Bioethics in Serbia

Bioethics, although a relatively new discipline, is in its very inception in Serbia as well. But during the last years Serbia has flourished in bioethics. The Center for the Study of Bioethics (CSB) has been founded at the University of Belgrade. Part of this Center is the Cambridge Working Group for Bioethics Education in Serbia. The Serbian Unit of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics has also been founded in 2011. The members of CSB are both Serbian members and associate members. They are the world’s most reputed bioethicists (see www.instifdt.bg.ac.rs/cbs). In May 2013 CSB organized an international bioethics conference on enhancement, together with the Oxford Centre for Neuroethics and the Belgrade based Center for the Development of Liberalism. The conference centered around the debate between John Harris and Julian Savulescu on enhancement. The discussant was Peter Singer. The event sparked widespread publicity, including mass media.

Nonetheless, many challenges remain. It is characteristic that the broader public is unacquainted with the new philosophical and scientific disciplines. In regards to bioethics, not only would an average citizen probably be unable to say what it is, but even experts dealing with areas directly related to bioethics do not have sufficient knowledge of this discipline. On the other hand, we are faced with bioethical topics and problems every day and every day we give our opinions of them, without knowing that we are straying into the domain of bioethics. Bioethical topics are very attractive and thought-provoking, which is why we have a good basis to popularize this discipline with the broader public as well. It is important to acquaint all generations and most professions with these topics and problems. In addition to this, the currently small number of bioethics courses for students of philosophy, medicine and pharmacology ought to be increased.

The events of the previous years, however, give ample reason for optimism.

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