

# Biopolitics as a theorem of bioethics

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## Abstract

This is a theoretical essay on biopolitics as a context to discuss issues of bioethics. It uses the concept of a theorem as a set of axioms from which and under whose perspective, discussions are developed in which they are implied. The starting point is that modern times have introduced the biopolitical management of life. This management presupposes the transformation of life in an exchange currency, making its biopolitical and economic capture possible. It has taken place through biotechnologies and more recently by the internalization of the technical system in people's own subjectivity, becoming a gear included in the economic processes. This automatic capture weakens human subjectivity because it separates human subjectivity from its form-of-life, a condition for autonomy. The biopolitical theorem is the base to discuss bioethical problems, allowing for the presence of sociocultural dynamics of its configuration and understanding its ethical analysis as critical hermeneutics.

**Keywords:** Knowledge. Bioethics. Power (Psychology)-Control-Behavior. Government. Economics.

## Resumo

### Biopolítica como teorema da bioética

O objetivo deste ensaio teórico foi abordar a biopolítica como contexto para discutir questões da bioética. Foi utilizado o conceito de teorema como conjunto de axiomas a partir dos quais e sob cuja ótica se desenvolvem discussões nas quais estão implicados. O ponto de partida é que os tempos modernos introduziram a gestão biopolítica da vida, que pressupõe a transformação da existência em valor de troca, possibilitando sua captura biopolítica e econômica. Assim, efetiva-se por meio das biotecnologias e mais recentemente pela interiorização do sistema técnico na própria subjetividade das pessoas, tornando-se engrenagem subsumida aos processos econômicos. Essa captura maquinal despotencializa a subjetividade humana, porque a separa de sua forma-de-vida, condição para a autonomia. O teorema biopolítico é a base para poder discutir problemas bioéticos, permitindo considerar as dinâmicas socioculturais de sua configuração e compreendendo sua análise ética como hermenêutica crítica.

**Palavras-chave:** Conhecimento. Bioética. Poder (Psicologia)-Controle-Comportamento. Governo. Economia.

## Resumen

### Biopolítica como teorema de la bioética

El objetivo de este ensayo teórico fue abordar la biopolítica como contexto para discutir cuestiones de bioética. Se utilizó el concepto de teorema como conjunto de axiomas, a partir de los cuales y bajo cuya óptica se desarrollan discusiones en las cuales estos están implicados. El punto de partida es que los tiempos modernos introdujeron la gestión biopolítica de la vida, que presupone la transformación de la existencia en un valor de cambio, posibilitando su captura biopolítica y económica. Así, se hace efectiva por medio de las biotecnologías y más recientemente por la interiorización del sistema técnico en la propia subjetividad de las personas, tornándose un engranaje subsumido a los procesos económicos. Esta captura maquinal despotencializa la subjetividad humana, porque la separa de su forma-de-vida, condición para la autonomía. El teorema biopolítico es la base para poder discutir problemas bioéticos, permitiendo tener presentes las dinámicas socioculturales de su configuración y comprendiendo su análisis ético como hermenéutica crítica.

**Palabras clave:** Conocimiento. Bioética. Poder (Psicología)-Control-Conducta. Gobierno. Economía.

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Declara não haver conflito de interesse.

Bioethics emerged in the 1970s due to ethical concerns about the gradual use of biotechnology to dominate nature and improve human health. Certain people and certain reactions to life-handling events that moved public opinion contributed to this purpose. These people and facts do not, however, explain the emergence of bioethics, because its origin actually depended on political macro-reconfigurations of power, focusing on valuing life. These new formulations constituted biopower which, in order to strengthen itself, developed successive socio-cultural and economic dynamics of capturing life, shaping biopolitics as a form of governance.

If, before, the politics of sovereignty prevailed over a given territory, the new configuration focuses on the ability to value and monitor the life of the population, giving rise to biopower, which is expressed in the biopolitical concern of the government with public health<sup>1</sup>. The issues of bioethics can only be understood in this context of governance of life. Thus, biopolitics becomes the hermeneutic context for understanding the ethical problems faced by bioethics.

Would it be possible to affirm that biopolitics is the explanatory theorem of current reality, of ever greater care for, capture and governance of life by different biotechnologies? So biopolitics would be the theorem of bioethics? What is a theorem? A theorem is statement that can be proved as true in a logical framework of axioms. A theorem generally has several conditions that must be listed and clarified. Then comes the conclusion, logical expression, true in the conditions in which it is formulated. The content of the theorem is the relation between hypothesis, thesis, and conclusion. In the human sciences, the theorem could be understood as a sufficiently justified principle from which and under whose perspective successive reflections are developed in which this principle is committed.

German philosopher Klaus Demmer<sup>2</sup> proposed, in the context of existentialist ethics, that the category of existential fundamental option is the explanatory theorem of ethics because this category is implicated in any specifically ethical action, and it can not be evaluated morally without considering the history of effects of the option about it. A fundamental option is a global option of existence that defines the person's moral personality. It is not a private decision nor is it identified with the sum of the particular decisions and actions of the individual, but it is an existential positioning that becomes

a transcendental condition of an explanatory possibility of the morality of human actions.

This stance means the awareness and liberation that happen when the person reaches their existential maturity, assuming their life and directing them, creating the possibility of free and ethical decisions. In this sense, the fundamental option is the theorem to understand the existential ethics of the person. Inspired by this understanding of the theorem assumed by personal ethics, the question arises about the possibility of transposing this category into social ethics. What would be the corresponding concept of fundamental option as a theorem when it comes to social ethics, such as bioethics?

Issues of personal ethics have to be defined by the context of existential positioning of the individual, expressed in the fundamental option that defines their moral personality. Thus, issues of social ethics, such as the problems of bioethics, must be interpreted from the sociocultural and economic-political context that shape them. In contemporaneity, this context is essentially shaped by the biopolitical governance that defines power today. Thus, this article proposes biopolitics as a possible explanatory theorem of the issues faced by bioethics.

If bioethics focuses on ethical issues linked to life in its broad sense, not only human, but living beings in general, and considering that existence is permeated by technological, economic, social, political and cultural dynamics that are shaped as governance of existence, deeply influencing on the conformation of its ethical problems, bioethics can not forget this context when deliberating and equating these problems, so as not to stay on the surface of the issues, without grasping in depth what is at stake.

Today, life is no longer left to the chance of evolution, because society has the conditions to direct it, there are technological interventions of all kinds, on the one hand, to give more quality and to perfect human life and, on the other hand, to transform existence of other living beings at the service of human interests. This process of increasing governance of life is what is meant by biopolitics.

The focus of power is no longer the domain of territories, as it was in the paradigm of sovereignty, but the monitoring of the population, shifting the emphasis from power to governance of life. Thus, the assumption and condition of this governance may constitute the biopolitical theorem, from which

conclusions can be drawn for the bioethical analysis of the problems related to existence.

The equation of this biopolitical theorem has as its assumption and condition the gradual and technological interventions on life, present in the biotechnologies that constitute, in the present context, an immense biopower system that controls all the advances of the vital processes. This biopower requires large financial investments for its development, which gain high profitability, giving rise to the bioeconomy based on the economic valuation of life.

In order for the improvement of these vital processes to become marketable products with a promise of health, well-being and quality of life, it is necessary to develop sociocultural dynamics of capture and biopolitical governance of subjectivity and, in turn, people capture these products as needs and even as objects of rights. This is the current context of life politics, where biomedicine, biopower and subjectivity are implicated, according to Rose's sharp analysis<sup>3</sup>.

This equation of the theorem - biotechnologies, biopower, bioeconomics and biopolitics - is present in any bioethical problem. In order for bioethics to be not merely a passive adjunct to the progress of the biotechnology system, trying to mitigate its adverse effects, it could be invited to be deeply critical.

English bioethicist Campbell had already warned in the 1990s that bioethics could not be reduced to a sort of chaplain in the royal court of science. According to him, *this would mean that bioethics would never really have a critical view of scientific progress, but would only seek to moderate its adverse effects by suggesting guidelines for its application. This seems to me as too passive a role, which betrays the duty of philosophy to formulate fundamental questions about the nature of knowledge and the foundations of our notion of goodness and evil. We need to work out a bioethic that is healthily skeptical about science and at the same time sees its potential benefits*<sup>4</sup>.

It is also necessary to remember Agamben's radical critique: *What is in fact not questioned in the current debates on bioethics and biopolitics is precisely what deserves, first of all, to be discussed, that is, the very biological concept of life. This concept, which today presents itself in the garb of a scientific notion, is in reality a secularized political concept*<sup>5</sup>. According to Rose<sup>3</sup>, human life is currently reduced to molecular biological processes, surpassing the vitalist vision.

Agamben calls this reduction "bare life", identified with pure physical existence, which does not include the moral dimension of dignity, opening up the possibility of the capture and manipulation of this biological life. It thus becomes a secular political concept, because it has become a secularized object of political intentionality, which once belonged to the aura of the transcendent.

These statements point to the need of the hermeneutic-critical approach<sup>6</sup> of the issues faced by bioethics in order to explain the technological, socio-cultural and political-economic dynamics involved in the problems that bioethics discusses. Considering biopolitics as an explanatory theorem of the problems discussed by bioethics can help in this task.

This article intends to discuss the presupposition that allows the biopolitical capture and governance of life, body and subjectivity that underlies biotechnological interventions and the economic valuation of these vital realities, configuring the context in which the challenges and problems that the bioethics faces. The premises of this discussion are found in the ontology of use, advocated by Agamben in the book "*L'uso dei corpi*"<sup>5</sup>. The biopolitical theses of this argument conform the theorem of bioethics.

### Biotechnologies, biopower: life as exchange value

What is the concept of life that underlies technological interventions? In order for life in general to be manipulated in its biochemical processes, it must first be isolated from its ecosystemic interactions. This reduction occurs in all biotechnologies that handle plants and animals. Life was limited to the crude fact of pure molecular mechanisms, completely segregated from its environmental relations. Artificial environments are created in line with the biological transformations of living things. The same happens in relation to human beings with the normalization of the environment to the service of quality of life and health.

This devaluation of environmental relations disregards the centrality of biodiversity and ecosystems. Human life can be reduced to bare life, that is, to mere biological successes, when it is emptied of what defines it as human. The distinction between life in general and human life disappears because life is seen as biochemical processes. The ancient Greek distinction between "zoé", biological

life, belonging to the private world, and “bios”, human life identified with the public sphere of morality and politics, is reversed. Today biological life is part of the social sphere of the market and the moral life of each one is private concern.

For this reason, Agamben states at the end of the first volume of his book “Homo sacer”: *But first we must verify how, within the frontiers of these disciplines (politics and philosophy, medical-biological sciences and jurisprudence), something like a bare life may have been and in what way, in their historical development, they have finally clashed with a limit beyond which they can not proceed, except at the risk of an unprecedented biopolitical catastrophe*<sup>7</sup>. Agamben wonders here how it was possible for bare life to be reduced to the biological and become part of these scientific disciplines. In their development they face limits that, if not considered, can lead to biopolitical catastrophes.

In this way, Agamben points out a fundamental task for bioethics, without specifying it, as he will do in the last volume of his work: how was it possible to conceive of bare life, de-contextualized from its ecosystemic interactions and separated from its human dimension of dignity? This conception underlies the biopolitical governance of life and serves as a horizon for all the problems that bioethics faces. Taking Agamben’s intuition, it can be said that one of the primary tasks of bioethics, even before providing solutions to problems, is to critically interpret the contexts in which these problems are manifested and configured.

Why was it necessary to reduce life to molecular biological mechanisms? This view made possible the transformation of the existence of pure use value into exchange value, thereby acquiring economic value<sup>3</sup>. What is the difference between use value and exchange value in relation to life? For Agamben, in use value the living being and/or the human being are autonomous, because their life is not split from its form, nor reduced to its purely biological materiality. The form of a living being would be the way it uses and organizes its existence in relation to its environment, configuring a mode of being that is beyond pure biological materiality.

A living being is not the sum of its biological processes. It emerges a unity that is the form, continuously generated and gestated in the use of this life in relation to its environment. If this applies to any living being, in the human being the constitution of this form is much more complex. What, then, is the shape of life? *It is not a being that has this or that property or quality, but a being*

*that is its way of being, which is its origin, being continuously generated by its way of being*<sup>8</sup>. This comprises the use value of life, a dimension denied when the existence is transformed into exchange value. When this occurs, it is stripped of its use of its existence because it is no longer autonomous in relation to its environment.

The form of any living being arises from its interactions with the environment, which define its way of being, both its dependencies and its autonomy. In the human, the form-of-life comes from its specific way of being, from which it is continuously generated as human, being the basis of autonomy in the management of its life.

In other words, the living being is defined by the autonomous use of its life, expressed in its form and way of being. A small current example of this loss of use and autonomy is the way people’s health is administered. It is not the result of the form-of-life that the person assumes and manages in relation to their environment, but the exchange value that one buys in the market. There is very little health management, because people turn their management over to the biomedical apparatus, as Illich<sup>9</sup> correctly analyzed several decades ago.

When the living being is split from its form, it is reduced to bare life in its biological materiality, expressed in biochemical mechanisms. In order for life to be transformed into exchange value, the living being must be emptied of its form, making its existence manipulable and therefore marketable. With this, the life of the living being, emptied of its form, loses its use value and its autonomy, because it is divided from its mode of being and its interactions.

This is the dynamic that underlies any biotechnology, the split between life and lifestyle or the way of being and the loss of autonomy, so that life is manipulated and marketable by the market as a value of exchange. It then occurs, as Agamben defines, the commodification of life, health and the body, that is, they become fragmented realities transformed into commodities<sup>10</sup>.

In the deepening of research on life it was discovered that the mechanisms and reactions that occur in these processes are determined by biological algorithms that can be calculated, predicted and monitored. Possessing these algorithms makes it possible to replace them with others that are no longer biological, but artificial and external to life. That way you can artificially create life. The existence will no longer be identified simply with molecular biological mechanisms, but with



biochemical algorithms, calculated from databases to improve their genetic expressions.

Algorithms depend on data, and the more data can be stored, the more perfect the calculations are to predict reactions or even direct decisions. This is the basis of what is called a “big data”, a leading topic in scientific research and economic inversion. We begin to speak of “dataism” as the vision that will replace the old humanism, because human decisions will no longer depend on feelings and moral values, but on algorithmic calculations that will be possible by storing more and more information in the network media<sup>11</sup>.

An example of this algorithm is stock exchanges, which are no longer dependent on human intervention in their trading sessions, but on algorithmic calculations operated by powerful computers that store millions of financial data. This allows automated trading of stocks by robots, which accelerate accumulation by decreasing time, so that the information reaches its destination and produces the result calculated by financial algorithms<sup>12</sup>. This use of algorithms in high-end economic activity may indicate what can take place in other spheres, such as the health economy.

Medicine is among the fields of application of algorithmic calculations. The increasing accumulation and storage of clinical data in the service of evidence medicine may in the future dispense with the clinical judgment of a physician, since diagnosis and therapy will be defined by algorithmic calculations. Physicians would be dispensable from their clinical function. The promise is that it will lessen the occurrence of medical errors because decisions would not depend on human judgments, affected by feelings and awareness beyond scientific knowledge<sup>13</sup>.

What is at stake in the central role of algorithms in the management of knowledge is the decoupling between intelligence and consciousness, privileging artificial intelligence with enormous capacity to store and process data and, therefore, to arrive at faster and more adequate decisions, without interferences of consciousness, typical of human intelligence. Thus, algorithms based on large databases will dismiss ethics because they will be scientifically more efficient in decision-making<sup>10</sup>.

This process of splitting human life and its mode and form of being, emptying the existence of its use value to be manipulable and profitable, is completed by the application of algorithms to

the knowledge about life separated from human consciousness.

In this context, two positions face each other. One that trusts that technological park of genetic transformation of humanity would provide better results than the culture of humanism, which always bets on the ethical conversion of the human being<sup>13</sup>. The other current questions the consequences of this biotechnological transformation in favor of the permanence of humanity as we know it, especially with regard to the autonomy of the subject<sup>14</sup>.

The transformation of life into exchange value by its reduction to biochemical processes and, more recently, the application of algorithms to computerized vital data means gradual power and domination over existence, constituting biopower. Large biotech conglomerates, such as pharmaceutical and food companies, and large networks that store huge databases such as Microsoft, Google and Facebook, opening up steps to the algorithmization of life, are structural expressions of this biopower. The possession of sophisticated biological and informational technology means financial economic power. So it is not surprising that biotechnology companies and media networks are the spearhead of world capitalism and have the greatest profitability in financial stock. So here we have the second great assumption of the biopolitical theorem of bioethics.

### Bioeconomics and the financial logic in relation to life

With its reduction to exchange value, life is ever more invaded by the financial logic, because its molecularization, given this reduction, requires large investments in laboratories, equipment, scientists and research to reach biomedical consumer products that sell health. These investments are high risk capital because of the uncertainty about the results and therefore the dispensing of financial funds will depend on commercial applications and profitability calculations that will define the health problems to be investigated and the clinical solutions to be found.

Large pharmaceutical companies are not philanthropic institutions because they are primarily aimed at profit and profitability so that shareholders continue to provide the capital needed to create new products. In this sense, commercialization conforms the truths about life, which acquires biovalue.

This economic valuation of life shapes what Rose called bioeconomy, which includes *those*

*economic activities that capture the latent value in biological processes and renewable bio-resources to produce improved health, growth and sustainable development*<sup>15</sup>. This economic valuation of life does not occur at the macro level of the organs and bodily functions, but at the micro molecular level of genetics, whose mechanisms are perfected by algorithmic calculations based on informational data, opening the way to total capitalization of life, due to its reduction to information.

This technological and economic capture of life, by the biotechnology conglomerates, aims to produce consumer goods to qualify and optimize this same life. With the advent of financial capitalism, these goods are no longer just commodities, but access to knowledge and openness to relational activities, provided by digital media networks that are the actual basis of capital accumulation. The process of economic valorization of life affects the subjectivity of people because it exploits the capacities of learning, relationship and social reproduction of human beings through the use of network media.

Therefore, the system is not only fed by the purchase of consumer products, but mainly by the use of the digital technologies in network, with its numerous devices that constitute the identity of the people, configuring their desires of fulfillment and happiness. This biocognitive dimension of present-day capitalism anthropogenically reconciles human beings to the system, fueling their continuous reproduction.

The system conforms the subjectivity of the people to their desires by the assumption of the consumerist values that underpin this system. Thus, the circle closes, propelled by the financial power whose maximum expression is the credit card. This is the cognitive dimension of capitalism that anthropogenically shapes the subjectivity of people, who are the true capital of the system, as they reproduce it<sup>16,17</sup>.

### Biopolitical dynamics of the capture of subjectivity

There is not only technological and economic capture of life with the offer of products that promise health and quality of life, but also the capture of subjectivity. This is because the system organizes and configures all relational activities - care, education, training, culture, leisure - and gains

value through these technologies of relationship, made possible by the digital network culture.

It can be said that for biocognitive financial capitalism, human beings, and more specifically, their brains, which accumulates knowledge of the system itself, is its fixed capital, continually producing surplus value by the simple use of the cognitive and relational devices offered by the network.

Therefore, what exists is not so much exploitation of the workforce as part of the productive process of the enterprise, but exploitation of the personal life of each one, turned into a gear of the system as a whole. The surplus value is predominantly taken from the capture of subjectivity at the service of capital, rather than the pure subsumption of the labor force to capital. We can not apply old schemes, because capitalism has been restructured and sophisticated in its exploitation. If the workforce needed to be regulated by the technological mode of production, in this new model, a more sophisticated governance of life is needed for the capture of subjectivity. It is a governance of subsumption of life to capital through social subjection of appropriate subjectivity and the symbolic enslavement of intelligence by the mechanical internalization of the system<sup>18</sup>.

This social subjection and symbolic enslavement of subjectivity takes place through digital technologies. Humans have always developed technologies for intervention in the environment. However, there is a fundamental difference between what technologies were until recent times, mere tools dominated by human beings, and what they are today, no longer a pure instrument, but a technical system that becomes the very ecosystem in which the human being, no longer autonomous, lives. This paradigmatic transformation happens mainly with the advent of digital technologies, which are a new cognitive model. In other words, these technologies are not pure instrument, but the very medium in which knowledge is applied.

Galimberti<sup>19</sup> demonstrates how the emergence of the psyche in human evolution was made possible by the use of *techne*, because the invention and construction of an instrument implied the use of imagination, the basis for the advent of the psychic dimension. The instrumental apparatus has always been part of human beings as an extension of their bodies, but there is radical change in modern times, in which *techne* begins to occupy the symbolic world of the human being, from being a mere tool and becoming the ecosystem in which he lives. Today,

humanity is faced with the technological imperative, and can not do without the system of technique.

Ellul characterizes this system as an immediate reality already given in which the human being is at birth and before which he can not have a distance. That's why your training path is an empowerment to enter and situate yourself in this universe and your own world of work is configured by this system, requiring skills that respond to technical needs. Thus, we are faced with a technified human being, whose culture is shaped by the symbolic values of the technique. This means that this system gives content and organizes human desires and needs, and is the basis of the construction of meanings. This observation points to Ellul's central thesis that human beings do not enjoy autonomy vis-a-vis the technical system, because they do not have an external reference point to evaluate it<sup>20</sup>.

Technophobia is not proposed, but the recognition of the transformation that happened in contemporaneity in relation to the technique, that stopped being a pure instrument object to become a symbolic object. It is not the intention to judge what has happened as good or bad, but to try to denature this process so that it is possible to think its meaning and its consequences, since the enchantment with the technologies makes reflection difficult. It is not possible to grasp the ethical issues of this process without engaging in critical detachment, necessary in the face of any reality that one wants to interpret and try to understand. This is the effort of Galimberti and Ellul.

### Bioethics as critical hermeneutics

Taking up the path developed so far, it was based on the observation that the current sociocultural context is shaped by the perspective of biopolitical governance of life. For this governance to be possible, life was always understood as molecular biological mechanisms, the last link in the process of reducing human life to bare life. This understanding facilitates interventions to correct and improve their functioning, offering great advantages. These new therapeutic and improvement possibilities, which are based on genetics, open up an immense field of economic and financial surplus investments that constitute the capitalist bioeconomy, based on the economic valuation of life.

This system continues to have its axis of exploitation in the workforce, but more and more its true capital becomes the brains of the people

who store the knowledge that reproduces it. More specifically, the surplus value happens by capturing the subjectivity and stimulating the consumerist values that underpin the system. This capture is guaranteed by digital technologies that have been co-opted by the system.

How to analyze, in a profound and critical way, this sophisticated process of capturing life and subjectivity in today's capitalism? The technological and economic governance of people became possible due to the denial of the dynamics of the use of life and subjectivity and the introduction of its commercial valorization of exchange with the promise of the production of consumer goods to optimize them.

The contradiction lies in the fact that at the moment life is emptied of its use value, its form or way of being, the basis of its autonomy and vital power, one can question how these products can bring quality to existence, because quality and optimization of life come from its form.

The form-of-life emerges from the use that the living being makes of its existence in relation to its environment. This dynamic awakens and promotes the potency of life of this being, making it a norm for itself, or rather, constituting its norm of life. In other words, there is autopoietic development, whereby its vital norm is not heteronomous, given by another, but autonomously constituted by the interaction of the living being with its environment.

If this holds true for any living being, this dynamics of use and form-of-life becomes more complex concerning the human being as a biocultural being. However, when use is denied, because life becomes commercial exchange value, its potency and autonomy is hampered. For this reason, Agamben, speaking of human life, advocates in the last volume of "Homo Sacer" an ontology of use and the possibility of a form-of-life that can not be appropriated nor captured by the external normalization of the system<sup>21</sup>.

Agamben asks: *How to think of a form-of-life, that is, a human life that is completely subtracted from being captured by right and a use of bodies and the world that is never substantiated in an appropriation?*<sup>22</sup>. With the term "form-of-life," Agamben intends to point to a *life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate and keep apart something like a bare life*<sup>23</sup>. The Greek distinction between *zōé* (biological life) and *bios* (moral and political life) is thus reappeared to designate human life, which had

never been thought of and considered separately, as a view of the human.

Only in modern times was it possible to understand the human reduced to bare life, separated from its form, although in the ancient world there were certain social categories considered subhuman, such as the enslaved ones, which were reduced to bare life. However, the full understanding of human life of the Greeks was not reduced to the biological aspect. This understanding of human life split from its form and reduced to the biological is the origin and foundation of biopolitics and the ideological basis of the scientific explanation of life. This ideology transformed into a science of splitting life in its form, reducing it to bare life, is the way to empty it of its power, making moral life and political life impossible.

It is about arriving at the form-of-life in which life and norm coincide in everyday life. The norm is not something external and separate from existential life, something that is not identified with a series of biopolitical norms imposed by the system by the capture and technological and economic governance of life, body and subjectivity, but the very form of life itself, generated by use, constitutes its normativity. It is the attempt *to realize a human life and praxis absolutely outside the determinations of the right and in this consists its novelty, not thought so far, and in the current conditions of the society, totally unthinkable*<sup>24</sup>.

Only in this way it is possible to escape one's technological capture and economic appropriation, establishing autonomous governance that activates one's vital power. In other words, there is no property, only use of life and body that activates its potency. Agamben finds this dimension of the use in poverty proposed by Francis of Assisi, in the expression of his defenders of the time, *although ironically in legal terms, such as the right to have no right*<sup>25</sup>. This is why *the monks renounce all property rights, but they retain the use of the things that others give them*<sup>26</sup>. This is the sense of Franciscan poverty, as the form-of-life nucleus by which they

escape the capture of the law, renouncing all property rights.

What could be said about our times in which life is split in its form, reduced to bare life, the basis of the biopolitical dynamics of capture and technological and economic governance of life, body and subjectivity? How can these realities of the human being regain their form so that their potency of life and, consequently, their true autonomy can be activated? For this autonomy can not be that commercial, to participate in the market that promises to optimize health and quality of life when, in fact, de-qualifies life and subjectivity, because of its capture to the system.

This challenge of offering critical tools to escape this capture and to allow biopolitical resistance is the main task of bioethics. This will only be possible if life, body and subjectivity are once again values of use and not of exchange. In order for the use of these human realities to be constant again, life must rediscover the form that activates its potentiality. It will not be possible while captured by the technological and economic system. It is necessary to create paths of biopolitical resistance through alternative forms-of-life that do not appropriate or capture existence. What will this form consist of in our times? It is about reinventing it, not about returning to the old way of life that would also be captured. This is the overarching challenge of bioethics.

## Final considerations

In affirming that biopolitics can be considered the theorem of bioethics, the priority is not so much the concept of theorem, but the perspectives that open up for bioethics in analyzing the biopolitical dynamics of the current context of life's governance. In this way, it is possible to offer tools of awareness and subjectivation that can be appropriated by the subjects in the constitution of themselves for themselves and in the construction of their autonomy, which is the basis for any ethics.

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