

# UTILITARIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE HUMAN BEING AND PERSON CONCEPTS AS A CURRENT BIOETHICAL PROBLEM

*FILOSOFÍA UTILITARISTA EN LOS CONCEPTOS DE SER HUMANO Y PERSONA COMO PROBLEMA BIOÉTICO EN LA ACTUALIDAD*

*A FILOSOFIA UTILITARISTA NOS CONCEITOS DE SER HUMANO E PESSOA COMO PROBLEMA BIOÉTICO NA ATUALIDADE*

Joan Contreras<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This research work aims to identify the modern utilitarian premises regarding the duality of the concepts of human being and person. This school of thought is responsible for the etymological nuances of what it means to be a human being and consequently what a person is, key definitions to understand vital issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and frozen embryos. Through the state of the art, textual criticism, and bioethical analysis of the utilitarian philosophy, we intend to show how it has permeated the culture of postmodern society to the point of giving rise to a movement that may redefine human nature and condition and build an archetype of what a person is in the strict sense of utilitarianism, i.e., from their autonomy, functionality, and fully rational faculties. This poses a bioethical problem in establishing an objective defense of human dignity.

**KEYWORDS (SOURCE: DeCS):** Utilitarianism; person; human being; human nature; contemporary philosophy; dignity.

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1 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2381-3384>. Investigador independiente, Colombia. [soyjoancontreras@gmail.com](mailto:soyjoancontreras@gmail.com)

**RESUMEN**

El propósito del presente trabajo investigativo es identificar las premisas de la doctrina utilitarista moderna respecto a la dualidad de los conceptos de ser humano y persona, dado que esta corriente del pensamiento es la principal responsable de las concepciones sobre lo que implica ser un humano y, consecuentemente, sobre lo que es una persona, definiciones claves para comprender y debatir diferentes temas trascendentales como el aborto, la eutanasia, los embriones congelados, entre otras discusiones de gran relevancia en la actualidad. A partir de un análisis del estado del arte, la crítica textual y el análisis bioético de la filosofía utilitarista, se pretende exponer cómo esta doctrina ha impregnado la cultura de la sociedad posmoderna al punto de desembocar en un movimiento que puede redefinir la naturaleza y condición humanas, así como construir un arquetipo de lo que es una persona en el sentido estricto del utilitarismo, es decir, desde su autonomía, funcionalidad y facultades plenamente racionales, lo cual plantea un problema bioético para establecer una defensa objetiva de la dignidad humana.

**PALABRAS CLAVE (FUENTE: DECS):** Utilitarismo; persona; ser humano; naturaleza humana; filosofía contemporánea; dignidad.

**RESUMO**

O objetivo deste trabalho de pesquisa é identificar as premissas da doutrina utilitarista moderna no que se refere à dualidade dos conceitos de ser humano e pessoa, uma vez que essa corrente de pensamento é a principal responsável pelas concepções do que é ser humano e, consecuentemente, do que é uma pessoa, definições-chave para compreender e debater diferentes questões transcendentais, como aborto, eutanásia, embriões congelados, entre outras discussões de grande relevância na atualidade. A partir de uma análise do estado da arte, da crítica textual e da análise bioética da filosofia utilitarista, pretende-se mostrar como essa doutrina tem permeado a cultura da sociedade pós-moderna a ponto de levar a um movimento que pode redefinir a natureza e a condição humanas, bem como construir um arquétipo do que é uma pessoa no sentido estricto do utilitarismo, ou seja, a partir de sua autonomia, funcionalidade e facultades plenamente racionais, o que coloca um problema bioético para estabelecer uma defesa objetiva da dignidade humana.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE (FONTE: DECS):** Utilitarismo; pessoa; ser humano; natureza humana; filosofia contemporânea; dignidade.

## BRIEF THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Utilitarian philosophy is a current of Anglo-Saxon thought that may have originated among the moralists of the eighteenth century; although a considerable period of time has elapsed since its inception, its validity in contemporary philosophy and thought is remarkable. One of the principles of this philosophy, postulated by Jeremy Bentham, a distinguished thinker of utilitarianism, is that the best action is one that maximizes utility, happiness and well-being for the greatest number of individuals involved (1).

Another philosopher who influenced the conceptual development of utilitarianism was John Stuart Mill, with his 1863 book *Utilitarianism*, whose postulates are similar to those of Bentham. Indeed, according to John Stuart Mill, utilitarianism is based on the fact that every human being always acts—be it at the individual, collective, private, or public level or in political legislation—according to the principle of greater happiness, that is, for the greatest benefit for the largest number of individuals (2). Generally, utilitarianism can be defined as a current of thought that establishes that the correctness or incorrectness of actions is determined by the correctness or incorrectness of their consequences. At least four different types of utilitarian conceptions have been established, and these have been summarized by TM Scanlon into two types: one philosophical and the other normative, the second derived from the first, so that if someone opts for a form of normative utilitarianism, they would also embrace a utilitarian philosophy, in his understanding of the moral nature of things and people (3). Another classic concept is *the utilitarian maxim*, which was defined by Francis Hutcheson as

follows: “[...] virtue is a ratio made up of the quantity of the good and the number of those who enjoy it” (4).

Peter Singer’s contemporary approach seems to fit perfectly with the structural premises of utilitarian thought and, in that sense, does not make a qualitative change in the foundations of the theory. However, Singer coined the term *utilitarianism of preferences*, by virtue of which a basic principle of equality is ensured.

Thus, the focus of utilitarian philosophy is on action, which is possibly a defining element of this current; another fundamental aspect, which in a certain way differs from its pragmatic and consequentialist character, is the principle of *the greatest happiness for the greatest number of subjects*, which clearly expresses the ultimate goal of the maximization pursued by utilitarianism.

## THE DICHOTOMY OF THE HUMAN PERSON FOR JEREMY BENTHAM AND PETER SINGER

Notably, the character *maximizer* utilitarianism is two-fold since it implies both the achievement of *maximum happiness* and the achievement of *the happiness of the greatest number of individuals*, and these two claims may contradict one another (5). According to AJM Milne (quoted by Gómez Barboza), “The first emphasizes the greatest sum of happiness; the second in the happiness of the greatest number, and both can be divergent” (1). Additionally, another of the most well-known principles of utilitarianism can also introduce contradiction: according to Jeremy Bentham, “Each one counts as one and no one else but as one” (6). By virtue of this, the preferences of each and every one of the individuals who are affected by the political or moral decision must be observed, and none of these preferences will be considered more

valuable to the detriment of another; however, in one way or another, some preferences, usually minority preferences, are inevitably minimized.

The dichotomy of individual-society or individual-generality is a characteristic of utilitarianism today; the utilitarian maxim may indicate an epistemic and theoretical direction in which the conception of the human being as the majority prevails over a focus on the individual. This dichotomy implies a reductionist vision of the human being since it distinguishes between the human being understood as an individual and as a species, a differentiation that we consider to be unacceptable because the conceptions of the individual (human being) and generality (concept of person) cannot be understood as two different realities, since we would be forced to choose one or the other and, consequently, to neglect one of them.

Since the publication of his book *Practical ethics* in 1980, Peter Singer has been possibly the most popular contemporary utilitarian philosopher, at least in terms of his theoretical production of the dichotomy discussed here, and in recent years, he has contributed to the popular consolidation of dichotomous positions on the conceptions of the human being and the person.

According to Singer, the concepts of human beings and people are based on a common belief: *life is sacred*. However, the following question arises: why should human life have special value? To answer this question, he clarifies the concept of *human being*. The first meaning that is given is as a member of a biological species different from others: “It is possible to give a precise meaning to ‘human being’. We can use it as an equivalent to a member of the species *Homo sapiens*” (7). In fact, Singer mentions that both terms are often

confused in everyday speech but makes the following caveat: “However, the two terms are not equivalent, since there could be a person who was not a member of our species in the same way that there could be there are members of our species that are not people” (7).

For Singer, the ethical use of the concept of *human being* is feasible, and he highlights some antecedents, such as the postulates of the theologian Joseph Fletcher, who defined the following aspects as *indicators of the human condition: knowledge and control of oneself, perception of the future, perception of the past, ability to relate to others, concern for others, communication and curiosity*. These characteristics are kept in mind when someone talks about *a real human being* and not simply when referring to the biological species to which it belongs.

According to Singer, these concepts *overlap but do not coincide*; thus, choosing just one of them could make an *important difference* in the bioethical debate. For this reason, to mark the differences for the benefit of the utilitarian maxim, Singer speaks of *human being* and *person*: “For the first sense, the biological one, I will simply use the annoying, but precise expression ‘member of the species *Homo sapiens*’, while for the second, I will use the term ‘person’” (7).

As we have argued, the original distinction cannot be attributed to Singer because the dichotomy comes from Mill, Locke, Bentham and other thinkers, but Singer consolidates it in a way that is understandable for modernity: “I propose to use the term ‘person’ in the sense of being rational and self-aware, to encompass the elements [...] that do not fall within the expression ‘member of the species *Homo sapiens*’”. Regarding the call *value of the person*, Miguel Ángel Polo mentions the following:

To do this, Singer resorts to utilitarianism, both in its classic version and in a new version. For classical utilitarianism, which judges actions to the extent that they tend to maximize pleasure or happiness and minimize suffering or unhappiness, there would be no “direct connection” between the condition of “person” and what is wrong, in killing. But indirectly it would be important to the classical utilitarian. (8)

Now, in the first scenario, “Singer identifies with Locke when he thinks that the essential note of man and by which he makes his distinction in the surrounding world, is the ability to have self-consciousness; in a second moment he proceeds, from his perspective, to modify it and offer his approach [sic]”(9). In this same theoretical line, we understand that today, the distinction between a human being and a person allows us to reflect on the fact that discarding a person who wants to continue living is unfair, but “[...] taking the life of a person will normally be worse than taking the life of any other being, since people are very oriented towards the future in their preferences” (7).

The utilitarian proposal is the potential consequence of a certain modern way of understanding human beings under an anthropological line that authorizes to dispense with those humans who “[...] due to the variable of time or the health / disease coordinate have not been able, no they may or simply are not yet in an adequate biological stage that allows them to access rationality [...]”(9).

## DISCUSSION

Thus, the consideration of the rational, self-conscious and autonomous person seems to establish some of the

decisive utilitarian aspects of knowing how to differentiate a human being is from any other living being and what category a human being can have. However, this assessment has several problems: “Any subject who does not currently exercise reason is excluded from the recognition of personal dignity: it would not be people who sleep, drunkards, nor embryos, the mentally disabled, the elderly, individuals in a coma [...]” (10). This aspect is very interesting because Singer’s utilitarianism tends, apparently, to recover some status of the individual’s relationship with the environment and, by virtue of it, his own status as a person is considered, although without the recovery of the sense of his own heterorrelation with the context and of the context itself with the individual.

The current discussion regarding the conception of a human being other than a person may be one of the reasons why bioethics centered on the human person requires a concrete and rigorously methodical axiological structure to counteract criteria that minimize and reduce meaning from the human being to a mere biologist, mechanistic or utilitarian conception. Here is the central problem of this article, since ideological concepts such as abortion and euthanasia are based precisely on the argument that not every human being is a person and that, to be a person, he or she must be aware of him- or herself (among other characteristics).

Not for nothing can one of the greatest achievements of utilitarianism be summarized as follows: “Dualizing the notion of human being and person in favor of the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number of people possible” (11). This dualization of human nature may be the ethical basis of several reductionist aspects of today, as fragmenting human nature and subjecting it to a mere group assessment of a community of thinking

people, on the basis of the usefulness of said nature, will not only make it easy to proceed scientifically or medically in various aspects of dubious applicability but also lead to human research becoming increasingly flexible and less thoughtful. Thus, investigating human beings lacking self-will and reason (such as humans with disabilities, frozen embryos, gametes, and fetuses) would allow individualistic interests to achieve significant advances in genetic, medical and eugenic areas.

As a counterpart, and in response to several of the utilitarian and reductionist arguments already raised, Caponnetto states, “The notion of person is introduced in order to underline the fact that the subject of human acts is the person in his total unity and integrity, to which is added a defense and exaltation of the dignity of the person placed as the foundation of ethics” (12). This reinforces the idea of existence of a permanently objective moral assessment and of an anthropology that includes all biological levels of the human being because, in addition to his or her singular capacity to rationality, the human being would be a worthy creature to be considered in the bioethical assessment for all its qualities, basic and complex, as an essential unit and not as a reduction of itself.

Relatedly, Karol Wojtyła mentioned the following:

Man is by nature a person [...]. Only and exclusively this rational nature can constitute the foundation of morality [...]. The notion of morality is linked to moral good and evil, with the manifestation of this moral good or evil in a certain object, that is, in the person [...]. As well as the rationale *Lity* is an attribute of human nature, freedom is an attribute of human nature.

The one and the other constitute a symptom of personality. (13)

However, Wojtyła notably considers *human nature* prior to the phenomenon of what he considers personality. Furthermore, he considers that this human nature is the basis of the notion of morality, a notion completely contrary to the attempts at utilitarian reductionism that we observe in the current ethical dilemmas regarding the human being. As Roberto Andorno notes, “It is urgent today, perhaps more than ever, to ask ourselves what the human being is as a subject, that is, as a person. Pushed by biotechnologies, man once again asks himself the eternal question about himself and his destiny” (14).

#### UTILITARIANISM, RELATIVISM AND TECHNOSCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT

If the main need for technoscientific research is to be able to experiment with human beings and implement advances in this area, utilitarianism and its capacity for systematic reductionism are obviously the perfect and ideal theoretical basis for achieving today’s research and eugenic objectives. For example, certain scientific sectors are highly motivated to consolidate dangerous transhumanist and eugenic premises through utilitarian ideological promotion that disguises itself as false ethical humanism, as CS Lewis reflected in 1943 (15). In this sense, scientific utilitarianism benefits a large number of individualistic claims in fields where the improvement, treatment or alteration of the human being is a reason for experimentation and research. If some human beings do not achieve the aforementioned status, obviously said that human beings can be used for other objectives, which is precisely the ambivalent context of rational mistrust that must be analyzed from

person-centered bioethics, since not only is it about analyzing the bioethical situation regarding abortion, eugenics or euthanasia; deep considerations of frozen embryos, cloning, and fertilization are also at stake in the present reflection. *in vitro*, among many other ethical problems that are looming with the advancement of technoscientific methods.

The cost-benefit calculation, which is transposed from the individual level to the social level, constitutes the valid moral rule for all; thus, this moral construction depends on time and culture. This problem of moral relativism was already addressed by Aristotle, with good reason (16).

Currently, one of the most subtle ways to proceed ethically without claiming utilitarian biases is to assess the *quality of life* that could be provided by technoscientific development. In this regard, for example, a large part of the culture of the disposal of human beings is camouflaged as false ethics and a relative moral conception that, according to its usefulness, is usually superficially correct and that formulates the problem thus: *Are there certain human lives that have lost their legal status to such an extent that their prolongation does not have, in the long run, any value, neither for the bearers of those lives nor for society?* (17). However, Kant anticipated this, noting that “While [that] things have ‘price’, people have ‘dignity’” (18); Today, these ideas resonate in the words of Gamboa-Bernal: “When the human being falls ill, he does not stop being a person, he does not lose his identity or his capacity to respond to what life puts before him: he does not from being a ‘someone’ to becoming a ‘something’, a thing” (19).

Hence, human reality must be understood as an essential unit of being, beyond a phenomenological perspective

and more accurately from an ontological perspective of its personal being (20). This ontological explanation of the being of the person gives a reflective, broad and objective form to a metabiosis centered on the person, and in this sense, it is necessary to clarify that the human person cannot be reduced to simple neural materialism or a mere manifestation *rational* of his being.

#### NEURAL MATERIALISM, BIOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE SACRALIZATION OF LIFE

This subtle form of utilitarian thinking conceives of, among the aforementioned, the particular conception that pain is not exclusive to human beings. According to utilitarianism, higher animals such as great apes, like human animals, also suffer stress, fear, frustrations, anguishes and neuroses. Additionally, in their considerations regarding the subject of death, there would be no substantial differences with the human being. Under utilitarianism, it does not make sense to ask about species, race or social class. What should be considered, in any case, would be the psychological and cognitive elements that constitute our life, such as the desire to live or the type of life we lead.

According to Singer, one of the great contributions of utilitarianism has been to demonstrate the error of sacralizing life and, rather, considering that it is not good in itself, an obvious criticism of Judeo-Christian culture; however, the denaturing of the human being and its biological reduction for the most convenient utilitarian services is also evident. This desacralization translates, according to Yáñez, “[...] into a devaluation of human life, since he [Singer] considers only that useful life valuable” (21). Following Singer’s thinking, human life would be essentially instrumental since it would lack

value in itself: “Precisely one of the arguments of our author [Singer] to propose the elimination of disabled children, is that they should leave room for those who were born normal and therefore have a greater capacity to enjoy life” (21).

The concern that is addressed in the present work arises from preponderant and modern utilitarianism. According to Spaemann, “Whoever is convinced that certain beings are persons is obliged to fight for their rights” (22). In this sense, when speaking from a bioethical understanding of the human being, it must necessarily be considered that the conception of the person is inherent, since we speak of a subject and not an object. In other words, the human being is a being in essential unity and not a *thing* that can be defragmented in its essence and its immanent dignity. R. Spaemann affirms that “Ontology and ethics cannot be separated” (22); consequently, our appeal to an ontological conception is an ethical appeal, since utilitarianism has consequences directly related to our actions (23). The problem with this is that utilitarianism is usually closely related to the techno-scientific development of eugenic perspectives: “Utilitarianism has increasingly received, also in Europe, the favor of the economic and political circles, which find in it an effective instrument. to make decisions” (24). Relatedly, the emergence of an ideological phenomenon that causes utilitarianism and that projects utopian futures related mainly to techno-scientific intervention in humans is interesting. As Ayllon mentioned, “Every ideology promises a happy world that never comes, but the expected utopia increases its popularity and facilitates its implementation” (25). An ideology, by pursuing a utopia such as the one that utilitarianism usually offers, could lead to a dystopia, a bad place, and this is the main ideological problem of reductionism resulting from a utilitarian

application of the notion of “quality of life” to mitigate suffering: “[...] admitting ambiguity in a term such as quality of life entails a major risk since nothing less than the dignity of each person is weakened regardless of the circumstances that surround it” (26).

### HUMAN DIGNITY AS OBJECTIVELY IRREDUCIBLE TRUTH

In the words of Millán Puelles, “[...] *axiomat, dignitates* they are, in the logical order [...] the objectively irreducible truths, which are valid in themselves, without the possibility of mediation” (27). According to this concept, we consider it reasonable to postulate human dignity as an objectively irreducible truth owing to its ontological relationship with the human being. Without this premise, human dignity could be reduced to a mere conception of “dignified death” or “dignified quality of life” to achieve a utilitarian goal such as the avoidance of pain and the maximization of pleasure. Consequently, it is plausible that the dignity of the human person is an exclusive, possibly indefinable and basic quality of a human being, which designates his or her superiority in front of the rest of the beings and that must be approached with a clear perspective of his due respect. their personal radicals, their potential species-specific abilities, and their degree of vulnerability.

The nature of the human being and its dignity as an immanent principle are manifested in various areas, the most basic of all, life itself, which each human being experiences in multiple and different ways. In this sense, dignity, as an objectively irreducible truth, must be extended to dimensions that are not empirically verifiable but highly valid and transcendental for human beings, such as spiritual experience. Relatedly, J. Mari-



tain notes, “Since the person is a universe of a spiritual nature, endowed with free will and thus constituting an independent whole vis-à-vis the world, neither nature nor the State can penetrate this universe without their permission” (28) and adds, “Considered existentially, it can be said, then, that it is a natural and supernatural being at the same time” (28). In this paper, we do not aim to analyze a possible spiritual dimension of the human being; however, we accept the initial assumption that human dignity is an objectively irreducible truth since it is ontologically linked to the unique explanation of the human being. We must consider metaphysical explanations for these assumptions and thus arrive at an adequate metabiosis centered on the person, which understands it as that, *nature universe*.

Any bioethical attempt to explain human reality in relation to its intrinsic dignity, in the face of the dangers posed by utilitarianism, must be aimed at a reasonable and reflective bioethics, which considers the human being as an essential unit, not reductionist, not biologist, not mechanistic and therefore not utilitarian. In this regard, Elio Sgreccia clearly proposes that bioethics is not a discipline with diverse opinions but must be based exclusively on a frame of reference “[...] that is committed to providing objective answers based on rationally valid criteria” (29); these objective answers necessarily come from a reflective and reasonable process, where metaphysics is inferred from the ontological conception of being, the phenomenology of the person and the logical structure of the arguments, a process that, precisely, utilitarian philosophy usually does not do.

This argumentation of an objective and irreducible truth of the human being cannot be separated from that which promotes “greater justice to the real and objective

meaning of man and that contributes to its evaluation” (30). In this sense, personalistic and ontological bioethics safeguards the strict value of the person and removes any attempt at arbitrary manipulation and instrumentalization of all human life, whose sustenance is dignity. Sgreccia highlights the ontological need to explain the human being from a higher level of abstraction because it is limited to define it from a single point of view: “There is a need to take into account that natural dignity to give people the treatment that such dignity demands” (19). From this perspective, it is easier to understand that Kant, and in contemporary Gamboa-Bernal, are right when they affirm that the person can never be treated as a means but always as an end (18), and as an end, the human being must be thought irreducibly, objectively and ontologically so that this conception applies to the entire human species for its benefit and dignity: “It must be ethical because life demands it for life to grow” (19).

## CONCLUSIONS AND BIOETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The differences among the four types of utilitarianism—*utilitarianism of acts and rules*, *selfish and universalistic utilitarianism*, *hedonistic or idealistic utilitarianism* and *simple utilitarianism and generalization*—must be clearly identified. These four versions are not necessarily exclusive of each other; in fact, they could be intertwined to the extent that utilitarian ethics must be applied in a specific context and situation. However, differentiating the four versions of utilitarianism makes it easier to recognize the dangers posed by the premises of each one, which we can synthesize as follows: first, the *utilitarianism of acts and rules* is the general and traditional vision according to which the best act is the one that provides the maximum utility; in contrast, the *selfish and universalistic utilitarianism* is framed in the

doctrine of the utilitarianism of acts but emphasizes that the individual human being must think if the consequences of his acts are for *himself*; for his part, the *hedonistic or idealistic utilitarianism* maintains that the goodness or badness of a consequence depends only on its pleasant or unpleasant character; finally, there is also talk of *simple utilitarianism and generalization*. Despite their differences, however, we find that all approaches to utilitarianism eventually converge on the same utilitarian maxim in favor of the greatest possible good for as many people as possible, according to which maximizing pleasure and avoiding pain justify action. dangerous and highly questionable with respect to humans and their bioethical qualities.

On the other hand, the slope *singeriana*, which arises from the antecedents of utilitarianism from Bentham and Mill to the present, is a particular philosophy that opts for highly dangerous reductionism for the conception of human dignity as an essential, unique and complex unit, since it encourages the false dichotomy between human beings and people. This utilitarianism, by eliminating the ontological and metaphysical complexity of the conception of the human person, reduces it to one more organism that must be evaluated by virtue of its potential capacities for autonomy, will, planning for the future or physical individuality. When such reductionism of the human person emerges in the bioethical discussion, discrimination toward those human beings who would not achieve the same *status* of a person in sole and exclusive function of their potential capacities, whose absence prevents the person from being worthy of the protection of his or her nature and his life, is inevitable since he or she could be seen only as a *member of the human species*, without recognition as a person.

The reductionism of the concept of the human being and person is one of the main ethical problems regarding the systematic use of utilitarian philosophy in different fields, such as academic, scientific, clinical and social. This problem reduces the spectrum of human nature to mere biological, mechanical and neural materialistic concepts that define that a person, beyond being a human, should be one who achieves autonomy, exercises his will, plans the future, implements reason and expresses his interests, seeking only well-being, consumption and the maximum possible pleasure. Thus, the false dichotomy of the concepts of human beings and people is encouraged, and an ethic of minimal effort is promoted in favor of a global and universal understanding of humanity as an essential unit.

Today, for the practice of bioethics, the reductionist adoption that is usually made of the human being is still a mere neural complex, since this is one of the most dangerous traits in which personism manifests itself, since it reduces the human being only to their neural capacities and discards any human being who cannot make full use of these capacities. This neural materialism is typical of Singerian utilitarianism and of the current ideological movements that embrace the theory to solve any ideological initiative, under the pretext of dubious content about what is “quality of life”, with the ultimate goal of empowering claims discriminatory and harmful to culture and its individuals. This would be the specific case that is gestated around abortion, euthanasia, frozen embryos and other problems that elicit a response from person-centered bioethics.

On the other hand, our observations are highly important in the face of the unreasonable terminological and theoretical dichotomy that is usually made with respect

to human beings and people as two different aspects, with respect to which one can proceed differently. Since its inception, this dichotomy has been expressed as a differentiation between individual-society or individual-generality and finally leads to the Singerian utilitarian appreciation of the human being as a member of the human species and of the person as an autonomous and self-conscious human being, which comes to be the starting point of much of today's utilitarian philosophy. Thus, we can deduce that from the existence of this possible phenomenal dichotomy, two different paths could be taken for intervention, research and even the discard or not of a human being, whether it is observed as an individual of the species human or as an individual of a society that determines whether or not he is capable of developing as a person. In any case, the dichotomy is unacceptable since the conceptions of individual (human being) and generality (concept of person) cannot be estimated as two different realities, so that we would be forced to choose one or the other, always having to neglect one of them, and they would also be considered at two different levels of conceptual understanding of the same reality, the human person as an essential unit that possesses ontological and intrinsically objective dignity.

In this article, we also conclude that utilitarianism is, by definition, relativistic and deeply ideological, which directly affects the notion of "quality of life" by virtue of a dialog and explanation of reasons that can cover and justify the suppression of a life for the maximization of pleasure or the avoidance of suffering. This ideological relativism radically undermines the notion of the human person and provides the necessary basis for reductionism, biologicism, neural materialism and the dualization of concepts to have a practical effect in academia, science, medicine and medicine. societies.

We propose that a deep metaphysical reflection on the ontological roots of the human person and its nature as an essential unit is necessary to counteract the problematic advance of utilitarian philosophy both in ideological and social movements and in academia, politics and research. This would imply a methodological exercise that only philosophy can offer us, in such a way that there is an approach to concrete concepts that enrich a vision of human existence.

Finally, we propose that human dignity should be the base element to base axiologically and epistemically a guiding principle, objectively irreducible, intrinsic, which takes precedence over the objectification of the human being and can prevent its abolition in its most essential spheres, such as its nature, its essential unity and its different personal dimensions. Therefore, human dignity cannot be only a superficial rhetoric or dialectic aimed at describing a mere phenomenological reality; in contrast, it must be the guiding principle of all human action, which contemplates the essence of the person in each one of his or her personal radicals, from the unity of his or her being to the development of all his or her capacities.

Although human dignity is usually part of an adequate bioethical perspective, this is also the concept that most eagerly seeks to overthrow the utilitarian philosophy in our time. Without human dignity, without the ontological objectivity of the being of the person and without the necessary metabioethical understanding for its study, any action that seeks to overcome pain and suffering through its avoidance while pursuing the greatest possible pleasure—any action that is implemented to achieve these ends—is completely dangerous, unreasonable and harmful to mankind.

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