

JUNE 2021

Dear Members of Societas Ethica

A significant amount of time has passed since our last newsletter. Consequently, we would like to inform you in this newsletter about our latest developments. We hope that you are all doing well and still coping with the challenges posed by the COVID - 19 pandemic. As a Society, we have tried to adapt to these challenges as best as possible and to find innovative ways to stay in contact with you. In an attempt to respond creatively to the challenges posed by the COVID - 19 pandemic, the Society has decided to hold the first online conference in it's history. We would like to invite you all to take part in this premiere.

Postponement of the Sarajevo Conference

Because of the challenges posed by the on-going pandemic, the Board of Societas Ethica and our partners in Sarajevo have decided to postpone the conference on "Intercultural Ethics" to 2023. We believe that the marriage of the topic of "intercultural ethics" with the location of Sarajevo is inspiring and fruitful and want desperately to maintain the synergy created by this marriage by holding the "Intercultural Ethics" conference physically in vibrant Sarajevo. We deeply regret the repeated deferment of the conference on "Intercultural Ethics," but hope that you will agree with our reason for doing so.

Fortunately, our partners in Sarajevo are able to provide their beautiful facilities in 2023. So we are more than happy to announce that the conference will take place in Sarajevo in 2023. When the time comes, the call for papers will be published on the Societas Ethic website and we will include on the website any relevant information regarding the program, the keynote speakers, the conference venue, accommodation and travel information.

Annual Conference 2021 (online): Time of Crisis - Time of Hope

As a replacement for the postponed Sarajevo conference, we will hold an online conference for the first time in the history of Societas Ethica. The topic of the conference is Time of Crisis – Time of Hope. By this choice of topic, we would like to explore not only the contribution that ethics is able to provide for a more fundamental understanding of the origins and the reasons for crisis, but also the potential hope that ethics is able to give.

The conference will take place from August 19-21, 2021 (via Zoom). The General Assembly will take place on August 20, 2021 (also via Zoom). A separate invitation to all members will follow via email.

For the latest news regarding the 2021 Annual Conference, please visit our website. For those persons interested in playing an active roll in the conference, please submit a paper proposal or contact us directly via email (galia.assadi@evhn.de). The Call for Papers will follow on the next page. Please distribute the Call to anyone who might be interested.



Arne Manzeschke, Preses
Galia Assadi, Scriba
Carina Weber, Quaestor
Kincsö Nemes, Administrative Support

2021 Annual Conference Call for Papers

DEADLINE: 15 JUNE 2021

TIME OF CRISIS - TIME OF HOPE

Societas Ethica's 57th Annual Conference 2021

August 19-21, 2021 (via zoom)

Crises reveal social and structural injustices, harms, and shortcomings that otherwise go unnoticed or are pushed to the margins. They may also be – or become – times of hope. How is hope reflected in approaches to ethics? May these reflections help to respond to the current crisis, or could they also foster the illusion of simple solutions or a “return to normal” and thereby prevent more dramatic changes? We invite you to submit papers that reflect upon the transitory moment we find ourselves in, with the Pandemic still ongoing but with many signs that it will be possible to contain it.

The Annual Conference 2021 will take place via zoom and in a different format than the usual in person conferences. In addition to keynote lectures on Thursday evening, we will have two sessions on Friday, August 20, and two sessions on Saturday, August 21st. They will take place from 3pm-4.30pm and 5.15pm-6.45pm CET. Each session will last 90 minutes, with up to 4 speakers. We especially encourage panel submissions, but individual presentations are also welcome. In both formats, each single presentation should not exceed 15 minutes.

At our conference, we want to strike a balance between theoretical inquiries and historical or contemporary case studies. We welcome contributions from philosophical, theological, and applied ethics, as well as from political and social theory, history, psychology, and the sciences. The conference languages will be English, French and German. The deadline for submitting proposals is 15 June 2021.

You may submit proposals for one of the following formats:

- a. **Panel proposals with 3 panelists and one facilitator.** The presentations should be under a common title or theme, which the facilitator briefly introduces at the beginning. Before submitting, please make sure that you contact the panelists and get their approval to be on the panel with you. Panel Submissions must entail: Title and theme (150 words); Abstracts of each contribution (300 words each); Information on contributors.
- b. **Individual papers.** These papers should take up the theme of the conference in line with the suggestions below. The conference organization will seek to assemble the papers on related topics in one session. Abstract of 300 words.
- c. **Wildcard papers.** We encourage junior scholars to submit proposals of their current work, and these do not need to reflect the conference theme. Abstracts of 300 words.

2021 Annual Conference Call for Papers (Continued)

Proposals should consider the virtual format:

- The sessions with individually submitted papers will be moderated by a member of the board of Societas Ethics. The moderator will respond to all technical questions, provide the link to the session, and launch the meeting.
- The same applies to panel sessions; however, the moderation during the session will be assured by the panel's facilitator.
- Panel facilitators and presenters of individual papers must agree to meet at least once with the moderator before the conference.
- Papers must not be longer than 15 minutes each.
- Each session must provide enough space for a discussion.

Themes for Papers. We invite papers in the following areas:

- **Philosophies and theologies of crisis and hope** and their status and/or role in ethical reflection
- **Signs of hope:** what initiatives, social practices and/or movements, and what policies in European societies (and beyond) demonstrate that this time of crisis comes with the opportunity to radically change the current status quo with regard to poverty, discrimination, health disparities, or political disenfranchisement?
- Is there room for **new utopias or a future-oriented ethics** - and how could this look like?

In addition to papers that look at the concepts of crisis and hope theoretically, we invite you to present your research on the following crisis points:

- **COVID19 and the crisis of health:** illness, death, mental health crisis, public health and justice, global health, etc.
- **The crisis of democracy:** the increasing power of authoritarianism and populism, conspiracy theories, and the undermining of democratic institutions
- **The crisis of climate change:** the lack of political determination to handle the crisis effectively, the failure of national self-regulation five years after Paris, the role of social movements, and global climate justice, etc..
- **Migration and the Refugee Crisis:** the ongoing crisis at the European Union borders, the international migration crisis, an assessment of the Global Compact as an instrument of regulating migration, etc.

You are welcome to add a theme that might not be expressed in this list.

Paper proposals should contain no more than 300 words (excluding bibliography), and clearly present a question or argument addressing one of the aforementioned topics. The deadline is 15 June 2021.

2021 Annual Conference Call for Papers (Continued)

Please send in the following two documents as Word attachments to **Dr. Galia Assadi** at galia.assadi@evhn.de using the subject line “Societas Ethica 2021 Conference.”

Document 1: Your name, first name, email address, institutional address, the title of your abstract, the topic under which your paper proposal falls, and, if eligible, your application to participate in the Young Scholars’ Award competition.

Document 2: Your paper proposal including bibliography (max. 10 references), keywords and title with all identifying references removed. Please use Times New Roman 12 pt for body, references and keywords, and Arial (bold) 16 pt for headline.

The abstract of the conference papers will be published in the conference proceedings. Selected papers (voluntary) will be published in a special issue of the journal *De Ethica. A Journal of Philosophical, Theological and Applied Ethics*.

Reports on COVID-19

In an attempt to sustain the lively communication and exchange on matters of public import for which Societas Ethica is so well known during these difficult times, we asked some of our Board Members as well our former president, Gorän Collste, to report on the unique way their respective countries chose to deal with the challenges posed by the pandemic.

PROF. DR. ARNE MANZESCHKE

Lutheran University of Applied Science Nuremberg, Germany
(Translation: Yan Wagner)

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

It is said that the COVID-19 pandemic acts like a burning glass in which things become larger and sharper. What do we see more clearly now? And are we also seeing something new? As a society are we ready to really look more closely? Are we ready to learn that “after the pandemic” cannot go back to “before the pandemic”? Are we ready to face the challenges that are now so clearly evident at all levels of our society? Will we resist the all too understandable longing to return to “normality” and draw consequences? Because we have noticed that something has to change – and that something can change.

We have known for some time that our (the German in my case) education system produces and reinforces inequalities. The pandemic, coupled with the deficits in digitization, made this grotesquely and embarrassingly clear. But what will this mean for the children and students affected by it, for their further development, for their degrees, their careers, their self-esteem? How do we want to take account in the future of the fact that digitalization is fundamentally changing our ways of acquiring, retaining and passing on knowledge, and that we therefore need to carefully recalibrate our notion of education, upbringing and skills. This does not mean simply expanding the networks and multiplying the number of end devices. But it also means accepting the pedagogical challenge of this epistemic break and rewriting it for a very heterogeneous society with its very different preconditions and requirements.

Reports on COVID-19 (Continued)

We could all have known for a long time that our health care system has been transformed into profit-making units through the economization of recent years and has become increasingly “sewn to the edge”. It is not surprising that this had to fall on our feet in the pandemic – at most, it is surprising that things have not (yet) gotten worse. It is not surprising that those who were being applauded and hailed as system-relevant heroes are being told the next moment that in times of maximum debt due to COVID-19, higher rates are not possible. The fact that in healthcare some of the promised bonuses have still not been paid out is as shameful as it is expectable. This is based on the insight that social recognition and its economic remuneration do not go hand in hand with system relevance, i.e. social and productive importance for a society, but depend on economic power and political representation. If we are really serious about “system relevance”, then there is a considerable need for change here.

What consequences do we draw from the insight into the situation in nursing homes and homes for the elderly under COVID-19 conditions – where the highest death toll is paid in this pandemic? The fact that being old, dying, disability and death are not among the attractive items in our society trimmed for efficiency and functionality is not new. In the COVID-19 pandemic, however, once again it became abundantly clear that old, dying people and those with disabilities could lose their self-determination and dignity overnight, and that suddenly and very drastically others could determine what happened to them – whether they could understand this, wanted to or not. The ban on contact had not only locked out relatives. People who were dependent on everyday assistance because of their disability were suddenly cut off from it or exposed to an incalculable risk. How should these people, who are in need of help and care, be appreciated in the future? It is unacceptable that their fundamental rights to self-determination and a dignified life are unceremoniously curtailed for reasons of health protection. Here we have a problem as a society that cannot be remedied by shaming a professional group that is notoriously understaffed in its work.

The fact that Germany entered the field of digitalization as “uncharted territory” only a few years ago is often laughed at and illustrated with a critique of the dead spots in the republic. But the fact that such a digital infrastructure with the corresponding devices could become the central medium in times of tightened contact restrictions makes one wonder. It is the many video conferences, the electronic communication and trade channels that keep an important part of society running and together. This is not a plea for “Digitalisierung first, Bedenken second” (this was a campaign slogan of the party FDP in 2017: “digitalization first, concerns second”). But it does mean reflecting more closely on the conditions of a modern society and shaping them accordingly, because the opportunities for participation of many, if not all, people depend on this. Nevertheless, digitalization is not the overall solution that can now be applied to all social encounters to make everything nicer, better and more optional. The digitized registration procedures for an immunization appointment make it clear in a curious way – if it were not so serious – that people cannot simply be replaced by machines and that contact between people and machines can and must be made much better.

I don't want to conjure up the glib talk of the crisis, which is always also an opportunity. I consider that to be pure cynicism in view of the suffering, disruption and destruction that accompany this pandemic. But it would be fatal if we – individually and socially – made nothing out of this massive disruption of our orders and routines other than to return to them as quickly as possible. As understandable as the longing is that (almost) everything should be as it was before, this wish misses the possibilities and necessities of this situation.

Reports on COVID-19 (Continued)

This pandemic has shown that it is suddenly possible to do things that were previously considered impossible: CO2 emissions can be drastically reduced. In view of the pandemic, enormous restrictions are possible. What could be done in view of the hardly less urgent climate crisis? Money doesn't seem to be the problem – at least not in our parts of the global north, where a “bazooka” is supposed to deliver the big “bang”. Sure, it all has to be paid back someday – by future generations, who may now be suffering the most from the curtailment of their prospects. But perhaps they would be willing to pay this price if we involved them more and really spent the money wisely.

It is internet and pharmaceutical companies, of all people, that are helping us to endure this pandemic and – if all goes well – to survive the majority of it. And above all the people who work for months in the clinics and homes for the survival of people beyond their own breaking point, who risk their own health, isolate themselves from their families partly for safety reasons, and watch and endure the horror of mass death. And all those who, in families, in risky workplaces or through their creativity, set an example of solidarity and perseverance. We can only do it on both sides at once: the technical and the social. But this is precisely where the inequities intensify: While there is no shortage of money for masks, Zoom licenses or even vaccines in Germany and other European countries, there is no sign that caregivers, medical staff, cashiers, cultural workers or cleaners would be paid to the same extent.

The situation is complex and confusing, simple answers and quick solutions are honestly not to be had – also because the matter can only be dealt with globally. We will only be safe if everyone else in the world is safe. This means that when it comes to the distribution of vaccines, ventilation places and personnel, we have to think beyond our small world and direct our energies to the well-being of all people. Think globally, you can't get any smaller. And there are encouraging signs to be seen: the WHO's global Covax strategy, the European idea of joint vaccine procurement (not necessarily its implementation). All very laborious, slower than going it alone nationally, but – if done well – with more vision and sustainability.

Take a closer look and learn something new. That could be a lesson. It's not about knowing better than the others. It's about putting that better knowledge to work for everyone else and, in a sense, coming out of this pandemic stronger with a global immune system.

PROF. DR. ROMAN GLOBOKAR

Assistant Professor at University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology (Slovenia)

Ethical questions in the COVID-19 epidemic in Slovenia

In Slovenia, the first infection with the SARS-CoV-2 was confirmed on the 4th of March 2020, on and by the 12th of March, an epidemic was officially proclaimed. Slovenia was among the most successful countries in the fight against the epidemic in the first wave in the spring. The radical measures were taken in time and people respected them. In the first 12 weeks, there were 111 deaths related to COVID-19. There were many problems in health-care institutions and retirement homes. The crisis has revealed shortcomings in the country's health and social system - notably the lack of necessary resources to deal with the crisis and the depletion of capacities in both areas. On 24 March 2020, National Medical Ethics Committee (NMEC) adopted a position on the decision of physicians regarding the inclusion of respirators in the treatment of severely affected patients with COVID-19. It opposed setting an upper age limit in determining the priority treatment of patients. Decisions should be

Reports on COVID-19 (Continued)

based on medical criteria, and in individual cases, it should be determined when the use of a respirator in the patient is still appropriate. In the same statement, the commission also called on those responsible to provide adequate protection for all health professionals, as it is up to them how the epidemic will be managed. Despite very insufficient resources and limited capacities in hospitals, Slovenia survived the first part of the epidemic very successfully and the health care system did not collapse.

A completely different story, however, is happening in the second wave of the epidemic since the beginning of October 2020. On the 15th of January 2021, the total number of deaths related to COVID-19 is 3121. Since mid-October, there were between 20 and 66 deaths a day and the numbers are not slowing down despite the new lockdown. Since the 19th of October 2020, all gatherings of more than six people are prohibited and there is a curfew between 9.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. All schools are closed, and all teaching has been going on exclusively remotely for three months now. In my opinion, remote schooling is one of the biggest ethical issues of the current crisis. Fearing the collapse of the health care system, the government dare not reopen schools. However, this leaves great consequences for many schoolchildren, especially those from deprived families, and burdens the parents of school-age children. In fact, more than 70% of the economy is running smoothly in the time of lockdown, while schools are not open to even the youngest children. I don't think the government has set the right priorities.

Hospitals are at the limit of their capabilities and more than half of all deaths caused by COVID have occurred in nursing homes. Due to the management of the health crisis, the government is restricting public life, which is also causing opposition among a growing number of citizens. Many also link resistance to measures against the spread of the epidemic to opposition to the policies of the current center-right government. These days, a vote of no confidence is being prepared due to the government's failure to manage the crisis. The vaccine that Slovenia receives under the agreement of the EU countries certainly brings hope. However, according to research, almost half of Slovenes are skeptical and do not intend to be vaccinated, so one of the challenges of politics will be to convince citizens of this responsible and necessary behavior.

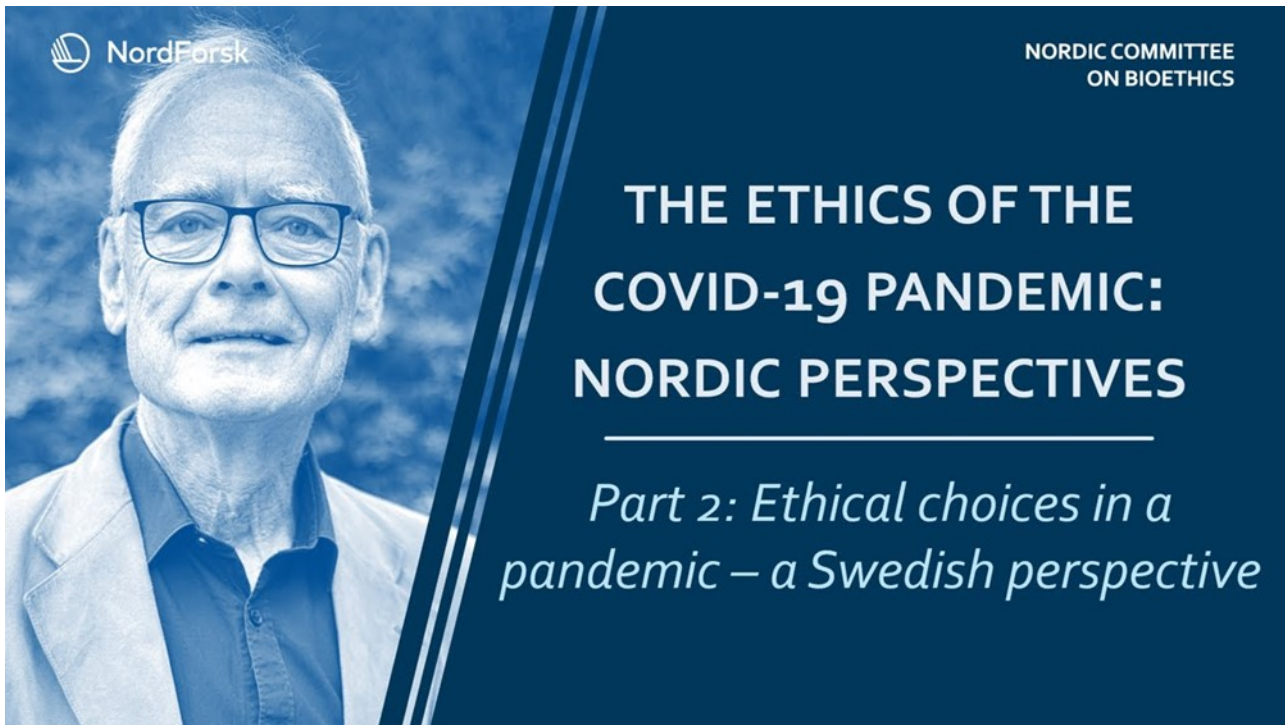
On the 11th of December 2020, National Medical Ethics Committee (NMEC) issued an opinion on the priority groups for vaccination. For the first group, it identified the elderly in nursing homes and the most exposed medical staff and workers in nursing homes, followed by medical staff, then chronic patients and then patients over 80 and over 70 and then people in occupations most exposed to working with large numbers of people (e.g. teachers) and finally all other residents.

I hope that those responsible will be more successful in communicating with the public in the future and that they will be persuaded to vaccinate and to respect other measures to control the epidemic in Slovenia.

Reports on COVID-19 (Continued)

PROF. DR. GÖRAN COLLSTE

Linköping University, Sweden



[Göran Collste: Ethical choices in a pandemic – a Swedish perspective - YouTube](#)

PROF. DR. HILLE HAKER

Loyola University, Chicago

In mid-January 2021, the numbers in the United States are incredibly high: almost 24 million people are infected by SARS-CoV-2, and the number of deaths will soon reach 400.000 – a quarter of the global deaths caused by COVID-19. No other country has seen such devastating rates, and this is not only a tragedy for the “richest country on earth” who often claims to also be the “greatest.” It is also a massive failure of governance and the Trump administration in 2020, and the dire effect of decades of policies that denied Americans social and economic human rights.

Transportation, education, medical centers or social services – poverty spells out in the lack of many things, both materially and immaterially. Racial inequality is reflected in the housing segregation, the food insecurity, the lack of political and/or professional representation, and less public participation (Wright 2020). African-Americans account for 33% of the hospitalizations due to COVID-19. They make up 13% of the population (Mahajan 2020). Four times more women dropped out of the work force, according to a study (Ewing-Nelson 2020). Still, the underlying problems are not to be reduced to race and gender – they also reveal the radical

Reports on COVID-19 (Continued)

economic injustice in the United States as well as globally: the roughly 650 American billionaires gained almost 1 trillion USD since March 2020, and worldwide, Forbes estimates that the 2,200-plus billionaires in the world have collectively gotten \$1.9 trillion richer in 2020. Ed Yong lists five factors that contributed to the disastrous US response: chronic underfunding of public health, an inefficient healthcare system, racist policies, the shredding of the social safety net, and social media platforms that spread misinformation and conspiracy theories (Yong 2020).

At first, the pandemic was considered to be the “big cities plague,” but by the fall of 2020 it had become the “rural plague,” too. Many states are by now on the edge of capacity in hospitals, not the least due to the fact that community hospitals have been systematically closed over the last few decades (Darby 2019). Whenever the governors tried to enforce mandatory mask-wearing or other mitigating measures, they were stopped by their Republican-led State Houses, mocked by the president, or protested by civil groups who self-described as the defenders of liberty and militant protectors of the people, often blending with Christian nationalists. Throughout the summer and the fall, the president urged his supporters to never accept his potential loss in the election. As we now know, on January 6th, 2021, these supporters followed through and stormed the Capitol, trying to stop the formal certification of Joe Biden’s election as 46th President. Obviously, this attempted Coup cannot be separated from the pandemic (Haker 2020).

Still, the majority of the American people starkly disagree – with Donald Trump and with the policies of the Republican Party whose members make up no more than 25% of the population. While the federal government failed them, states and local authorities do whatever they can to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The United States has a generous and solidary civil society. I have seen more solidarity and civil activism over the last few months than I have ever experienced – from donations to food banks, support of families and communities to the continuous ordering of goods from small businesses and restaurants. In many cases, neighbors take care of everyone who lives in their neighborhood – from the young children who have not gone to school since March to the elderly people who do not dare to enter a supermarket – all over the country, people say that they see a new sense of togetherness. And we all hope that it is sense that will get us through this crisis.

1. A longer report has been published as “SARS-CoV-2 in the United States: An Account of a Tumultuous Year,” ET Studies. Journal of the European Society for Catholic Theology. Volume 12, Issue 1, 2021.

2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chasewithorn/2020/12/16/the-worlds-billionaires-have-gotten-19-trillion-richer-in-2020/?sh=37411af67386> ; <https://americansfortaxfairness.org/issue/net-worth-u-s-billionaires-soared-1-trillion-total-4-trillion-since-pandemic-began/>

Darby, L. (July 30, 2019): "72 Percent of All Rural Hospital Closures Are in States That Rejected the Medicaid Expansion." GQ, <https://www.gq.com/story/rural-hospitals-closing-in-red-states>.

Ewing-Nelson, C. (October, 2020): "Four Times More Women Than Men Dropped out of the Labor Force in September." <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/september-jobs-fs1.pdf>.

Reports on COVID-19 (Continued)

Haker, H. (January 8, 2020): "Der Tag Danach" feinschwarz, <https://www.feinschwarz.net/der-tag-danach/>.

Mahajan, U. V., Larkins-Pettigrew, Margaret (2020): "Racial Demographics and Covid-19 Confirmed Cases and Deaths: A Correlational Analysis of 2886 Us Counties." *Journal of Public Health* 42.3 (September), 445-47.

Wright, J. E., Merritt, Cullen C. (2020): "Social Equity and Covid-19: The Case of African Americans." *Public Administration Review* 80.5 (September/October), 820-26.

Yong, E. (September, 2020): "Why the Pandemic Defeated America." *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/coronavirus-american-failure/614191/>.

New Publications

Haker, Hille. *Towards a Critical Political Ethics. Catholic Ethics and Social Challenges. Studien Zur Theologischen Ethik* 156. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2020.

Wolbert, Werner. *What Kind of "ethics" Is New Testament Ethics? Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego.* (2019): 27-41.

In Memoriam of Prof. Markus Arnold

Our valued member Prof. Markus Arnold died unexpectedly at the age of 67. We wish to express our deep sorrow at his passing. Those who were fortunate enough to know Markus personally will remember him fondly and miss him exceedingly.

De Ethica—Societas Ethica's Journal

Please take a look at the latest articles of De Ethica — <http://www.societasethica.info/deethica>

Please Visit Our Website

- English version — <http://www.societasethica.info/introduction>
- German version — <http://www.societasethica.info/willkommen>

Reminder: Membership fees

We would like to remind you to pay the annual membership fee. As you know, we rely on the payment of the membership dues to finance Societas Ethica - e.g. the annual meeting. Many members pay the annual membership fee as part of the registration fee for the annual meeting. But because no annual meeting was held this year, many persons have not paid this year's membership fee. We would like to encourage those members who have not yet paid the registration fee to do so and would like to thank the members who have already paid the annual fee or given us a SEPA-mandate.

You have following possibilities to pay the fee this year:

1. Payment per bank transfer

You can transfer the annual fee of 60 € to the bank account of the Societas Ethica. Details can be found also on the [homepage](#).

Bank account:

Societas Ethica
Evangelische Bank
IBAN: DE 05520604100105003288
BIC: GENODEF1EK1

2. SEPA-Mandate

You can give us a SEPA-Mandate (if you are in the SEPA area). The SEPA blank can be found on our [website](#). Please fill it in and send it either per email (feag@elkb.de) or to the following address:

Societas Ethica
c/o Prof. Dr. Arne Manzeschke
Bärenschanzstr. 4
90429 Nürnberg
Deutschland

3. Payment by check

Please find the details on our [website](#)

4. Donations

As a Society for Research in Ethics, we are engaged in promoting an open, constructive interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange not restricted by borders of any kind. Therefore we want to enable people with limited financial resources to participate in our conferences. As the financial resources of Societas Ethica are limited, we want to encourage our members to donate to a fund, which will be used for supporting applicants with financial limitations. The money will be stored in the bank account of Societas Ethica and will be used only to support potential participants and members, who apply for a funding in order to realize their participation in the conference.