

## EDITORIAL

The INTERthesis Journal features in this issue the dossier entitled **Biopolitics and the medicalization of life**, organized by Sandra Caponi and Selvino J. Assmann, professors linked to the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in the Humanities (UFSC).

In August 2012, the UFSC PPGICH called the second edition of the Symposium "the medicated life", which was initially conducted in 2009 by the core of study in Philosophy and Health (NEFIS)<sup>1</sup> and the Center for Research in Bioethics and Public Health (NUPEBISC)<sup>2</sup>. In this second edition of the Symposium, a central theme of debate was chosen - "Biopolitics and the medicalization of life" - and the INTERthesis Journal dossier that we present here was organized on this thematic axis.

The dossier brings together, on one hand, the Conference texts presented in that symposium, and, on the other hand, texts written by lecturers present, in addition to articles written by scholars who, for various reasons, were unable to attend the event. In addition to the texts gathered here, the symposium had more than 30 papers presented in coordinate communications. Many of them correspond to research conducted by students, professors and graduates of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in the Humanities (including DINTER programme), as well as by professors, students and graduates of the graduate program in Political Sociology and the graduate program in Public Health at UFSC.

The choice of the theme of biopolitics is due to the interest, shared by several teachers from the human condition and modernity area, in discussing and clarifying the scope, limits, and potential difficulties inherent in this concept. For some of us the reading of biopolitics focuses on studies of Michel Foucault, while for others, the contributions of the Italians Roberto Esposito and Giorgio Agamben are important. That is why the dossier presents texts that problematize the biopolitics from an

<sup>1</sup> Registered in Doctorate studies in the Humanities and Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Political Sociology-UFSC

<sup>2</sup> Research group registered in the Programa de Pós-graduação em Saúde Coletiva-UFSC

eminently foucaultian perspective, while others take into account the readings proposed by Agamben and Esposito.

The purpose of the Dossier, consisting of eight articles, was to gather the work of several specialists from Brazil, Spain and Argentina who are interested in reflecting on the theme of **Biopolitics and the medicalization of life**, presenting a rich diversity of perspectives and looks. In some texts the reflection on the very concept of biopolitics as articulating axis appears; in others, this is not a conceptual questioning, but an attempt to operate the biopolitics as analytical matrix to understand problems linked with the medicalization of life, the distress, the problem of risk, the relationship between madness and crime, or the problems of experimentation with humans or transplants from live donors.

So, without pre-established certainties, the purpose of this Dossier is to look critically at the difficulties that are implied in these fuzzy boundaries that separate normal suffering considered pathological. We believe that the biopolitics can be a prime analytical matrix to reflect about the proliferation of new diseases linked to everyday conduct, on the participation of the pharmaceutical industry in the production of new drugs for diseases before unthinkable, as well as the ethical and political issues linked to the growing phenomena of medicalization of behaviors. Beyond any doubt, the diversity of theoretical perspectives presented in the Dossier will enrich this current debate and will allow a better understanding of a topic that today seems to have sparked a growing interest of the academic community, enabling interdisciplinary dialogue between the humanities and social sciences, and health sciences.

It is in this perspective that the text of Angel Martínez-Hernández, lecturer at the University of Rovira and Virgili, Tarragona-Spain, opens the Dossier. The text, ***Offstage: madness, the obscene and common sense***, based on ethnographic data of the mental health system of Barcelona, discusses the refractory nature of madness, showing how it has led to a kind of stigmatizing management of subjects afflicted by expert systems, which tend to reduce the sufferings to Nosological predictable categories.

Taking the concept of biopolitics as a starting point, the second text presents a very well argued about problematic absolutely as current as the problem of experimentation with human beings is. In the text, called ***Biopower and Political Racism: an analysis from Michel Foucault***, teachers Cesar Candiotti and Thereza

Salome D'Espíndula, PUC/PR, analyze a classic case of abusive experiment with humans called the "Tuskegee Case ", regarding the experiments performed in the State of Alabama-USA, between 1932 to 1972, with a community of black people who suffered from syphilis. From the reading of that case, the authors propose to make a connection with what Foucault called BioPower, to ascertain to what extent there is a relationship of power in this study.

The dossier continues with a beautiful text by professor Marcos Nalli, from the State University of Londrina (UEL), named ***The approach of Roberto Esposito's immunity paradigm: biopolitics and medicalization***. The author presents a way of understanding biopolitics that contrasts in many respects to the earlier work as part of a reflection of biopolitics that no longer falls solely on the foucaultian tradition, but rather in the tradition of studies opened by Roberto Esposito. As stated by Nalli, the Italian philosopher believes it is possible to conceive biopolitics in another semantic structure, which has no more life in politics but as realization of the innovative power of life instead. And it is in this perspective that he proposes to rethink the relevance of hermeneutics in the "paradigm of immunization" and its implications in the medicalization of life.

Following the text on Esposito, there is the article by Edgardo Castro, known researcher of the Philosophical Research Centre-CONICET-Argentina. The article, published in Spanish, called ***On the (non) distinction between bíos and zoé*** is dedicated to analyze the role that the concept of biopolitics plays in the work of Giorgio Agamben. The article defends the distinction between *bíos* and *zoé* made by Agamben, featuring a thought-provoking dialogue between the readings that this author and Michel Foucault devoted to the theme of life, privileged object of biopolitics.

The fifth article, ***Utopia/Atopy-Alma Ata, public health and the "Kazakhstan"***, authored by Professor Luis David Castiel of the ENSP-FIOCRUZ, constitutes an invitation to start a theoretical reflection, necessary and urgent, on the way the knowledge is being produced in the field of health. The article aims to assist us to dismantle the traps installed by the proliferation of these technoscientific discourses that, by the mediation of correlations, probabilities and statistics, build and legitimize the risk society. This is a challenging and critical text, where the author, who has an extensive and recognized experience in epidemiological studies, reflects with irony on the need to rethink the current production of risks under an

interdisciplinary perspective, using the concept of biopolitics as a theoretical aid. That reference shall be, in this specific case, a dialogue between Foucault's and Esposito's readings.

The dossier continues with a text by Myriam Mitjavila and Priscilla Garcia Mathes, respectively Professor and PhD student of Interdisciplinary Doctorate in Human Sciences at UFSC, entitled ***Psychiatry and the medicalization of abnormals: the role of the notion of antisocial personality disorder***. The authors analyze the construction of a new psychiatric classification, reflecting on the recent history of the concept of antisocial personality disorder (TPA) in the field of Psychiatry while Nosological category. They maintain that the development of TPA as a diagnostic category implies the transfer to the field of psychiatric medicine social control functions of behaviors, leading to a redefinition of the family, especially those families in contexts of urban poverty, as pathogenic agent.

In this same direction lies the text authored by Professor Sandra Caponi, entitled ***Classifying and medicating: the bio-political management of psychic sufferings***. Taking the foucauldian concept of biopolitics as a starting point, it discusses a text recently published by the former head of the task group of the Manual on Diagnostic and Statistics of Mental Disorders (DSM), where he questions the current process of preparing the fifth edition of that Manual. This criticism shows that the Manual, which is configured as a today's hegemonic strategy of management of psychic suffering, is articulated around the same axes that characterize biopolitics: the centrality of normal-pathological opposition; the statistical studies referred to vital phenomena that characterize the populations; the problem of risk and the safety devices; and the government of the population as a form of management that excludes the self-government.

The dossier is concluded with an article prepared by Professors Fernando Hellman of UNISUL, Marta Verdi of the Postgraduate Program in Public Health at UFSC and Benjamin Fox, of the Dentistry Department at UFSC. ***Commodification of human organs for transplantation intervivos from the perspective of Social Ethics*** presents a thought-provoking reflection on a problem rarely discussed: the purchase and sale of human organs for transplants from live donors. The article discusses the arguments used to justify such practices, their limits and difficulties, pointing to the liberal and utilitarian character of justifications, creating the possibility



to accept the double *standard* and highlighting an apology to the laws of the market, turning the body and its parts into a commodity that can be bought and sold.

Continuing, INTERthesis presents, in the usual *Articles Section*, five contributions in the Society and Environment areas. In the first, Elis Dener Acuna and Marcelo Sacardi Biudes analyze the variability of air temperature and relative humidity at the Cuiabá campus of the Federal University of Mato Grosso, with the article ***Analysis of the air temperature and relative humidity: study of micro-climates***. By means of the grouping technique, the authors propose a microclimatic zoning in the study area, to defend that understanding the variability of climate elements in time and space is critical to the understanding of the microclimatic dynamics.

In the second article, ***Analysis of socio-environmental conflicts: the case of the rural community of Rio Maior, city of Urussanga, Santa Catarina***, the authors Daniel Trento Nascimento and Maria Augusta Almeida Bursztyn describe the conflict occurred in the municipality of Rio Maior, addressing a community mobilization against the basalt/diabase mining activities, crushing and asphalt milling driven by Setep Construction Company, based in Criciúma, SC. The authors start from the hypothesis that the increased socio-environmental conflict is one of the determining factors for the strengthening of actions and to the formation of local environmental governance structures.

Next, in the article ***Inter and/or transdisciplinarity as a condition to the study of socioenvironmental issues***, Marcelo Gustavo Aguilar Calegare and Nelson da Silva Júnior discuss the need to adopt inter and/or trans-disciplinary approaches to the study of contemporary environmental issues. The authors support, on one hand, the need to adopt new scientific references and, on the other hand, point out some challenges to study environmental issues according to inter and/or transdisciplinarity.

With the fourth article, ***Organization of the family work in the rural area of the State of Para: new arrangements on work organisation and management of production units***, Ketiane dos Santos Alves and Maria Dalva da Mota presented results of research carried out with farming families of the community Nossa Senhora de Lourdes, in Itabocal Settlement, municipality of Mãe do Rio, Northeastern Pará. The article deals with the organization of work of the family members, identifying new

strategies both in family production and reproduction in the context of limitations of natural resources.

Finishing the section, the essay ***GMO soybeans: risks, uncertainties and interests at stake***, by Arnildo Korb, Bruno Gasparini and Francisco de Assis Mariano, discusses the production of GMO soybeans and the debates between experts and laymen about the perception of risks from that activity.

This issue brings, finally, in the *Review Section*, a review of the book ***Animal Rights. A very short introduction***, by American philosopher and bioethicist David DeGrazia, written by Gabriel Garmendia of Trinity and Waleska Maridi.

We hope that the thought-provoking dossier ***Biopolitics and the medicalization of life*** as well as the other texts do represent calls for a better understanding of our time, stimulating further supradisciplinary analyses.

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**Editors**

