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From the Editor

Historiography of Science in Pandemic Times

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The eighth issue of *Transversal: International Journal for the Historiography of Science* was produced under atypical conditions. As with the rest of the world, we are living through the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the authors and editors of this issue were in quarantine during the preparation of this edition. Unfortunately, due to these conditions, some authors were not able to conclude their contributions in time and could not participate in this issue. Yet fortunately, we were able to publish this issue with many authors as well as maintain the focus and quality of past editions. More than being part of this particular moment of the history – which will certainly be analyzed by historians of science in the same way they investigated other pandemics – we can now extract from it some reflections that will certainly be explored more profoundly in the future.

As we know, in recent years, we have been living in an anti-intellectual climate of science denialism, where all science has not only been devalued, but even negated. Now we know that it has been fully possible for a society to choose to live without science, or, at least, without having complex scientific and technological knowledge. History has shown us societies that have dedicated themselves to magic, witchcraft, religion and politics, however, without an in-depth interest in science and technology. Even today, perhaps, denying science is still possible for a relatively closed society located somewhere in a remote place on our planet. Nevertheless, as we all know, denialism is no longer possible for most of our contemporary societies that have become more complex with extremely high levels of interconnectedness between them.

The potential for spreading a virus around the world lies exactly in its ability to go where every human being can go, which is practically anywhere on earth. But if, on the one hand, these interconnected societies bring about this misfortune of viral dissemination, then it is this same type of society that can find a solution to this problem, since it possesses the scientific and technological knowledge to do so.

During the pandemic, science and its practice got a lot of media attention in most countries. Information on epidemiological controls, sanitary barriers, antiviral treatments and the hope for a vaccine, among other related topics, became a part of every citizen's daily life. It seems, therefore, that the growing trend of science denialism needs to immediately review its positions, because it is precisely through science, to a large extent, that the

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possibility of maintaining the existence of this type of society is based. Although, paradoxically, this society carries the seed of denialism within itself.

I hope that this tragic episode we are experiencing can bury science denialism once and for all. But in all probability, with the appearance of a vaccine, this agenda will change, and science denialism will come back. Unfortunately, it is in the interest of some groups to deny facts and ideas in order to promote an ideological position. This shows that our societies carry within themselves these paradoxes, such as the simultaneous presence of rational and irrational behaviors. There is no inevitable progress of reason with an ultimate goal to which we all are heading, since the very development of science is circumscribed to societies' setbacks. In this pandemic, it is regrettable that, for some political leaders, only in situations like pandemics and wars – with their concentrated efforts on results – science does gain importance. And what is worse is the knowledge that for some political leaders, even in these moments, science does not seem to be of any use to them.

Somewhere along the road of science, I hope that this terrible feeling that the world has entered the wrong path will leave our daily lives, and we will return as much as possible to normality. A normality which, unfortunately, will probably still have to grapple with science denialism – although perhaps it now be more weakened. In short, the constant struggle of science needs to not only unveil the mysteries of nature, but defend us from mankind's irrationality. We must always be attentive. And I believe that history and philosophy of science as well as science education have an essential critical role in this process.

I would like to say that this eighth journal issue would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the special issue's guest editors in the *Historiography of Physics*, Prof. Dr. Ivã Gurgel (USP) and Prof. Dr. Thiago Hartz (UFRJ) to whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude.