

Bioethics and its international reach through Mexico



10th Global Summit of National
Ethics/Bioethics Committees

June 22-24

Mexico City 2014



12th World Congress
of Bioethics

June 25-28

Mexico City 2014

- México 2014: Global headquarters of Bioethics
- The experience of the CONBIOÉTICA: 22 years of continuous activity
- Thoughts on bioethics from the diversity of current perspectives



Meeting on Bioethics

Conversation with Dr. Juliana González

Cultural Programme

Thursday
June 26,
2014
20:00 hrs

Biblioteca de México
Plaza de la Ciudadela,
Centro Histórico



- Performance by Amalia Hernandez's Folkloric Ballet of Mexico



- Exhibit Mexico City's Popular Art Museum



- Gala Dinner
(vegetarian menu available)

- Wine tasting of Mexico's traditional drink: The Tequila



- Mexico's Handcraft Exhibit FONART



- Coffee tasting
Café Punta del Cielo



More information:
bioethicsmexico.mx

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Editorial

With this 12th issue of the gazette of the CONBIOETICA we'll have given continuity for three consecutive years to this means since its first appearance and we appreciate the kindness our readers have had with us.

This is a special edition that accompanies the realization of the two most important international events on Bioethics –the 10th Global Summit of National Ethics/Bioethics Committees and the 12th World Congress of Bioethics- that have been carried out every two years since the last decade of the past century.

As a result of numerous efforts, our country has been chosen this year as headquarters for both events, which are of crucial importance for the development and effective implementation of Bioethics, safeguarding the rights of persons, the ethical evolution of knowledge and the preservation of the environment in all its depth.

This is a unique chance for exchanging information, promoting bioethics education, proposing new routes and bioethical alternatives in every field of knowledge and in every society that co-exists in the planet. This is a week of continuous work along two main themes: the performance, scope and advocacy of National Ethics/Bioethics Commissions, as well as the review and presentation of select and original proposals in various subject themes.

Representatives and experts from almost a hundred countries, totaling over a thousand attendees, will converge in these events. The activities that will be taking place include keynote lectures, symposia, plenary sessions, poster sessions, academic and editorial offerings, graphic works and, of course, cultural activities and special visits to historic sites in our city.

Thus, this issue of the Gazette focuses on the scope of bioethics and its projection in the international

arena as well as the position of Mexico therein. It starts with an *in depth* section which describes some of these international events, and subsequently we offer a special text by Dr. Manuel Ruiz de Chávez, president of the council of the National Commission of Bioethics, which states the vision and horizon of the Commission since its creation 22 years ago. The third article in this section gathers a series of thoughts and ideas from our prestigious guests, from a pluralistic and diverse point of view.

The section titled “Meeting on Bioethics” —a segment that is intended for interviews with distinguished specialists— features a conversation with Dr. Juliana González Valenzuela, a renowned Mexican philosopher that has been engaged with Ethics and Bioethics for a long time.

Further on, in the bibliographic corner, we offer a review of various works from specialists that will be attending in these events. The section on Culture and Bioethics features three short texts: one that focuses on the Mexican poet and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz, who on the centennial of his birth is officially celebrated nationwide; a review of the “Amalia Hernández” folkloric ballet, the late Mexican dancer who founded an incomparable institution devoted to Mexican folk dancing; and finally a piece on the library of México, a historic site that gathers extraordinary collections and works from renowned Mexican writers and researchers, who have donated their very own libraries so that they may be accessible for all Mexicans.

This issue concludes with three of our regular sections: Open portal, a feedback section for our readers; Advances, featuring in general terms the themes of our September issue; and the curricular synopses of the collaborators of this issue, published in Spanish and English.

Mexico 2014: Global headquarters of Bioethics

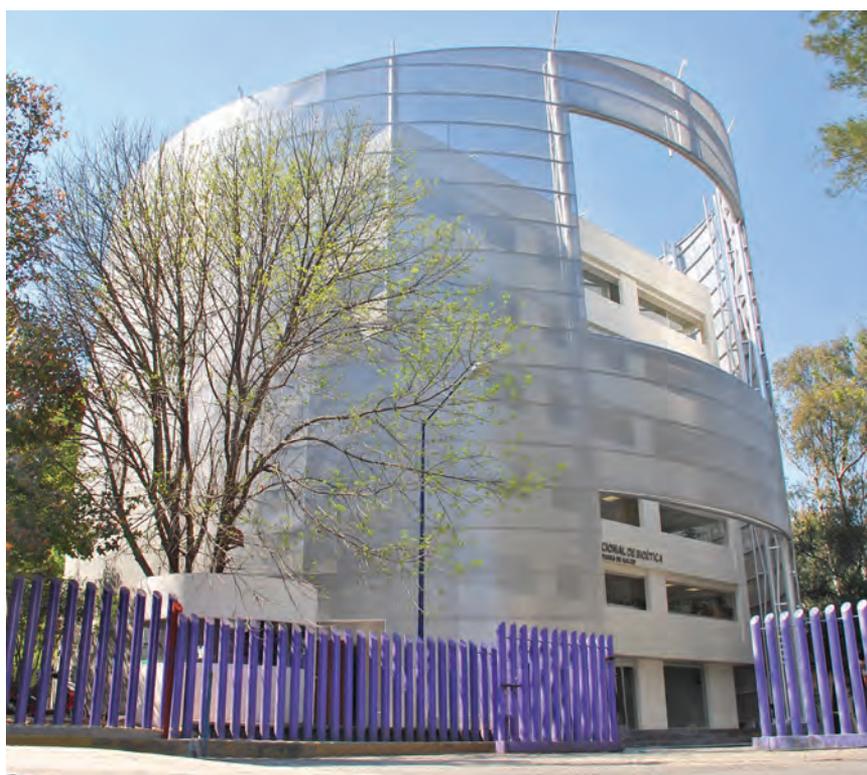
Just as the globalization of the economy, the market and the information is an unavoidable reality, our reaction towards our own health, that of others and towards the environment we inhabit calls upon a common ethical responsibility, one that should be anchored in our culture, from a global perspective. This is why today it is an ineluctable task to enable a universal legislation founded on the vision and ethics of persons, societies and cultures, regardless of their differences. This critical reflection on human activity is a priority that requires definition of a universal ethical minimum that seeks to preserve life and its future.

In our context, the health secretariat is committed through the National Bioethics Commission to the following task: promoting a bioethical culture in Mexico and to be a point of reference in the vanguard of Bioethics for the Americas

and for the world. Now more than ever, it is evident that the scope of our actions transcends the local sphere.

It is, therefore, essential to rethink and practice bioethics, a type of ethics that pursues the protection of every life form, as a form of expression that reflects on and promotes regulatory and public policy approaches in order to regulate and solve social conflicts, especially in the development and implementation of life sciences, as well as medical practice and research, which have an impact on the life of the planet and its future.

It is from this pluralistic and inclusive perspective, which forces us to see the world from a secular, free and universal point of view, that the realization of these two mayor encounters takes place: the **10th Global Summit of National Ethics/Bioethics**



National Bioethics Commission

Committees and the 12th World Congress of Bioethics, June 22 – 28 in Mexico City's historical centre.

10th Global Summit of National Ethics/Bioethics Committees

The summit is fostered by the Assembly of National Ethics/Bioethics Committees, whose countries of origin are members of the World Health Organization; the permanent secretariat and, in this case, the Mexican National Bioethics Commission are responsible for its fulfilment. This meeting gathers more than 50 countries from the whole world, as well as an important number of representatives from other international bodies.

It took place for the first time in the United States in 1992 and, since then, it has been celebrated biannually nine times in different countries. Now, in 2014 it will take place for the first time in Mexico and for the second time in Latin America since the Summit of Brazil more than a decade ago.

The summit emerged from the necessity of having a proper forum for discussion and analysis of impact of science and technology, as well as the need of including the input of Bioethics in the formulation of public policy at the regional and global level. Since it addresses the performance, scope and perspectives of the National Ethics/Bioethics Committees, it constitutes a unique learning opportunity for all who attend; there is no other forum in which this issue can be assessed so critically and pluralistically.

12th World Congress of Bioethics

On the other hand, The World Congress of Bioethics is one of the most important academic meetings for the spreading of findings and new theoretical perspectives in regards to the ethical reflections brought about by scientific and technological progress and its possible consequences for life —not only human— and the environment. It has been convened by an organization with international presence that counts with a worldwide network of experts, the International Association of Bioethics (IAB).



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The history of this meeting dates back to 1992 and, since then, it has been celebrated biannually in various countries. To this date, there have been eleven editions of the world congress. The next one, the 12th edition, will be the first to take place in Mexico, which means that after more than 10 years it will be returning to the American continent.

The Congress will take place immediately after the conclusion of the summit, in accordance with the on-going tradition. The agenda envisaged is the following:

Agenda						
Domingo	23	24	25	26	27	Sábado
22	Lunes	Martes	Miércoles	Jueves	Viernes	28
10ª Cumbre Global de Comisiones Nacionales de Ética/Bioética	Ceremonia de Bienvenida	Inauguración y Sesiones de la Cumbre	Sesiones de la Cumbre y Clausura	Sede Hotel Hilton Reforma Centro Histórico, Ciudad de México Junio, 2014		
12º Congreso Mundial de Bioética	10º Congreso de Enfoques Feministas en Bioética y Reuniones Satélite		Inauguración y Sesiones del Congreso	Sesiones del Congreso	Sesiones del Congreso y Clausura	Actividades culturales

The general theme of the congress —Bioethics in a global world: science, society and individual— implies that it will be carried out along four main subject areas:

1. Global Health: Climate change, health prevention, promotion and culture, distributive justice in health, universal healthcare coverage, hunger, nutrition and health; ethical guidelines for the performance of healthcare professionals, public health and epidemics; biosecurity and military applications, and human material commerce.

2. Science: research ethics, integrity and security, conflict of interest, public policy in science, costs

and access to emerging technologies, genetic tests and its use, DNA, privacy policy and data management; biobanks and registration, and neuroethics and neuroscience.

3. Society: dilemmas regarding reproduction, the beginning and end of life, justice and social responsibility, community action, poverty and vulnerable groups; aging, migration, disability, consent and informed assent, rights of persons with mental disorders and of those under involuntary treatment and confinement, interculturality, discrimination, biopolitics, ethics and law, cooperation and international convergence, education and bioethics, bioethics in art and culture, and bioethics and media.

4. Individual: Individual responsibility in health, the role of the individual in society, the welfare of all living beings, autonomy, dignity, responsibility and lifestyle, conscientious objection and gender.

More than a thousand persons from more than a hundred countries from around the world will be attending this great event. The Congress will bring together important figures, such as: Florencia Luna (Argentina); Juliana González (Mexico); Tom L. Beauchamp (USA); Norman Daniels (USA); John Harris (UK); Peter Kemp (Denmark); Gilbert Hottois (Belgium); José Sarukán (Mexico); Eduardo Matos Moctezuma (Mexico); Adolfo Martínez Palomo (Mexico); Ruy Pérez Tamayo (Mexico); Juan Ramón de la Fuente (Mexico) and Julio Frenk, among other specialists from other fields.

These are, undoubtedly, two of the most important events for Mexico as well as for the international stage, reiterating the resolve of encouraging health preservation from a national, regional and global perspective.

In the following pages the background and activities program to the congress and the summit will be specified in greater detail, a brief description of the delegations that will be attending the Global Summit and a series of brief reflections from the key speakers for the World Congress are also given.

The experience of the National Commission of Bioethics of Mexico:

22 years of ongoing activities fostering a Bioethical Culture

*Manuel H Ruiz de Chávez**

Introduction

The following pages have the purpose of presenting, in a brief manner, a general picture of the activities taken by the National Commission of Bioethics, on the grounds of its attributions, and in regards to the actions committed to the fulfillment of its objective, mainly in the period of October 2009 to September 2013. It's about a period of almost 5 years and is based on a detailed report that was presented in September 2013 and that has been continuously updated since. Of course, it only refers briefly to the previous stages of September 1989 to 2009.

In this sense, in order to make a short review, we must say that the origin of the Commission dates back to the creation of a study group on the field of Bioethics, under the wing of the General Health Council. I wasn't until March 30, 1992 that, thanks to the commitment and talent of Dr. Manuel Velasco Suárez, it was created as such. Dr. Velasco Suárez pointed out its mission and objectives in a presentation given 7 years later at the 1st Congress of the foundation of Ethics and Human Rights, which took place within the Air Force University, in the Medical Military School.

In this document the specific aspects and strategic continuity of the National Commission of Bioethics are described and rendered essential for its evolution, and also it states a series of results, guidelines and perspectives for its empowerment and projection in short and medium terms, with the intent of enforcing the mandate to respect for the dignity of life, the safekeeping of people's rights, health preservation and protection, protection of the environment and life in all their expressions.

In this occasion we refer to the activities framed within the functions regarding the regency of the National Health System and the activity stated in terms of quality policies of the system, guided by two basic premises: Social Assistance and Patient Protection, which translates to respect for the dignity of people and safekeeping of human rights.

*President of the National Commission of Bioethics Council.

This is why the Commission has set forth its mission to promote a bioethical culture in the country through four processes which conform its different tasks: (i) As a legislative-normative and consultant body on public policy and bioethics; (ii) As a promoter of the infrastructure or installed capacity on Bioethics in the country (State Commissions, Hospital Bioethics Committees and Research Ethics Committees); (iii) As a space for Bioethical knowledge promotion among specialists in the topic, others working in the field and the general population, -using electronic and printed media, as well as free library services, both personal and online-; And, also, (iv) as a promoter of academic development and social exchange in bioethics.

For the commission, under its current administration, Bioethics is an essential task that demands a clear vision of its conception, means and scope, as it represents the concretion of ethical guidelines in the face of scientific development and its technological application —which impacts on practically every domain of life—, grounded on reflection and giving priority to the preservation of human life and the environment before any other consideration or interest.

Conceptual foundation

I will briefly review this concept in order to make clear the exact meaning of the commission's task. Bioethics is a space for dialogue and consensus, and for convergence of diverse fields of knowledge —humanist, scientific, practical, specialized and general—, for this it is necessary to bring together diverse cultures, with different practices and background, in facing matters that impact on society as a whole: peace, health, and local, national and global involvement in environment and natural resources protection.

Within the Council of the National Commission of Bioethics, far from adopting a complex, rigid and, most likely, provisional definition of Bioethics, it was considered relevant to come up with a concept in terms that adopted the work of renowned specialists, as well as national and international bodies, but that still reflected the commission's own stance: "Bioethics is a branch

of applied ethics that reflects, deliberates and plans regulatory approaches, as well as public policy, in order to resolve social conflicts, especially in matters relating to life sciences and medical practice and research, that have an impact on life on the planet today and in future generations.”(1)

Along the same lines of Dr. Hottois, who is fortunately with us, in this congress it is considered that this approach is useful not only for guiding actions in this conceptual and educational domain, but also in its pragmatic exercise, heeding the ethical implications in societies with varying degrees of order, individualistic, multicultural and evolving; and, of course, keeping in mind the considerations of the professionals that have dealt with this field of knowledge.(2)

It is about encouraging a responsible attitude towards decisions made by the citizenship as well as by healthcare professionals, authorities, social organizations and governments, in all three spheres of action, from a secular platform, respectful of the plurality of standpoints on bioethical issues, especially those related to human life and healthcare for individuals and societies.

Implemented measures: reach, challenges and perspectives

The main goal of the Mexican National Bioethics Commission is to promote a bioethical culture in the country, a task that implies planning and design of strategies and lines of action that may aid in the ethical development of society as a whole, stimulate reflective thought in individuals and societies on the situations of uncertainty brought about by techno-scientific development, as well as seek greater participation in a context of pluralistic and respectful dialogue, keeping in mind criteria and standards that may ensure social benefit and without adversely affecting vulnerable social groups.

Likewise, promoting a bioethical culture means strengthening the social fabric by providing access to knowledge, aiming at better social conditions and general welfare from an ethical standpoint,



Manuel H Ruiz de Chávez

fully aware that it is a multidisciplinary field and that it has an impact on all human activities.

From this perspective, the main actions undertaken have focused, on the one hand, in the operational development of bioethics by promoting the formation of state bioethics committees, as well as research ethics and hospital bioethics committees. To this date, 20 state committees out of 32 have become formally and legally established. Nine more are in process of formalization, however they are already operational. Regarding these committees, their integration, development and actions have been progressively deployed, yet today the general health law of our country calls for their presence in every health establishment as a matter of obligation.

On the other hand, a social and educational communication campaign has been developed; various printed documents have been developed and digitalized, and also a specialized quarterly gazette, which offers specialized and general information, has been regularly published. Similarly, a library with a vast array of information, which

offers free personal assistance and online services, as well as specialized education for all, has been created. A web portal has been established as well for the dissemination of the Commission's actions and the promotion of information exchange and access to the national and international network.

Another crucial aspect is academic development. Through this effort there has been participation in various university courses, two series of videoconferences on numerous topics have been developed and remotely transmitted—with curricular value—; and cooperation agreements have been made with the National University and the National Council on Sciences and Technology, two institutions that have provided their full

support for the development and practice of Bioethics in the country.

In 2012 the 20th anniversary of the creation of the CONBIOETICA in Mexico was celebrated with various events, including the following: the signature of the aforementioned agreements, the edition of a commemorative postal stamp, the organization of an editorial expo on Bioethics, and the issue of a commemorative lottery bill.

Similarly, in 2012 the commission's new seat became operational, which helped invigorate the commission's labor and, especially, that of the Centre for Bioethical Knowledge (CECOBE), since an adequate space for a wide thematic library became available, as well as a state-of-



Manuel H Ruiz de Chávez

“The main goal of the Mexican National Bioethics Commission is to promote a bioethical culture in the country, a task that implies planning and design of strategies and lines of action that may aid in the ethical development of society as a whole...”

the-art virtual library and an adequate platform for transmitting videoconferences on Bioethics.

An essential task since its creation has been convening regional and national meetings with State Ethics Commissions and NECs for addressing crucial institutional issues.

Conjoined efforts with professional schools and universities (such as the National School of Medicine, the School of Surgery, among others), as well as the Supreme Court of Justice, have also been made; every year the “Manuel Velazco Suárez” International Excellence on Bioethics Award on is granted, which seeks to encourage research and addressing important topics on Bioethics among young professionals.

Another aspect of great significance has been embarking on various international activities, since this is the main reason why Mexico, supported by the permanent secretariat of the

World Health Organization, has been chosen as this year’s host for the 10th Global Summit of National Ethics/Bioethics Committees and for the 12th World Congress on Bioethics, which is carried out every two years by the International Association of Bioethics (IAB).

In this international scenario, strategic linkages have been established with diverse bodies, such as: the Pan-American Health Organization, the Pan-American Health and Education Foundation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Association of Bioethics (IAB), the Iberoamerican Bioethics Network, Latin American and Caribbean Association of Institutions on Bioethics (FELAIBE); the University of Miami; the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission (US-MEX BHC); the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEP), the European Commission; the Committee on Bioethics DH-BIO, the European Council; the Council Health Research for Development (COHRED); the Nuffield Council on Bioethics; The Peruvian National Bioethics Commission; the University of California; and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In sum, the actions taken have been multiple and diverse and, proportionately, the short and mid-term challenges have been numerous. The course taken accounts for the labor, reach and challenges to be faced, nevertheless there is in Mexico a platform for a new vision and a new horizon for a solid, inclusive and pluralist performance of the National Bioethics Commission and the furthering of its essential task, the promotion of a bioethical culture in the country and the inclusion of Bioethics in public, social and private matters, in order to defend human rights and the dignity of persons involved in health and biological research.

Notes

- (1) Concept developed and approved during the XXXIX session of the Council of the National Bioethics Commission, which took place on December 5, 2012.
- (2) Hottois, G.: What is Bioethics?, Fontamara Publishing House, 1st ed., México, 2011.

Miscellany on bioethics

Diverse thoughts from current ethical perspectives



Nicholas Agar

“Some people are impatient with the idea of an ethical discussion of cloning – or of any new technology for that matter. They point to what they perceive as a fundamental axiom of human existence: that any exciting new technology will be used, regardless of ethical qualms. All the ‘should nots’ and ‘morally wrongs’ in the world could not stop nuclear weapons from being built and used within a couple of decades of the first speculation that the energy within the atom might have destructive potential. This pessimism has infected even the most ardent opponents of human cloning who tend to accept that, morally evil though the cloning of humans is, there is almost nothing they can do to prevent it from happening. But we should not be so pessimistic about the efficacy of morality in the face of new technology.” *Perfect copy, unravelling the cloning debate, Icon Books, 2002.*



Evandro Agazzi

“[...] if we reject (and we have a legitimate claim) the statement that science and technology are inherently perverse, the problem of reconciling its legitimate development with the avoidance of its negative impacts still remains, and possibly even the advocacy of different human values. Solving this problem may be considered the greatest challenge of our time [...]” *Il bene, il male e la scienza. Le dimensioni etiche dell’ ‘impresa scientifico-tecnologica, Rusconi Publishing House, 1992.*



Tom Beauchamp

“Prior to the early 1970s, there was no firm ground in which a commitment to principles outside of Hippocratic medical ethics could flourish. Particular ethical codes written for the medical, nursing, and research professions had always been written by their own members to govern their own conduct. To consult persons outside the profession was thought not only unnecessary, but dangerous. This conception has collapsed in the face of the pressures of the modern world, such a professional morality has been judged inadequately comprehensive, at least somewhat incoherent, not nimble enough to address fast-changing issues, and insensitive to conflict of interest. The birth of bioethics occurred as a result of a increasing awareness that this older ethic had become obsolete.” *Contemporary issues in bioethics, Wadsworth-Cengage Learning, 2008.*

Carlos Alonso Bedate

“To a large degree the value attributed to a human embryo in its initial stages of development, as if it were a person, has resulted from the belief that the embryo potentially contains a human being and that it is destined by its own dynamic nature to become one. Although the ideas supported by some embryologists of centuries past have already been discarded, like the belief that within the head of spermatozoa there existed a fully formed human being that could grow by meeting an egg, at times we keep thinking about this under similar schemes, even though the molecular expression has changed.” *A reparative medicine: genetic and cellular therapy. Science and Ethics, Iglesia viva: revista de pensamiento cristiano, 2003.*



María Casado

“Anyone who address problems known as bioethical issues is bound to under what the law has to say on the matter. In a pluralist society —by definition one in which there is no right way of deciding good lines of conduct—, when dealing with conflicting positions it is necessary to be acquainted with the legal framework in order settle an issue. It is a possibility that this framework were insufficient, or even obsolete, and then it would be necessary to call it into question and change it, however one must always be acquainted with it.” *The Laws of bioethics, Editorial Gedisa, 2004.*



José Ramón Cossío

“Which possible solutions are there for problems like those in Bioethics? I believe that not only should this be addressed in terms of a relationship between a general biological issue and an ethical issue, but also of providing scientific knowledge to the supreme court and all other tribunals so that they may start by identifying the biological terms and conditions of these topics and, afterwards, address any ethical concern, which is a very different and complex issue.” *Right and bioethics, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008.*





Norman Daniels

“Insofar as meeting health-care needs has an important effect on the distribution of health, and more to the point, on the distribution of opportunity, the health-care institutions are plausibly included on the list of the basic institutions a fair equality of opportunity principle should regulate.” *Justice and justification*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.



Ruth Faden

“Hope is a delicate and precious commodity for people with life threatening illnesses. For physicians, finding the balance between honesty and support of that hope is often difficult. At the same time, however, there is a world of moral difference between a physician’s emphasizing—even inappropriately—a slim chance of cure to bolster a patient’s waning hope, and a physician’s emphasizing what is, in fact, a remote chance of benefit from research to meet a recruitment goal for a clinical investigation. Feeding hope at the expense of candor is one thing; exploiting the desperation of patients whose lives hang in the balance is another. While patients with serious illnesses may stand to gain the most from participating in medical research, they are also among the most vulnerable to its risks.” *Human-subjects research today: final report of the advisory committee on human radiation experiments*, National Policy Perspectives, 1996.



Julio Frenk

“Our approach starts from the clear premise: all health systems reflect a number of ethical assumptions. Conscious or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly, these assumptions become clear in the distribution of health care benefits and in the institutional organization. Along with the formulation of technical proposals and political strategies, each attempt to reform the health system should start by questioning the values that should be encouraged.” *Bioethics in action: the ethical foundation of health public policy*, Secretaría de Salud-Comisión Nacional de Bioética, 2009.

Juan Ramón de la Fuente

“Imposing public policy out of personal beliefs gives way to polarization, revives confrontation—many of which have already been overcome—, riles tempers, favors fundamentalisms and fires passions in a social context, which is already sensible and complex, like the one that is currently predominant. Secularity and tolerance are, thus, two of the big topics addressed by the current Mexican liberalism, which demands today from the progressive forces of the country a new articulation, one capable of finding again the road to social harmony, the best road for the republic in the 21st century.” (The secular state of the 21st century, Revista de la Universidad N°72, Febrero de 2010).



Juliana González

“A secular bioethics should possess certain distinctive notes: a rationality imperative and a critical spirit, objectivity, historical and social consciousness. It is mainly about recognizing the plurality or diversity of perspectives and standpoints, as well as assuming the relativity and perfectibility of scientific and philosophic knowledge, which is in constant development and cannot achieve single and permanent solutions.” *Dialogues on bioethics. New knowledge and life values*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013.



Christine Grady

“For a clinical research protocol to be ethical, the methods must be valid and practically feasible: the research must have a clear scientific objective; be designed using accepted principles, methods, and reliable practices; have sufficient power to definitely test the objective; and offer a plausible data analysis plan. In addition, it must be possible to execute the proposed study. Research that uses biased samples, questions, or statistical evaluations, that is underpowered, that neglects critical end points, or that could not possibly enroll sufficient subjects cannot generate valid scientific Knowledge and is thus unethical.” *What makes clinical research ethical?*, American Medical Association, 2006.





Andrew Haines

“The advent of research-based information for patients and growing accessibility by patients to information of variable quality through the internet and other sources suggest potential for doctors to work as information brokers and interpreters with patients and to work in concert with user groups, a number of which have demonstrated an interest and commitment to providing quality, research-based information to their members. The pace of change in knowledge is unlikely to slow and health systems around the world struggle to reconcile such change with limited resources and rising expectations, pressure to implement findings of research more effectively and efficiently is bound to grow.” *Getting research findings into practice*, BMJ Books, 2002.



John Harris

“It is significant that we have reached a point in human history at which further attempts to make the world a better place will have to include not only changes to the world, but also changes to humanity, perhaps with the consequence that we, or our descendants, will cease to be human in the sense in which we now understand that idea. This possibility of a new phase of evolution in which Darwinian evolution, by natural selection, will be replaced by a deliberately chosen process of selection, the results of which, instead of having to wait the millions of years over which Darwinian evolutionary change has taken place, will be seen and felt almost immediately. This new process of evolutionary change will replace natural selection with deliberate selection, Darwinian evolution with «enhancement evolution».” *Enhancing evolution*, Princeton University Press, 2010.



Gilbert Hottois

“Bioethics covers a number of tasks, discourses and practices, which are generally multidisciplinary and pluralistic, whose aim consists in clarifying and, if possible, solving ethical issues brought about by biomedical and biotechnological research and development within societies with a varying degree of individualism, multiculturalism and evolution.” *What is bioethics?* Fontamara, 2011.

Amar Jesani

“Women have demanded abortions but their access to services has been restricted by a number of social and legal hurdles. Far from being static, the norms governing the ethics of abortion have been modified from time to time and from one social context to the other. However, it is noteworthy that regardless of their (restrictive or permissive) orientations, abortion norms (and laws) have been directed, almost invariably, towards the fulfillment of extrinsic social needs. Women and their right to determine their sexuality, fertility and reproduction are considerations that have seldom, if ever, been taken into account. Further, in the formulation of policies related to abortion, it is the medical profession (and not women’s groups) that has played a vital role.” *Women and Abortion, Economic & Political weekly, 1993.*



Patrick Johansson K

“Unlike the western concept of death, which represents the end of an individual existence on a linear time axis, the indigenous concept assumes that it is an integral part of life: yoliztli, comprised of an existential march: nemiliztli and a deadly counterpart: miquiztli, metaphorically speaking, an «existential systole» and a «lethal diastole», both of which are continuous as a heartbeat. The cyclic axis of nahuatl time and the regeneration of beings through a fertile death has led to this vital duality. According to the myth «the creation of man in Mictlán», the human being is the product of a divine marriage between heaven and Earth, gestated in her fruitful womb and, at the same time, assimilated to death.” *Miquiztlatzontequiliztli. Death as retribution or redemption of a fault, Estudios de cultura Náhuatl, 2010.*



Peter Kemp

“The economic risks associated with disability and with the provision of support and care to relatives cut across ‘traditional’ forms of disadvantage caused by income, social class, gender and ‘race’. Moreover, the social exclusion and reduced opportunities that are often associated with caregiving and disability are exacerbated by these traditional forms of disadvantage. While there has been much emphasis on «work for those who can», less attention appears to have been given to the notion and reality of ‘security’ for «those who cannot».” *Cash and care, Policy Press, 2006.*





Florencia Luna

“For Latin-American bioethics human rights should be understood not as a slogan, but as a legally binding moral minimum. This kind of framing allows clearly distinguishing the existing inequalities in the region, providing instruments to enable positive action and that help us go beyond mere statements, and, also, beyond a restricted interpretation that views the invocation of human rights as a populist form of political action.” *Bioethical approaches in and from Latin-America*, Civitas publishing house, 2012.



Ruth Macklin

“Whether it is establishing equal rights for minorities and women, the prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment of individuals convicted of crimes, or prohibition of female genital mutilation, those individuals or groups who sought reforms were often looked upon by others as “hopelessly aspirational,” if not subversive of the established order and tradition. Although the protection of human subjects of research has been a prominent concern for more than three decades, new questions are being raised not only about what is owed to research subjects themselves, but also to others in the communities and countries where research is conducted. It is, therefore, not a legitimate defense against proposed changes to point to the status quo, arguing that the sought-after reforms are unrealistic.” *Double Standards in Medical Research in Developing Countries*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

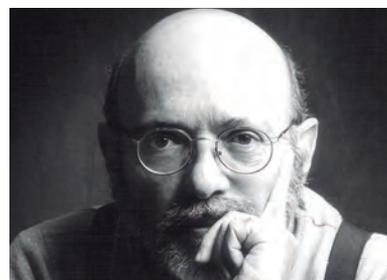


Adolfo Martínez Palomo

“The emergence and reappearance of contagious diseases and pandemics emphasize the importance of thinking about health in a global manner, from an ethical and economical point of view. This perspective, while keeping distance from a bioethics focused on the individual, accounts for contextual and cultural differences. Healing and health care don’t have the same priority and aren’t reflected in the same way in each country’s public policy, however every nation’s political leaders should attempt to allocate resources in order to prevent diseases, as well as promote and protect health. To consider health as a universal common good may also serve to convene countries in order to ensure that Health resources were apportioned more fairly among the population.” *Bioethics and Health*, El Colegio de México, 2010.

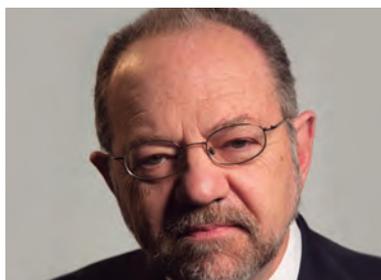
Eduardo Matos Moctezuma

“For the mexicas the cause of death was an important marker that defined the next path of spiritual entities. They regarded this phenomenon as a transitional step within a cycle that relates to a universal system. From man’s creation, whose essential ingredient was taken from the underworld or Mictlan, to some of the residences of the dead, such as heaven or the Tlalocan, this mythology makes up a system that accounts for the observation of vital cycles such as agriculture and astronomy —even after a long assimilation process brought on by the Conquest, symbols, rituals and certain ways of understanding the world are still alive in present day Mexico.” Death among the *mexicas*, Tusquets publishing house, 2010.



Jonathan D. Moreno

“A wide range of brain-related scientific endeavors, some as spectacular as mind control and others as mundane as political propaganda, have also been pursued in the interest of the defense of the nation. Moreover, the potential for emerging developments in the neurosciences and national security is indeed remarkable; old-fashioned notions of mind control are quite archaic compared with what is just over the horizon. The improvement of soldiers’ war-fighting ability, brain-machine interfaces, and the use of drugs and other measures to confuse and disrupt the enemy are the sorts of approaches that are going to be developed over the next decades, driven by cutting-edge science.” *Mind wars: brain research and national defense*, Dana Press, 2006.



Maria do Ceu Patrão Neves

“There is more water than land on earth and life began in the sea. Nevertheless, the seas are still widely unknown to us. In the last decades, activities that take place in the seas have developed from traditional fishing and transport activities to other activities that sometimes dispute the same space - aquaculture, renewal energies, sports, ecotourism, mineral exploitation, etc. All these activities are of social and economical value: the right conditions should therefore be fostered in order to develop a sustainable management of the seas that will reduce conflicts, optimize human and financial resources, and to do more and better while spending less.” *Interview of MEP Maria do Ceu Patrao Neves [Portugal, EPP]: Member of the Fisheries Committee Rapporteur on the proposal on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels*, 2012.





Carlos María Romeo

“In any case, it seems reasonably foreseeable that soon there will be unicellular living beings and shortly after, multicellular living systems. Maybe the least important aspect to be reflected upon is the artificial origin of these life forms, the fact that they have been created and not copied from a model by human beings, however, by its very nature, this is a matter that should remain open for discussion. The issue with this simple kind of life doesn't stem from its identity or closeness to other living beings we may find in nature. On the contrary, similarly to the manner in which this issue has been addressed in hybrid and chimeras, it stems from their identity as a species, particularly if they have a very different phenotype and genotype as other preexisting beings. It is not a matter of preserving biodiversity but restraining it to the extent that synthetic life may impact on it, in order to assure the identity of the species. Here we must rethink our ideas and position, ponder the advantages and disadvantages, resort to a principle of proportionality, set boundaries and, if possible, restrictions, these are matters upon which we'll have to make decisions, the higher the phylogenetic profile, the higher the restrictions will be.” *Ethical and Legal aspects of synthetic biology*, Acta Bioethica, 2010.



José Sarukhán Kérmez

“Although we are currently facing the greatest challenge humankind has met during its brief history on the planet (for all intents and purposes we are new arrivals in the fascinating adventure of life on Earth), I believe we may deal with this challenge without increasing social and economic costs due to severe environment degradation, even without seriously affecting national economies. However, I am also certain that if we don't take necessary and serious measures to do this we are embarking on a path, as a species, towards one of the greatest catastrophes this planet has witnessed over a period of more than four billion years revolving around the Sun. The main difference with the others lies in the fact that this one will have been caused by only one of hundreds of millions of species that have populated it: ours.” *Realistic Optimism*, El Universal, 2014.



Carlos Viesca

“The future seems promising, as promising as complex is the task of establishing for bioethics a disciplinary and discursive identity. On the meantime, we are forced to talk about bioethical doctrines, we must employ partial and provisional methods, we must face the risk of moral relativity in seeking wider ethical criteria, and form inter- and trans-cultural bonds. In this moment, bioethics is a characteristic discipline of a postmodern world. It is interdisciplinary, essentially plural and, therefore, multiform and multilingual, at the same time this partial indefiniteness becomes essential for delineating the route for future definitions.” *Bioethical Perspectives*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008.

Conversation with Doctor Juliana González Valenzuela

Researcher Emeritus with the National Research System

It is of great honor for the CONBIOÉTICA Gazette to chat with Doctor Juliana Gonzalez Valenzuela who counts with an outstanding and renowned professional life. Her academic formation was forged in the halls of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM in Spanish), where she obtained her PhD. in Philosophy. She has imparted classes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the College of Philosophy and is emeritus professor of the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature. She is a researcher emeritus of the National Researchers System and chair member of the Institut International de Philosophie.

She was director of the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature and member of the government boards of the UNAM, The School of México, and the National Institute of Genomic Medicine. She is a member of the Mexican Science Academy, the Ethics Committee of the post-graduate division on Bioethics of the UNAM, the International Platonists Society, the Société Européenne de Culture, and the Ibero-American Philosophy Society. She currently belongs to the Government Organization, Fondo de Cultura Económica. She has participated as advisor for different commissions, such as the CONBIOÉTICA, and the Presidential Science Advisory Council.

Dr. González has been awarded various distinctions, such as the National Science and Arts Award, and the National University Award in Humanities Research. She has authored over 20 books, several as sole author, such as “Ethics and Freedom”; “the Malaise in Morality”; “The power of Eros” and “Human Genome, Human Dignity”.

Let us begin our chat with Dr. González:

In the fifth volume of “Dialogues on Bioethics, new knowledge and values of life”, a magnificent book, like everyone Dr. González has had the opportunity of coordinating, on this occasion side by side with Dr. Jorge Enrique Linares, published as a co-edition of the UNAM and the Fondo de Cultura Económica, there an idea emerges early in the book, which I would like to pick up: in your words —more or less—, to once again think in life and its value has been one of

the most significant philosophical and scientific undertakings of the twentieth century and the early 21st century as well, since its findings have deeply revolutionized the ideas and values that had prevailed in our tradition.

My question is the following: Somehow hasn't this already happened? When in prior historical periods, such as the Renaissance or the so called Industrial Revolution, to mention only those two important historical turning points, men had to rethink, re-asses, and start considering new perspectives that, without a doubt, affected and continue to affect their journey through life. Are there really profound distinctions between those two moments of humanity's history? A human being who thinks, reflects, and knows, one who is responsible for his actions, and the innovations he makes, doesn't one gain some learning from this, in an ontological sense?

JGV: It is true that both the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution entail crucial changes in our current history, but it's also undeniable that these are not the only cases of historical transformations of great scale that have been happening in our time since the onset of modernity: some with scientific and philosophical meaning; others of a practical order: economical, political, social, technological, and cultural in general.

However, if we approach the new and astonishing findings that have been produced in the field of life science, mainly from the second half of the twentieth century to the present, without a doubt these have brought with them a decisive revolution, theoretical and practical, which changes the root of our conception of life in general, and of human nature in particular.

Why do we say this? because we're dealing with an extraordinary event that defines the possibility of entering another dimension of living nature, unknown until now: from the micro universe of genes, on one the hand, to brain cells, on the other. We're dealing with the discovery of this “new continent”, interior and infinitely small, with its conquest and, in particular, its intervention and alteration by technological means in accordance with human design. Schematically saying,



Juliana González Valenzuela

revolutions in life sciences and their new technologies reveal among other things:

First: that every living being has a common nature. On one hand we are made up essentially of the same life, of a physiochemical substance, DNA, a prodigious acid that is structured as a double helix that contains in itself the “written” code of universal and individual life. And, on the other hand, as part of an evolutionary process, a unique corporeal structure through centuries and millennia gradually came to being: the encephalon, the highest expression of which, in evolutionary terms, is the brain of the homo-sapiens, which comprises the main stages of such evolutionary process. It is precisely the human brain that holds and originates the most defining functions of the human being, not just physical and biological, but psychological or spiritual. We carry within our head, so to speak, the most crucial moments of evolution: we are batrachians, mammals, dolphins and poets as well.

Second: one of the main consequences of these formidable discoveries is that they debunk the ancestral and universal belief in human nature

as being made up of two essentially different parts: body and soul, matter and spirit, as well as the belief that the human being were defined by this spiritual “side”. This dualism has been predominant, especially in western civilization, and has been assimilated by not only religions, but philosophy, science, arts, politics, social organizations, culture and our general way of life as well.

However, it is precisely this scientific and technological revolution of molecular biology which breaks —or blurs— the boundaries between the biological and the spiritual, meaning that monistic or reductionist doctrines which question the specificity of human nature would remain relevant, since now the spiritual and axiological domain of human existence has been seemingly erased. Priorities would lie now in the corporeal, material, immanent and exterior, and, most of all, in techno-scientific might, which is man’s current means of domination and transformation of Nature (devouring the planet at the same time), as well as his own nature. The implications are undeniably ontological and ethical, historical, social and psychological.

Third: we can find consensus here, that ethics, human rights and, most remarkably, bioethics, should intervene and address all threats to the survival of what is properly human, building a bridge to the future, as the pioneer of bioethics, Potter, saw right from the start.

In the opening pages of the book, you also rightly state that attempting to reconcile two languages —that of humanism and that of science— goes beyond linguistic difficulties. That it is rather “the rapprochement of two different ways of talking about a single reality... that can mutually enrich each other.” However, the general view is that humanist thought is subjective, insofar as it includes our emotions, while scientific thought is based on reason, and is objective, even measurable. Does this not lead to a basic opposition when we speak of an ethical or bioethical perspective?

JGV: It is true that to some extent there persists —at least in the common understanding— the

myth of “the two cultures”: scientific and humanistic, with the characteristics you describe, which evidently diminish the validity of humanist knowledge in the face of the objective and fully rational rigor of the sciences. This, however, is a myth that is gradually dissipating, in two senses: science is coming to acknowledge the relativity of its truths, together with its ethical and social commitments; while humanist disciplines are defending and reaffirming their own methods and values, which go far beyond subjectivity and the arbitrariness of mere opinions. The truth is that even if they are two fields or aspects of human culture, at bottom sciences and humanities share the same realities and objectives, as well as countless points of connection that today are more intense than ever. Bioethics is precisely the clearest testimony to this fruitful and necessary interdependence.

The future of man is the present of philosophy, Heinrich Rombach tells us. He, in turn, sets out the thesis that the “multiverse” nature of the world corresponds to the “multi-truth” nature of reason.

“The diversity of human worlds does not destroy the shared ground and fundamental points of agreements, just as this ground —understood without dogmatism— does not imply the exclusion of diversity either”.

Thus, he suggests, each world has its “own” reason, which means that no discussion or discourse can be established between worlds, because there is no shared plane, no truth that would be valid over and above the worlds and provide the basis for agreement among men. Beyond the phenomenological tendency of this leading German philosopher, it would appear that some of his assertions place limits on the possibility of this rapprochement between scientific knowledge and humanist wisdom. What is your opinion of this view and, above all, of the idea of linking the future of man to the present of philosophy?

JGV: I think that, put in this way, this is a relativist and skeptical position that I would be far from sharing. But I don’t think Rombach himself would either, since he affirms that “there is nevertheless a ‘dialogue’ of the worlds or communication between worlds.” This is what, in my view, we have to acknowledge and clarify.

It is true that in the history of thought the unity and plurality of truth are frequently treated as mutually exclusive. And it tends to occur that, when we question the existence of a single truth, and when we defend the fact of diversity, then it is treated as an absolute and seen as excluding the unity (of truth): multi-diversity would entail multi-veracity and both would invalidate unity. However, I firmly believe that our times are leading us to think not in terms of absolutes but to open ourselves up to understanding the compatibility (and not the exclusion) of opposites. The plurality and historicity of the truth does not erase its unity (also historical and relative). The diversity of human worlds does not destroy the shared ground and fundamental points of agreements, just as this ground —understood without dogmatism— does not imply the exclusion of diversity either. The one and the diverse are opposed but at the same time are reciprocally complementary: they form a dialogue.

I don’t know how to interpret the idea that the future lies in philosophy. In any case I think that the future would be gestating not only in philosophy, but in all knowledge and action in the present, though never in a complete manner, regardless of what is essentially unforeseeable.

“...bioethics penetrates and is widely disseminated in all corners of contemporary activity, where the multiple and complex aspects of personal and social life give rise to countless dilemmas of a basically ethical nature...”

In addressing the issue of the ethical consequences for the understanding of life, unity and diversity is discussed as a new conception of human life. What is your opinion of this?

JGV: If I have understood your question, I think the answer is, if not explicit, then at least implicit in what I have just said.

In any case, in my view what we need to emphasize is the fact that if one thing is characteristic of bioethics it is its exponential growth in all directions and senses. It has expanded practically throughout the world and has also expanded in terms of its definition and its spheres of action. It has been deployed both in the philosophical sphere and that of public debate, and in the practical sphere. It is in the latter, however, that bioethics has permeated in an extraordinary fashion, since it is in practice that questions of contemporary individual or collective life have caused the most pressing problems of an ethical nature to emerge.

In this sense, bioethics is the equivalent of general ethics, and we are going to find it enriched not only in the field of medical ethics, but in connection to the most fundamental social, psychological and even political and economic questions. In other words: bioethics penetrates and is widely disseminated in all corners of contemporary activity, where the multiple and complex aspects of personal and social life give rise to countless dilemmas of a basically ethical nature —and which demand urgent resolution— and which only ethical criteria, decisions and acts can and should confront. There is no better testimony to this plural and unitary richness of bioethics than the World Bioethics Congresses, which this year is happily being held in our country. In their very diversity, these Congresses are unrivaled engines of dialogue and of the search for basic consensus.

Turning to the issue of health and social welfare, what role should this new knowledge and evaluation of the value of life play in shaping public policies that are based on an ethical and bioethical approach? How do you view the coming together of social determinants of health, ethics and bioethics?

JGV: I fully agree with the WHO's classic definition of health: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” I likewise share it in the sense that it is a “regulatory idea” that, as is acknowledged, “beyond its abstract and utopian nature, guides the path to be followed by the practice of medicine and the integral and social ethical values this should pursue.”

It is most clearly in the sphere of health, a fundamental value of life, where ethical questions emerge in a number of different senses. In everything relating to the world of personal and private medicine, of course —from the doctor—patient relationship to decision making in cases of eugenics and euthanasia. But perhaps the most significant ethical problems today are those that apply to public health and the pressing need for a truly distributive justice in a world shaped by unspeakable social inequality and its intrinsic disregard for ethical values and thereby for the human condition.

Finally: from the point of view of the university and the education of new generations, what recommendations would you make with a view to inserting bioethical knowledge in curricula and study programs, from elementary through to higher education?

JGV: I was actively involved in the proposal to create the Postgraduate Program in Bioethics at the UNAM. There were misgivings among the scientists with regard to the humanities and also vice versa. Nevertheless, the Postgraduate Program was created and it has been working fruitfully in the Faculty of Medicine, with tutors

from different disciplines. And there is hope that bioethics studies will now be able to prosper, even from elementary level, by whatever means. That they come to form part of the “natural” culture of our world. I think this is the great challenge for study programs as they undergo reform, especially if we consider the teaching of a secular bioethics, which for a whole host of reasons is the one that must prevail, as explicitly stated in the principles of our National Bioethics Commission.

Doctor González Valenzuela, Gaceta CONBIOÉ-TICA thank you for your time and your generosity in offering us this interview.



Juliana González Valenzuela

New publications

Books written by some of the experts who will participate in the international Bioethics encounters in Mexico

Just health care

Norman Daniels
Cambridge University Press
Estados Unidos 1985, 245 p.

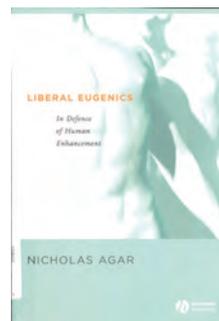


Norman Daniels analyzes some of the dilemmas arising from the conflicts in medical attention to move towards a theory of distributive justice in health care.

The principal argument of the book lies in the idea that medical attention —both preventive and active— has a decisive effect on equality of opportunities, and that a principle of this equality must broadly guarantee health care services. This book will be of great interest to philosophy and medicine students, medical authorities and political scientists, and the general public interested in the equitable distribution of health services.

Liberal Eugenics. In defense of human enhancement

Nicholas Agar
Blackwell Publishing
Estados Unidos 2004, 205 p.



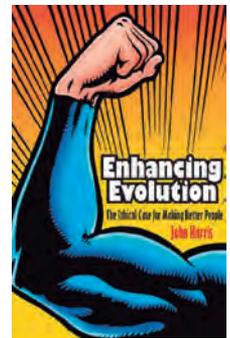
The public debate on the use of genetic technology seems to be dominated by the fear of a Huxleyan “Brave new world”, or the return to past links between eugenics and fascism. As a result, in this controversial book, the author refutes these assumptions and defends the idea of allowing parents to improve the genetic characteristics of their children.

The author argues that parents can use specific technologies to achieve their procreation objectives without damaging the persons that arise as a result; added to this, he rejects the idea that eugenics will necessarily divide those who are and are not favored genetically, and also denies that social pressures have to force the direction of any decision on eugenics towards a simple notion of human improvement, suggesting that these liberal threats to social agreements can be combatted.



***Enhancing Evolution:
The Ethical Case for Making Better People***

John Harris
Princeton University Press
Estados Unidos 2007, 260 p.

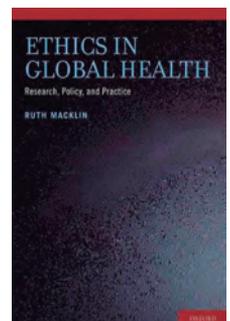


In this book John Harris takes charge of dismantling the objections against genetic engineering, stem cell research, designing new human beings, and how to think of cloning as a rigorous and resounding ethical success in the use of biotechnology to improve human lives.

The author defends all those biotechnological interventions that could enable humans not only to live longer, but to enjoy happy and healthy lives. Harris supports the improvement of human beings by almost any medium available, because not only does he see it as morally defensible but, in some cases, morally obligatory. Whether biotechnology is viewed with hope, fear, or a little of both, this work represents a perspective that can not be ignored.

Ethics in global health. Research, policy and practice

Ruth Macklin
Oxford University Press
Estados Unidos 2012, 408 p.

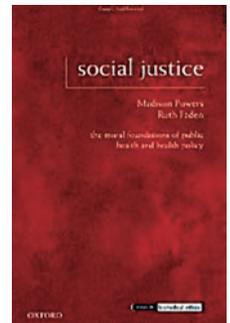


This is a collection of articles published by Ruth Macklin in different academic journals or as chapters in books, from 1989 to the present. They are arranged into two major sections. The first includes topics relating to cultural beliefs, family planning and contraceptive methods, among others. The central issue of these essays is the defense of the universality of ethical principles, despite the cultural differences around the world.

In the second section, the author includes articles on international documents, the discussion of the obligations of researchers and sponsors in developing countries, and the application of universal ethical principles in global research. Thus, the author criticizes the double standard used in global research: one model for developed nations and another for developing countries.

Social justice. The moral foundations of public health and health policy

Madison Powers, Ruth Faden
Oxford University Press
Estados Unidos 2006, 248p.

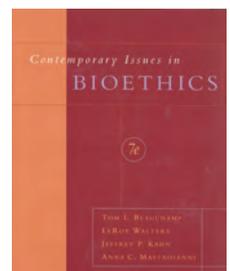


In bioethics, discussions of justice have tended to focus on issues of equality in access to health care: is there a right of access to health care and how should priorities be set when medical resources are scarce? Health care is only one of many factors that determine the degree to which people can enjoy a healthy life, and equality is not the only consideration in determining whether a public policy is fair.

In this book, bioethicists Powers and Faden confront fundamental issues around health and justice. How much inequality in health care can a society that sees itself as fair tolerate? It is an open question, and the book invites reflection from both academics and students of bioethics, moral and political philosophy, as well as anyone interested in the issues of public health and health policy.

Contemporary issues in bioethics

Tom Beauchamp, Walters Le Roy et. al.
Cengage Learning
Australia 2008, 806 p.



This book expresses the opinions of renowned experts from around the world on key issues of bioethics, such as: human reproduction, euthanasia and assisted suicide, genetics and genetic testing, the right to health care, organ donation and transplantation, research on animals and humans, ethics in relation to legislation and public policies.

The book is useful for students and instructors, presenting a comprehensive and concise overview that includes summaries of real cases, abstracts of important theoretical and policy approaches, and proposals to address contemporary issues. The inclusion of classic and contemporary essays makes it a work worthy of the interest of doctors, public health professionals, philosophers, genetic counselors, and is widely recommended to those interested in understanding bioethics from a variety of perspectives.

La salud de la población

Julio Frenk

Fondo de Cultura Económica

Mexico 2003, 166 p.



The author proposes, rather than a new public health system, a restructuring of the existing one, through the building and strengthening of a strong culture that provides cohesion to the attempts to build knowledge and that underpins the practice of medicine.

In examining the challenges to the foundations of a new public health system, four basic elements are addressed: the conceptual basis which rigorously defines what public health is, and knowledge about the sphere, together with the production, reproduction and use of this knowledge. The author recommends the involvement of the whole of society in this process leading to the assimilation of the health needs of the population, and deepening them.

Las leyes de la bioética

María Casado

Gedisa

España 2004, 133 p



This book is a very useful tool to approach bioethical issues; it provides a thorough selection of normative knowledge and case law that opens the mind to reflection on bioethical dilemmas and includes material that sets out the problems arising from new technologies and their use in living things and the environment.

The author states that the selection of the most significant case law, as well as the major issues that have driven bioethical debate, allow discussion and consideration of lessons learned for the future, and argues that this way of approaching bioethical problems is unquestionable if the scope of judicial decisions is examined. The author recommends an open and unprejudiced mind for the task, referring to the democratic sentiments of people that promote transparent debates and consensual agreements grounded, above all, on respect for the rights of other people.

Bioética: en busca de consensos

Proyecto de informe sobre responsabilidad social y salud
Comité Internacional de Bioética, UNESCO
Adolfo Martínez Palomo (Coordinador)
El Colegio Nacional
Mexico 2009, 81 p.

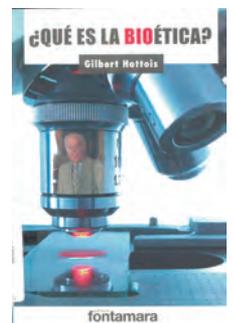


This book addresses the issue of social responsibility and health included in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. This is taken as the basis for actions that go beyond medical ethics where bioethics is positioned as a factor of progress that affects the field of social policy. Article 14 is open to the participation of policy makers in the field of medicine and life sciences and displays the concerns of bioethics to guide bioethical decision making towards the most pressing issues at the global level.

The article provides guidelines for the design of policies in relation to health services and is focused both on governments and different groups of people in society. It presents the report emerging from discussions by UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and is aimed at the principle of social responsibility and health, taken from the point of view of bioethics.

¿Qué es la bioética?

Gilbert Hottois
Fontamara
Mexico 2011, 106 p.



The book provides a breakdown of the development of the term “bioethics” and the creation of different bodies around the world relating to the discipline, as well as the clash between ideals with globalization. It also gives an overview of this different stances that have led to bioethics, from the most conservative to the liberalism defended by the author. He defines bioethics as a mere “procedure for secular discussion,” a “peace process” for the problems that arise as a result of the innovations of science and technology for medicine.

His argument is that people can genetically reconstruct their bodies to achieve greater welfare, that the changes are not the result of chance, since human nature cannot be radically changed, and medicine has always been linked to the plans expressed by patients.

Dilemas de bioética

Juliana González (Coordinadora)
Fondo de Cultura Económica
Mexico 2007, 356 p.

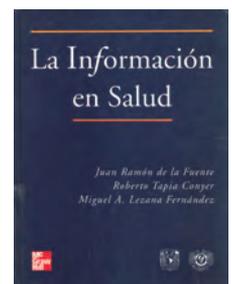


Juliana González argues that we live in times of ambiguity and ambivalence; a time of great change in terms of scientific and technological revolutions, before which it is the responsibility of bioethics to raise awareness of the dual power of techno-science, and the possibility of deciding responsibly when faced with any choice: bioethics is characterized not only by its multi- and interdisciplinary nature but by its controversial and collective nature.

The general choices that concern humanity in general, have to be decisions that involve as much as possible of society, meaning they must have access to reliable and authoritative information on the life sciences, biotechnology and bioethics; hence the value of the dissemination of knowledge and the formation of values, and the significance acquired for the committees, national and international commissions, forums, conferences or congresses, universal declarations and all the other bodies, processes and facts involved with bioethics.

La información en la salud

Juan Ramón De la Fuente
McGraw Hill Interamericana
Mexico 2000, 452 p.



This book argues for the importance of having access to the data generated by health care services, as this is essential to understand the state of health of the population, in order to implement relevant actions, such as creating new programs, determining and informing risk factors and other aspects.

This book supports the many benefits achieved in the wake of the health system reform in Mexico in 1995, at the same time as presenting the shortcomings and the areas of greatest opportunity, since this same reform has helped to strengthen the information system supported by modern technology, enabling the design of new policies, redesign of strategies, modernization of programs and creation of benchmarks.

Genética, biotecnología y ciencias penales

Carlos María Romeo
Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas
Colombia 2009, 680 p



The book invites the reader to the vast and exciting challenge that characterizes criminal science (criminal law) as it explores knowledge of human genetics and biotechnology, particularly in regard to controversial issues such as human embryos, cell reprogramming techniques and biomedical research, which need to be oriented from a perspective of the defense of human rights; from the commitment of modern man to the welfare and future of humanity; from the observation of biological diversity; from the genome as a legacy of the human race, etc.

This theme and its treatment demand reflection on the need to reshape values associated with the human genome where the law and bioethics become an instrument to guide and grant legality to science.

Culture and Bioethics

In this section, which seeks to link bioethics with culture in its broadest sense, and in particular with the different expressions of art, we present a brief article on the poet *Octavio Paz*, Mexican winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, and his critical vision of ethics.

A second article discusses the importance of Amalia Hernández's Mexican Folk Ballet, which forms part of the cultural program of the 12th World Bioethics Congress. The Ballet is truly a visual expression of the highest quality and is a dance company that for many is an ambassador of Mexican vernacular culture around the world.

Finally, the third article presents a short history of one of the most important public libraries in Mexico —and host of the cultural program— which constitutes one of the greatest cultural treasures of the country, and one that offers free and open access to its collections for the entire population.

The National Bioethics Commission is grateful for the selfless support of José Luis Martínez Hernández, a key part of the Mexican Folk Ballet, and Rafael Tovar y de Teresa, head of the National Council for Culture and the Arts, for their generosity and openness to events of major importance for Mexico, such as this one.

Octavio Paz: Tradition, Rupture and Continuity of a Critical Humanist

We hear Cardoza defend poetry, not as an activity at the service of the Revolution, but as the expression of the perpetual human will to subvert. Cardoza was the bridge between the avant-garde and the poets of my generation. A bridge stretched not between two banks but between two opposing points.

...The light too is lost in itself.
Octavio Paz

This year Mexico celebrates 100 years since the birth of one of the towering figures of Mexican letters: Octavio Paz. He was born in 1914, as the revolutionary coalition against Victoriano Huerta triumphed and as the First World War broke out, events that doubtless impacted on his worldview and shaped his passion as the great intellectual that he was —and continues to be for his many readers— and whose work and renown remain of global stature.

While different aspects of his thought are debatable and indeed open to criticism, his work, as Jorge Aguilar Mora —perhaps his keenest and most brilliant critic— rightly points out, is full of ideas and is thus itself “worthy of discussion.” (1)

Paz is a singular case in modern Mexican thought and art, insofar as, more than a man of letters like Alfonso Reyes —another Mexican figure of world standing— he was an intellectual in the broad sense of the word, who was equally at home writing political commentary, historical analysis, reviews and discussion of the leading currents in contemporary thought, as well as poetry —of course— and literary essays.

There is no doubt that Octavio Paz was a precocious talent. At the age of just 17 he published his first essay in issue five of the review *Barandal*, appearing in December 1931, and which —curiously enough— dealt with a crucial issue from the perspective of



Octavio Paz

bioethics and one that interests us here: the *Ethics of the Artist*. While it remains the essay of a young man, and a statement of intention, with all the exaltation and fervor of youth that might be expected, it is revealing—as Anthony Stanton observes—that this essay addresses aesthetics as an ethical problem. (2)

1931 also saw his first published poem, appearing in the section *Los nuevos* in the Sunday supplement to the *El Nacional* newspaper. The poem was called *Juego* and, given it is not well-known today, it was reproduced by Anthony Stanton by way of homage. (2) We present here only a fragment, which already reveals his direction and his love for literature as a creatively ethical attitude.

Game

I will put the seasons to the sword
Will play with months and years
(Winter days with their red summer faces).

And along the grey pathway
In among the silent procession
Of the harsh, unmoving days
I will place azure, gymnastic ones.

One undulating morning
Of painted lips
Fresh out of the bath,
With an autumnal twilight.

And I will seize the clouds
—red, blue, purple—and will cast them
At the expressionless page
Of the pale firmament
So they might write a letter
In the universal language,
To their good friend the wind
To their good friend the wind.
[...]

It is clearly the first poem of a young man—17 years old at the time—but one through which desire and humor, and the avant-garde of the time can be heard flowing from his already accomplished pen. Above all, it echoes the voice of Carlos Pellicer in his *Colors in the Sea and Other Poems*—also a first work.

Later on, between 1938 and 1945 he published a series of prose texts grouped under the title of *Vigils. Fragments from a Dreamer's Diary*. In these, Octavio Paz concerns himself with separating out two forms of knowledge that would come to define his later creative vision: on the one hand, the rational knowledge that implies “a conceptual penetration that deforms reality,” and, on the other, the poetry that is “to ignore, to abandon, a passionate and heroic dissolution of man in the world.”

In 1942, José Luis Martínez wrote in *Letras de México*: “Octavio Paz, it is now clear, is the foremost poet and most certain reality of our youth.” Not yet 28 years old, he had established a remarkable career: graduating in Law, he accepted an official commission to set up a school for workers’ children in Yucatán, before going on to marry Elena Garro and attend the Second International Congress of Antifascist Writers, at the invitation of Pablo Neruda. He was involved in the foundation of three literary reviews, working with writers including Xavier Villaurrutia, Alfonso Reyes, Salvador Novo and Rafael Alberti. He won his first literature competition run by the Séneca publishing house (with a jury comprising Alfonso

Reyes, Julio Torri and José Bergamín) and, to round off this initial stage of his career, won the Guggenheim scholarship. (3)

His poetry, with its early, belligerently social content, moved towards a position of interiority—one of open spaces, yes, but bound by the vision and sensibility of a man among men. In the end, it is not a poetry of solitude, but of communion, and therein lies the ethical nucleus of this extraordinary poet, whose work is as vast as it is stellar. As Paz himself put it: “... Yet poetry remains a power able to reveal our dreams and to invite us to experience them in the light of day.” (4)

In the same vein as this poetic declaration, Paz suggests: “The fact the answers have failed does not mean the questions are not valid.” This notion indicates the unity and solidity of Octavio Paz’s view of ethics. Just one of his clearest thoughts highlights his notion of ethics: “I believe in the market economy, but I refuse to accept that the market economy is the same

as the market society, because I believe that human beings possess dignity.”

This year we celebrate the centenary of the birth of the great Nobel Prize-winning Mexican, one he shares with the birth of two other great Mexican artists: the poet Efraín Huerta and the outstanding novelist and libertarian thinker José Revueltas.

Alejandro del Valle

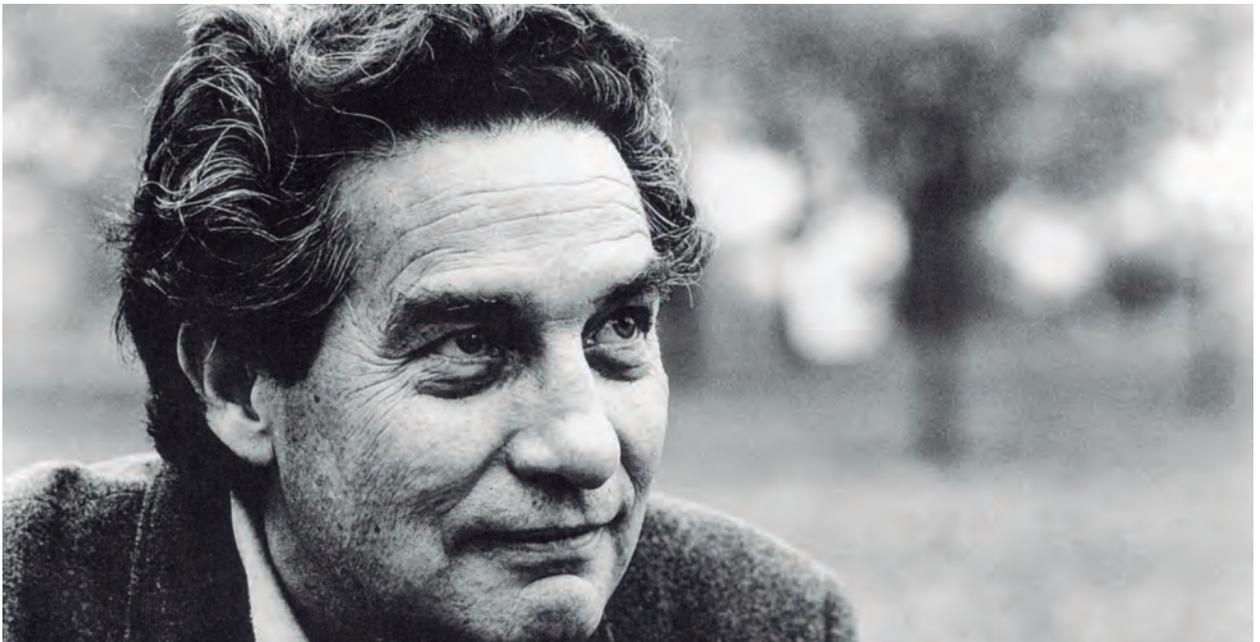
Notes:

(1) Aguilar Mora, J.: *La sombra del tiempo. Ensayos sobre Octavio Paz y Juan Rulfo*. Siglo xxi editores, S.A. de C.V. México, 2010; 136pp.

(2) Stanton, A.: *El Paz Joven: el primer ensayo y el primer poema*. Revista Tierra Adentro, México, marzo-abril 2014.

(3) Martínez, José Luis.: Octavio Paz: Entre la piedra y la flor. Letras de México, n° 5, 15 de mayo de 1942, p.56

(4) Paz, Octavio. *Poesía de soledad y poesía de comunión*. Publicado en el Hijo Pródigo. México, agosto de 1943.



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Octavio Paz

The “Amalia Hernández” Mexican Folk Ballet

*The most authentic expression of a people is found
in their dance and music. The bodies never lie.*
Agnes De Mille

The term “folklore” refers to a people or culture’s traditional beliefs, practices and customs. These are traditions shared by different social groups that tend to be transmitted down the ages from generation to generation.

Folk dances are one of the most expressive manifestations of a country’s folklore. Not only do they acknowledge, preserve and display the traditional habits, beliefs, rituals and customs of the inhabitants, but through their musical richness and the color of their movement and costumes they constitute an audiovisual spectacle that arouses a range of intense emotions in the audience, regardless of the origin, nationality or language of the latter.



Amalia Hernández



Folk Ballet

The Mexican Folk Ballet shows off this tradition in all its glory. Its origins date back to the 1950s, when Amalia Hernández, dancer, choreographer and founder of the institution, embarked on an untiring effort to salvage Mexico's dance traditions.

This effort became a vital necessity to project, in Mexico and before the eyes of the world, the beauty of the universe in movement from pre-Hispanic culture through the Spanish influence of the Colonial period, to the popular resurgence of the revolutionary period.

The present day dissolves before our eyes and we begin a journey into the past. The lords of the heavens and of the earth return, jaguars, deities born from human beings, different cultures that flourished long ago and left their traces in the color and rhythm, the dance and the music, of our rich history.

The Mexican Folk Ballet has prepared the choreography for more than 120 dance performances. In all of them, the music, the technical rigor, the elaborate traditional costumes and the original choreography combine to create the singular character of this company, whose international success over more than sixty years has earned it numerous prizes and awards, including the National Arts and Science Award, the Nations Prize (awarded in Paris in 1961) for the best dance company in the world; the French Legion of Honor; the Tiffany Prize awarded by the U.S. press; and the gold medal from Mexico's National Fine Arts Institute, to mention only a few.

In a period of globalization, culture tends to become homogenous and dominant countries impose their creative worldview. Folklore is distinctive and individual to each people, and offers a sphere of resistance for national identity in each country. It is, in reality, a two-way phenomenon in which the local becomes global and the global is accepted as one's own.

The Library of Mexico: a historic site committed to defense, storage and knowledge in the Mexico of yesterday and today

The seat of the Library of Mexico: the Ciudadela

The building of the Ciudadela, or Citadel, which is now home to the Library of Mexico, was originally built in the late 17th century to house the Royal Tobacco Factory of New Spain.

In 1808 the building was restructured to permit a secondary use as a political prison, and was used as such to imprison the independence leader Don José María Morelos y Pavón, who left it on his way to execution by firing squad at San Cristóbal Ecatepec.

During the Mexican Independence movement, Viceroy Félix María Calleja initiated efforts to convert the building into a general artillery store, which were approved by royal order on October 19, 1816, when it ceased to be a tobacco factory to officially become the Ciudadela.

Following independence, the use of the Ciudadela did not change. General Guadalupe Victoria used it to store arms. Subsequently, President Vicente Guerrero ordered improvements to be carried out: the courtyards and halls were repaired,



Library of Mexico



Interior view of the Library of Mexico

the external limits rectified, and the surrounding ditches were broadened and deepened. These latter disappeared in 1980, the year in which most of the courtyards were roofed over, while the exterior saw the addition of pilasters and metal railings. Thanks to the solidity of the structure, which gives it the appearance of a fortress, the Ciudadela building was the site for numerous political and military declarations. The last was that made in 1913 by the anti-Madero forces, better known as “the Tragic Ten Days.”

The Library of Mexico

On January 30, 1940, President Manuel Ávila Camacho granted part of the Ciudadela building to the Library of Mexico, following negotiations by José Vasconcelos, who aimed to restore and reorganize the National Library (a project he never saw come to fruition). The President and the Minister of Education, Jaime Torres Bodet, formally inaugurated the new library on November 27, 1946. José Vasconcelos was the first director of the Library.

Upon the death of Vasconcelos, Doctor María Teresa Chávez Campomanes, pioneer of library science in Mexico, occupied the position until 1979. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Education’s Libraries Department, the Library of

Mexico was restructured to establish an open-shelf service.

In the 1980s, the Ministry of Education proposed the creation of the Ciudadela Cultural Center. At the time, the Library occupied just one-quarter of the building, sharing it with offices of the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Defense and schools belonging to the Ministry of Education.

In 1987 the architect Abraham Zabludovsky undertook a comprehensive renovation and restoration of the building. Thus, the Library of Mexico was reinaugurated on November 21, 1988 by President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, as the culmination of the National Public Libraries Program, run by the recently-created National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONACULTA). The new director was Jaime García Terrés, who occupied the post until his death on April 29, 1996.

The same year, the poet and writer Eduardo Lizalde took over the position of director, continuing the efforts to develop the site as a cultural center for books and reading, with the introduction of new information technologies and modernization of services and the organization of documents.

The opening of the José Luis Martínez Personal Library on January 19, 2011 marked the start of

the Master Plan for the Library of Mexico, intended to position it as a cutting-edge institution for the 21st century. It now brings together the personal archives of the writers José Luis Martínez, Antonio Castro Leal, Jaime García Terrés, Alí Chumacero and Carlos Monsiváis, in line with a state policy to select, acquire and preserve the great personal libraries of the 20th century, in order to prevent their dispersal, loss or sale abroad. It also offers new services, which benefit from the installation of new technological infrastructure: on-line consultation of material the library has digitalized and implemented in public libraries; and *in situ* digitalization of archives, in particular the special collections. This has also helped to preserve valuable bibliographic material while making it available for consultation by the general public in the library or via the website.

The architectural master plan for the building, under the supervision of the Department for Cultural Heritage Sites and Monuments, sought to reorganize the spaces: the Children's Room was redesigned to offer children a range of ways of approaching books and of moving naturally from printed to electronic books; it also incorporated an innovative project for visually-impaired people, providing more modern services that permit the user much more autonomy and access to more diverse sources of information, availing of new technologies, together with improved acoustic conditions. Likewise, the infrastructure for cultural activities was renewed, adapting the former auditorium into a multi-purpose forum, and creating new spaces for art exhibitions and a spacious courtyard for showing films.

The Library of Mexico offers a wide range of services: consultation; internal loans; children; guided tours; photocopying; and loan of computer equipment. It includes the following rooms and collections: general collection; children's room, including a space for babies, a playroom and digital literacy room; a room for visually-impaired people; digital services modules; the Austrian Centre for Reading; reserved collection; Mexican collection; and a newspaper and journal collection.

It further houses several personal libraries donated by leading Mexican intellectuals and writers: José

Luis Martínez; Antonio Castro Leal; Jaime García Terrés; Ali Chumacero and Carlos Monsiváis.

Finally, it also has a number of cultural spaces of prime importance: the writers' courtyard; the film courtyard; the "Octavio Paz" courtyard; the "Antonieta Rivas Mercado" multipurpose forum; the Abraham Zabludovsky gallery and the Alejandro Rossi bookstore.

Note: this text is courtesy of the Library of Mexico. Our special thanks are due to its director, Enrique Lizalde—outstanding Mexican poet— and María Guadalupe Ramírez, Deputy Director of the Library, for their generous assistance.



Interior view of the Library of Mexico

Open door

Transmission of values through art

I found the article published in Gaceta No. 11 on *Art and Bioethics* very interesting, in particular the author's thoughts on how art produces knowledge by *harmonizing the formal relation between our sensory perceptions*. Also interesting was the link between art and bioethics, treating ethics as the *art of living*, this being a free choice. The article refers to the thought of English writer Herbert Read regarding the artist's perception not only of the object or the idea but its universal scope. Art does communicate, and in this sense the transmission of human and social values through it is undeniable.

The article also makes continual reference to Fritz Jahr, who addresses the issue of art as a medium for man's relationship with life and with his surroundings; this is the case with cinema and the bioethical dilemmas it presents. In this way, ecology and health, for example, may be questioned by means of any artistic manifestation as well as, of course, exalting aspects of value, the *eternal attributes of humanity*.

I was particularly interested in the section that mentioned the artistic trends of contemporary art that are closely linked to bioethics, including bio-art, which explores biological limits, and land art, which uses nature as its support and alters nature. I would ask whether these can be called art since, as the article points out, *creative liberty is no excuse for appropriating other life forms: ethically speaking, it is not permissible to abuse other living beings in the name of art*.

To close, I would like to add that the article was not only interesting but forced me reflect on the issue. It was also pleasing to see two great poets mentioned: José Emilio Pacheco and Juan Gelman, whose work remains with us, fortunately.

Ana Lucía Ruiz Fernández
Puebla, Mexico, April 2014

Editor's note

Thank you, Ana Lucía, not only for reading the article *Art and Bioethics* published in issue 11 of *Gaceta CONBIOÉTICA*, but also for the interest you show throughout your comments. It is indeed an issue—if you'll excuse the expression—that has *substance*. For those of us who deal with the issue of bioethics every day, not only because of our human condition but because of our professions, it is exciting how art, in its different manifestations impinges on, presents and questions bioethics. Art is on one time with life itself, not just to please and inspire, but also to convey information, raise awareness and transcend socially.

Many thanks,
The editor

Migration and health

I follow the *Gaceta CONBIOÉTICA* every three months, and in issue 11 I came across the conversation with Doctor Xóchitl Castañeda, whose work on the phenomenon of migration and with migrants themselves is deserving of greater recognition. Those of us who live in a country like Mexico know that our compatriots live in a difficult situation in the United States, often facing a demanding, hostile world far from their families. In general, those who cross the border illegally, and take their families, or form families far from their country, have no knowledge of what they will face.

The work of Doctor Castañeda allows migrants to understand the work opportunities they will encounter, as well as health services issues, among others. Also worthy of note is the work she carries out in the Binational Health Awareness Weeks, which call upon different bodies to provide health services to the migrant population who do not attend community clinics. Likewise, there is the creation of the "health booths" at 50 Mexican consulate in the United States. The doctor mentions that the support of both countries has been fundamental and that the program has also been extended to Canada and to other countries in Latin America.

The training that is given to people who are part of the community as bilingual health promoters is striking, and they serve as a bridge between institutions, community and migrants. Together with this, the work of the research teams is of great value, whose results have impacted on decision making and public policy recommendations to improve the quality of life of this population.

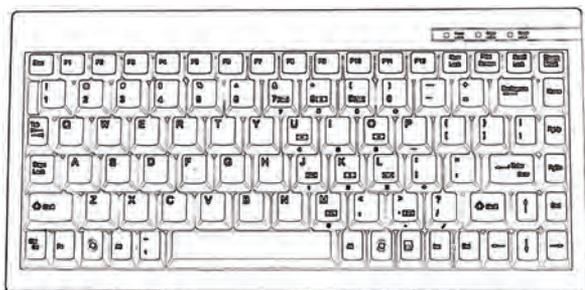
Let us hope that more professionals like Doctor Castañeda join these efforts to help our fellow nationals, my sincere congratulations for the publication of this interview.

Raúl Méndez Juárez
State of Mexico, May 2014

Editor's note

Thank you Raúl, for your acknowledgement of the interview with Doctor Xóchitl Castañeda, who indeed showed us the importance of her work on the health of the migrant population, above all in the United States, without forgetting the opportunities for Mexicans and the political responsibility and will of the governments involved. The leadership of the doctor over more than 13 years, has enabled the creation of programs to improve the health and quality of life of migrants. As a result, there is now a network of thousands of volunteers and bodies working on the issue. Without a doubt, bioethics has a wide field of action in this issue.

Many thanks,
The editor



advances

The September issue of *Gaceta Conbioética* will present summaries of the leading global events held in June—the 10th Global Summit of National Ethics/Bioethics Commissions and the 12th World Bioethics Congress— together with some of the papers presented on these occasions, selected for the newness and originality of the issues they deal with, as well as their global significance.

Also included—in summary version and with analysis by the Office of the President of the National Commission and the Board— will be the most significant conclusions and general outcomes of the symposiums and the recommendations of the experts and institutions involved. Of course, conference posters selected for their content and visual impact will also be presented, in the smaller format permitted by the *Gaceta*.

Another key aspect will be the discussions, summary proceedings, and the agreements and commitments made with other countries, institutions and, of course, with the International Association of Bioethics (IAB), the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), together with the lessons learned and proposals generated by the State Bioethics Commissions and, in general, all of those participating in the field in Mexico.

We hope that this upcoming issue assembles, in abridged form but with the greatest possible fidelity, the most significant contributions to both events and offers Mexico, and the rest of Latin America, lessons learned, guidelines for action and a renewed vision for promoting and applying bioethical culture, to the benefit of our societies and of the habitat that hosts us and makes life possible.

contributors

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A graduate in Administration from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, she has worked in the private sector in the departments of billing and customer care, as well as in the public sector. She contributes to the newsletter and news section of the CONBIOÉTICA Library website and is currently CONBIOÉTICA's Deputy Administrative Coordinator of the Documentary Archive and Services.

Juliana González Valenzuela

She holds a Doctorate in Philosophy from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. She teaches and is a Researcher Emeritus with the National Research System. She has been director of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters and a member of the governing board of the UNAM. She has also acted as an advisor to numerous commissions, including CONBIOÉTICA. She has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the *National Prize for Science and the Arts*. She is the author of over twenty books, several as sole author.

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A graduate in philosophy from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, specializing in ontology and ethics, with postgraduate studies in ethics, and an associate professor. Coauthor of the text *Retos Éticos a la Salud Pública en México*, part of the lecture series *Bioética y Salud Pública*, 2006. Taught seminars and presented papers at a range of academic activities at the UNAM. Currently working at CONBIOÉTICA's Center for Bioethics Knowledge.

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A surgeon with a Masters in social medicine, studied in the United Kingdom. He has occupied important positions in government and in the social and private sectors, and been involved in numerous studies in the field of public health. He is a member of the National Academy of Medicine of Mexico —of which he was president and vice-president— and is President of the Board of CONBIOÉTICA.

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