SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS

Lecture series

CONTROVERSIES IN MEDICINE

**EUTHANASIA –**

**LEGAL, THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC ASPECTS**

Welcome address: Academician Vladimir S. Kostić, SASA president

Introductory address:

Lecturers:

* Academician Dušica Lečić Toševski: Euthanasia – Psychiatric Aspects
* Prof. Violeta Beširević, PhD: Legalization of Euthanasia in Serbia and the World – Evolution, Revolution or *Status Quo*?
* Prof. Bogdan Lubardić, PhD: the Church and the Issue of Euthanasia – Theological Reflexions

Monday, 16 March 2020 at 12 o’clock

SASA Grand Hall, Knez Mihailova 35/II, Belgrade

ABSTRACTS

**EUTHANASIA – PSYCHIATRIC ASPECTS**

Dušica Lečić Toševski

Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Euthanasia, medical practice of intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering, is a part of modern civilization and a consequence of the advancement of technology, as well as the movement for human rights and autonomy of each individual. The request for the active and intentional acceleration of death is a controversial contemporary phenomenon which corresponds to attitudes that it is necessary to modify social norms and value systems of a new man in a new society. Euthanasia has been legalized in several developed countries of the West, initially only for the patients in terminal stages of diseases accompanied by unbearable suffering, and later for people with psychiatric disorders, on the grounds that these disorders are chronic and the suffering they cause is more long-term than in somatic diseases. The debate on euthanasia in the 21st century represents a significant discussion on moral values. The debate involves physicians, ethicists, jurists, politicians and the public, and is followed by religious, ethical, legal and practical issues. In a social action such as euthanasia, the greatest responsibility falls on the doctors who need to administer the euthanasia procedure, which is contrary to the basic principles of the medical profession and represents the antithesis of treatment.

LEGALIZATION OF EUTHANASIA IN SERBIA AND WORLD: EVOLUTION, REVOLUTION OR *STATUS QUO*?

Prof. Violeta Beširević, PhD

Faculty of Law, the Union University, Belgrade

Should euthanasia be legalized, is there a right to die, who controls the machines – a physician or a patient – what are the conditions of dying, are the questions which have polarized majority of modern societies ever since the development of medical technology has demonstrated that with the prolongation of life, suffering and pain do not end, i.e. ever since with the rise of awareness for the need of human rights protection, the fight for the legalization of euthanasia has taken the form of a struggle for the recognition and protection of the right to die.

Occupied by pre-political issues for the last thirty years – where our borders are and who the members of political community are – the public in Serbia has become aware of this global dilemma only after a group of enthusiasts working on the draft of Civil Code, which Serbia has been waiting for the last 70 years, proposed, with a certain hesitation, the revolution in the Serbian legislature: provided that all defined human, social and medical requirements are met, as stated in the proposal, physical person can gain right to euthanasia which implies the right to consensual and voluntary early termination of life. Neither does this broad formulation demand the enactment of an additional law which would regulate in details the conditions under which an individual may/may not exercise their right to euthanasia nor does it solve the basic, contentious issue amongst supporters and opponents of euthanasia: which medical treatments represent euthanasia and which do not?

Placing the discussion within the context of comparative law, the author of the lecture will talk about the existing dilemmas in euthanasia definition, legal pros and cons of legalization, as well as the methods and conditions under which the legalization of euthanasia could be achieved.

the Church and the Issue of Euthanasia – Theological Reflexions

Prof. Bogdan Lubardić, PhD

Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade

The lecturer presents the reasons why euthanasia is not acceptable from the perspective of the Orthodox Church and other Christian communities, as well as the legalization of euthanasia as a possible social practice. Following the analytical definition of basic terms and concepts, and the introduction of the main problem revolving around the burning issue of the right to assisted self-deprivation of life (assisted suicide by euthanasia), he details the main assumptions of the Church’s teachings based on which the arguments in favour of justification of euthanasia legalization are being criticized and rejected. After the differentiation between marginal positions on euthanasia (voluntary, non-voluntary and involuntary), he explains in which cases and why the Church members may apply oieconomia of leniency based on the informed compassion: particularly related to the so-called voluntary passive euthanasia. He proceeds to criticize the main assumptions of the euthanasia movement, which includes the problematization of elected philosophical, socio-cultural, political-economic and legal-moral beliefs and the motivation of euthanasia advocates. Having in mind the previously explained teachings of the Church on the constitutionally relational character (open and non-individualistic) of a subject or personality, and likewise, the view that a good earthly life is important, but that only based on the integration of transcendence does it receive the full meaning, the lecturer identifies the reasons why the Church, when confronted with euthanasists, insists on two predominantly essential messages: on the one hand, on the revealed truth of the faith that life is a gift from God, being at the same time a necessary pledge of confirmation of eternal life with Christ in God (hence the life of a person is first and foremost inviolable and sacred); on the second hand, on the suffering being identified with willing acceptance of the crucifixion as an integral part of spiritual growth and a necessary pledge of victory over sin as the primal cause of death, following the pattern of Christ's baptismal overcoming of death, the result of which is the very resurrection. The renunciation of pain, agony or seemingly absurd suffering does not arise from this. On the contrary: as evident in the engagements of the trained clergy and the Church believers in the pastoral and palliative domain, with significant convergence in the work of responsible medical and psychiatric-psychotherapeutic professionals, and the work of other relevant scientific and knowledgeable professionals devoted to treatment, and relief of more or less advanced diseases with expected terminal outcomes.