

## **Editorial:**

### **Ethics and responsibility in the 'fake news' times**

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*"Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd"*

(Voltaire, 1694-1778)

*"Life is wasted on the living"*

Nathaniel Sr., *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001–2005)

In March 2020 the COVID-19 a pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) representatives, and governments adopted special laws and implemented restrictions measures for population, unimaginable and incredible before. As direct consequences people reacted, buying food supplies, and advancing apocalyptic scenarios about the pandemic and the goal of official measures. Population was divides in three categories: people who consider the pandemic a war, sustained by conspiracies; people neutral, thinking that every news deserve attention, but with reserve; and people who consider that we are living a period with the Coronavirus and if they are aware about the danger, they take care of them, pandemic will end soon.

In all this time the population faced a huge amount of news: sensational, contradictory, unbelievable news. And all social media supported the spread of all news, even the 'fake news'.

### ***What are 'fake news' meanings?***

According to Merriam Webster website, the 'fake news' is frequently used "to describe a political story which is seen as damaging to an agency, entity, or person"<sup>1</sup>.

False or distorted news have always been disseminated, but the term 'fake news' is quite new. It appears at the end of the 19th century<sup>2</sup>.

### ***What is the role and meaning of 'ethics' in this period?***

The term *ethics* comes from the Greek (*êthos*) and refers to habits, behaviors, rules of behavior. The ethics recommends people to respect the values in everyday behaviors, being a sort of "laic moral"<sup>3</sup>.

*The ethics* is the study of the concepts related to the practical reasons: good, right/law, duty, obligation, virtue, liberty, rationality, choice<sup>4</sup>.

Guy Durand<sup>5</sup> consider that *ethics* covers the more types of realities:

1. The research of norms and of rules of conduct, values analysis, the analysis of the fundamentals of the obligation or of values.
2. The systematization of the thinking of an author or of a school. It is talked about Se Kant's ethics or of Plato's ethics. Some Protestant theologians used the expression "Christian ethics" to refer to the values of the Christian Gospel and to their concrete translation in everyday life.
3. The concrete practice and the achievement of values.

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<sup>1</sup> The Real Story of 'Fake News', available online at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/the-real-story-of-fake-news>, last accessed on 12.07.2020.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> G. Durand, *La bioéthique. Nature, principes, enjeux*, Cerf/Fides, 1997, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> S. Blackburn, *Dicţionar de Filosofie*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> G. Durand, *La bioéthique...*, p. 17.

The role of ethics in the time of Covid-19 pandemic was and is to advocate for moderation, the right measure of thinking of every one of us, no matter if we are governors, healthcare providers, or simply ... people. We should have a critical opinion and consciousness of good and bad the actions, news, and behaviors.

It is obvious that the general knowledge and perception on what we live during these times cannot offer viable solutions for all the concrete situations encountered in the day by day life.

Bioethicists have nowadays the task to be courageous, prudent, and informed sentinel of human choices. The reality brought up by of Covid-19 pandemic opens to wider horizons, which raise more complex and demanding questions in terms of autonomy, communication, mobility, interaction, and responsibility of their choices.

It is difficult to distinguish real and fake news, as they have become spread through the same media. There emerges the need to elaborate and understanding of human life and human behavior in time of crisis and an attentive critical reflection on mass media and social media, contemporary culture, and the ensuing responsibilities.

This new issue of *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai – Bioethica* introduces new topics related to the reality we live in present, the Covid-19 pandemic, to research medical and clinical practice and topics related to bioethical debate on refusal of treatments. We believe that ethics needs more and more attention in day-by-day life, in order to understand and examine our moral life, our choices, preferences, facts and responsibilities.

