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Orthodox Christian bioethics and technoethics: An approach to the contribution of H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.

Abstract

H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. (1941–2018) undertook, on the one hand, the most systematic effort to revise bioethics in light of Orthodox Christian theology, and, on the other, offered a clear depiction of the condition in which ethics and bioethics find themselves in the "post-God" era. This distinguished philosopher and bioethicist locates the Truth—sought as a means of transcending the confines of secularism—in the Christianity of the first ten centuries, the continuity of which is embodied today in the Orthodox Christian Church. In this spirit, the present article seeks, first, to highlight the contribution of H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., and second, to underscore the significance of Orthodox Christian bioethics in the twenty-first century. Within this context, it highlights the significant horizons opening for the formation of a distinctly Orthodox Christian Technoethics, given that the rapid advancement of technologies—most notably artificial intelligence, robotics, and genetic engineering—has generated new challenges that transcend the traditional boundaries of religion and science.

Keywords: H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., bioethics, technoethics, artificial intelligence, orthodox christian theology

Introduction

The work of H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. (1941–2018)[2] represents, on the one hand, the most systematic attempt to date

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[2] For a detailed account of the contribution of H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. and its relevance to the present article, see (in Greek): LADAS, I., Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς θεμελίωσης τῆς βιοηθικῆς καὶ οἱ βιοηθικὲς θεωρήσεις τοῦ H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. (The problem of the philosophical foundation of bioethics and the bioethical thoughts of H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.), Papazisis, Athens 2023.

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at a comprehensive revision of bioethics grounded in Orthodox Christian theology, and, on the other, offers a lucid account of the condition into which ethics and bioethics have fallen in the "post-God" era. This renowned philosopher and bioethicist locates Truth—which he seeks as a means of escaping the limits of secularism—in the Christianity of the first ten centuries, whose living continuation is found today in the Orthodox Christian Church. This fact imparts a confessional character to his works, something that should not be viewed as paradoxical, since, after half a century of reflection on God, ethics, and bioethics, he concludes that secular bioethics is fundamentally ungrounded and therefore seeks a stable foundation upon which it may be reconstructed (Engelhardt, 2007).

By deconstructing Western Christian bioethics, Engelhardt demonstrates that a significant factor in its failure was the fragmentation of Christianity itself. Through this multiplicity of "Christianities," each individual was afforded the opportunity to select whatever best suited their personal preferences. A similar phenomenon occurred in secular bioethics, where the unity it claims to uphold is ultimately hollow, given that there exist as many secular interpretations of ethics as there are religions.

Extending the above line of reasoning, one may observe that even within the Orthodox Church there is not only an absence of an official, unified stance, but at times there are notable divergences in the approach to bioethical issues (Ladas, 2024). This reality appears particularly troubling, as it suggests that one of the principal causes -according to the Texan philosopher- of the failure of both secular bioethics and Western Christian bioethics is also present within the Orthodox Church (Ladas, 2018).

Such differences do not constitute a problem when they reflect the personal views of hierarchs, clergy, or academic professors in their efforts to address a particular bioethical issue. A problem arises, however, when these divergences take the form of official positions adopted by Autocephalous Churches and bear the approval of a local Holy Synod (Ladas, 2023a).

While not overlooking the aforementioned issue, the present

article aims to present the contribution of the Texan bioethicist to the shaping of Orthodox Christian bioethics. The fact that a philosopher and bioethicist of recognized stature and scientific credibility converted to Orthodoxy and undertook the most systematic effort to date toward a comprehensive revision of bioethics grounded in Orthodox Christian theology is of particular significance. Moreover, through his contribution and the new perspective he offered, the enduring relevance and value of Orthodox Christian bioethics and technoethics in the twenty-first century is made evident.

The work of H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.

The work of H. T. Engelhardt, Jr. may be divided into two phases: (a) the pre-conversion and (b) the post-conversion period. The first, or early period, encompasses his entire philosophical and theological system prior to his embrace of Orthodox Christianity, while the latter comprises the entirety of his subsequent contributions. It appears that, in his early period, Engelhardt grounds his bioethical reflections in a form of rational religion (in this case, Roman Catholicism), whereas in the later phase, he revises and reexamines his entire body of work, ultimately arriving at a thoroughly theistic system.

Following his conversion, the Texan philosopher believed it was his responsibility, as a scholar, to reexamine all his previous work from the ground up—an undertaking that led him to approach bioethical questions from an entirely new perspective (Engelhardt, 2000). Indeed, he expressed a sense of guilt over his earlier contributions to the development of mainstream secular bioethics (from the early 1970s through the 1980s), which he came to regard as a form of sin (Engelhardt, 2000). This realization prompted him to write both *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics* and *After God: Morality and Bioethics in a Secular Age*. In the first chapter of the latter volume, he offers autobiographical reflections that are particularly illuminating for understanding the development of his philosophical thought, addressing, as he notes, "what might be seen as an unbridgeable gap between

my early work and what followed (Engelhardt, 2014)."

The autobiographical reflections found in *After God: Morality and Bioethics in a Secular Age* serve a clarifying function and help readers of Engelhardt's earlier works to better understand the arguments he employs in *The Foundations of Bioethics* (Engelhardt, 1986; Engelhardt, 1996), in contrast to those he adopts in *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics* and his subsequent writings. In his earlier studies, Engelhardt examined the reasons why strong rational arguments failed to provide normative foundations for a logically coherent secular morality and bioethics. This led him to the conclusion that moral philosophy, when severed from God, cannot identify universally binding norms sufficient to establish a meaningful ethical or bioethical framework (Engelhardt, 2014). Thus, the primary aim of the first edition of *The Foundations of Bioethics* was to construct a formal secular morality and bioethics suitable for the peaceful resolution of moral disputes. Engelhardt attempted to formulate a procedural ethics grounded in the distinction between the commitments of moral friends (the morality of a particular community) and the agreements reached among moral strangers. In this way, he sought to offer an ethical perspective capable of transcending the diversity of moral worldviews while at the same time providing a shared moral language.

The procedural secular bioethics developed in the first edition of *The Foundations of Bioethics* by no means represents the personal moral stance of the philosopher; rather, it expresses a form of common morality capable of binding moral strangers and enabling their cooperation. Due to the frequent misinterpretation of his views, Engelhardt clarifies in the preface to the second edition that the book should not be read as a presentation of his own moral ideals, but rather as an exploration of the possibility for morally authorized cooperation among moral strangers (Engelhardt, 1996). Nevertheless, his work was so widely misunderstood that some interpreted it as the foundation for a new secular ethics, others as evidence for the possibility of valid substantive consensus, and many believed he advocated individualism and the primacy of liberty—going so far as to label him not merely

a liberal, but a "libertarian" (Dragona-Monachou, 2016). For instance, professor Miltiadis Vantsos argues that this book marks a departure of bioethics from Christian morality, as it shifts toward a neutral philosophical justification that responds to the diverse perspectives of contemporary pluralistic society (Vantsos, 2002).

In the second edition of *The Foundations of Bioethics*, Engelhardt, seeking to dispel the confusion generated by the first edition, replaces the "principle of autonomy" with the "principle of permission/approval." The Texan philosopher explains that, in a secular and pluralistic society, the authority to act in ways that involve others derives from their approval. Consequently, without such approval or consent, there is no legitimate authority, and any action that contravenes this authority is morally blameworthy. According to Engelhardt, this principle is justified by the fact that moral authority for resolving ethical disputes can only arise from the consent of the involved parties. His guiding maxim in this regard is the following: "Do not do to others what they would not do to themselves, and do unto them only what each has contracted to do." He further suggests that the principle of permission constitutes the foundation of what might be called an ethics of autonomy as mutual respect.

By interpreting autonomy as permission, as Dragona-Monachou clarifies, "informed consent" is no longer regarded as a principle but rather as the justification of bioethical decisions (Dragona-Monachou, 2016). In this way, the Texan bioethicist sought to make clear that secular moral authority derives solely from the approval of those involved. By replacing the "principle of autonomy" with the "principle of permission," he shifted the center of gravity, demonstrating that what is at stake is not the intrinsic value of autonomy or liberty.

The Texan philosopher further emphasizes that, in his works prior to 2000, he did not attempt to explore what it means to live without God, nor did he investigate the roots of the prevailing secular culture or the consequences of the entrenchment of atheism—or, at least, agnosticism (Engelhardt, 2014). Indeed, those earlier works never offered a thorough examination of how

this condition is linked to the cultural severance from God (Dragona-Monachou, 2016), although the question itself remains faintly present in the background of both *The Foundations of Bioethics* and *Bioethics and Secular Humanism* (Engelhardt, 1991). *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics* (editions and translations from 2000, 2003, 2005, and 2007) addresses questions of ethics, political theory, and bioethics that, in Engelhardt's view, cannot be adequately addressed within the confines of secular thought. The book also attempts to articulate the nature of the moral and bioethical principles shared by Christians as moral friends.[1] In this work, where his personal moral and bioethical stance is clearly expressed, Engelhardt could arguably be said to speak as a theologian, using a dialect that, as M. Dragona-Monachou observes, may seem foreign to philosophers. Nevertheless, even in this work, his treatment of many ethical dilemmas does not diverge significantly from his earlier approach -though the "principle of permission" no longer holds the same place. Engelhardt makes only limited reference to autonomy as permission, instead discussing liberty and informed consent, emphasizing that while consent is a significant moral principle in secular bioethics, it is not central to Christian bioethics. As Dragona-Monachou notes, Engelhardt's principle of permission bears little resemblance to the Kantian or mainstream bioethical concept of autonomy, though it is not entirely unrelated to the principle of autonomy as expressed in the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*.[2]

Engelhardt's conversion, and especially the new foundation for ethics and bioethics that it introduced, elicited both favorable and critical responses. Several scholars regarded this shift as marking the emergence of a "new Engelhardt." However, only a few -such as Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes, Ruiping Fan, and Kevin Wm. Wildes, S.J.

[1] According to Engelhardt, moral friends are those who share sufficient fundamental moral premises and agree on who holds the authority to resolve moral disagreements.

[2] At its 33rd General Conference, held on 19 October 2005, UNESCO unanimously adopted the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. Article 5 of the Declaration emphasizes that the autonomy of individuals to make decisions regarding matters that concern them—while also assuming responsibility for those decisions and respecting the autonomy of others—must be respected. For individuals who are not capable of exercising such autonomy, special measures must be taken to protect their rights and interests.

-recognized the organic unity between his earlier and later work (Cherry & Iltis, 2010). For a more comprehensive understanding of the Texan philosopher's philosophical, theological, moral, and bioethical positions, it is advisable to study his entire corpus. Many readers of *The Foundations* or *Secular Humanism* have misunderstood Engelhardt as opposing a broad range of practices within Christian bioethics (Wildes, 2010). Thus, by examining his work in its entirety, one is better equipped to grasp not only each individual text but also the complexity of his intellectual development (Wildes, 2010). It is worth noting that the Italian translation of *The Foundations of Bioethics* sparked public debate and became a focal point in the clash between a Roman Catholic and a post-Christian Italy—a controversy that reached national media coverage (Engelhardt, 1991a).

Some have favored Engelhardt's early period as the more important one, particularly given that his later positions are difficult to grasp for those who do not consciously adhere to Orthodox Christianity. The prominent bioethicist Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes observes that, on the one hand, it is not easy for readers to accept Engelhardt's harsh diagnosis regarding the limits of secular moral rationality and the collapse of the Enlightenment project, and on the other, it is quite difficult to distinguish between his arguments concerning the capacities of secular moral discourse and the possibilities of Christian knowledge (Delkeskamp-Hayes, 2010). For example, in the volume *Global Bioethics: The Collapse of Consensus*, edited by Engelhardt, the possibility of a global morality is critically examined (Engelhardt, 2006), and a strong critique is directed at the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*. For this reason, M. Dragona-Monachou describes the volume as provocative, noting that the secular ethic downplayed by Engelhardt is, in fact, inevitable in official international collective documents. She argues that Engelhardt's critique can only be fully understood through the lens of his personal Orthodox Christian perspective (Dragona-Monachou, 2016). Nevertheless, Dragona-Monachou maintains that such criticism ultimately does a disservice to the Texan philosopher, since the *Universal Declara-*

tion reflects -if not in letter, then certainly in spirit- the procedural secular bioethics he himself helped to shape, with "permission" as its core conceptual tool, which established him as a leading figure in the field (Dragona-Monachou, 2016).

Engelhardt was deeply knowledgeable in ancient Greek, medieval, Western, and Eastern philosophy, possessing a sharp critical mind and an admirable command of ideas (Dragona-Monachou, 2016). According to Cornelia Delkeskamp-Hayes, he succeeded in synthesizing his many and often divergent academic views into a coherent philosophical system (Delkeskamp-Hayes, 2014). Following his conversion, he immersed himself in the works of the Church Fathers, by whom he was profoundly influenced. This influence is evident both in his adoption of numerous Patristic positions and in his frequent references to Fathers and ecclesiastical writers. Notable among those he cites are the Apostle Paul, St. Ignatius of Antioch (35–108), St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Clement of Alexandria (150–215), St. Macarius of Egypt (301–391), St. Basil the Great (330–379), St. John Chrysostom (344–407), St. Maximus the Confessor (590–662), St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), St. Silouan the Athonite (1866–1938), Elder Justin Popović (1894–1979), Elder Joseph the Hesychast (1898–1959), and the theologian Fr. Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983).

Engelhardt, of course, was not the first Orthodox thinker to address bioethical issues through the lens of Orthodox theology. The key difference between all esteemed hierarchs and distinguished professors and Engelhardt lies in the fact that the latter thoroughly deconstructs both secular bioethics and the bioethics of Western Christianity -following a rigorous analysis of their philosophical and sociocultural foundations- and proposes an alternative bioethics grounded in the principles of Orthodox ethos, and the liturgical and sacramental life of the Orthodox Church, having first become a participant in the Patristic Tradition and Orthodox dogmatic teaching. A significant factor in this regard is that Engelhardt converted to Orthodox Christianity as an already established and respected bioethicist. This fact is especial-

ly noteworthy, given that his conversion took place at a time when many of his peers believed that religions -including the Orthodox Church- should have no voice in bioethical discourse and actively sought to marginalize them, viewing their positions with suspicion.

H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. and orthodox Christian bioethics

H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. clarifies that Orthodox Christian bioethics cannot be fully understood apart from Orthodox Christian life. According to him, life in Orthodoxy is Eucharistic in nature; therefore, Christian bioethics can only be fully comprehended liturgically (Engelhardt, 2000). This does not mean that only the liturgical texts themselves provide bioethical guidance, but rather that the Eucharistic gathering constitutes the primary encounter with God. The significance of the liturgical assembly as a source of content for Orthodox Christian bioethics may easily be underestimated. To prevent this, we must remember that Scripture cannot be authentically interpreted outside the context of the liturgical gathering (Engelhardt, 2000). For example, Engelhardt notes that if we seek to advance Orthodox Christian bioethics, we may turn to the prayers of the Divine Liturgy. As a foundation for the prohibition of abortion, one could refer to the prayer of St. Basil the Great (330–379): "Lord, You who know each person's age and name, You who know each from his mother's womb." This prayer, according to Engelhardt, is sufficient to show that abortion is always prohibited, as it stands in direct opposition to Christian bioethics, which recognizes the human being as a person from the moment he or she is in the mother's womb (Engelhardt, 2000).

Within this framework, it is emphasized that Holy Tradition is not merely an orally transmitted historical narrative but rather the ongoing communion with the Holy Spirit. It is Tradition that encompasses and legitimizes the Scriptures—not the other way around. Consequently, Christian bioethics should neither stand in opposition to Holy Scripture nor depend exclusively on it (Engelhardt, 2000). Instead, it must be guided by the fullness of Tradition, since authentic theologians are marked by a unity of spirit.

At this point, the professor recalls the words of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, who states: "Holy Tradition, for the Orthodox Christian, is not simply a collection of teachings or texts external to Holy Scripture, based on the Church's oral tradition. It is that, but not only that. Above all, it is a living and essential transmission of life and Grace -a tangible and vital reality- that is handed down from generation to generation within the Orthodox Church. This transmission of faith is like the circulation of the sap of life from the tree to its branches, from the body to its members, from the Church to the believer." (Bartholomew, 1997; Engelhardt, 2000).

For Christianity, then, true authority lies in the moral teachings related to bioethical issues, as these have proven their enduring relevance over time. If the experience of truth constitutes the source of genuine moral knowledge, then this experience will remain unchanged, even when applied to different circumstances and challenges. The method for approaching new bioethical problems as they arise will not be fundamentally innovative, because the orientation of authentic theology is shaped by a personal, transcendent God, and the unity of faith across space and time will serve as the normative criterion.

Indeed, Christian ethos is more authentically expressed through ecclesiastical literature than through a manual attempting to systematically codify it (Mantzaridis, 2004). The bond between Christian ethics and Christian faith is indissoluble. Dogmatics and Ethics both express the Church's teaching concerning its faith and way of life—the former leading to the latter, and the latter activating the former (Mantzaridis, 2004). They coexist and cannot be properly understood in isolation from one another. When faith and works are separated, ecclesial ethics ceases to be healthy (Matsoukas, 2009). This was also the conclusion reached by Engelhardt when he began his deconstruction of secular bioethics. For this reason, he came to believe in an "alternative" bioethics, one that he proposed as a way of life rather than as a mere set of principles. Such an approach might appropriately be termed *bio-theology*.

Bio-theology and bioethics, however, are not identical. They differ for two main reasons. First, the term *bio-theology* does not denote a theology of bioethics or a theological bioethics, but rather a theological understanding of life itself (Nikolaidis, 2006). That is, bio-theology is theology—not ethics (Nikolaidis, 2006). Its aim is not to oppose technological achievements, but to foster the spiritual maturity of individuals so that they may be capable of making responsible decisions (Skouteris, 1999). Second, interpreting *bio-theology* as "theological bioethics" would constitute a limitation and a reduction of the term, primarily because it would imply a preconceived relationship between theology and science, thereby restricting theology's ability to intervene meaningfully. After all, a fundamental tenet of Orthodox dogmatic theology is the distinction between the created and the uncreated (Matsoukas, 2009). All that exists around us—including ourselves—belongs to the realm of the created (*ktiston*), whereas only God belongs to the realm of the uncreated (*aktiston*). According to the patristic tradition, God created the material world not out of necessity or emanation (Androutsos, 1956; Romanides, 2004; Ladas, 2016)—as in Plotinus or Proclus—but out of the superabundance of His love and goodness.

Bio-theology, in no way, sets itself against science, technological advancement, or medical progress (Vlachos, 2015). Without rejecting them, it simply moves beyond them. It must be emphasized that both research and scientific inquiry are theologically justified in the very commandments that God gave to the first-created humans (Skouteris, 1999). The purpose and role of science differ fundamentally from those of theology: science seeks to improve the conditions of earthly human life, while theology seeks to guide humanity toward deification [*theosis*] (Vlachos, 2010). Even when science acts in ways that threaten life, theology does not condemn science as a whole but instead offers a critical response to the specific act in question. In such cases, the importance of Christian intervention becomes clear (Nikolaidis, 2006)—an intervention that stresses how secular bioethics often attempts to address questions posed by the present moment

while neglecting the eschatological destiny of the human being (Skouteris, 1999). When secular bioethics distorts or assigns immoral content to core moral concepts, the Church intervenes decisively, warning of the consequences such actions may entail (Nikolaidis, 2006).

H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. and orthodox Christian technoethics

Engelhardt's contribution to the formation of a distinctly Orthodox Christian bioethics also opens significant horizons for the development of an Orthodox Christian technoethics. The rapid advancement of technologies -most notably artificial intelligence, robotics, and genetic engineering- poses new challenges that transcend the traditional boundaries of religion and science. While time and multifaceted examination are required for the evaluation and responsible use of these scientific achievements, the intervention of economic and political interests often accelerates or oversimplifies the processes, thereby creating dangerous situations (Mantzaridis, 1995). Technoethics seeks to address these issues, which are not merely technical or legal in nature but profoundly ontological and theological. In this way, the necessity of the Orthodox Christian perspective becomes evident.

Although Engelhardt did not engage directly with artificial intelligence or robotics, he clearly delineated the limits of secular ethics in the "post-God" era. As in bioethics, so too in technoethics, the secular approach proves incapable of providing an adequate foundation for addressing contemporary technological challenges. The Orthodox tradition, however, offers a solid evaluative framework grounded in the patristic teaching and the liturgical life of the Church. Just as bioethics cannot be separated from faith and theology, technoethics cannot be conceived as an autonomous field independent of Orthodox anthropology and cosmology. Engelhardt's understanding of bioethics as a "way of life" rather than a "set of principles" applies equally to technoethics. This means that the assessment of technological developments should not rest on abstract rules but on the holistic Orthodox vision of

the human person, the world, and their relationship with God.

As early as 1976, prior to his conversion to Orthodox Christianity, Engelhardt had observed that science and ethics are "rooted in one another" rather than existing as independent spheres (Engelhardt, 1976). This position provides the basis for understanding technology not as a morally neutral activity but as a domain that combines scientific knowledge with moral choices. As he emphasized, "science, like all human activities, is rooted in and draws upon fundamental value judgments about ourselves and the world" (Engelhardt, 1976).

Particularly significant for Orthodox technoethics is Engelhardt's analysis of the precautionary principle. In his work *The Precautionary Principle: A Dialectical Reconsideration* (Engelhardt & Jotterand, 2004), he offers a dialectical reexamination of this principle that bears direct implications for Orthodox technoethics. Engelhardt emphasizes that the precautionary principle must take into account not only the potential catastrophic consequences of technological development but also the destructive consequences that may arise from the absence of technological innovation. This dialectical approach aligns with the Orthodox understanding of technology as a means that can be employed either for theosis or for the fall of humankind.

Fundamental to Orthodox technoethics is the distinction between the created and the uncreated, to which reference has already been made. This distinction safeguards against the danger of venerating technology as an end in itself, since all technological achievements belong to the realm of the created. Orthodox technoethics recognizes that technology, as part of the created world, has the potential to contribute to theosis, yet it can also lead to human alienation. For this reason, the evaluation of technological developments must be guided by the ultimate purpose of the human person-deification and communion with God.

This distinction also accords with Engelhardt's early observation that the sciences are "structured by value judgments regarding what human beings should be and what they should be able to do" (Engelhardt, 1976). In the realm of technology, this

means that every technological development embodies particular conceptions of human nature and destiny. Orthodox technoethics must evaluate these inherent value assumptions in the light of Orthodox anthropology.

Influenced by the patristic tradition, Engelhardt views the proper use of technology as part of the process leading to theosis. Just as in bioethics the medical art is employed for the healing of the body, so in technoethics technologies can be employed for the spiritual advancement and maturation of the human person. This approach accords with the patristic teaching on the use of material goods: just as the Fathers did not reject material goods but emphasized their proper use, so too Orthodox technoethics does not reject technology but seeks its right and God-pleasing use.

According to Engelhardt, Orthodox Christian ethics is Eucharistic in nature and can be fully understood only within the liturgical context. This principle likewise applies to technoethics. The evaluation of technological developments cannot be undertaken apart from the liturgical life of the Church. Technologies that foster communion, solidarity, and the human capacity to participate in the divine life are assessed positively, whereas those that lead to individualism, alienation, and estrangement from God are judged negatively.

Orthodox technoethics, as shaped by Engelhardt's approach, faces particular challenges in relation to modern technologies such as artificial intelligence and digital technology. The distinction between reason as a gift of God and artificial intelligence as a human creation becomes critical. Orthodox anthropology, as presented by Engelhardt, emphasizes the unique status of the human person as the image of God—a status that cannot be replicated by artificial systems, regardless of their complexity. This does not, however, entail a rejection of artificial intelligence, but rather a proper understanding of its capabilities and limitations.

Engelhardt stresses that the Church bears a particular responsibility to intervene when secular ethics "distorts or assigns immoral content to core moral concepts." Such intervention is not reactionary but advances an alternative vision of the hu-

man–technology relationship. The Church is called not only to offer critique of problematic technological developments but also to provide positive guidance for the creation of technologies that contribute to theosis and the protection of creation. This requires dialogue with technologists and scientists—not from a stance of confrontation, but from one of collaboration, informed by Orthodox values.

As in bioethics, so in technoethics, the Orthodox approach does not aim at producing a manual but at cultivating a pastoral framework grounded in authentic theological discourse. Technoethics, as an extension of theology, must take into account the eschatological destiny of the human person and evaluate technologies in light of their contribution to the ultimate theosis of humanity and the transfiguration of the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through his deconstruction of both Western Christian bioethics and secular bioethics, H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. proposes an entirely different bioethics -radically distinct- which is grounded exclusively in the principles of Orthodox Christian ethos and the liturgical and sacramental life of the Orthodox Christian Church. A study of his work reveals that Orthodox Christian theology does not aim to create a manual of Orthodox Christian bioethics, nor to establish a rigid system thereof. Rather, it offers a pastoral approach to bioethical issues rooted in genuine theological discourse (Keselopoulos, 2011). In the Orthodox Church, ethics is not an autonomous concept; it is an extension of theology (Zizioulas, 2011). Just as Christian ethics seeks to apply the moral principles of the Gospel to human moral life, so too does Christian bioethics endeavor to lead the human person toward perfection -through which alone one becomes a partaker in divine goodness and beatitude (Kefalas, 1897).

Following the reconfiguration of bioethics on the basis of Orthodox Christian theology alone, the conditions were created for extending this approach to broader fields of technological development, given that, from an Orthodox perspective, technology is

neither inherently good nor inherently evil. Indeed, theology "does not aim to hinder technological achievements, but seeks to foster the spiritual maturity of human beings so that they may be capable of making responsible decisions" (Engelhardt, 2000).

Engelhardt's contribution to the formation of an Orthodox Christian bioethics provides the foundation for the development of a comprehensive Orthodox Christian technoethics—one that will not be limited to formulating rules for evaluating technologies, but will promote an integrated way of life in which technology is incorporated within the framework of Orthodox faith and practice. The development of this approach builds on Engelhardt's early observation that "science and the humanities develop out of the same central human concerns" (Engelhardt, 1976). This unity enables Orthodox technoethics to regard technology not as a field foreign to theology, but as one to be integrated into the broader framework of the Orthodox worldview.

If divorced from patristic anthropology and the Eucharistic vision of the world, technoethics risks descending into a technocratic utilitarianism. Orthodox theology proposes a different path: it does not reject technology but situates it within the horizon of salvation and the human relationship with the Creator. The challenge is not merely ethical; it is, in essence, theological: what does it mean to be "human" in the digital and posthuman world?

Therefore, the Orthodox contribution to technoethics lies in its capacity to offer not merely answers to isolated problems but an interpretive framework grounded in the Tradition of the Church, the experience of the Fathers, and life in Christ. In this way, Orthodox theology is called to enrich the international discourse on the ethics of technology with a voice that is at once scientific, spiritual, and ecclesiological.

This contribution will be further enriched when technological achievements are examined through an interreligious lens; such a framework will help ensure that religious traditions do not risk fragmenting into competing moral frameworks, thereby weakening their capacity to address the ethical implications of emerging technologies.

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