



Abolishing Ageing? Ethical implications of biological research on ageing

A discourse project at the Leibniz Institute for Age Research – Fritz Lipmann Institute e.V. (FLI)

Prof. Peter Kunzmann, Dr. Hans-Jörg Ehni, Dr. Wilfried Briest, SoSe 2013

Topic: Current advances in biological ageing research (Biogerontology) indicate that age-associated diseases can soon be tackled more effectively by direct medical intervention into molecular biological ageing processes. This raises hopes that it will be possible to medically avoid that a rise in age-associated diseases goes along with the demographic changes in society. But the possibilities of far-reaching medical interventions into the ageing process go with complex ethical, legal and social questions which have been barely discussed so far. Using a biogerontological outline of a future age medicine, we will explore the questions what ageing is and how we would like to grow old.

Target: The seminar aims to raise the participants' awareness for the ethical, legal and social implications of biogerontology and its possible ageing medical applications. We will convey information and skills, which are necessary for a qualified and individual assessment of these implications and enable the participants to independently continue and implement the discourses in their future professional fields of activity.

Set-up: The seminar comprises four elements:

- Firstly the skills-based and self-reflexive conveyance of principles of interdisciplinary ethical reasoning and judgment (especially for life scientists)
- Secondly the basics of biogerontological research and the associated ageing medicine will be conveyed
- Thirdly the systematic disclosure, reflection and assessment of the ethical, legal and social implications of biogerontology will be practised with a special emphasis on the associated images of ageing
- Fourthly the course comprises a short introduction into research ethics which will not only prepare life scientists for their laboratory practice, but also students of ethics for possible work in ethic commissions

The Project: The seminar is part of the project „Diskurs: Biogerontologie“ (“Discourse: Biogerontology”) and thus partly funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Within the scope of the project and together with interdisciplinary experts a teaching module on ethics in biogerontology will be developed. With eight study groups this teaching module will be tested, evaluated and published as an aid for teachers. A joint discourse of life scientists and students of ethics and social studies is planned in Jena. For the participants the embedding of the seminar into the project means the following:

- Since the seminar is part of the project and serves the further development of the teaching module; you contribute to this development by taking part.

- The seminar will be evaluated more extensively than usual. At the beginning, during and at the end of the seminar the course participants will be asked to analyse newspaper articles in writing. These texts will – only with your consent of course – be analysed in the form of a content analysis.

You can find more information on the project here: <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/de/28922>

Referees:

- Prof. Peter Kunzmann (Ethics Center Jena: http://www.ethik.uni-jena.de/de/index.php?option=com_contact&view=contact&id=8&Itemid=7)
- Dr. Hans-Jörg Ehni (Institute for ethics and history of medicine, University Tübingen: http://www.iegm.uni-tuebingen.de/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=29&Itemid=74)
- Dr. Wilfried Briest (FLI, Jena: <http://www.fli-leibniz.de/contact/publicrelations.php>)

Dates:

- 29.05.2013 14:00 – 18:00 (Venue will be announced later): Principles of Ethics (4 h, Kunzmann)
 - Tasks of ethics and virtue ethics
 - Utilitarianism und deontological ethics
- 30.05.2013 9: 00 – 18:00 and 31.05.2013 9:00-13:00 (Venue will be announced later): Detailed plan will follow (Ehni)