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## **HUMAN DIGNITY IN CURRENT BIOETHICS DISCUSSIONS**

### **Introduction**

There are several kinds of bioethics based on the actual understanding of bioethics and the methodological aspects of the approach towards the issues in question. We can at least mention the philosophical-ethical approach towards bioethics, the biological-medical, religious-theological and, possibly, legal approach to bioethics. In the same way, though, we could consider the psychological, sociological, anthropological, economic, etc., approach. In general it can be stated that, at present, bioethics is characteristic for its interdisciplinary character, plurality of methods, which, as a result, often means plurality in understanding the conception of bioethics.

Daniel Callahan, one of the most significant representatives of bioethics and long-standing Head of the Hasting Center in the USA, starts his contemplation on bioethics by the claim, alongside the Biblical Solomon, that it is “nothing new under the sun”, and he remarks that issues of life and death, pain and suffering, law and the power to control one’s own life including the responsibilities towards oneself and others with regard to health and welfare, are among the oldest that humankind has imposed on itself. In his opinion, bioethics is a radical transformation of an older area, i.e. medical ethics. He suggests that bioethics is not only an intersection of ethics and sciences dealing with life, but also an academic discipline, as well as a political decision-making vehicle in medicine, biology and environmental studies, and it also provides a cultural perspective with certain consequences. In a narrower sense, bioethics is a new discipline which originated as a search for answers to new scientific and technological challenges. In a broader sense, it can, in his opinion, be stated that it is an area which

penetrates into law and public politics, literary, cultural and historical studies, as well as popular media, branches of philosophy, religion and literature, and also to scientific spheres of medicine, biology and ecology, demography and social sciences<sup>1</sup>.

Callahan realises that arguments occur with respect to which theory of ethics should be used as the basis for bioethics. According to him, the question is what authority such arguments can have. Are we supposed to take them seriously at all? Both groups, scientists and humanists, argue for their own grounding and standpoints. He, however, finds it much more important that, in all areas, accordance can be found in practical issues, even without a theoretical consensus. Moral decisions need to be made regardless of their theoretical foundations. According to Callahan, the authority of bioethics lies in a clear definition of the problem and the convincing argumentation of those who reflect a moral problem. The primary task of bioethics is to clearly formulate a problem which requires a solution, regardless of the level of the solution, be it in clinical practice or at the political or legal level, etc. What will follow is searching and giving reasons for theories and principles. It is, however, necessary to say that there are hardly any situations where a problem, which cannot be solved with regard to a disagreement between theory and principles, is also reflected in practice. It is also confirmed by the development of bioethics in recent decades. He points out that a good individual decision includes three conditions: self-cognition, knowledge of moral theories and traditions, and cultural perception<sup>2</sup>. Originally, bioethics was primarily understood as a matter of sciences dealing with life with reference to issues of morality and values. This opinion has, however, gradually changed; sciences focusing on life are still understood as its core, but it is rather scientific than moral. Philosophical ethics plays the key role, as facts and values cannot be separated. Issues of moral value and the purpose of sciences studying life can no longer be separated from the issues of moral value and purpose of society and culture<sup>3</sup>.

From our viewpoint, the following proposition of his is really important: even though bioethics is of multidisciplinary character, it still answers three fundamental questions: what kind of person to be in order to live a moral life and to make the right ethical decisions, what one's obli-

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<sup>1</sup> D. Callahan, *Bioethics*. W: *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, t. 1, red. S.G. Post, Farmington Hills 2005, s. 278-279.

<sup>2</sup> Tamže, s. 284-285.

<sup>3</sup> Tamže, s. 286.

gations and engagements are towards other people whose lives may be influenced by my actions, and how to contribute, as a member of society, to the common welfare or public interest<sup>4</sup>. I think we can agree that all three of the above questions are primarily philosophical, and that they find their specific manifestation in searching for answers to new challenges of medicine and biology. All disciplines which deal with issues of bioethics, whether perceived in a narrower or broader sense, can contribute to their being answered. In any case, ethics, regardless of the particular ethical theory it relates to, should be the core, where all this reasoning should start, should it concern a solution to real and not imaginary forms of ethical and moral problems related to the development of biology and medicine, biomedical research and biotechnology. For the reason, philosophical ethics has to be a core of bioethics education.

Alongside known, even classic, versions of methodological approaches to bioethics and ethics in general, among which deontological and utilitarian ethics can be counted, and, in recent decades, also, for instance, discourse or feminist ethics, I would also like to present non-utilitarian consequentialism and my version of this viewpoint, known as ethics of social consequences, as a possible approach to studying and developing bioethics and ethics of science.

### **Ethics of Social Consequences – Form of Non-Utilitarian Consequentialism**

Non-utilitarian consequentialism understands consequences in a broader sense than, for instance, utilitarianism; it does not only consider consequences of actions but also consequences of motives, intentions or a certain attitude. Among other common characteristics of non-utilitarian consequentialism (as opposed to utilitarianism) are differences in the understanding of good and right, the role and sense of such values and principles as usefulness, happiness, gratification, pain, niceness, satisfaction of desires, and so on. Furthermore, it concerns refusing the principle of impartiality and maximisation. Based on the definition of these attributes, the following conceptions can be included among non-utilitarian versions of consequentialism: Philip Pettit's *virtual consequentialism*, Michael Slote's *satisficing consequentialism*, Frank Jackson's *probabilistic consequentialism* and Amartya Sen's conception *evaluator relative theory*.

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<sup>4</sup> Tamže, s. 282.

The key value structure of ethics of social consequences is formed by primary values, among which I consider values of humanity, human dignity and moral right (to life), which, as a criterion, are commonly underpinned by positive social consequences. In the “background”, as an axiological basis of this ethical conception, there is also biological and moral value of life, conditioning individual elements of the whole value system<sup>5</sup>. Among secondary values, I count the value of responsibility, justice, commitment and tolerance. In this sense, humaneness stands for a certain moral ideal, based on respect and the pursuit of human dignity and this moral ideal is specified through moral principles and individual moral norms, which define particular ways of pursuing humanity in the life of an individual, moral community and the whole mankind.

Humaneness and dignity create the essence of moral good; they are the highest values which man should try to achieve through his/her actions. The above values are set in motion by means of the principle of positive social consequences, the contents of which are defined by the requirement for consequences to correspond with the effort to pursue and achieve humaneness and dignity in the life of an individual, moral community and, by effect, mankind as such.

Moral right, as another essential value within ethics of social consequences, includes the idea of moral value that needs to be pursued. Dignity and humaneness are set in motion via the principle of positive social consequences, which is also limited by them. Humaneness and dignity are a generalised expression of moral right (to life), which expresses the effort to protect or fulfil primary moral values related to the life of an individual and mankind as a whole. Moral right (to life) makes human dignity concrete. Moral right (to life) is an informal expression of moral values. It can, thus, be stated that moral rights stand for a mere framework or form for realisation of an actual moral value, as, after all, it is not rights (including moral right) but moral values (with the main focus on the value of life) that are the goal.

A crucial role within ethics of social consequences is played by the understanding of the moral agent as a morally mature adult individual able to recognise and understand the existing moral status of society and also capable of conscious and voluntary actions for which he/she bears moral responsibility.

It can, therefore, be claimed that values and principles within ethics of social consequences are closely related to the essential principles of bioethics

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<sup>5</sup> V. Gluchman, *Etika a reflexie morálky*, Prešov 2008, s. 77.

and medical ethics, which were (in 1979) formulated by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, i.e. the principle of autonomy, harmlessness, care and justice<sup>6</sup>. Also based on this, we are trying to develop ethics of social consequences as a methodological approach to studying and solving numerous ethical and moral problems in applied ethics, including bioethics and biomedical research<sup>7</sup>.

Adela Lešková Blahová, in her contemplations on the possibilities of applying ethics of social consequences to analysis and assessment of topical problems in biomedical research, including gene technologies, came to the conclusion that this ethical conception is a productive and efficient methodological approach to assessing such ethical and moral problems as, for instance, isolation of stem cells<sup>8</sup>. When analysing possibilities resulting from ethics of social consequences, Lešková Blahová mentioned such issues as understanding life, but also refusing absolutism of values with regard to the above value of life, which, by implication, means that “the effort to protect human life should not get to a position of inhumane actions, when we try to sustain a human life (which, in its sense is reduced to mere biological existence of an organism, and the state cannot be expected to change in the future) at any cost. A humane action, in this case, refers to providing adequate health care, which does not prevent the natural process of the existence of a human organism, and also includes the decision to let such an organism die”<sup>9</sup>. With regard to this conception, she finds a positive feature in the situational dimension when evaluating actions of a moral agent and, based on this, she came to the conclusion that “this ethical theory combines approaches of consequentialism with values of other ethical, including deontological, theories. Application of this new theoretical approach in the form of ethics of social consequences as a form of non-utilitarian consequentialism, and this, on

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<sup>6</sup> T.L. Beauchamp, J.F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, New York 2009, s. 99-287.

<sup>7</sup> M. Gluchmanová, *Uplatnenie princípov a hodnôt etiky sociálnych dôsledkov v učiteľskej etike*, Prešov 2009; A. Lešková Blahová, *Etika sociálnych dôsledkov ako možné metodologické východisko riešenia bioetických problémov*. W: *Metodologické a metodické otázky bioetiky súčasnosti*, red. V. Gluchman, Prešov 2009, s. 135-147; ťaž, *Bioetika v kontextoch etiky sociálnych dôsledkov (Aplikácia zvolenej paradigmy na vybrané bioetické problémy)*, Prešov 2010; G. Platková Olejárová, *Aplikácie etiky sociálnych dôsledkov v ekonomike*, Prešov 2009.

<sup>8</sup> A. Lešková Blahová, *Bioetika v kontextoch...*, s. 159-176.

<sup>9</sup> Ťaž, *Etika sociálnych...*, s. 142.

the surface, incompatible combination could shift the discussion on bioethical topics to a different dimension”<sup>10</sup>.

## **A Critique of Human Dignity in Bioethics**

Recently, doubts with regard to the need or uselessness of the term ‘human dignity’ have started to be mentioned more and more often in scholarly bioethical, as well as medical, circles. A number of authors point out the vagueness of the existing definitions of the term ‘dignity’, or ‘human dignity’ (Ruth Macklin, Steven Pinker, Udo Schüklenk and Anna Pacholczyk, Alasdair Cochrane and others). They also bring attention to the redundancy, uselessness and, even, harmfulness of this term. Ruth Macklin claims that human dignity does not stand for anything more than respect towards people and their autonomy. In her opinion, the conclusion is clear: dignity in medical ethics is an unnecessary term and it can be eliminated without any loss of meaning<sup>11</sup>.

With regard to the above, Alasdair Cochrane adds another argument, claiming that the term ‘human dignity’ is reactionary, as it groundlessly creates obstacles to progress in medicine, which causes great harm. In his contribution *Undignified Bioethics*, he analyses four conceptions of dignity: dignity as virtuous behaviour, dignity as an internal value, Kantian understanding of dignity and dignity as species integrity. The author admits that it is possible to find a coherent understanding of dignity; he, however, refuses the latest defence of dignity not only because it is unclear, reactionary and pointless, but mainly because it is based on unsustainable ethical arguments. According to him, none of these conceptions of dignity is, on the whole, applicable in bioethics, to, for instance, solving problems in medical, and especially clinical, ethics. He claims that popularity of a particular ethical term does not imply we are committed to accept it forever. Trends in ethical discourse are changing and ethicists have to accept these changes, albeit at a low level. If terms are unclear, it is the experts’ task to clarify them. If, however, terms prove to be unnecessary, or, even, useless, they should be refused. He, thus, leans towards bioethics without dignity, towards “undignified bioethics”.

A similar opinion is presented by Steven Pinker who points out the relativity, interchangeability and harmfulness of using the term ‘human

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<sup>10</sup> Tamże, s. 135-147.

<sup>11</sup> R. Macklin, *Dignity is a Useless Concept*, „BMJ” 2003, v. 327, s. 1420.

dignity'. In his opinion, the relativity of this term lies in it being liable to time, place and understanding by the recipient. He claims that, many times, it has been proven that dignity is a trivial value, interchangeable with life, health and safety. The harmfulness of this term is often manifested in its defence in the form of despotic features of behaviour, such as the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, Danish caricatures of Mohamed and so on. On the other hand, Pinker is also aware of the significant potential included in this term. He claims that every one of us wants to be perceived with dignity. It is one of the interests of man, just like corporal integrity or personal belongings. The above perception of dignity is significant with regard to biomedicine, especially when curing patients is concerned. Another reason for accepting dignity is, according to Pinker, the possibility of its elimination leading to the loss of inhibitions when torturing, tormenting and humiliating people, such as, for instance, in the case of Jews in Nazi Germany. He, however, sees the problem in the fact that, in many cases, conservative religious bioethicists (theocon bioethicists) consider sci-fi as prophecy, which leads them to, in the name of salvation of dignity, inhibit progress in biomedical research, which could help decrease suffering in many ill people<sup>12</sup>.

Undoubtedly, human dignity is an interesting and important theoretical, and, thus, ethical, as well as practical moral problem, the solution to which could have a highly significant impact on further development of bioethics, medical ethics, biomedical research, including research into gene technologies. I will, therefore, try to formulate my own standpoint, which, on the one hand, results from my own understanding of human dignity, and also proposes answers to at least some of the raised objections of the abovementioned authors, or those who criticise the use of term 'human dignity' in bioethics.

First of all, I would like to point out that, in most cases, critics operate with the static, or conservative, model of understanding human dignity based, to a certain extent, on deontological approaches to human dignity and morality in general. They primarily understand morality as a set of static, or stable, values with the focus on respecting existing moral principles, rules, norms and values, while a major role is played, or importance born, by the respect and pursuit of obligations. Cochrane's understanding of human dignity also fits in this scope; he perceives it as a certain pattern of behaviour which needs to be pursued, or a set of certain stable and static values resulting from human nature. Of similar character is Pinker's

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<sup>12</sup> S. Pinker, *The Stupidity of Dignity*, „The New Republic” 2008, 238(9), s. 28-31.

criticism of understanding human dignity by the American Council for Bioethics from the period of George Bush's presidency, when conservative Christian views on human dignity resulting from the opinion concerning the gift of life and the divine origin of man dominated.

## **Value of Human Dignity in Ethics of Social Consequences**

Unlike the critics, I am not of the opinion that the term 'human dignity' can be replaced by the term 'respect' towards a person and his/her autonomy, since this reduces the meaning of the value of human dignity to mere functional dimension of human existence and it, to a certain extent, comes near to what Cochrane criticised with regard to understanding dignity as species integrity, or dignified existence of man. The Nazi programme of 'final solution to the Jewish issue' was based on the fact that the Nazis, "thanks to" racist laws, deprived Jews of the status of people and autonomy, which, as a result, made the whole exterminating programme including inhumane experiments on prisoners in concentration camps easier to realise (the best-known example is Josef Mengele and his experiments in Auschwitz).

Instead of the static (conservative), or, functional, model of human dignity, which is the subject of a number of justified critical viewpoints and stipulations, I am offering a dynamic model of perceiving human dignity based on an intersection of values of humaneness, human dignity, moral right (to life) and positive (social) consequences.

I accept that fundamentally dignity is a concept that we use to describe an aggregate of values and qualities of someone or something that deserve esteem and respect. The primary value that creates the right to have dignity is life. The degree of dignity according to a particular life form depends on its place in the evolutionary scale. Human beings are the highest form of life so they possess the highest degree of dignity. Such an understanding of the value of dignity, including human dignity, represents in its basic definition a form or manifestation of moral biocentrism. However, it certainly does not mean a devaluation of the value of dignity, including human dignity. On the contrary, it broadens its scope, so that it extends also beyond the category of humankind.

Now let us consider the question of whether such an understanding of human dignity can have some place or meaning in the context of consequentialist theories of ethics. Since I perceive a non-utilitarian consequentialism, I will develop my further discussion about the relation of the

idea of human dignity and consequentialism by reflecting on the place and meaning of human dignity in the ethical theory.

How can we embrace human dignity, regarded by many as a deontological moral value, in the context of non-utilitarian consequentialism? I remind the reader that the essence of non-utilitarian consequentialism is the interaction of the moral values with the value of positive consequences. What is significant, from the perspective of the discussion presented so far, is the relation between the value of human dignity and the value of positive consequences. Is there any relation at all? Is it possible that they are completely incongruous? The basic definition of dignity that we have stated here is that it is a body of values and qualities worthy of respect and esteem. We have also come to the conclusion that a universal value that is worthy of esteem and respect is life in all its forms and manifestations. What are the consequences of this conclusion for non-utilitarian consequentialism and its main criterion – positive consequences? Does life bring positive consequences? Are there any positive consequences that result from life? We can be sure that there are. Let us think what we could see as the positive consequences of the existence of life. The very fact of life's existence creates the basis for everything else. Here I do not mean the existence of human life (I will return to this later) but the existence of all of life on earth. The very existence of life *per se* brings many positive consequences. With some risk of oversimplification, I could say that the basic positive (of course also social) consequence of life is that life enables a quality of life. Individual forms of life that exist on the Earth bring numerous individual, albeit at first sight perhaps diminutive, positive consequences, since they create the world and life that is manifold, rich and in most cases interesting enough to be lived. The fact that we accept the idea that all individual life forms have dignity brings positive consequences not only for human life but also for other life forms since by accepting this idea we accept their right to live and reproduce. No value can be seen as absolute, which means that our acceptance of the value of dignity in the case of other life forms does not result in the absolute prohibition of any acts that would violate their dignity. As the degree of dignity varies on the scale, for instance from 0.0001 to 1, so also the degree of our responsibility and respect for these forms of life varies. Of course, in trying to avoid violating the dignity appropriate to any life form, we also try to avoid the negative consequences (negative social consequences included) that would result from such a violation and negatively influence not only humankind but also the whole of life on earth. On this basis we can state that the acceptance of dignity defined as

the acceptance of life brings clear positive consequences for life as such and, of course, also for the life of humankind. So what can be concluded at this place is that the value of dignity can be seen as an integral part of the non-utilitarian consequentialism and ultimately it can be accepted as a value that can have also a consequentialist dimension (at least in the context of the non-utilitarian consequentialism). Such a form of moral biocentrism represents a very productive approach. It respects life as such, while also making it possible to qualitatively differentiate between various forms of life.

I think that the same degree of human dignity, expressed, for instance by number 1, belongs to all human beings on the basis of the fact that they were born as members of the species *Homo sapiens*, regardless of their future qualities and capacities, their future action, or successes and failures in life. What logically follows is the question of whether our degree of dignity remains the same throughout our whole life, regardless of the way we live our life. Does it remain the same whether we live our life in accordance with the moral norms and requirements accepted in our community or, on the contrary, we live in conflict with them? Are we entitled to the same degree of dignity throughout our whole life just because we were born as beings possessing the same initial degree of dignity? Does it mean that throughout our life we are all morally equal? If this is true, then I believe that human effort to be moral is counterproductive, despite the fact that, with the exception of various digressions and doubts, such efforts have characterized almost all of human history.

If Göran Collste's claim is true that the concept of human dignity (or sanctity of life) "express[es] a view that each human being is valuable in a unique way and, hence, worthy of respect, regardless of any personal characteristic or qualities and that this value is equal for all human beings"<sup>13</sup>, then some very interesting consequences result. Our moral value, our human dignity would not be determined in any way by our behavior, by our action, by the way we live our life. The Biblical parable about talents can help to make the point. One servant hid them in the ground, the other spent them and only the third one used them to earn interest. I think that it is not right to judge all the three equally, disregarding what they did with their talents.

I believe that it is not right to maintain that all moral agents possess the same human dignity, so that, for example the victim of humiliation,

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<sup>13</sup> G. Collste, *Is Human Life Special? Religious and Philosophical Perspectives on the Principle of Human Dignity*, Bern-Berlin 2002, s. 15.

abuse and torture possesses the same human dignity as the abuser, torturer and moral monster who commits such acts. If we accept that both the victim and the torturer have the same human dignity, we have to accept the absurd conclusion that Dr. Mengele, for example, who performed inhuman experiments on prisoners in concentration camps, had the same human dignity as his victims. If we accept this, we demean the humiliated, abused and tortured prisoners in concentration camps. In relation to human dignity Mengele had the same starting position as everybody else, but through his acts he clearly denied the equality of other human beings and degraded them to the status of soulless objects for his inhuman experiments. In this and many similar cases we cannot accept the argument that all human beings are equal in human dignity.

I understand Collste's reasons for his argument, which he bases on the Christian ethics that the value of human beings is based on the fact that human life is always a gift from God. But when we treat human life as God's gift, we absolutise life itself without considering its quality: the values that moral agents realize in their lives, the consequences of their way of living and their action in relation to other human beings and society. Birth is only the beginning of it all. All mentally fit newborn children get the above-mentioned Biblical talents in the form of certain potentials and in many respects it depends on them what they will do with them. It depends on them whether they will let them rot, squander them or use them to earn interest for the benefit of their kin, or maybe even for the benefit of a closer or wider community of people. By talents, of course, I do not mean material goods but rather our action through which we express our relation to ourselves, to people around us, and also to the rest of the world. The measure of our human dignity and the respect we get from others depends on our action and its consequences. If we maintain a connection, or even dependence, between our action as moral agents and the human dignity we can expect to be accorded, the result can only be beneficial for the morals of society and of individuals.

## **Conclusion**

So what are the main conclusions drawn from my reflections on human dignity? First of all, it has been confirmed that the value of human dignity has its place in the non-utilitarian consequentialism. This is so because it is compatible with the value of positive consequences that creates the crucial criterion in the non-utilitarian consequentialism. There exist

two aspects of human dignity in the non-utilitarian consequentialism. The first is related to the value of life that is worthy of esteem and respect, which brings positive consequences (moral biocentrism). So the positive consequences result here from human dignity. The second aspect is related to the fact that human dignity is a function of the positive consequences of our behavior prevailing over the negative consequences of our action (including the negative social consequences). This creates a basis for assigning moral agents with an additional, qualitative value of human dignity. In case of human beings without developed consciousness and who are only potential moral agents the first aspect of human dignity is dominant in our judgments about them. In the judgments concerning moral agents the second aspect of human dignity dominates.

Adela Lešková Blahová, with regard to contemplations on the importance of understanding human dignity within ethics of social consequences, came to the cognition that “the primary criterion for the assessment of the value of human dignity is the ontological aspect, while the secondary criterion is the situational dimension with regard to the actions of a moral agent. This distinction guarantees a minimum degree of protection of and respect for the lives and interests of those people who cannot be considered moral agents, such as children, the mentally disabled, and so on. The degree of dignity of a moral agent is, then, an outcome of not only his/her affiliation to the *Homo sapiens* species, but also a long-term process of evaluation of his/her behaviour and actions on the part of the wider moral community which he/she is part of. It could also be assumed that human dignity is of a certain hierarchical nature, depending on the mental, or cognitive and intellectual, as well as psychical and moral development of an individual. This, however, does not mean making dignity as such absolute. I consider this conception of human dignity in relation to the overall level of morality within society as well as virtuousness of an individual as more productive. Its productivity lies in constant motivation of man (social group) to actions in accordance with moral requirements of society. It, thus, benefits morality in general”<sup>14</sup>.

Similarly, it is possible to quote her conclusion with regard to the assessment of possibilities of research into human stem cells in the context of the value of human dignity. In her opinion, “the main problem I can see here is considering the principle of human dignity the primary approach of assessment of moral justification of research into embryonic stem cells in man. This could, in many cases, mean unstable grounds. The

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<sup>14</sup> A. Lešková Blahová, *Bioetika v kontextoch...*, s. 94-95.

principle of human dignity can only be applied to those beings in whom the attribute of human dignity is »trustworthy«, and as these I consider human beings. As I have stated before, from the viewpoint of moderate anthropocentrism in ethics of social consequences, a human embryo cannot yet be considered a human being, let alone a moral agent. It, thus, does not even fulfil the essential criteria (biological and social-moral requirements) for attributing human dignity. The human embryo, therefore, does not have human dignity, »only« dignity which befits it in the form of life in connection to its position within the evolutionary scale. Its materialising in scientific research is, thus, not in contradiction with the value of human dignity but »only« with the value of dignity. Should this ethical theory modify its approaches in accordance with moral biocentrism, it could partly avoid this conflict, or, morally excuse instrumentalising human embryo in scientific research in a better-founded way”<sup>15</sup>. Based on this, I am of the opinion that it is possible to agree with the standpoint of the Italian author Massimo Reichlin, who claims that “bioethics is a research area in which there is no place for unanimity. Most typical of it are discussions and arguments – as it does not concern any factual issues, on which we all could, in the end, come to the same opinion, but rather interpretation of such empirical and scientific facts in the light of general conceptions in human beings and their good”<sup>16</sup>.

Karl Raymund Popper claimed on several occasions that it should rather be ideas to die in battles than people. I would like to modify Popper’s statement, though, as I am not of the opinion that a battle where ideas die should primarily be concerned, nor should it be a competition where one wins and the other loses, but rather a positive confrontation, the aim of which lies in the origination of new ideas which might be productive when searching for common moral problems at present. One of the most significant aims of the conference is to contribute to a positive confrontation and origination of new ideas, which could help further theoretical development of bioethics, finding new solutions to practical moral problems of bioethics and moral dilemmas of individuals with regard to issues of bioethics, including bioethics education. I assume that we have a common interest in solving these problems, even though our methodological bases, the proposed means of their solution, as well as the outcomes which we might come to, may differ (for example, issues of the meaning and understanding

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<sup>15</sup> Tamže, s. 163.

<sup>16</sup> M. Reichlin, *Bioetika v Taliansku: Dva dôvody nespokojnosti*, „Filozofia” 2007, 62(3), s. 255.

bioethics, idea of human dignity, etc.). Let us not reject other viewpoints of these issues and problems a priori, let us not reject such thinking which might seem absurd, i.e. searching for answers and solutions outside of traditional or conventional ways of thinking. Nothing can be solved by “burying our heads in the sand” like ostriches do, rather the opposite. Let us not look for the one and only theory which could provide the only correct answer to the complicated ethical and moral problems of this era brought about by developments in science and technology. Never, in the whole history of mankind, has it been possible and, very probably, never will be, as long as the present form and nature of mankind are kept. Let us clearly formulate issues or problems and let us argue and look for solutions to them in accordance with the principles and values of humanity, human dignity and moral rights of man for life. Together, they should bring primarily positive consequences (also within the social level), or a prevalence of positive consequences over negative, as the development of science and technology is often contradictory; or, at least, minimise unexpected negative consequences, which might result from the process of scientific development and discoveries. It is the only course befitting ethics and bioethics in all its forms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I really think that philosophical ethics, including non-utilitarian consequentialism is one of the fruitful methodological starting points for such discussions and looking productive solutions of the problems.

### **Godność człowieka we współczesnym dyskursie etycznym**

Poza znanymi w nauce, a nawet już klasycznymi uzasadnieniami metodologicznymi bioetyki i etyki, do których można zaliczyć etykę deontologiczną i utilitarystyczną, a w ostatnich dziesięcioleciach również etykę dyskursywną oraz feministyczną, w artykule wskazano także na możliwość wypracowania nowej podstawy metodologicznej dalszego rozwoju bioetyki i etyki nauki, którą autor nazywa konsekwencjalizmem neutralnym. Jest to wersja autorska platformy metodologicznej, nazwana w artykule etyką konsekwencji społecznych. Ze względu na założenia aksjologiczne etykę społecznych konsekwencji tworzą wartości pierwszego rzędu, do których autor zalicza humanizm, godność człowieka oraz naturalne moralne uprawnienie (do życia), przez które ujawnia się ona jako kryterium pozytywnego wpływu na społeczeństwo.

W ostatnim czasie w kręgach specjalistów z zakresu bioetyki, w tym również medycznej, zaczynają się pojawiać coraz głośniej wyrażane wątpliwości co do sensowności i zasadności tradycyjnie pojmowanego rozumienia terminu „ludzka godność”. W większości przypadków krytycy koncentrują się jednak na statycznym czy konserwatywnym modelu rozumienia ludzkiej godności, w dużej mierze

opierającym się na deontologicznym podejściu do ludzkiej godności i moralności w ogóle. Zamiast funkcjonującego dotąd statycznego (zachowawczego) modelu rozumienia godności ludzkiej, który jest przedmiotem wielu zasadnych krytycznych opinii i zastrzeżeń, autor proponuje zatem dynamiczny model jej postrzegania, odwołujący się do wartości humanizmu, godności człowieka, praw moralnych (do życia) oraz pozytywnych (społecznych) konsekwencji.

Zgodnie z modelem dynamicznym, w ramach tego samego stanowiska wyrażają się dwa aspekty ludzkiej godności. Pierwszy wiąże się z wartością życia, które zawsze zasługuje na cześć i szacunek, z czego wynikają korzystne konsekwencje społeczne – stąd społecznie pozytywne skutki są funkcją ludzkiej godności. Drugi zaś dotyczy faktu, że godność ludzka jest funkcją społecznie pozytywnych konsekwencji naszych zachowań i działań, które zawsze powinny przeważać nad konsekwencjami społecznie negatywnymi. Ma to podstawowe znaczenie dla przypisania określonej jakości bądź spotęgowania wartości godności podmiotu moralnego. W rozważaniach na temat nieświadomych istot ludzkich, czyli tylko potencjalnych podmiotów moralnych, dominuje pierwszy aspekt godności człowieka, zaś w ocenach moralnych dotyczących podmiotów moralnych dominuje drugi aspekt ludzkiej godności.

