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Summary of the doctoral thesis:

HOMO FABRICATUS?
THE STATUS OF THE HUMAN EMBRYO FROM AN
ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE, IN THE CONTEXT OF
CONTEMPORARY BIOTECHNOLOGIES

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Keywords of the paper **Keywords:** situational bioethics, infertility, embryo transfer, implantation, in vitro fertilization, preimplantation genetic diagnosis, embryonic biopsy, stem cells, totipotency, "designer babies", liberal eugenics, transhumanism, "human enhancement", biopolitics, human dignity , SCIP arguments, somatocracy, the sacredness of life, patristic theology, pneumatization, Stanley Harakas, John Breck, Jean Boboc, orthodox anthropology.

General introduction to the topic of the paper

One of the Old Testament books states that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1: 9). This assertion deserves to be considered in the light of the emergence of bioethics since the years 1950-1960. From a certain perspective, it is a modern field, a child of remarkable advances in the biomedical sciences. This reality has brought to the fore a new way of extended scientific understanding but also a technological innovation, which seems to change forever what was known until now about the vulnerabilities of nature and the human mind, as well as about saving, improving and expanding terrestrial life. However, from another perspective, the types of interrogations caused by these advances are among the oldest that man has addressed to himself and his fellows. They activate the meaning of life and death, carrying pain and suffering, the right and power to control our common life and duties, to each other and to nature, in the face of serious dangers to our health and well-being.

The word "bioethics" in the contemporary sense, came to refer not only to a specific field of human research, such as the intersection between ethics and life sciences, but also an academic discipline, a force in medicine, biology and environmental studies but also a perspective. cultural with some consequences. Strictly understood, "bioethics" is "the science of decisions in the living world: medicine and the environment, but it is also the study of ethical challenges and decision-making on living organisms." Understood in a broader sense, it is a field that has spread to many other fields. He reached law and public policy, literary, cultural, historical studies and popular media. It is also present in the disciplines of philosophy, theology and literature, in the fields of medicine, biology, ecology and environment, demography and social sciences. Some authors have resorted to the globalization of the notion of "bioethics" by referring to the study of the dimensions morals of life sciences and health care in an interdisciplinary landscape. This will focus on the broader meaning, place and significance of bioethics. The aim will be to establish not only what the register of specific problems related to

the life sciences means, but also what it has to say about the interaction of ethics with that of human values.

Bioethics is an area that ranges from the private and individual dilemmas faced by doctors or other health care workers in the bed of a dying patient, to the terrible choices of the public and society facing citizens and legislators, while try to design equitable health or environmental policies. Bioethical challenges can be extremely individual or personal - what should I do here and now? - but also community and political - what should we do together as citizens and peers? While the main focus will be on medicine and healthcare, the scope of bioethics has come to encompass a number of areas and disciplines widely grouped under the heading "life sciences". They encompass all those perspectives that seek to understand nature and human behavior, characteristic of the field of social sciences and the natural world that provide the habitat of human and animal life.

From the investigation of the above, it can be highlighted that the scientific and secularizing definitions of the concept of "bioethics" prove the limits within which it falls. None of them relate to the transcendent or the anthropological meaning of creation. The field of secular bioethics remains in the exclusive sphere of the relations between created beings. The Orthodox Church contrasts this type of relationship with the eternal connection between the Creator and the created being. In this sense, "bioethics is a discipline of applied Christian morality and the science that researches and issues moral norms in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, to preserve the anatomical and spiritual integrity of the human being and to morally substantiate the necessary medical act and decisions. in biomedical practice and research".

Orthodox bioethics is also a process of permanent defense of the wonderful creation of the human person and puts at the disposal of man a system of divine-human values, in which the "bios" or the living is in the pronouncing hand of God.

Framing the paper in a thematic field

This paper was developed within the Doctoral School of Theology of the University "December 1, 1918" in Alba Iulia, under the coordination of Prof. Univ. Dr. habil. Daniel Munteanu specialized in systematic and ethical theology, at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology and

Education Sciences, "Valahia" University of Târgoviște and the Faculty of Humanities of the "Otto-Friedrich" University of Bamberg, Germany. The paper falls within the field of bioethics and has an interdisciplinary character.

The semantic roots of bioethics are the Greek word "βίος, via -life, a contemporary term used in bioethical scientific discourse and the word "ethos" which designates the perspective of ethics or morality on the possible biotechnological consequences for human nature. All definitions referring to "bioethics" emphasize the central role of medical science and technology. None of the definitions meets unanimity. One of the technical definitions of the term refers to the systematic study of life sciences and the medical system that involves a variety of ethical methodologies in multidisciplinary interference.

It can be critically stated that, based on a thorough personal research, the evangelical pastor Fritz Jahr (1895-1953), in his work, *Aufsätze zur Bioethik 1924-1948. Werkausgabe* first introduced this term in 1927, when he highlighted it as a moral necessity or obligation. In a critical examination of the categorical imperative proper to Kantian philosophy, he develops the concept of "deliberate situational ethics" as well as the framework for future integrative and global bioethics. His collection of essays proposes a review of people's ethical relationships with animals and plants, but also proposes a "bioethical imperative" for all life forms. Analyzing the new biological and physiological knowledge of his time as well as the moral pressures associated with the development of secular and pluralistic societies, Jahr redefines moral obligations to human and non-human life forms, considering bioethics an academic discipline, fundamental principle and moral virtue. Although his thesis did not have an immediate influence being ignored by his contemporaries, his argument that new science and technology requires new reflection and ethical and philosophical resolution can help clarify the terminology and normative and practical views of contemporary bioethics.

Later, in the early 1970s, American oncologist Van Rensselaer Potter (1911-2001) proposed that bioethics be a frontier science that he called "The Science of Survival," which would integrate the sciences. biology with the ethics of human values. At the same time, Andre Hellegers (1926-1979), a renowned researcher and sociologist in the field of demography, considered bioethics a kind of maieutics, a science capable of rallying values through the dialogue between medicine, philosophy and ethics. He was the first to introduce the term "bioethics" to the university world, academically structuring this discipline and then inserting it in the field of biomedical, political

sciences and the media. He also made a substantial contribution to implementation of a specific methodology, of this new discipline, namely that of interdisciplinarity.

After the familiarization and insertion of this term in academic and scientific circles, the concept of "principalism" was created, which started from the premise that, to analyze particular ethical approaches in the field of medical biotechnology, it is necessary to build a feasible framework for identifying and examining conflicts of an ethical nature containing principles, rules and rights. Thus were born the four fundamental principles of biotics: the principle of autonomy, benevolence, non-maleficence and equity, analyzed and argued from the perspective of medical ethics by renowned bioethicists Tom Beauchamp and James Childress. These principles were born out of the Nazi trial that took place at the end of World War II when the "Nuremberg Code" (1946-1947) was born, which regulated individual rights and freedoms regarding biomedical experiments on individuals. developed by the "Declaration of Helsinki", the "Belmont Report" and the "Oviedo Convention".

Three and a half decades after the standardization of the term, in 2005 UNESCO adopted the "Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights", a document setting out a set of bioethical principles approved by member states. Most of these principles have medicine as their field of application, thus outlining the globalization of bioethics. The context of the development of this discipline represents the direct consequence of two phenomena: a negative one related to the abusive experiments of the biomedical research carried out by the Nazi regime and a positive one related to the extraordinary advances of life sciences. The philosopher Michael Foucault pointed out that bioethics was born out of a need for the possible impacts of science on human rights, becoming a specific concern that has generated a multitude of subfields known as biotechnology, biopower, biopolitics, biosecurity, bioterrorism. or biodiversity. For the first time, bioethics tended to give a full dimension to ethics, given that the concept referred not only to current human beings but also to future generations.

This scientific field addresses three types of bioethics: "general bioethics" which deals with the indigenous principles and values of medical ethics through documentary sources of bioethics, "special bioethics" which analyzes special issues from a medical, ethical and biological perspective such as abortion, organ transplantation, euthanasia, clinical trials, etc. and "clinical bioethics"

or decisional ”which concretely analyzes the practical medical aspects and the clinical situations, in order to choose some principles or criteria for evaluating a specific case. Bioethics is one of the disciplines in which the dialogue between science and faith is permanently present with the active participation of various types of mentality, depending on the religious, cultural and social values of each person. More recently, two bioethical models can be distinguished. These have as their starting point the obvious moral disagreements between Christian and Orthodox conceptions in general about the meaning, value of life and dignity of the human person and the secularizing ones based on the splitting of reason of faith and modern deist conceptions animated by postmodern secularism. In the last two decades, two directions have emerged regarding the content that determines the solutions and positions, regarding the questions related to the issue of dignity and intangibility of human life and person, represented by secular bioethics and Christian bioethics.

Orthodox bioethics reiterates that the analysis of the mystery of the human person and bioethical problems is constantly related to the perspective of life in Christ, having a transcendental character of eschatological and soteriological origin. Christian teaching infuses bioethics with revealed and practicable moral values that go beyond materialism and overestimating the value of human nature to the detriment of its spiritual nature. Characteristic of orthodox bioethics are the approaches in which the development of interpersonal relationships in bioethical decisions is confirmed by the presence of Christian ethics, and the importance of biological life is correlated with the deification of human nature as an expression of man's union with God. It is a certification of the fact that the presence of God in the world, in man, in his life and decisions, is a plenary, defining and concrete reality, as a value in itself and a landmark for the whole creation. The recognition of the living and dynamic presence and manifestation, non-ideologized, of the Creator in creation produces the effect of establishing the relations of faith, moral and practical, between man and God, between man and creation, they reverberating even more in the field of bioethics, where every interpersonal relationship is anchored in a morality full of spiritual content. Orthodox bioethics also has a profound missionary aspect in the sense that the world's opinion must be formed in the direction that religion is also a major factor in the formation and information of human consciousness. No theological dialogue can have an effect if it does not concern such social problems.

The purpose and general objectives of the paper

Invisible in his uterine pocket, barely emerging from non-existence, the human embryo focuses on curiosities and fantasies. He is the bearer of the riddle of origins and has been in the field of contemporary interdisciplinary scientific debates for decades, involving medicine, bioethics, ethics, philosophy and theology. If for centuries the right to life seemed to be a fact gained, then the explosion of biotechnological development has brought back to the center of discussion the right to life before birth. By legalizing abortion, the issue of the right to intrauterine life introduced several forms of humanity with a different status: the first stage is at birth and refers to the question of whether the right to life is the same before and after birth; the second stage refers to the interval from which abortion can no longer be performed, which makes it appear that the embryo would have a different status before and after this date, and the third stage coincides with the production of embryos "in vitro" or the time of experimentation on human embryos should be prohibited.

The working hypothesis or catalyst of this research thesis is related to the scientific effort to argue in detail, empirically and exhaustively, in an interdisciplinary and credible way, that the human embryo possesses the status of a human person from the moment of conception or syngamy and therefore has an intangible, inviolable and inalienable dignity. This paper fills a gap in special bioethical research, and aims to analyze from a scientific and multidisciplinary perspective the issue of the status of the human embryo in the context of biotechnological challenges, namely through the filter of contemporary Orthodox anthropology. The priority emphasis will be placed on human dignity in an interdisciplinary context, which is, in fact, the guiding thread of this doctoral research. As strengths of my doctoral thesis I want to highlight in the study and critical analysis of current specialized works in Europe and America. The following general objectives of the thesis are also original and unique in bioethical research in Romania:

1. Empirical analysis of the dignity of the human embryo from a philosophical and theological perspective. Having as a starting point the approach of the human embryo in ancient philosophy and medicine, filtered through the Kantian prism, I will emphasize the arguments "SCIP" (argument of species, continuity, identity and potentiality) philosophical arguments with direct reference to dignity, uniqueness, identity and the unit of the human embryo.

2. The synthesis of Orthodox anthropology about the human embryo in the anthropology of St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Maximus the Confessor opens a new perspective in contemporary theology and culture, namely by revaluing the Orthodox tradition on the dignity of the human embryo from the first moment of its existence. This synthesis will then be fruitful as well from the perspective of contemporary orthodox anthropology about the value of human dignity in the vision of Father Stăniloae.

3. Implementing the scientific results of Orthodox ethics and reflecting the perspectives of genuine Orthodox deepening in contemporary bioethical discourse. In this sense, the results obtained regarding the human dignity and the status of the human embryo will be submitted to the attention, based on the critical analysis of the contemporary orthodox theologians of international scope: Stanley Harakas, John Breck and Jean Boboc.

4. Approaching the issue of the dignity of the human embryo through the philosophical and medical theological incursion contributes to highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the work.

5. The originality of the treatment of the notions of "human enhancement", "moral enhancement" and "Designer Babies" in relation to the orthodox doctrine of "theosis".

6. Problematizing the challenges of liberal eugenics and transhumanism with their detrimental repercussions on contemporary society, by promoting a discriminatory and unjust eugenic society, which harms human dignity and social justice.

7. This paper aims to be a personal contribution to the profile of contemporary Romanian Orthodox ethics both through interdisciplinary, international and critical discourse, as well as through the conclusions of the research topic.

Research stage

The issue of the status of the human embryo, a topic specific to the field of special bioethics, has been treated in the Romanian scientific literature, tangentially and from a generalist perspective. There is currently no work that deals interdisciplinary exclusively with the topic of the status of the human embryo and that also involves the arguments of patristic and contemporary orthodox theology and anthropology. However, secular authors from different scientific fields have approached this subject through interdisciplinarity. For the topicality of the

research topic, there are a series of Romanian authors who have directly or indirectly analyzed the status of the human embryo.

The Romanian Orthodox theological bioethical literature on the subject of the human embryo and the subject of human dignity is relatively modest and as stated in informed voices "the number of theologians who carry out current and constantly public research in this field is, unfortunately, derisory." However, there are works, but not very recent ones, that treat this thesis tangentially. One of the theologians and pioneers who wrote papers on the subject of the beginning of human life, Father Professor Ilie Moldovan was a competent and knowledgeable critic on the issue of abortion. One of the founders and supporters of the "Pro-vita" Association, he focused his attention on aspects related to divine intervention on the human act of procreation, the origin, significance and value of unborn human life from the first moment of existence. Another issue addressed is related to contemporary challenges of procreation, such as voluntary infertility, contraception and infamy. A paper addressing the topic of this research was developed by Father Ilie Moldovan and doctor Christa-Todea Gross, which deals with issues about the development and status of the human embryo. Another reference work from this period, in fact an orthodox bioethics textbook, which analyzes in a whole chapter the problem of medically assisted procreation, with reference to the moral aspects of "in vitro" fertilization, is the one elaborated by His Eminence Irineu Pop Bistrițeanul and entitled Bioethics Course, published by Renașterea Publishing House, in Cluj-Napoca in 2005.

Analyzing the works of the last decade of Orthodox bioethics, it can be seen that there are works that directly or indirectly address the current research topic. A work of this type is elaborated by Ștefan Iloaie who analyzes in a subchapter the imminent negative moral repercussions on the human person, the excessive use of the reproductive biotechnology, reiterating at the same time what is the Christian meaning of life. The paper has a general character, in the sense that it is concerned with pointing out birth, suffering and death from the perspective of Orthodox ethics and no special attention is paid to the dignity or status of the human embryo through the filter of multidisciplinary.

Theologian Sebastian Moldovan, in his book "Essays on Bioethics", critically analyzes in a twenty-page chapter in terms of biological data, the significance of embryonic appendages, the primitive line and the importance of embryonic totipotentiality, as arguments in favor of individuality in embryo development human. However, no theological arguments are evoked in

this context regarding the dignity of the human embryo from the first moment of its existence. George Stan, analyzes in eleven pages the medically assisted procreation from a biotechnological point of view and then concludes about the biotechnological dangers.

The paper does not address interdisciplinary the status of the human embryo or the issue of its dignity. On the same line is another work by the same author which is a development of the aforementioned work. The volume edited by Nicolae Răzvan Stan, sums up articles on human dignity. However, legal and philosophical approaches to the status of the human embryo rather than those of a theological nature are analyzed. Mircea Gelu Buta analyzes in his book perspectives of Christian bioethics and the identity of the human person, and in the chapter dedicated to applied bioethics, refers to the moral challenges related to the birth of the child and to the implications that reside from the birth of people with physical and mental disabilities. The paper does not focus on the status of the human embryo and for this reason it is not given special attention. The author's references are general and do not imply biological, ethical or theological arguments regarding the dignity of the embryo.

Among the Romanian bioethics journals that analyze medically, philosophically, ethically and sociologically the issue of human embryo status and in vitro fertilization, the "Romanian Journal of Bioethics" published in Iasi and the "Studia Bioethica" magazine appear under the patronage of "Babeş-Bolyai" University. from Cluj-Napoca. There are also a series of articles that address tangentially the subject of this research topic in volumes IV, VIII and IX of the works of the National Symposium "Doctors and the Church" in Bistrita in which the topics are treated multidisciplinary. The lectures were published by Renaşterea Publishing House in Cluj-Napoca in 2006, 2010, 2011. From a critical perspective, it can be stated that, in general, both the mentioned journals and the published scientific communications analyze the problem of human dignity and status. in certain areas of research and do not aim at defining or interdisciplinary empirical analysis of the dignity and status of the human embryo.

The international orthodox theological literature is based on the works of contemporary orthodox theologians who have questioned the status of the human embryo and its dignity from the moment of conception. However, there were theologians of other denominations who approached this topic. The most important, however, remain American Orthodox theologians.

Hugo Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. can be considered the father of American Orthodox bioethics, due to his important contribution to the arguments, directions, and specifics of

Christian bioethics. He is best known for his work translated into Romanian and mentioned above but also due to the fact that he participated in an international theological symposium at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Alba Iulia, where he received the title of "Doctor Honoris Causa" of the University "December 1, 1918." There are other works of his bioethics in which he radiographs postmodernity through the prism of secular and orthodox bioethics. One of these analyzes morality in bioethics in the secular age. Another work of interest concerns how secular humanism has influenced contemporary bioethics, to determine whether there could be a common morality between bioethics and humanism. Another work edited by Engelhardt analyzes contemporary bioethics based on critical considerations and focuses on the role of society and political ideology in the development of bioethics. He is also the editor a collection of bioethics essays dealing with the problem of repeated failure of attempts to obtain a universal set of standards in bioethics. It is important to mention here that two of the disciples of the great American bioethicist continue his work. Ana Smith Iltis and Mark Cherry Stanley Harakas analyze the biotechnological challenge of "in vitro" fertilization from an Orthodox perspective. The same author in another book analyzes the orthodox theological principles and resources of bioethics. Another theologian of international notoriety, Vigen Guroian, bases the principle of the dignity of the human person on the theology of the resurrection and analyzes the orthodox Christian ethics from the perspective of the biblical and liturgical typology. He also argues for human rights in Orthodox Christian ethics through the prism of Christological theology, and in his most recent book, Guroian analyzes the issue of fatherhood and motherhood from the perspective of contemporary bioethical challenges, without specifically addressing the status of the human embryo.

The American theologian John Breck critically evaluates from an Orthodox perspective the contemporary challenges of the human embryo through the prism of biblical and patristic theology in his book "God with Us", and in "Longing for God", he analyzes the status of the unborn from the perspective of Orthodox ethics and liturgical dignity. of the human person. It should be pointed out critically that the three orthodox bioethicists, Harakas, Guroian and Breck, are the spearhead of contemporary orthodox bioethics in terms of the dignity of the human embryo. They found in the biblical, patristic, moral, and liturgical resources of Orthodoxy the essential and credible arguments for the present subject. However, their approach is not necessarily interdisciplinary, but eminently theological.

A recent Orthodox bioethicist, little known in Romania, is Jean Boboc who concentrates in one of his works, elements of Orthodox theo-anthropology, showing the dangers of eugenics that can become reality by manipulating the human embryo. Although his work has philosophical-anthropological dimensions, Boboc highlights the patristic anthropology of St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Maximus the Confessor as fundamental resources of Orthodox bioethics. The more than 700 pages do not directly address the issue of the status of the human embryo but have many emphasis on orthodox bioethics regarding the human zygote. Equally revealing is his work that radiographs from an Orthodox perspective in 460 pages the transhumanism with its detrimental implications on humanity. It is a book of critical analysis of posthumanist anthropology, which is countered by the arguments of patristic and contemporary orthodox anthropology. Boboc does not specifically analyze the status of the human embryo but does it focuses more on the consequences of biotechnology animated by liberal eugenics and the transhumanist current.

The international secular scientific literature in English is extremely fertile in terms of the thesis of the research thesis. There are also older works that tangentially address the research topic, but the works considered more important in the last decade will be evoked here. The philosophers Robert George and Christopher Tollefsen argue in their book from a philosophical point of view the status of the human embryo, through the prism of scientific observation and new objections related to the public perception of the person's quality of the embryo. The work is also an apology for the dignity of the human person. It can be critically stated that issues of dignity from a social or biological perspective are not treated, and the theological approach is absent. The collective volume, *Religion and Transhumanism. The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement* brings together a series of studies that analyze the trends of the transhumanist current and the issue of human improvement in relation to the ethical norms of the Christian faith and the resources of contemporary Catholic anthropology. However, collective studies do not bring together analyzes related to the status of the human embryo or human dignity, but only offer new perspectives on the meaning of reproductive biotechnology in the context of transhumanist anthropology.

The Scottish bioethicist Calum Mackellar, evokes in his book the substantial, relational and functional aspects of the human embryo, as theological arguments of the creation of man according to the divine image. The author aims to prove that the embryo is a human being from

the first moment of its existence, through the prism of Anglican theology. Although the paper addresses the interdisciplinary, biological-theological topic, it does not analyze philosophical, medical or social arguments. Lynn Morgan, a professor of anthropology, analyzes the perception of the human embryo from a historical and cultural perspective. The author captures in her book, the social perspective on the human embryo during the development of contemporary biotechnologies. It is necessary to state critically that a careful reading betrays the eminently feminist character of the book. The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics critically dissects the history of contemporary eugenics and biopolitics. The paper acquaints the reader with the way in which the eugenic current was born and developed. It cannot be said that the volume deals exclusively with issues related to the manipulation of the human embryo or human dignity, but shows how the phrase "Designer Babies" has become a real possibility of contemporary biotechnology due to biopolitical legislation. The collective work edited by Joseph Schenker, brings together articles and studies related to ethical dilemmas that arise in the context of manipulation biotechnologies in assisted reproduction medical. It can be critically stated that the evocations of the authors involve exclusively nuances of medical and legislative ethics, without connections with Christian ethics.

The German scientific literature on bioethics in terms of the dignity and status of the human embryo is also notable. There are several reference papers on this topic that were written and published prior to 2010. They are also important and relevant to the state of the research topic and those that appeared later in the last decade, of which some reference papers will be mentioned here. The professor of applied ethics, Giovanni Maio, filters through the prism of the ethics of Aristotelian virtue, Kantian duty, utilitarianism and contemporary medical ethics, the challenges of biotechnology on the human embryo. The same author analyzes from an ethical perspective the concept of "Designer Babies", which he considers a dangerous pretext for the dangers of liberal eugenics. In *Geschäftsmodell Gesundheit*, Maio evaluates ethically the health policies that promote the improvement of human nature through medical biotechnologies. These three works by Maio delve into themes of special bioethics, which are interpreted from the perspective of Christian ethics. Although there are references to the status of the human embryo, the three works do not dedicate a generous or interdisciplinary space to this subject, summarizing only in the statement that the prospect of granting a definitive status to the human embryo

depends on the visions of moral and ethical currents that medicine adopts. , as biotechnological development progresses.

Research methodology

This paper will use the historical method to highlight the possibility of knowing the development of human embryo manipulation biotechnologies in the dynamics of their development and to present the evolution of liberal eugenics and transhumanist anthropology from the perspective of biopolitics throughout modern and postmodern history. Another method of research is the comparative one, which will be used to elucidate certain aspects related to the status of the human embryo, aspects that interfere with research in the field of theology, philosophy, medicine and ethics. At the same time, this method will highlight the profile of orthodox bioethics and secular bioethics in relation to the issue of the status and dignity of the human embryo. Regarding the understanding of the biotechnological procedures for manipulating the human embryo, the descriptive method will be used, because it will best outline the moral dangers of "in vitro" fertilization or preimplantation genetic diagnosis.

Limits of research

The theme of this scientific research aims in principle to analyze in detail, elaborated and empirically the issue of human embryo status from an Orthodox perspective in the age of biotechnology by highlighting the moral dangers of changing human nature according to the phrase "homo fabricatus" and the thesis on apology of status and dignity. human embryo from the first moment of its existence. The paper will analyze exhaustively the issue of human embryo status from the perspective of secular bioethics and orthodox bioethics, having as relevant period the interdisciplinary studies, works and researches of the last decade, in the international and domestic academic space, with special references to contemporary American and French orthodox bioethics.

The limits of the thesis research are determined primarily by the lack of knowledge of the neo-Greek, Serbian and Russian languages. With the exception of the synodal documents translated into English and French, the other works in the aforementioned languages folded on the present research were not consulted. Access to this literature would have facilitated the understanding of the topic in the Orthodox space in the Balkans and beyond. Another limitation

of the research is represented by the rapidity and vivacity of the developments and performances of the new biotechnologies for manipulating the human embryo. As a consequence of this aspect, the specialized scientific literature is also as animated, in the sense that what seems to be a novelty in the present, in the very near future, can be obsolete. Because of this, moral dilemmas and challenges determine the Orthodox Church to demonstrate agility, vigilance and speed, in retaliating and outlining its public position on these new and permanent biotechnological challenges that have plagued human life since its inception its biological.

Brief presentation of the chapters of the paper

A summary of the research topic will be presented as follows. **In the first chapter** called *Contemporary Biotechnologies for the manipulation of the human embryo and the dignity of man as the image of God*, the moral dangers will be highlighted, through various manipulations of the human embryo in the biomedical laboratory. The procedure of "in vitro" fertilization and preimplantation genetic diagnosis with all the stages, risks, compromises, dilemmas and moral challenges to which couples or families who resort to such biotechnological procedures are exposed will be analyzed in detail. It will be integrated in the theme of the first chapter and the interfaith perspective related to embryonic stem cell research and embryo instrumentalization for scientific purposes. In the second part of the chapter we will analyze the two ideologies or currents that stand at the basis of human embryo manipulations, respectively "eugenics" which will be presented from a historical and contemporary perspective, as well as "transhumanism" as a new contemporary anthropology, which militates through the intervention of biotechnology on human nature, for the "posthuman" man.

The main points of this chapter are related to the originality of the approach of biotechnologies to manipulate the human embryo and the position of the Christian Church towards embryonic stem cells that come from embryos artificially created in the laboratory, embryos that are then destroyed. The integration of the phrase "Designer Babies" is also original, as an expression of biopolitics through which liberal eugenics intends to bring to the attention of public opinion, the possibility of birth through genetic manipulation of the human embryo "the perfect child". The notions of "human enhancement" and "spiritual enhancement" are also original as transhumanist desideratum of the creation with the help of biotechnology of the "new man". One of the results of the research already presented in the introduction is that, for the first

time in the scientific literature, the term "bioethics" was first used by German pastor Fritz Jahr, while the American oncologist Van Potter implemented it about five decades later. Late. Another result is related to the argument that, beyond the positive aspect, biotechnology can lead by manipulating the embryo to incalculable and unimaginable repercussions, and when it is out of control, it evades all the principles and precepts of human morality.

The link between Chapter I and **Chapter II** entitled *The Status of the Human Embryo and Human Dignity in an interdisciplinary approach* is that, in the face of biotechnological challenges, other areas of scientific research are competent and have the resources to advocate for the dignity and integrity of the human embryo. from the first moment of its existence. For this reason, this chapter is intended to be an interdisciplinary foray into gnosis, philosophy, and ancient medicine, benefiting from the competence of biblical tradition and exegesis to clarify how the human embryo was understood and perceived. The main points of this chapter are related to the originality of the approach to human dignity as a "goal in itself" from a Kantian perspective and the identification of the difference between legality and morality. The novelty of approaching this topic is that the legalization of human embryo manipulation by legislation does not automatically imply the moral act of biotechnological procedures. Another original aspect of the chapter is related to the analysis of the "SCIP" arguments, in order to defend the status and dignity of the human embryo. These four arguments that are part of the area of contemporary philosophy (the argument of species, continuity, identity, and potential), are completely unique in Romanian bioethical literature and the result of researching these arguments lead to the conclusion that the human embryo is a human person because belongs to the human species, embryonic development is a continuous process without syncope, the embryo is unique and identical with the person born from it and from the moment of syngamy it contains in its genetic material the potential of the human being. Another result of the research is the fact that the analysis of the biological status of the human embryo confirms what has been mentioned above, namely that the dignity of the human embryo also resides from the biological perspective of the present debate.

The third and last chapter, called *The Status of the Human Embryo and Human Dignity from the Perspective of Orthodox Bioethics*, is an eminently theological one and must be considered the "heart" of this thesis. This chapter argues from the perspective of patristic and contemporary anthropology, the position of Orthodox theology on the status of the human

embryo. As a starting point, the patristic perspective of Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint Maximus the Confessor was analyzed, then filtered by the authentic and profound thought of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. The original approach of this analysis led to the conclusion that just as human nature is the culmination of the plasticization of divine rationality, through the incarnation of the Logos, so the embryo is a "plasticized rationality" of God. The originality and novelty of this chapter also lies in the perspectives on the dignity of the human embryo in the three international bioethicists Stanley Harakas, John Breck and Jean Boboc. By analyzing Harakas's bioethical thinking, eleven strengths of Orthodox theology have been identified that underpin the dignity and integrity of the embryo as a human being. The examination of John Breck's bioethical vision resulted in the highlighting of the concept of "sacredness of life" and the understanding of contemporary biotechnologies for manipulating the human embryo through the filter of Orthodox ethics. A new and little known presence in the Romanian bioethical space is that of the theologian Jean Boboc. The critical analysis of his bioethical thinking led to the discovery of a new and original concept in orthodox bioethics, regarding the "pneumatization of the zygote". Original and completely new is the phrase "the hegemony of somatocracy", as an expression of the dangers of transhumanist anthropology, which militates intensely for the artificialization of human nature.

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