

EDITOR'S NOTE

As in other regions in the world, cholera epidemics caused significant impact on Argentinean society. In the first article of this issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*, Adrián Carbonetti and María Laura Rodríguez analyze media advertisements of products and to a lesser extent of practices capable of preventing or curing the disease during its first epidemic (1867-1868). By studying the situation in Córdoba, which lost approximately 8% of its population to the disease, these Argentinean historians present homemade prescriptions, chemical compounds endorsed by foreign physicians, cigarettes and other products able to dissipate the malodorousness associated to the spread of cholera, sumptuary products containing alcohol to neutralize the supposed cooling of the body, and other products supplied to that terrified population trying to escape from a sin that seemed unavoidable.

In the article "Origin and destiny revisited: cloning of prophecy with promise", Ana Maria Coutinho Aleksandrowicz and Fermin Roland Schramm analyze the views on therapeutic and reproductive cloning held by French bio-physicist and philosopher Henri Atlan, in his 1999 book written with an anthropologist, a lawyer, an Orientalist, and a historian. Differently from the critical views concerning the supposed capacity of biotechnology to violate or enslave 'human nature', Atlan does not raise philosophical nor scientific questions as far as cloning. In the scientific rationality realm, his views are at the same time optimistic concerning research and realistic concerning the difficulties related to the widely publicized cloning capacity to cause irreversible damage to human beings. Atlan's fears are related to a different kind of rationality, the mythical rationality, which is as needed, legitimate and dynamic as the former, being able to subject clones to psychic and social suffering that surpass potential biological gains.

The writer reviews myths that predict the contemporary representations of human submission to the biotechnoscience destructive potential, and is aware that his intellectual engagement in the scientific progress in general, and in cloning in particular are informed by a trustful belief – as expression of mythical rationality – according to a project for liberation of human beings.

Scientific rationality and myths also set bounds for the article written by anthropologist Priscila Faulhaber. "Understanding the theories about the rainbow" follows and lists three trajectories. The first is on the scientific explanations for the rainbow from Aristotle to Newton, who reduced color to a constant quantitative basis after methodical experimentation. The second trajectory refers to the ethnographers that went to the Amazon Region in the first half of the 20th century. Among them were: Constant Tastevin, Theodor Koch-Grünberg, and Curt Nimuendaju. These ethnographers' views on the rainbow were based on the scientific culture in their countries of origin, but they wanted to show how Indians and riverside populations interpreted and described the phenomenon. The third trajectory the author considers is the extent to which anthropological theory can contribute for the analysis of mythical thought and of Indian knowledge as types of classification informed by a native theory built according to a specific logic. The correlation between ethnographic registers on the rainbow and the history of the explanation of the phenomenon made Faulhaber emphasize the importance of such registers for the history of meteorology, astronomy, and of the ethno-science.

For Gustavo Caponi, the possibility to reduce the life sciences to physics and chemistry is one of the most recurrent discussions in the philosophy of biology. In "Physics of organisms versus hermeneutics of the living being", the philosopher tries to demonstrate that the approach to the subject of discussion has been hindered because its proponents have not paid due attention to the classical distinction between functional and evolutive biology. For this reason, they have frequently made the mistake of placing pro-reductionism theses and arguments related to the former with theses and arguments that belong exclusively to the latter.

Based on Ernst Mayr, Caponi explains that functional biology studies causes that are close to the vital phenomena that make the individual organism whereas evolutive biology studies the remote causes acting at the level of populations, explaining the reasons for certain kinds of present and the past evolution. For Caponi, the best way to understand the differences between the two biologies is to countermatch the kinds of questions asked by biologists from one domain or the other.

"Science and medical education in Brazil (1930-1950)" was written by Lúcia Grando Bulcão, Almir Chaiban El-Kareh, and Jane Dutra Sayd. For the authors, the 1939 Brazilian mission to the United States guided by Oswaldo Aranha, was the landmark for Brazilian special relations with that country. Since then, large amounts of North-American capital and technology have entered Brazil. Ideas, values and professional models developed in the United States became paradigms in Latin America and other parts of the world. The concepts concerning preventive and social medicine were included in programs sponsored by North-American agencies, particularly the Rockefeller Foundation. It was also due to these programs that Brazilian universities complied with the premises of the Flexner Reform, particularly the emphasis on professional training in science, research, and on the use of science.

Education is also subject of another article in this issue. In "Perspective of historical epistemology and health promotion in schools", the pedagogue João Batista Vianey Silveira Moura and collaborators, all from Fortaleza, the state capital of Ceará, approach education from the philosophical perspective of Gaston Bachelard and Thomas Kuhn. What is the role of schools in the development of educational strategies for promoting health? – ask the authors, who believe that the crisis in health education points to a change in paradigm, to the end of the Cartesian and positivist load with the creation of a new arena for the humanization and improvement of life standards.

The psychiatry reform is discussed in two articles in this issue. Ilana Lemos de Paiva and Oswaldo H. Yamamoto have studied the history of reform implementation in the state of Rio Grande do Norte since 1992, through reports, legislation and patient records, and testimonials by those involved in the process. The article title doesn't leave any doubts concerning authors' views on the perspectives of the movement: "In defense of psychiatric reform: for the dawn of a new unavoidable future".

In addition, Lys Teixeira de Alvarenga and Cristiane de Oliveira Novaes study the reform in Barbacena, town in the state of Minas Gerais. The authors analyze the history of psychiatry care in this municipality, and describe the cooperation between public administration and private sector in assisting households and bringing quickness and some degree of sustainability to the psychiatry reform. The authors consider this case an institutional innovation in mental health public policy and recommend new research on this and other cases of cooperation between the State and society.

In "Biopolitics in the genealogy of psychoanalysis", Joel Birman presents readers with an elegant essay on the passage from ideal of salvation to cure in Western countries, showing the effects of the 'medicalization' of society and the unfolding of biopolitics in psychoanalysis discourse. In Greek-Roman tradition, says Birman, human responsibility in the genesis of evil was not primordial. By means of 'self-care' practices, individuals aimed not only at living better but also at preparing themselves to die according to the ethical principles of stoicism. The relationship of these individuals with 'finitude' changed completely at the beginning of the Christian era. In that new historical context, the 'moral' of salvation transformed Ancient ethical relations. The relationship between an individual and evil was placed into the religious domain and his or her relationship with finitude was replaced by the Christian promise of eternal life. This system of ideas on salvation was once again subverted in modern times, with the development of cure by the medical profession. Finitude is brought back and into the complex relations weaved with concepts of 'life' and 'health' on one hand, and 'death' and 'disease' on the other.

In the 'Sources' section, the reader will find an unpublished text written by Joaquim Manoel de Macedo and Joaquim Norberto in 1859, after the request by Emperor D. Pedro II to the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro – IHGB). The essay "For a history of vaccination in Brazil" attempts to identify the first person to bring smallpox vaccines to Brazil, thus solving the controversy involving Marquis of Barbacena and surgeon Francisco Mendes Ribeiro de Vasconcellos.

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