

**“Bioethics – the Sign of a New Era:  
Bioethics, Media, Law and Medicine” Conference,  
Ohrid, Macedonia, 21–22 October 2011**

With opening words regarding bioethics as a modern science which has left its mark with an increasing indicator of interest in the last 20 years, the organisers of this event, Dejan Donev and Marija Todorovska, with an assistance of the Institute for Journalism, Media and Communications, Justinianus I Faculty of Law in Skopje and the Centre for Integrative Bioethics in Kumanovo, introduced the first international conference of bioethical character in the Republic of Macedonia.

Under the title “Bioethics – the Sign of a New Era: Bioethics, Media, Law and Medicine”, around 30 participants (professors, scientists, journalists, social workers) exchanged thoughts and ideas in bioethics represented in multiple fields. From the very beginning, with the arrival of the participants on 21 October 2011 at the Congress Centre of St. Cyril and Methodius University in Ohrid, in positive vibrations and atmosphere began the first informal discussion about the idea for this event, first of its kind in Macedonia. Next morning, Dejan Donev officially opened the conference emphasising that the main subject is “the concept of integrative bioethics trying to unite knowledge, ideas, tendencies and problems of life in general, with its integrativity and pluriperspectivity through the inalienable and infallible role that media has in this effort (...) sharing ideas in terms of bioethics and journalism, law and medicine, especially the explored results from the participants”.

After the introduction, and the greeting letter from the President of Macedonia, Gjorge Ivanov, the working part started with the presentation “Bioethics: Problems of its defining and scope” by Amir Muzur (Croatia). Analysing the departing enthusiasm surrounding bioethics as an imported discipline, using the example of spreading paths of bioethics in Croatia in the 1990s, the author explained implications of the discovery of the work of Fritz Jahr, who already in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century conceived bioethics more widely than its present overwhelming ranges would suggest. In conclusion, Muzur made an attempt to objectively estimate bioethics as well as its place and importance in modern society. The next presentation was held by Iva Rinčić (Croatia), on the subject “Rijeka declaration for the future of bioethics” through the original and undoubtedly valuable ideas of the two “fathers” of bioethics – Fritz Jahr and Van Rensselaer Potter, stating the thesis that “via the enlargement of the content and the employment of methodology of pluriperspectivism, this new *integrative* bioethics can mediate between the legitimate requests for spreading disciplines, respecting cultural diversity, and the capability to turn into legislation”. This presentation was followed by the one of Luka Tomašević (Croatia) titled “Human life and dignity”. He emphasised that F. Bacon’s main goal – conquering nature in favor of man – means opening Pandora’s Box and suffering of its consequences. Hence, using the words of Ante Čović, Tomašević confirmed the thesis that “man has passed the an-

thropological frame of responsibility and *de facto* entered in the theological dimension of responsibility”.

“Are you bioconservative, transumanist, or something in between? Take the test and find out” was the title of presentation by Marija Selak (Croatia). In this text on questions concerning human dignity and possibilities of moral choice presented were on one side the transhumanist argumentation with an accent on Bostrom’s work, and the bioconservatist thinking (F. Fukuyama, J. Habermas) on the other. Elaboration of the Sloterdijk–Habermas case is just one of the analysed events for explaining the debates between transhumanists and bioconservatists. Right after her, Denko Skalovski (Macedonia) presented the paper “Bioethics as one of the abundance of ecological terms”. Starting with ontological, epistemological, and ethical premises, through legal and political spheres, he tried to reach the educational and cultural forms. Thus he formed a wholesomeness of a new, ecological social order. Željko Kaluđerović (Serbia) discussed on “Transgenic organisms – pro et contra”. Taking into consideration opinions from both proponents and opponents of this “revolutionary” method, the author remained at the standing point that we should not *a priori* reject, but to cautiously explore these new insufficiently studied technologies. The author also is of the opinion that in this region and Europe in general, in this moment there is no need for transgenic organisms, either in agricultural production or in the food chain. As one of the main problems that might appear, says the author, is the intentional breeding of GMO’s.

Session two was planned for the paper by Silvana Karačić (Croatia) and Elena Shataeva (Russia) which was related to “Children observers in the circle of violence and social support”. The aim of this research was to examine how much children, observers of violence, sympathise with the victim, and how many of them would join the acts of violence, as well as to determine the degree of social support among children at schools. The research involved 150 children from “Ostrog” school in Kašteli. After this presentation, Agima Ljaljević (Montenegro) had a presentation on the subject “The incidence of varicocele in the population of 7–26 years of age and the importance of early ligatures of spermatic veins” thus analysing the significance of varicocele as one of the most frequent causes for male infertility. The aim was to establish the frequency of varicocele in male population aged 7 to 26 years and to point out the significance of timely spermatic vein ligation as a means of preventing male infertility.

The presentation titled “Placebo in drug development and medical practice: pros and cons” was prepared by three authors: Zoran Todorović (Serbia), Branislava Medić (Serbia) and Milica Prostran (Serbia). They elaborated the history of placebo use as well as the ambiguity of this notion. They concluded that the question of placebo use is still far from being resolved. In continuation, Bardhyl Çipi (Albania) presented “Ethics in the osteological studies” emphasising that ethics concerns the study of standards of conduct and moral judgment in osteological studies from different fields, e.g. forensic medicine, anatomy, anthropology, archaeology etc. In his presentation Çipi discussed many of the ethical questions that arise in practice of forensic medicine and the real help for reaching efficiency in the work of the people that belong to those professions.

After the break, “The Bioethical syllabus” was presented by Nada Gosić (Croatia) as a syllabus that has a double task: to serve as an aid for the professors in their attempts to transmit materials to students, and to point out outcomes of the corresponding bioethical education. Žaklina Trajkovska-

Ančevska (Macedonia) presented the paper “Bioethical aspects of doctor–patient relation”, at the same time taking into consideration the problem of communication from an ethical aspect in resolving and improving the relation, and simultaneously medical treatments as well. After this presentation and the discussion, a meeting was planned for the Regional coordination group for bioethical education. The rest of the day was reserved for walks and guides through Ohrid’s sights and natural (bioethical) beauty.

Sunday morning – the opening of the third session. Marko Trajković (Serbia) and Niko Josić (Serbia) were discussing on “The axiological approach to the legal norm” understanding legal norm as a logical and obligatory formulation of value. Marija Todorovska (Macedonia) was presenting the theme “Natural law vs. legal positivism in bioethical disputes”. In the paper, the author was elaborating the connection between the theory of moral law in the framework of ethics and natural law theory, analysing its contrariety with legal positivism, through short examples referring to the problems of *bios* – such as the basic notions of respecting life and dignity, property rights, functioning of natural and acquired human rights and the implications of intensification of the importance of these issues in the contemporary development of bioethical discourse. The last presentation in this session was reserved for “Medical criminal law – a challenge of the new era” by Nikola Tupančevski (Macedonia) and Dragana Kiprijanovska (Macedonia). The paper took into consideration few conceptual issues regarding the development and status of medical criminal law in the new categorical system of values, which is substantially influenced by the so-called modern, technocratic or aggressive medicine.

The opening of session four belonged to Sonja Antonić (Serbia) who regarded mass media as the most interesting emitters of bioethical themes. “What kind of responsibility is in question?”, “How is this responsibility distributed among participants in media system?” and “Are media workers, and if they are, to what extent are they aware of their own responsibility regarding bioethical themes?” are just a few examples of the raised questions. The next presentation belonged to one of the most well-known Macedonian journalists from the health sector, Menče Atanasova–Toči (Macedonia) with the subject “The healthcare in Macedonia viewed from journalistic perspective”. Her presentation had an emotional impact on other participants due to the famous case of the little Boško in Macedonian healthcare. As a journalist from health field, and motivated by the weaknesses in that sector, Atanasova–Toči finished the presentation with the key question: “How to get a better healthcare?”

At the very end of this two-day conference, which turned out to be an exchange of productive and useful information and incentive for productive discussions, Dejan Donev (Macedonia), the organiser of the conference, held his presentation “Bioethics and journalism – Appendix to the bioethical education of journalists”. In the presentation Donev wrapped up the dilemma of how to give a bioethical education to journalists. Describing the mass media’s big influence in general, the author stated that “what we need is the creation and training of generation of journalists with developed bioethical sensibility in their reporting, which can be formed through its bioethical education, i.e. establishment and implementation of a syllabus for bioethical education of journalists”.

With this last presentation, the first conference of bioethical character in the Republic of Macedonia was officially closed. The informal discussions from

the very beginning to the very end, in positive vibrations and atmosphere, as well as the exchanged contacts for further collaboration, are just part of the positive factors that bring hope for this event to become a tradition. There is also hope that a lot more participants from other sectors, fields, spheres would strive to exchange ideas and thoughts on the table where numerous questions seek their answers, numerous problems seek their solutions, for bioethics or science in general.

**Vlatko Čalovski**  
**Dejan Donev**