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Letters to the Editor

Re: Psychiatry in the Nazi Era

Dear Editor: About the time that Dr Seeman's paper was being reviewed, we published a paper called *First Do No Harm: The Role of Psychiatry in Nazi Germany* (1). We would like to have a discussion about the extent to which basic principles that supported the disciplinary influence our current activity. We would also like to discuss the tools we can use to reach a goal caught in the continuum of abuse suggested by Kleinman (2). We believe that continuing to focus on ethical aspects of our actions can help us in this task. The goals of social science and epistemology are essential tools to reach a comprehensive understanding of our job.

Dudley and Gale say that attitudes of psychiatrists toward patients sometimes resemble attitudes of societies toward marginal groups (3). Within this framework, nonstigmatizing makes sense within an ambitious program that takes into account the disparities within our society by analyzing the situation of minorities within society, as well as their exclusion. Biologism neutralizes these aspects by disregarding diversities and minimizing the influence of culture in our work (4).

Not following certain scientific trends supported by "prestigious knowledge" makes sense out of the evolution of their specialty. In other words, academic groups or scientific communities and trends as psychopharmacology are more varied and powerful and have a greater number of those connected to such marginal trends as history, anthropology, or epistemology. It is essential to examine how programs for the congresses of our associations are prepared.

In her paper, Dr Seeman wonders how future historians will portray us and whether we can ensure today's science will not turn into myth in a few years (5). We agree with her that we should not forget that experiments and programs carried out by Nazis were not prepared but by major figures of German psychiatry (3,6).

With regard to the connection between the discipline and the political and economic context, so aptly questions, we believe that this increases when psychiatrists take on the role of reflection. Reflection becomes essential to prevent the disregard of ethical and professional implications of institutional policies in which patients' needs are not the focus. Often, what is advanced is not in the best interest of individual patients.

With these issues in mind, we believe that the ideal of a scientifically objective clinical practice. Objectivity in psychiatry must be grounded in a clear definition of which value judgments are used in scientific processes and which should be used to ensure that all decisions we make are based on scientific objectivity (7).

With these concerns, and to learn about our particular context, we recently conducted a study on the ethical aspects of psychiatric practice in Argentina, recently published in *Vertex* (8).

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Maxime Lewkowski, Michael Davis, Sébastien Dube, Myrna E Lashley, Isabelle Morin, Patti Dray, Bonnie Harnden

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Book Reviews

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Psychotherapy for Children and Adolescents:

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Daniel Matusevich, MD
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Evidence-Based Treatment
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The Unsung
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The Genius of Genesis: A
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Reply: Psychiatry in the
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Re: Psychiatry in the Nazi Era, potebnya notes, contemplation gives a greater projection on the axis than the sorted ontological status of art.

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