

GENE TECHNOLOGY-IMPRESSIONS

LOTHAR MÜLLER

With Goethe's "Sorcerer's Apprentice", a report commences about a symposium on the subject "Chances and Limits of Gene Technology" (1989). Indicative are the titles of the articles following on that matter: "From Trust in the Master", "Subject the 'Ghosts' to Gene Technology", "Responsibility in Conflict", "Problem Zones of Gene Technology".

Today, after the completion of the first National Council investigation commission, after completion of the appraisal process for an Austrian gene technology legislation, the situation of knowledge, consciousness as well as feeling is expanding considerably.

The impressions:

- Gene technology is more than a mere "set of methods". It is a technology that considers life as both an instrument as well as a goal.
- Gene technology, in its aspired and distinct form, goes "right through our personal and social life". Its "optimization package" ranges from medical diagnosis to new foodstuffs, even to the alteration of plants and animals. Nature is made at will, even in the very substance.
- Until now wide-spread consumption and consequently destruction ("deconsumption") of natural conditions has been compensated by so-called "biotopes". I am convinced that even the days of these "natural facades" which show us nature, as it were, in the open-air museum, are numbered. The future belongs — if we allow it — to the "technobiotopes".
- If life becomes arbitrary through the possibility of purposeful change, substance exchange, extending through the species limits, etc., consciousness also changes. Dimensions like integrity, uniqueness and autonomy fall back behind the terms of practicability, exchange and optimization. The triumph of segmentation!
- The sides of gene technology to be accepted (possible range of application medicine, environment), largely result from the negative side of our "civilization". Microbes will eat refuse, plants are made resistant, living beings are optimally adapted. Instead of fighting causes — a rehabilitation technology!
- Whoever says gene must also say ethics!