

EDITORIAL

Academia on the verge of a nervous breakdown: searching for ethics in social relations

PH.D. HÉLIO ARTHUR REIS IRIGARAY ¹

PH.D. FABRICIO STOCKER ²

¹ FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS (FGV EBAPE) / BRAZILIAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, RIO DE JANEIRO – RJ, BRAZIL

² FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS / CADERNOS EBAPE.BR, RIO DE JANEIRO – RJ, BRAZIL

In classical philosophy, ethics involved socially accepted and valued moral issues, habits, and customs. Also, it has to do with a behavior pattern observed both in private and public life. In this sense, ethics was about finding the best way to live and live together (Spinoza, 2020). So, what is the distinction between ethics and morals?

Strictly speaking, the main difference is that ethics is related to the dimension of duty, whereas morality is related to happiness (Comte-Sponville & Ferry, 1998). Ethics is the perspective of the good life, with others and for others, in fair institutions (Ricoeur, 1990).

Then, why do we use the word “ethics” over the word “moral” nowadays?

Spitz argues that the prominence of the term ethics hides the intention of “alleviating the inextricable embarrassment of those who would like to speak about morals without daring to pronounce the word” (Spitz, 1995, p. 149, our translation). Perhaps this is why ethics has been commonly interpreted as a synonym for morality (Lévy-Bruhl, 1971), an instrument that, through socially constituted values, legitimizes values, principles, and rules (Kant, 1985).

Ethics may be widely perceived as an antonym for corruption, acts of violence, incivilities, or behaviors that harm other individuals or society as a whole (La Taille, Souza & Vizioli, 2004). These mundane interpretations explain why one hears much about ethics in politics (Bobbio, 1997), in the media (Baggio, 2011), or in corporations (Cherman & Tomei, 2005). As for corporations, companies have been addressing this issue in their narratives and promises regarding social responsibility and engaging in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies and practices. Thus, we witness the “engagement between ethics and business” (Lipovetsky, 1992, p. 313, our translation). However, this engagement does not mean a real, transparent, or last-longing relationship.

Concomitantly, the discussion on ethics in academia has been conducted internally in the institutions. The issue has been addressed in commissions focused on ethics in research, mainly dealing with cases of plagiarism (Gasparyan, Nurmashe & Voronov, 2016) or deciding on procedures in projects involving human beings (Santos, 2020).

However, as scholars and researchers, we must do more. We understand that our activities must be anchored in our social role. We cannot be guided by ordinary pragmatism or instrumentality that reveals vanity and moral indifference. We have to show a set of moral qualities – intellectual honesty, personal detachment, defense of the truth, and criticism toward untruth. These qualities guarantee better performance in pursuing our fundamental goals (Vásquez, 1986). In addition, these moral qualities must permeate social relationships in the academic environment.

Our professional lives involve interacting with students and colleagues, participating in meetings and congresses, submitting articles. We evaluate, and we are evaluated. Academia is idealized as an immaculate locus, in which wise and educated people create and share knowledge and exchange ideas respectfully. However, this is not always true. Therefore, we propose a collective reflection on the academic environment we have inherited and (co)create. We invite you to reflect on the sometimes inelegant and perverse practices that we reproduce.

As editors, we hear complaints from colleagues about having articles rejected for publication – even though they were nominated for a prize at a congress – or about harsh feedback from a referee. At these times, we cannot forget that we are, together, academia. Sometimes we are authors, sometimes referees. When in the role of referees, how do we evaluate our peers' work? When we review an article, are we as polite and careful as we want others to be with our work? It seems that our ego jeopardizes our ability to make such a reflection.

It is unfortunate to recognize that, although not often, we are faced with superficial or, worse, crude reviews. This, however, does not only happen in Brazil. As authors, we have also received this type of review from foreign colleagues.

Reviewing an article is a contribution to the advancement of the discussion in the field. Thus, our feedback must be detailed. Criticism has to be followed by suggestions on how to improve the work. It is not the referee's role to question the authors' ontological premises, regardless of whether we share them. We have to assess whether there is a logical chain of ideas, whether the theoretical framework was well constructed, and not limited to mere name-dropping. Are the procedures for entering and leaving a research field or data collection and treatment well described? Were the research results presented and discussed? Above all, it is crucial to assess whether it is an empirical work or a theoretical essay. What are the study's contributions and implications?

It is important to recognize that offering harsh feedback when acting as a journal's referee in blind review processes is just one of many harmful behaviors observed in our professional environment. Apparently, academia is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. And we cannot blame the COVID-19 pandemic for this phenomenon since it is something that has been going on for a while.

In congresses and conferences, we have witnessed scholars making misogynistic and homophobic comments and jokes, assaulting and being sarcastic toward peers, without any sign of reaction or protest on the part of the other colleagues. Similar embarrassment sometimes occurs in discussions, debates, and panels. These activities should be a space for us to build knowledge but have become the stage for personal attacks, harshness, self-centeredness, and political disputes.

This kind of behavior and moral and sexual harassment practices are also reported within educational institutions. It is aggression that happens in physical spaces and online, through social media platforms and WhatsApp groups. Frighteningly, the "country's intellectual elite" shows no respect for peers and their audience. It is an elite that attacks, curses, and publicly belittles academic research.

Unfortunately, it seems that academia is closer to being an Octagon than we imagined. But it is never too late to reinvent ourselves. So, here is an invitation to all of us to (re)insert virtue – in the Aristotelian sense – in our human relations. With this very academic spirit in mind, let us reflect on the contributions of the articles in the third issue of 2021 of **Cadernos EBAPE.BR**.

The first article, "**Welfare state in Brazil: a review or the crisis and the end of the 'Dunkirk spirit'**," was written by Claudio Gurgel and Agatha Justen. The authors resume the debate on the welfare state in Brazil, verifying to what extent Brazilian capitalism and the state integrated the effort of social reform effort that, on a global level, took place after the Second World War.

Daniele Silva Rodrigues, Felipe Rodrigues Cruz, Jacqueline Veneroso Alves da Cunha, and João Estevão Barbosa Neto are the authors of the second article of this issue, "**Irregularities in the execution of public resources to combat *Aedes aegypti* in Brazilian states: analysis of managers' justifications based on the attribution theory**." The study identified the justifications managers in Brazilian states presented regarding the use of federal resources to fight the proliferation of the mosquito that can spread viruses such as dengue and yellow fever. The research discusses the managers' self-serving biases regarding irregularities observed in the use of federal resources.

The third article, "**Institutional, inter-organizational, and financial factors in science parks: a study from the perspective of collaborative governance**," was presented by Lindsay Teixeira Sant'Anna, Dany Flávio Tonelli, Teresa Cristina Monteiro Martins, João Paulo Nascimento da Silva, and Luiz Marcelo Antonialli. The authors examined the importance the actors involved in science parks in Brazil attributed to the fundamental elements of collaborative arrangements. The study also sought to verify if these fundamental elements are present in the daily practices of Brazilian science parks.

Rodrigo Tavares de Souza Barreto and James Batista Vieira presented the fourth article, "**Public integrity programs in Brazil: indicators and challenges**." The study describes the integrity programs implemented by the Brazilian public administration, comparing their practices with the international anti-corruption regime.

The article **“Intensified work and absence from work: an analysis in slaughterhouses in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul”** analyzed the relationship of work intensification, absence from work, and illness of workers in slaughterhouses in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. The authors Gustavo Henrique Petean, Elcio Gustavo Benini, and Gabriel Gualhanone Nemirovsky conduct their analysis based on historical materialism.

The sixth article of this issue is **“From modern manufacture to large industry: empirical delimitation of technical change in the automotive sector in Brazil (1996-2017)”**, by Elcemir Paço Cunha, Lara Nora Portugal Penna, and Leandro Theodoro Guedes. The research empirically delimits the inflection of the principle on the technical basis for the Brazilian automobile sector. It marks the period with the greatest probability of the transition between modern manufacturing and large industry.

Wagner Ragi Curi Filho and Thomaz Wood Junior present the study **“Evaluation of the impact of universities on their communities.”** The authors explore the role of universities and their impact on surrounding communities, offering a model for impact evaluation.

The eighth article, **“Changes in the configurations of corporate governance and agency relationship: a longitudinal analysis in a privately held company,”** was presented by Fabricio Bomtempo Oliveira and Joaquim Rubens Fontes Filho. The authors discussed changes in corporate governance associated with the companies’ life cycle, business maturity, ownership structure, corporate relations, and other governance configurations.

In **“Nostalgia as a practice? Rereading the research on nostalgia in the field of marketing”**, Flávio Medeiros Henriques and Maribel Carvalho Suarez propose new possibilities for investigating the phenomenon of nostalgia in the field of marketing, based on theories of practice.

Arlindo Carvalho Rocha, Paula Chies Schommer, Emiliana Debetir, and Daniel Moraes Pinheiro presented the article **“Structural elements for the co-production of public goods: an integrative approach.”** The authors discuss the co-production of public goods and services based on an integrative approach, considering transparency, information, trust, participation, and accountability as its structural elements.

The theoretical essay **“Deleuze and Guattari’s contributions to a rhizomatic perspective of organizations”** was written by Eline Gomes de Oliveira Zioli, Elisa Yoshie Ichikawa, and Luciano Mendes. The work highlights a multiplicity of how we think of organizations, expressing – instead of denying – the power that constitutes the organization. The study seeks to continue the theoretical efforts that try to overcome the construction of the organizational theorization marked by functionalism, which is characteristic of the modern organization and hinders the emergence of new research perspectives.

The article **“Active transparency ranking of municipalities in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais: evaluation of transparency portals based on the Access to Information Law,”** was written by Josias Fernandes Alves, Adílio Renê Almeida Miranda, Marco Antonio Carvalho Teixeira, and Paulo Roberto Rodrigues de Souza. The authors sought to evaluate the online transparency portals of the 13 geographic regions of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais.

Marcos Roberto Nóbrega and Bruno Felix discuss the tactics used by expatriates to manage the interface between the “work” and “home” domains in **“Managing the boundaries between work and home: a study with expatriates.”**

In the article **“The poststructuralist ontology on leadership: identity and materiality in evidence,”** Eloisio Moulin de Souza carried out a critical analysis of the mainstream research on leadership based on the lens of the poststructuralist ontology.

We also present the guest article **“Deliberating or stalling for justice? Dynamics of corporate remediation and victim resistance through the lens of parentalism: The case of the Renova Foundation in Brazil”** (only in Portuguese) by Rajiv Maher, originally published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, which presents a rich empirical and theoretical contribution by revealing twelve dialectical tensions of the Renova Foundation’s attempts to remedy the injustices caused to the victims of the Fundão dam Collapse.

The last work in this issue is the book review by Tracy Jeanel St. Louis and Airtton Cardoso Cançado **“Beyond common knowledge ‘Against elections: the case for democracy’,”** presenting the book by David Van Reybrouck.

I wish you a pleasant read!

PH.D. HÉLIO ARTHUR REIS IRIGARAY

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PH.D. FABRICIO STOKER

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

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Prof. Dr. Hélio Arthur Reis Irigaray
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9580-7859>

Ph.D. in Business Administration from FGV EAESP; Masters in Business Administration from PUC-Rio and Bachelor Degree in Economics from the University of Northern Iowa, USA. Assistant Professor at FGV EBAPE and at the Corporate International Masters (CIM) program of the Georgetown University, Washington, USA. Leader researcher on the theme Diversity and Labor Relations, in the area of Work Management of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Administration (ANPAD). E-mail: helio.irigaray@fgv.br

Prof. Dr. Fabricio Stocker
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6340-9127>

Ph.D. in Administration from FEA/USP and Ph.D. in Management from the Erasmus University of Rotterdam; Visiting researcher at the University of Amsterdam; Master's in Administration from UFPR and specialization at FGV and London Business School; Economist and Administrator; Professor at FGV on the online undergraduate programs, MBA, and graduate programs. Associate Editor of the journal Cadernos EBAPE.BR (FGV). E-mail: fabricio.stocker@fgv.br