
Leo Pessini, Christian de Paul de Barchifontaine,
Fernando Lolas Stepke (Eds.):

Ibero-American Bioethics: History and Perspectives

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Even though bioethics seems to be dealing with issues that have universal characteristics, the rise of bioethical thought and, even more importantly, its development, has been influenced by social factors, including the specificities of historical and cultural heritage.

This volume, under the editorial supervision of Leo Pessini, Christian de Paul de Barchifontaine and Fernando Lolas Stepke, addresses the topics of the development of bioethics on the territory of Latin America (including the role of Portugal and Spain in it, as these European cultures played a major part in the creation of the Latin American cultures), main features of bioethics, and guidelines for future achievements. The names of the *editors* speak for themselves: all are esteemed bioethicists, while L. Pessini and F. L. Stepke are considered to be the pioneers of bioethics in Latin America.

The volume consists of 30 essays divided into five sections: Reflections from the Latin American Context (5 chapters), Reflections from Pioneering Voices (16 chapters), Special Topics in Bioethics (5 chapters), The Future of Ibero-American Bioethics (3 chapters) and Postscript.

The *first section of the book* gives a brief survey of the history of Latin American civilizations, with a focus on the development of bioethical thought (D. G. Guillén, Spain), and it has made an influence on the shaping Ibero-American bioethics (J. A. Mainetti, Argentina). J. Drane (U.S.A.) discusses the role he has played in promoting bioethics in Latin America, while A. L. Escobar, S. J. (Colombia), delineates its main characteristics and includes a list of its founders from across Central and South America. The last essay of the first section is devoted to the impact of the Pan-Amer-

ican Health Organization (PAHO) in spreading bioethical thought and practice in the countries of Latin America (F. L. Stepke, Chile).

The second part of the book provides an overview of the progress of bioethics and its effects in the societies known under the common name of "Ibero-America": Argentina (J. A. Mainetti and M. L. Perez), Bolivia (J. L. O. Eduardo), Brazil (L. Pessini and C. de Paul de Barchifontaine), Chile (M. Kottow), Costa Rica (D. Bustos-Montero), Cuba (J. R. A. Sariago), Dominican Republic (M. A. Suazo), Ecuador (K. Rodríguez), Mexico (G. Jiménez-Sánchez, C. F. Lara-Álvarez and A. Arellano-Méndez), Panama (C. Vergès), Paraguay (M. Ascurra), Peru (R. L. Zuloaga), Portugal (J. Biscaia and W. Osswald), Puerto Rico (L. Santos y Vargas), Spain (F. Abel and N. Terribas), and Venezuela (L. Schmidt H.). The fact that the current status of bioethics is discussed here by local pioneers of bioethical thought and leading bioethicists, involved in its promotion and spread in the area, gives even more credibility to these reports.

The specific topics in bioethics are addressed in the third section of the volume. M. F. dos Anjos (Brazil) discusses the relationship between bioethics and religion, while D. Diniz (Brazil) and D. Guilhem (Brazil) expound on the role of women in Ibero-American bioethics. J. R. Junges (Brazil) and L. Selli (Brazil) talk about the context of Brazilian environmental bioethics, whereas J. E. de Siqueria (Brazil) and M. Segre (Brazil) are interested in the approach to human vulnerability through bioethics. The last essay in this section addresses research ethics related to biomedical experimentation on human beings, viewed through Brazilian experience (W. S. Hossne (Brazil) and C. B. D. de Freitas (Brazil)).

The following section of the book attempts to provide guidelines for the future development of Ibero-American bioethics. To this end, it is pointed out that the historical context of Latin America should be taken into account (H. Lepargneur, Brazil). In addition to that, a critical review of the main settings of Latin American bioethics is presented (G. C. Legarda, Colombia), and the requirement that the discussion of bioethics in the new millennium should include multi- and transcultural dialogue (L. Pessini (Brazil) and C. de Paul de Barchifontaine (Brazil) supported).

In the last part of the volume, J. A. Bulcock (U. S. A.) stresses the differences between North American and Ibero-American bioethics by analyzing four main aspects of it: communitarian vs. individualistic ethics, establishment, development path, and determination of the content.

While the main aim of this volume of essays is to provide the reader with an opportunity to learn about the history, current status and perspectives of bioethics in Latin America, in fact, it has a wider impact. It also provides the reader with the possi-

bility to get acquainted with the kind of bioethical perspective that differs quite a lot from the dominant Anglophone, North American and European, bioethics. In terms of the development of global bioethics, this volume aptly shows that bioethics cannot be separated from the social and historical context, as well as the natural environment, and emphasizes the necessity for the respect toward regional and cultural differences, regardless of what part of the world is talked about.

Robert Doričić