



ACADEMIA ENGELBERG

9<sup>th</sup> Dialogue on Science – October 13 – 15, 2010  
in Engelberg, Switzerland

**Herbert Gottweis, Prof., University of Vienna, Department of  
Political Science, Vienna, Austria**

### **Life, Death and Democracy**

Life and death are traditional issues of democratic political reflection where they appear in different discussion contexts – from the question about life protection to death penalty. Over the past decades, technical-scientific developments have contributed to a new dynamic of the relation of death, life and politics.

Life and death seem to become increasingly “disposable” – be it through clones or synthetic biology or through a variety of life prolonging technical-medical options for severe diseases. The idea of the new “disposability” of death and life manifests itself in the new options to “create” life, but also in the increased and stronger desire to determine one’s own death, as it occurs, for example, if a person suffers from a terminal disease and expresses his or her desire for euthanasia.

These issues increasingly raise large political debates around the globe. Political solutions for existing problems are often not in sight or potential solutions have strongly dividing effects for society.

In my presentation, the contours of new politics regarding life and death shall be traced. The question will be raised how these new challenges can be reasonably addressed in the context of modern democracy.