethics with its broader philosophical, anthropological, ecological, and theological foundations. In doing so, *Bioetika* presents bioethics as an interdisciplinary and socially engaged field grounded in human dignity, ecological integrity, responsibility, and solidarity.

Keywords: Roman Globokar; *Bioetika*; bioethics; Van Rensselaer Potter; Georgetown tradition; personalism; theological ethics; ecological ethics; human dignity; social responsibility.

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Introduction

Roman Globokar's *Bioethics* (2025) emerges at a significant juncture in contemporary ethical discourse, addressing not only the classical dilemmas of biomedical ethics but also the broader environmental, social, and technological concerns that define the scope of modern bioethics.^[1] Published by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Ljubljana in 2025, the work represents a continuation of Globokar's longstanding engagement with ethics, theology, and social responsibility. It is about the book, that is much more than a manual of bioethical norms; it is a philosophical-theological treatise that seeks to reorient the ethical compass of modernity toward a vision of integrative humanism.

Historical Foundations of Bioethics and The Two Traditions: Potter vs. Georgetown

This short review offers a scholarly analysis of the book *Bioethics*, evaluating its conceptual frameworks, methodological coherence, and contribution to the field of bioethics, with particular attention to its interdisciplinary breadth and theological anchoring, and with a special and deeper accent to the first chapter called "Definition of Bioethics". The same starts with the historical foundations of Bioethics where Globokar by revisiting the historical genealogy of bioethics, carefully distinguishing the divergent currents that

have shaped its evolution. He highlights the dual origin of bioethics, rooted in both Van Rensselaer Potter's ecological vision and the Georgetown tradition's biomedical focus. This bifurcation is not merely a historical footnote but forms the analytical spine of the work. Potter's aspiration for a bridge between biological knowledge and ethical wisdom is contrasted with the principlist approach developed at Georgetown, particularly by Beauchamp and Childress, which emphasized autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.^[2] Globokar traces these traditions to their philosophical and cultural sources, demonstrating how they influenced the institutionalization of bioethics in Western academia and healthcare policy.

Summarized, one of the strengths of Globokar's exposition lies in his critical appraisal of these foundational paradigms, i.e. two traditions: Potter vs. Georgetown. He appreciates Potter's holistic vision, which anticipated current ecological concerns and the imperative for a sustainable ethical framework. Simultaneously, he critiques the Georgetown model for its procedural and deontological rigidity, which often reduces complex moral dilemmas to algorithmic decision trees. Globokar argues for an integrative approach that does not abandon the principlist tradition but situates it within a broader anthropological and theological context. This synthesis resonates with the European continental tradition, particularly in the works of Hans Jonas,

Paul Ricoeur, and Emmanuel Levinas, who serve as important interlocutors throughout the text.^[3]

Case Studies and Institutional Developments of The Bioethics in Slovenia

On this intellectual journey dealing, which deals not only with the historical foundations of Bioethics, Globokar goes further analyzing the case studies and institutional developments. The book offers a detailed account of how bioethics became institutionalized through hospital ethics committees, academic programs, and legal instruments. Globokar meticulously examines landmark cases – such as Karen Ann Quinlan, Nancy Cruzan, and Terri Schiavo – which catalyzed public awareness and legislative action in the United States. He contrasts these developments with European and Slovenian contexts, where the Catholic intellectual tradition has played a more visible role in shaping bioethical discourse. The analysis of these cases is not merely descriptive; Globokar engages them as hermeneutical events that illuminate the normative tensions between individual autonomy, communal responsibility, and institutional authority.

Furthermore, what has a big particularly valuable contribution of his *Bioethics*, is its focus on the Slovenian bioethical landscape, a topic often marginalized in Anglophone literature. Globokar traces the development of ethical

committees, legal regulations, and academic programs in Slovenia, providing a critical assessment of their effectiveness and limitations. He notes that the Slovenian context is marked by a complex interplay between post-socialist legal reform, Catholic moral theology, and European Union directives. Globokar situates his analysis within broader discussions on transitional ethics, arguing that bioethics in Slovenia must navigate the tension between inherited normative frameworks and emergent pluralistic sensibilities. This section is enriched by empirical data and institutional history, offering a model for contextualized bioethical reflection.

About the Return to the Expanded Bioethics and the Philosophical Reflections and Ethical Paradigms

In the last part of the first chapter, the subtitled “Bioethics as an ethics of life in the broader sense”, Globokar pleads for a return to an expanded vision of bioethics, echoing Potter’s original aspiration but informed by the ethical challenges of the Anthropocene.

^[4] He critiques the reduction of bioethics to biomedical problem-solving and calls for a reorientation toward environmental ethics, social justice, and global health. Drawing on recent developments in planetary health, climate ethics, Globokar argues that the moral community must be widened to include non-human life, ecosystems, and future generations. This expanded bioethics requires

an epistemological humility and ethical responsibility that transcend disciplinary silos.

In this context, I can confirm that the previous efforts are justified because they are grounded in the philosophical depth of Bioethics, which is evident in Globokar's engagement with a range of ethical paradigms, from deontology and consequentialism to virtue ethics and care ethics. He explores these traditions not as mutually exclusive but as complementary lenses for moral discernment. In this sense, a notable feature is

evidence in his use of personalist philosophy, particularly in the vein of Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II) and Emmanuel Mounier, which emphasizes the dignity, relationality, and transcendence of the human person.^[5] Globokar argues that bioethics must be grounded in a robust anthropology that resists both reductive materialism and abstract universalism. He also incorporates the theology of creation and incarnation as resources for a more holistic ethical vision, demonstrating how faith-based perspectives can enrich rather than narrow bioethical discourse.

Conclusion – Evaluation of Globokar's Contribution: Critical Reflections and Future Directions

To conclude this short evaluation of his contribution, I'll say that, not only the first chapter, but in general, *Bioetika* stands out for its methodological pluralism, conceptual clarity, and normative coherence. Globokar does not merely synthesize existing positions; he constructs a framework that is at once critical and constructive, rooted in theological reflection and responsive to contemporary ethical crises. His call for an integrative bioethics is not a vague appeal to interdisciplinarity but a carefully argued case for ethical convergence grounded in human dignity, ecological integrity, and social solidarity. The book is particularly effective in bridging the gap between academic theology and applied ethics,

offering insights that are accessible to scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike.

That's why his effort, this book, is a significant contribution to contemporary bioethical scholarship. It revives the original promise of bioethics as an interdisciplinary, ethically rich, and socially engaged field. The book challenges the narrowing of bioethical inquiry to clinical dilemmas and instead proposes a capacious vision rooted in theological humanism, ecological consciousness, and philosophical depth. It deserves a wide readership among ethicists, theologians, medical professionals, and all those concerned with the moral dimensions of life, death, and the environment.

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^[1] Roman Globokar, *Bioetika* (Ljubljana: Teološka fakulteta, 2025).

^[2] Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 7th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Van Rensselaer Potter, *Bioethics: Bridge to the Future* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

^[3] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

^[4] Roman Globokar, *Bioetika*, 15-32.

^[5] Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979).