

**Review of the book  
“Bioetica în criză sau  
criza bioeticii? O  
filosofie a pandemiei în  
societatea  
medicalizată”  
[Bioethics in crisis or  
the crisis of bioethics?  
A philosophy of the  
pandemic in the  
medicalized society],  
authored by Antonio  
Sandu, LUMEN  
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**Abstract:** This paper is a review of the volume “Bioethics in crisis or the crisis of bioethics? A philosophy of the pandemic in the medicalized society”, authored by Antonio Sandu (LUMEN Publishing House, 2020) and aims to highlight those innovative aspects in the field of bioethics. Bioethics in crisis or the crisis of bioethics? A philosophy of the pandemic in the medicalized society” is the only volume published in Romania that debates the issue of the SARS-VOC-2 virus pandemic exclusively in the field of bioethics.

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Bioethics is commonly understood as referring to the ethical and practical implications of certain sciences that study life and health issues, most often public health. Bioethics manages to focus the interests of several sciences in order to provide the opportunity for ethical debate on events that test humanity. Specialists in the field of humanities, social, legal and medical sciences constantly contribute to the development of bioethics, by bringing the expertise in their field to its construction. Thus professionals such as philosophers (theorists and practitioners), lawyers, sociologists, doctors, theologians, social workers and anthropologists contribute to bioethical debates around the world.

The current global context, characterized by the SARS-COV-2 virus pandemic invites both specialists and lay persons to debate. These debates are proving to be controversial, and the ethical acceptability of the intervention of legislative measures to isolate COVID 19 infestations should be a sensitive issue. Bioethics announces a period of crisis worldwide, and ethics specialists, by noticing this, come together to debate the current situation (The Hastings Center, 2020; Nuffield Council on Bioethics, 2020; Sandu, 2020). The World Health Organization provided even international scientific open access sources related to the influenza pandemic on their official website so as to support people to better approach the ethics of pandemics (World Health Organization, 2020; Hick et al. 2020). Publications all over the world come to also support the better understanding of the current crisis caused by the SARS- COV-2 virus, and publish research papers that reflect the manner of coping to the new pandemic times worldwide. The Committee on Bioethics of the Council of Europe developed “DH-BIO Statement on human rights considerations relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic” and provided online sources related to the virus. Best practices in education, economics, social welfare and healthcare systems are pursued in order to adapt to the new learning and living conditions (Cismas & Dumitru, 2020; Gonçalves, 2020; Gavrilenco & Markeeva, 2020).

This paper is a review of the volume “Bioethics in crisis or the crisis of bioethics? A philosophy of the pandemic in the medicalized society”, authored by Antonio Sandu (LUMEN Publishing House, 2020) and aims to highlight those innovative aspects in the field of bioethics. Bioethics in crisis or the crisis of bioethics? A philosophy of the pandemic in the medicalized society ” is the only volume published in Romania that debates the issue of the SARS-VOC-2 virus pandemic exclusively in the field of bioethics.

The volume includes textual debates from the online sessions conducted by the author during the Thursday Meetings with Bioethics and

Applied Ethics between March 12th and May 7th, 2020. As stated by the author, these lectures were initially part of the course of Bioethics and Professional Ethics held at the "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania, and subsequently held within the Circle of Applied Ethics and Practical Philosophy "Ekpyrosis", an activity part of the Project Ethical Competence and Academic Integrity in Scientific Research and Teaching.

Structured in 12 chapters, the volume brings to the attention of an uninitiated public in ethical issues, as well as an expert public, current debates on the challenges of ethics and bioethics in a period of crisis that goes beyond public health and becomes an economic and political crisis worldwide.

The volume encourages reading from the first pages, in which the table of contents reveals the author's way of approaching the issue of bioethics in a pandemic context. I identify consistency from the outset, a coherent and gradual rendering of the deep penetration of the subject of a bioethics in crisis. The author starts by preparing the reader with what follows, by stating in an introductory chapter the challenges identified for the field of bioethics in times of crisis and the need for bioethics in pandemic situations.

The volume discusses the principles of bioethics, the medicalization of social life, of bioethics between philosophy and science, about the bioethics of public policies, the effects of the pandemic to catalyze the virtualization of social space, the excess of fake news and their impact on ethical decisions, the crisis of bioethics, individual and collective responsibility in pandemic but also spirituality in pandemic times. I will refer in this review to only 3 of the 12 chapters.

I stop at the second chapter because it approaches so elaborately one of the principles of bioethics that is very controversial in social, medical and research practice - the principle of respect for the autonomy of the person. The author treats "autonomy" both from the Kantian philosophical perspective and from the bioethical perspective - especially decisional autonomy - developing the issue of informed consent in medical practice and research. "Autonomy is a concrete and practical expression of the idea of freedom. As long as I am a free being who can decide for himself, I must express this freedom through my ability to make my own choices." (Sandu, 2020: 54). The debate on the principle of respect for autonomy is all the more provocative in a pandemic context, but not only, the autonomy of the individual is the least respected or prioritized in emergency situations. As the

author pointed out, between the principles of bioethics established by Beauchamp and Childress (2001) - the principle of beneficence and the principle of non-maleficence are more respected in emergencies, in life-saving interventions, than the principle of respect for personal autonomy.

One chapter that I read with great pleasure is "The Medicalization of Social Life", which discusses the usefulness and necessity of philosophical counseling as a catalytic process in self-awareness and awareness of the Other in a society subjected to hyperconsumerism (Lipovetsky, 2007; Frunza, 2016; Sandu, 2020). The context of a hyperconsumerist society and its ethical, social, economic effects are reflected by interactive consumption, which makes the transition to postmorality and post-duty, bringing with it a different relationship to self, to the other, to things and time (Frunza, 2016). I support the idea that we are living more and more a "medicalized life", as it is presented by Professor Antonio Sandu in the volume, starting from the model of practical philosophy developed by Lou Marinoff (2019). Society's efforts to change the chaotic lifestyle into an organized one, but at a fast pace without real effort, mislead people with the help of wellbeing theories, which promise to create healthy lifestyles by purchasing specific products or services, but without effort claims. Thus, argues Antonio Sandu, "Many of these efforts prove to be superficial, generating the illusion of a healthy life (Baudrillard, 1994) and then, such an additional effort, to be aware of the risks, to be aware of the ways in which these daily risks for health actually impacts our lives, can be achieved through ethical counseling and philosophical counseling." (Sandu, 2020).

As I read the volume, I find that this volume seems to fulfill the role of lobby in favor of awareness of the need for professional ethics in organizations, and learning ethics by professionals. The ethical dilemmas of that professionals involved in the first line of fighting SARS-VOC-2 virus require ethical debate. If time, resources in emergencies do not allow for debate within a peer group, then at least the ethical knowledge of a physician, social worker, or any decision-making individual in emergencies can help make decisions.

The establishment of ethics commissions is also supported by the author in chapter 9 of the volume - "Bioethics in crisis or the crisis of bioethics?". Starting from an article published in The New York Times, in which the imminence of choosing the number of hospitalized persons infected with SARS-VOC-2 who will benefit from artificial ventilation devices, the author debates the gravity of the act itself. It is an act unsupported by any previous ethical analysis, performed by either nurses or doctors. Are they entitled to act selectively? What are the selection criteria

for those who can no longer benefit from life-saving medical equipment? Can such practices launch reports of post-pandemic malpractice cases? The author of the volume himself is in the middle of a dilemma, questioning whether or not the pandemic context in which humanity finds itself is not a favorable context for a crisis of bioethics, which would force the establishment of new models of practice in bioethics. The author invites the reader to a thorough analysis, provoking him not to make harsh judgments on the medical practices forced by the pandemic. Thus, ethics commissions find their use precisely in such situations: every information, judgment, accusation requires proof, through a rational ethical analysis, and not made under the influence of psychological pressure (Sandu, 2020).

I noticed, as the text deepened, that the author started the debate from the approach dedicated to practice, from the perspective of bioethics, sociology and practical philosophy, to conclude in a register of spiritual becoming.

Through each chapter, as a result of online lectures given by the author between March 12th and May 7th, 2020, the author brings to the consciousness of the inexperienced reader in the field the desire to know and understand more from the field of practical ethics, to analytically address his social environment and surroundings. For a reader with expertise in ethics and bioethics, the volume invites you to take part in the transformation of bioethics.

The volume ends differently than usual, because the author addresses the end of the state of emergency created by the SARS-COV-2 virus pandemic, established in Romania until May 15th, 2020. The end of the state of emergency is associated with a "great release" - in terms of the possibility of manifesting the rights of each individual affected by self-isolation at home.

At the end of the review, I express my special admiration for the success of the author Professor Antonio Sandu, and I invite the public interested in the field to enjoy reading the volume “Bioethics in crisis or the crisis of bioethics? A philosophy of the pandemic in the medicalized society”. I am convinced that the public will also notice the novelty brought by the volume, a novelty that lies primarily in its construction, which contains, in 12 chapters, a philosophical, sociological and bioethical analysis of the health, social and economic crisis effects caused by the new pandemic. PhD Prof. Antonio Sandu is a philosopher and sociologist whose research interests cover issues such as ethics, bioethics, sociology, social philosophy, public administration, all of which have been combined very practically in this volume. The author has manifested both his teaching

qualities and the analytical spirit of the philosopher, as well as the experience of a sociologist to give rise to provocative debates.

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