

EDITORIAL

One theme has reoccurred in large part among discussion which involves scientific production – ethics in research. Such reoccurrence, more frequent in recent decades, has not been significant of a tranquil and coherent course of constructing consensus. On the contrary, it has been implied within a scenario of multiple positions and arguments concerning questions which are also diverse and encompass all the stages of investigation, including releasing the results of such investigation. The findings which mobilize changes in editorial criteria have not always been the most “agreeable”, since they have made us aware that academic and scientific expertise does not naturally and spontaneously guarantee the ethical correction of their procedures. Tacit confidence in that which is presented as research results has been substituted by the endorsed declaration of following minimal guidelines and protocols. The requirement of approving research projects in Ethics Committees for research involving human beings might be the most typical example. After an initial “adaptation” period from authors and readers, it has now become one more regulatory act, absorbed and incorporated into the routine of scientific production, many times separated from the important reflections which promote and give further significance to the act in itself.

What we have learned through this process now is revived, when another ethical topic gains increasing evidence – combating plagiarism. We cannot say that this is a new concern of academia, but that it has grown exactly because plagiarism manifests itself in all the formal education process, from elementary school through post-graduate work. The first “homework” tasks for a child to research are intermediated by the powerful search engine and access provided by the internet and the reading and writing exercise is easily confused with “copying” and “pasting”. Among teachers’ mistrust and effective educational strategies there seems to be a vast gap, after all we still face the great challenge of the citizen’s moral education. Meanwhile, more “connected” youth arrive at the University and produce more “doubtful” higher education work. The ancient trust and value of the academic title is undone when one learns of plagiarized dissertations in their entirety. This is the professional and scientist fabricated in the gaps of the academic system. One’s professional history and background can be found in the “lattes” (attested to by the author, however under the assumption of trust) and we know, or better, we “access” people based on the frequency of their publications and subsequent citations in other publications.

Scientific production in Brazil is in large part linked to Graduate Programs. One sign of how intolerable the situation may be becoming can be found in the initiative from the organization responsible to regulate and evaluate – CAPES – in assuming the proposition of the Brazilian Bar Association (Brazilian Order of Advocates - OAB), ratifying them with the intuition of combating plagiarism within the realm of graduate studies. The orientation released in January, 2011, from CAPES highlights the text of the proposition, recommending that the Higher Education Institutions adopt “policies for consciousness and information concerning intellectual property”^{1,2}, even sighting the use of reading software and electronic tracing of texts.

Certainly the problem is grave and no professor should doubt the OAB concerning plagiarism as an illegal practice, as such “nefarious procedure infects research, producing irreparable damage”^{1,1} But as the health professionals we are, we cannot forget another lesson learned – that remedies may also kill. Even its perfect prescription and administration, dosages, pathways, and collateral effects must be landmarked. We do not yet know from what will unfold what major success will be accompanied with the least damage possible. Nor is it foreseen which new practices will be generated in the academic and editorial fields, as consequence. For now we are between the threat of great evil and the fear that we will

not be capable of controlling the “creature” generated to combat such evil. After all, the Brazilian Bar Association itself warns us of the difficulty in dealing with non-absolute cases and results, with different gravities of plagiarism and with tools that are not yet properly evaluated. Or rather, the season for “clinical tests” against plagiarism is open; the adverse effects are yet to be reported. One needs only to consider the moral argument that will mobilize us and how insecurity and limits will be present.

Robert Steveson’s literary work, “Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”², reminds of the duo, of good and of evil divided in the same person and the terrifying effect of self-testing the formula one’s created. Combating plagiarism cannot be, in the extreme opposite, the instrument to defend supposed authorial rights who judge themselves to be the “owners” of what has been said by all. After all, to whom do so many of our ideas incorporated into discourses which have participated in shared and mobile knowledge and identity belong? Who generated our words or when have they gone from being mine and become ours?

Finally, it is relevant to remember that the theme of authorship is approached in a rather diverse form in the scientific, artistic, and literary worlds. While some announce the death of the author and his/her realm, other find their sustenance in him/her. Even under judgements so unfrontable, it is always good to drink from other sources. Possibly from Roland Barthes, “Who speaks thus? It will never be possible to know, for the simple reason that writing is the destruction of all voice, of all origin. Writing is this neutrality, this compost, this oblique where our subject flees, the black-and-white where one comes to lose all identity, the body which writes to start with [...] the text is a cloth of citations, parting from the thousand foci of culture”^{3:65-9}

Dra. Flávia Regina Souza Ramos

President of the Executive Council of Texto & Contexto Nursing Journal. Associate Professor of the Nursing Department and Coordinator of the Graduate Nursing Program at the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Post-Doctorate from the University of Lisbon, Portugal. Leader of the PRÁXIS Research Group – Nucleus for Studies concerning Work, Citizenship, Health Care, and Nursing. CNPq Researcher.

REFERENCES

1. Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil. Comissão Nacional de Relações Institucionais do Conselho Federal da OAB. Proposição 2010.19.02136-03: Plágios nas instituições de ensino [online]. (Relatório) Brasília (DF):OAB; 2010 [acesso 2011 Mar 2]. Disponível em: <http://www.oab.org.br/combateplagio/CombatePlagio.pdf>
2. Stevenson RL. O medico e o monstro. São Paulo (SP): Scipione; 2003.
3. Barthes R. O rumor da língua. São Paulo (SP): Brasiliense; 1998. p. 65-9.