

INTERDISCIPLINARY

The Emotional Nexus
Recovery Model for
Addiction

Junk Food, Hormonal
Variation & Social
Media

More's Utopia:
Architectural Design
and Politics

Ethics vs Morality in
Human Action &
Bioethics

Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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PREFACE

The Global Journal of Human-Social Science (GJHSS) is pleased to present this issue, bringing together a curated collection of high-quality research papers that explore diverse dimensions of human society, culture, and the social world.

This issue features research spanning topics including arts & humanities, sociology, history, anthropology, economics, political science, linguistics, education, and interdisciplinary social inquiry. Each paper has undergone a rigorous double-blind peer-review process to ensure scholarly rigor and originality.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the authors for entrusting their research with us, to the reviewers for their thorough and constructive evaluations, and to our readers for their continued engagement with the academic discourse.

We hope that the research presented herein inspires further inquiry and contributes meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge in the human and social sciences.

The Chief Editor
Global Journal of Human-Social Science
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Centring Emotion in Addiction: The Emotional Nexus Recovery Model

Article Record

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Abstract

Addiction is increasingly understood as a condition shaped by interconnected biological, psychological, social, and spiritual elements that contribute to its onset and persistence. Although various treatment and recovery models demonstrate some success in reducing substance misuse and promoting abstinence, they often give little attention to the role of emotional experiences, particularly shame. This discussion examines the importance of recognizing emotion, with an emphasis on shame, in the addiction recovery process, advancing the understanding that addiction serves a purpose in reducing emotional suffering and fostering survival. The Emotional Nexus Recovery (ENR) model integrates biopsychosocial-spiritual and emotion-focused frameworks to promote a holistic understanding of addiction that positions emotion as a central guide in the recovery process. Limitations of the model and directions for future research are discussed.

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ARCHIVAL RECORD

Centring Emotion in Addiction: The Emotional Nexus Recovery Model

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Abstract

Addiction is increasingly understood as a condition shaped by interconnected biological, psychological, social, and spiritual elements that contribute to its onset and persistence. Although various treatment and recovery models demonstrate some success in reducing substance misuse and promoting abstinence, they often give little attention to the role of emotional experiences, particularly shame. This discussion examines the importance of recognizing emotion, with an emphasis on shame, in the addiction recovery process, advancing the understanding that addiction serves a purpose in reducing emotional suffering and fostering survival. The Emotional Nexus Recovery (ENR) model integrates biopsychosocial-spiritual and emotion-focused frameworks to promote a holistic understanding of addiction that positions emotion as a central guide in the recovery process. Limitations of the model and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *addiction, biopsychosocial-spiritual, Canada, emotion, recovery, shame, treatment*

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1. Introduction

It is estimated that, worldwide, half the adult population uses psychoactive drugs on a regular basis, far more if caffeine is included in the totals. In Canada, adult drug use from 2007 to 2020 remained relatively steady with two major exceptions: cannabis and opioids. Alcohol remained the most commonly used psychoactive agent, with approximately three-quarters of those 15 years of age and older using the drug annually. Not surprisingly, given the change in status from illicit to legal in 2018, cannabis has seen the greatest increase in reported use in the 21st century within Canada, with nearly one in five adults indicating using the drug at least once in 2020 (Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms Scientific Working Group, 2023). Interestingly, cannabis misuse has decreased (McDonald et al., 2025), however this has not prevented cannabis from becoming the leading cause of psychoactive-related hospital admissions among youth (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2026). Despite a far lower rate of use than either alcohol or cannabis, the drugs that have received the most media and political attention have been opioids. Taking into account population size, North America continues to have the greatest rate of illicit opioid use globally, approximately 4% of the population (Csiernik, 2026). The influx of opioid prescriptions beginning with the introduction of oxycontin in 1999 created an opioid dependence epidemic in Canada, with a 24% increase in opioid prescriptions between 2010 and 2014 alone (Eibl et al., 2017). Between January and March 2025, Canada experienced a reported 1377 opioid deaths (Government of Canada, 2025). It has been estimated that the cost of substance use to Canadian's is more than \$49 billion annually and leads to over 200 lives lost per day

(Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms Scientific Working Group, 2023). Likewise, overdose deaths in the United States have reached unprecedented levels as between June 2022 and June 2023, over 106,500 individuals alone died with opioids being the primary driver of fatalities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Neither substance misuse or the opioid crisis is an issue only in North America as opioid misuse is a major problem in public health worldwide (Health–Americas, 2023).

2. Foundations of addiction

It has been well established that addiction has several distinct interconnecting elements (Csiernik, 2026; Csiernik et al., 2023). Notable biological factors responsible for the commencement and continued use of substances include genetics, chemical and hormonal imbalances, physical health, nutrition, sleep and the impact of withdrawal (Yazici & Bardakçi, 2023). By continuing to use substances, a tolerance to the psychoactive drug will often form, leading to the brain and the body requiring an increasing amount of the substance to remain in homeostasis (Csiernik, 2025). Additionally, psychological factors such as mental health, trauma history, cognitive processing, stress, and motivation have a connection to addictive behaviours (Yazici & Bardakçi, 2023). Not only do psychoactive agents move users away from their natural homeostatic level of anxiety, creating a sense of euphoria, but they also provide an escape from psychological turmoil (Fisher, 2022). Mental representations, if inaccurate, may lead to destructive thought processes, emotions, and behaviour, including substance misuse (Rakfeldt, 2023). The quality of social factors in an individual's life has been associated with reduced risk of relapse in

those recovering from substance misuse (Yazici & Bardakçi, 2023). It has been argued that substances may be used as a replacement, in some situations, for interpersonal connection and thus, social support and capital are deemed vital for recovery (Chen, 2022; Maté, 2021).

Viewing substance misuse as a behaviour that serves a functional purpose helps to conceptualize why people may continue to use substances even when it conflicts with their values. This inconsistency between behaviours and beliefs is referred to as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and may lead to uncomfortable feelings of moral tension or conflict (Hashemi & Vogel, 2024). As people typically desire consistency in terms of their behaviours and values, those experiencing cognitive dissonance will often take action to reduce the discomfort it causes (Tse et al., 2022). The most common way of reaching cognitive consonance is by changing attitudes to be more consistent with current behaviours, rather than changing behaviours to be more aligned with attitudes (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). Even so, cognitive dissonance is recognized as a powerful motivator for change within substance use behaviours, as some individuals will decide to change their usage to be align more with their values (Tse et al., 2022). Hashemi and Vogel (2024) identified that in circumstances where psychoactive substance use is normalized among peers, messages about moderation and harm reduction may be more acceptable than promotions of abstinence, as cognitive dissonance will prevent the acceptance of this rigid practice. While potentially helpful in motivating change, cognitive dissonance may also produce emotional reactions, leading to increased substance use, to avoid negative feelings or an alteration of value systems to support drug-using behaviours (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019; Tse et al., 2022). This is one reason why the emotional state of the individual is a critical aspect underlying the development, maintenance, and escalation of substance misuse to become an addiction.

Negative emotions have been linked to substance use in multiple understandings of addiction, including negative reinforcement, tension-reduction and social learning models (Batchelder et al., 2022; Peralta & Steele, 2010; Smith, 2021; Wilson 1988). Maté (2021) argued that addiction originates in pain, whether openly known or subconsciously. One reason for individuals beginning and continuing to use psychoactive substances is that drugs work, even if temporarily, in reducing feelings of emotional pain and suffering (Barnett, 2024). Individuals who use substances to avoid or relieve negative emotions have been shown to develop addictive patterns of use more quickly than those who reported other reasons for their administration (Wilcox et al., 2016). This avoidance of emotional experiences can lead individuals to lose their ability to be emotionally present, becoming, as Maté described, “emotional amnesiacs” (2021, p. 39). Emotional dysregulation then becomes even more prominent, and addiction more severe, as use continues (Wilcox et al., 2016). This has led to counsellors in this practice area advocating for the incorporation of emotion-regulation training and supports for those with addiction issues to improve overall well-being, by first understanding the purpose that substance use serves (Barnett, 2024; Chen, 2022). Additionally, attachment theory explains how early attachment to an emotionally present caregiver is vital to developing a healthy sense of self and the ability to regulate emotions (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1958; 1982; Parolin & Simonelli, 2016). Substance use, then, instead of being internalized as a moral failing, is recognized as a learned behaviour used to suppress very real and unbearably painful emotional experiences (Barnett, 2024), while filling a void of lost connection (Maté, 2021). By identifying these experiences that lead to their

substance misuse, the individual is in a better position to learn to work with these feelings and develop alternative coping strategies (Barnett, 2024).

Even with a strong motivation to change behaviour, difficult experiences can lead to fluctuations in emotional arousal and a breakdown of cognitive processes (Barnett, 2024). This can manifest as either hyper-arousal or hypo-arousal. Hyper-arousal occurs when emotions feel as if they are flooding or overwhelming the body, leading to reactivity, while hypo-arousal is the logic system’s attempt to override this emotional process, leading to dissociation and shutdown (van der Kolk, 2014). Psychoactive drugs used to manage hyper- versus hypo-arousal aim to modulate the autonomic nervous system, either calming hyperarousal, the fight-or-flight state or stimulating an immobilized, numb state, hypoarousal. While individuals self-medicate using a range of substances stereotypically stimulants are used to address feeling of hypoarousal (Khantzian, 2003; Wagner, 2017) while depressants tend to be used to address hyperarousal (Dagan & Yager, 2020; Duranceau et al., 2014; Lader, 2011). Siegel (1999) proposed that between these two states is a window of tolerance where one is able to make accurate decisions and productively experience emotions. People with addiction issues are more likely to use their substance when outside of their window of tolerance as a way to manage overwhelming or underwhelming emotional experiences (Corrigan et al., 2011).

When outside of the window of tolerance, individuals cannot learn from their experiences and struggle to remain in control of their behaviours (van der Kolk, 2014). The limbic brain system works as an internal alarm to alert one to danger and will cause an individual to react in a way that will protect them from harm, making it vital to human survival (Csiernik, 2026; Maté, 2021). Within this context, substance misuse and addiction can be understood as a brain pattern developed for survival to protect an individual from emotional harm by dulling painful feelings (Maté, 2021; van der Kolk, 2014). Continued substance use causes further dysregulation of the limbic system, leading to minor adversities feeling overwhelming and unbearable to those with an addiction (Lin et al., 2024; Wilcox et al., 2016). This view moves us beyond the simpler disease model that was prominent in forming views regarding addiction in the middle part of the 20th century to the more comprehensive neurobiological theory of addiction. Additionally, by increasing awareness of emotional experiences, an individual can expand their window of tolerance to better navigate difficult life stressors and reduce time spent in survival mode. Through this, people with an addiction are better able to make rational decisions about whether or not they want to use substances, without the overwhelming emotional destabilization that occurs during hyper- and hypo-arousal states aligning with trauma-informed models of counselling and support (Barnett, 2024).

Another perspective, the self-medication hypothesis, views substance misuse as an adaptive tool of survival from overwhelming emotional suffering (Chen, 2022). Using substances as an avoidance strategy serves to protect the sense of self from situations that seem unlivable and is one example of how individuals will react in ways that seem maladaptive when faced with pain (Fisher, 2022). This implies that addiction is not a behaviour that exists outside of emotional experiences and is instead deeply interconnected and driven by them (Barnett, 2024). People with mental health concerns have an increased risk of addiction due to the impact some substances have in mitigating or relieving symptoms of mental health conditions (Lin et al., 2024). Thus,

individuals will do what they feel they need to in order to find or maintain some level of emotional safety and survive (Chen, 2022). Addiction overtakes the natural emotional survival system, leading to temporary feelings of safety through substance use, which makes one less equipped to navigate ongoing emotional turmoil without their substance of choice (Barnett, 2024).

3. Shame: An under-recognized contributor to addiction

Emotions are both a necessary and challenging component of human existence, forming an indispensable part of the sensory system and a vital component of who someone is (Maté, 2021). Hawkins (1995) introduced the emotional frequency chart, identifying a range of emotions based on his concept of power versus force. Low-frequency emotions require force, meaning that they are negative or life-reducing, while high-frequency emotions exert power and are considered positive or life-supporting. Hawkins identified shame, described as self-loathing and destructive energy, as the lowest frequency emotion that an individual can feel. The concept of shame has been a key element of many theories attempting to explain or provide insight into the development of an addiction, including the moral model, disease model, attachment theory, personality theory, humanistic theory, psychodynamic theory [object-relations], and social learning theory (Csiernik, 2026). Additionally, societal narratives and discrimination regarding addiction can lead those who misuse substances to internalize self-stigma. Stigma is additionally reinforced through structural and systemic barriers that exclude people with an addiction from the opportunity to recover (Chen, 2022; Fisher, 2022). Negative self-conscious emotions, such as shame, arise from an evaluation of the self in comparison to others and often lead to feelings of being less valuable or less worthy (Batchelder et al., 2022). Shame has been described as the most overwhelming emotional experience that one can face, as it attacks the very core of who that person is (Barnett, 2024). Those who feel shame then, either from their substance misuse or factors leading to or arising from it, continue to use substances as a way to self-medicate and avoid this emotion that has been deemed unbearable (Chen, 2022). Psychoactive substances effectively reduce the intensity of feeling these emotions, acting as a protective factor to facing emotional pain; however, this also results in a loss of the ability to engage in other activities or behaviours to overcome difficult life experiences moving forward, increasing an individual's reliance on the substance (Barnett, 2024).

The presence of shame and the temporary relief offered by substance use is often referred to as the shame-addiction cycle (Batchelder et al., 2022). Substance misuse and feelings of shame become cyclical in nature as the individual consumes drugs to sedate feelings of shame, which in turn increases feelings of shame for using substances (Chen, 2022). This shame associated with using substances has been linked to the idea of not being able to control one's desire to use, even when they wish to maintain abstinence (Chen, 2025). Additionally, avoidance of difficult emotions leads to increased feelings of fear about facing these emotions in the future, as one feels unprepared to do so. This increase in fear due to avoidance produces an increased likelihood of using substances, creating a cycle that is counterproductive to personal growth (Barnett, 2024).

There has been debate within the literature about the role that guilt plays in addiction and how this differs from shame (Batchelder et al., 2022; Chen, 2022). The key difference between

guilt and shame is the focus of the negative evaluation; shame can be conceptualized as a negative evaluation of oneself, while guilt is a negative evaluation of one's behaviour (Batchelder et al., 2022). Guilt has been argued as a potentially self-regulatory mechanism that can support people in decreasing substance use as they identify the behaviour, rather than themselves, as problematic, leading to desires to change. In contrast, shame is internalized as a personal deficit, and reparations may seem impossible or too abstract to be tangible (Chen, 2022). Batchelder and colleagues (2022) found that shame was consistently associated with increased substance use, while guilt was seen as associated initially with increased substance use, but potentially protective over time as substance use continued. Some researchers identify that both shame and guilt are connected to the development and maintenance of substance use concerns (Chen, 2022), while others describe shame and guilt as motivating factors for people using substances to engage in treatment (Jones et al., 2024). A negative association with self-forgiveness was identified for both shame and guilt, however a stronger association was present between self-forgiveness and shame (Hall & Fincham, 2005).

Since shame has been identified as playing such a significant role in addiction, there has been a search for strategies to mitigate its risks. Self-acceptance has been recognized as an important mechanism to address the cycle of shame within addiction and foster long-term recovery (Chen, 2022). Linehan (1997) defined the term 'radical acceptance' as the ability to feel painful emotions without needing to react to or change them. Only through the allowance and acceptance of difficult emotional states are individuals able to move toward changing their behaviour (Greenberg, 2017). Additionally, self-forgiveness and gratitude reinforce the recovery process and may be helpful in sustaining long-term recovery (Chen, 2025). Gratitude supports individuals in rebuilding helpful and supportive relationships and improving coping strategies (Nelson, 2009). Self-forgiveness, while identified as more difficult than other forms of forgiveness, provides individuals with an adaptive way to cope with difficult situations and emotions (Chen, 2025). Participation in 12-step mutual aid groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous has been seen to foster self-acceptance, self-compassion, and gratitude (Chen, 2025), reduce shame (Chen, 2022), and reduce the risk of relapse in some individuals (Yazici & Bardakçi, 2023).

4. Treatment options

Given the complexity and multidimensional nature of addiction, a plethora of approaches to address the condition have been proposed. This includes a variety of common psychotherapy modalities that have been adapted to support those misusing substances who wish to abstain or reduce their consumption (Csiernik, 2026; Yazici & Bardakçi, 2023). Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has significant literature supporting its use for people with substance use concerns, with an emphasis on identifying patterns in thoughts and behaviours that are associated with an individual's desire to use substances (Rakfeldt, 2023). Specifically, CBT for substance use focuses on challenging unhelpful or inaccurate mental representations and encourages active restructuring of these thoughts to increase an individual's ability to process their emotions effectively and thus, reduce harmful substance use behaviours. This approach views emotions as influenced by cognitions, understanding that challenging unhelpful thought patterns can help an individual feel better emotionally and thus, reduce substance use (Csiernik, 2026; Rakfeldt, 2023). Interestingly, one criticism of CBT is its lack

of direct focus on emotional processes (Leahy, 2015). Third-wave adaptations such as dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) build on the initial concepts of CBT, with an added appreciation for self-acceptance and the ability to mindfully observe thought processes, without attempting to change them (Chen, 2022; Linehan, 1993; 2015). DBT and other contemporary models situate substance use as a learned behaviour that is influenced by environmental factors (Waldron & Kaminer, 2004). These approaches also contrast with CBT's strict focus on cognitions alone by using interventions that teach emotional regulation and distress tolerance, recognizing the importance of emotions for general well-being (Leahy, 2015).

The transtheoretical model (TTM), in contrast, was developed specifically for supporting individuals who identified as having an addiction (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). This revolutionary model argued that individuals will cycle through various stages in the process of attempting to change a behaviour, represented as a spiral with a mixture of positive change and setbacks along the recovery journey. Techniques used to support individuals are informed by their current state of change, and throughout the entire process, individuals are asked to reflect on the pros and cons of changing their behaviour and the impact this would have on their life (Prochaska, 2008; Prochaska et al., 1992; Prochaska et al., 1994). Within TTM, emotions are recognized as fluctuating throughout the therapeutic process, resulting in one's willingness to change their behaviours (Hodgins, 2001). Specifically, the concept of dramatic relief, which refers to the negative feelings one associates with their addiction and the subsequent relief one feels when these behaviours cease, is considered a central motivation of change within TTM (Hodgins, 2001). Associated and used in conjunction with the TTM, but developed independently, was the construct of motivational interviewing (MI). MI is a method of counselling often used in partnership with TTM to increase an individual's intrinsic motivation to change by utilizing attribution, empathy, self-efficacy, and cognitive dissonance (Miller & Rollnick, 1991, 2002, 2012). MI has been seen as effective in supporting clients who are described as ambivalent to change or stuck in addictive behaviours (Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2017). Resistance in MI is seen as an emotionally protective mechanism reflecting ambivalence about change (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, 2012). While emotion-focused concepts are utilized in both TTM and MI, they are not the central focus of either approach.

Emotion-focused and emotionally focused therapies have also gained popularity as psychotherapeutic models that can be used to support those with substance-use concerns or addictive behaviours, as well as their families (Barnett, 2024). In contrast to CBT and related cognitive-behavioural approaches, and TTM/MI, as the name suggests, the focus here is upon the emotional aspect of substance misuse. While often used interchangeably, emotionally focused therapy and emotion-focused therapy are considered distinct practices, specifically in regard to the population being supported (Greenberg, 2017). Emotionally focused therapy was developed initially as a couple's therapy approach to encourage the expression of underlying vulnerable emotions and foster a change in the way the couples interacted with and understood one another (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988). In 2015, Greenberg proposed that emotion-focused therapy is an integrative term which encompasses all treatments that centre emotion as the focus of their interventions. Emotion-focused therapy for addictions emphasizes the role that negative emotions play in the onset and maintenance of substance use (Barnett, 2024). This approach focuses on building emotional fluency and awareness, as well as

an understanding of addiction as an adaptive behaviour used to protect individuals from emotional suffering (Barnett, 2024).

It has been well established that addiction recovery requires a holistic biopsychosocial intervention strategy, as illustrated by the various treatment approaches discussed above, that can support individuals in developing and maintaining general well-being (Csiernik, 2026; Csiernik et al., 2023; Yazici & Bardakçi, 2023). Additionally, peer-run 12-step groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous emphasize the importance of spiritual connection, with addiction being identified as a hybrid condition with physical, mental, and spiritual elements (Fisher, 2022). As an outcome of the increased awareness of the benefits of spiritual support, the biopsychosocial (BPS) model for wellbeing, developed by Engel in 1977, was expanded by Sulmasy (2002) to formally acknowledge the spiritual domain, becoming known as the biopsychosocial-spiritual (BPSS) model (Figure 1). Fisher (2022) identified that spirituality in recovery involves individuals letting go and putting trust in a purpose greater than themselves. Substance misuse in 12-step programs are regarded as spiritual disorders which are created through the absence of meaning to life (Chen, 2025). Some benefits of including a spiritual understanding within addiction care include increased recovery capital in the form of community support, increased treatment adherence, and resources to counteract narratives of personal shame and guilt (Van Denend et al., 2022). Since these programs are peer-led, there is no specific focus on emotional processes. Instead, the groups follow the 12-step philosophy from the Alcoholics Anonymous manual known as the "Big Book," which provides a structured and standardized framework for maintaining sobriety and has since been adapted to support other peer facilitated groups (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001).

The BPSS model, while not universally implemented, has gained prominence in addiction counselling practice (Csiernik, 2026). A critical dimension of this approach is the emotional component; an area explored to varying degrees by the various treatment approaches. As has been discussed, for many individuals with substance misuse concerns, the underlying emotional component is shame (Barnett, 2024; Batchelder et al., 2022; Chen, 2022; Jones et al., 2024). Drawing upon the established literature and practice in the addiction field, a distinct approach is proposed: the Emotional Nexus Recovery (ENR) model. The ENR model emphasizes the importance of emotions during substance misuse and the recovery process, focusing on shame as the key issue to explore and address in developing a foundation for decreasing or stopping substance use. The ENR model recognizes that a spiritually focused program fosters acceptance of the unknown through faith, hope, and purpose, which are often viewed as prerequisites for safety and meaningful lifestyle changes. To those who are struggling with a substance use disorder, their drug of choice is a primary tool of control or used to reduce the fear and anxiety of the unknown. Using ENR to express the human need underlying spirituality can help the individual separate religion, doctrine, and dogma from the spiritual process, again reducing the potential shame associated with rejection from the 12-step process due to a lack of belief in God. ENR is currently proposed as a brief intervention tool that identifies emotion as a barrier to behaviour change and improved quality of life. This awareness becomes a complement to other treatment modalities such as DBT and EFT, while most importantly reducing shame, allowing a person to progress through the TTM, and making strides toward less harmful coping strategies.

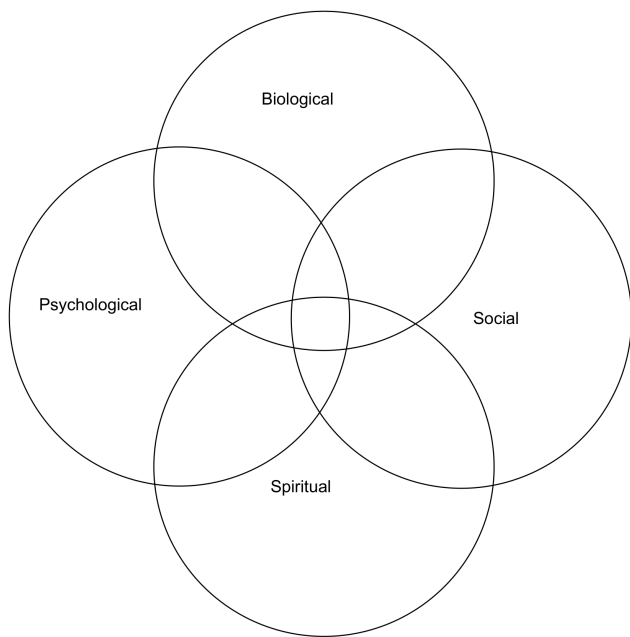


Figure 1. The Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Model

Adapted from Raffay, Wood, & Todd, 2016.

5. The Emotional Nexus Recovery model

The ENR model is a holistic approach for supporting those with addiction issues centring emotions within a biological, cognitive, social, and spiritual framework. While proposed as primarily an addiction recovery model, the concepts can be used to support overall well-being and quality of life for anyone searching for balance or stability. ENR incorporates elements of the BPSS and emotion-focused therapy models to conceptualize how everyday practices can help or hinder emotional well-being. By placing emotions in the center of the model, it symbolizes the ways in which biology, cognition, socialization, and spirituality affect an individual's emotional state. Conversely, it also recognizes that a poor or dysregulated emotional state, particularly one where shame is the dominant affect, can radiate outwards to impact all areas of well-being. To improve emotional functioning, it is fundamental that a framework for recovery recognize and name the importance of shame in the addiction process. The ENR model identifies emotional suffering, highlighted by shame, as the root of ongoing substance misuse and thus views emotional well-being at the center of recovery.

Both the traditional BPSS model (Figure 1) and the ENR model (Figure 2) can be visualized using a Venn diagram. Biological factors such as sleep, nutrition, and medication, and social factors such as family connection, community supports, and friendship are common to both models. Spirituality can be understood as the belief that one is not in control of everything that may happen in life, and having faith that life will work out in the way that it is meant to, alleviating the burden of not knowing (Maté, 2021). The main difference between the ENR and the BPSS models is the understanding of psychological factors and their positioning. Psychological factors within the BPSS model include both cognitions and emotions (Van Denend et al., 2022). The ENR model separates these two concepts; the traditional psychological section from the BPSS model becomes cognition,

and emotions are placed in the centre of the model and thus the treatment approach. As discussed, emotions, particularly shame, are a critical factor in the development and maintenance of addiction and thus, in response, the ENR model position them as such. By centring emotions in this way, the ENR model is drawing on practices of emotion-focused therapy through an understanding that emotions are at the root of all behaviour, including addiction (Barnett, 2024). Emotions in this way are considered central to all aspects of life and, therefore, a necessary component of healing. This moves away from the traditional understanding of addiction, which often centres addictive behaviours as the core issue and the focus of interventions. Additionally, spirituality is identified as all-encompassing to biological, cognitive, and social practices, rather than a separate entity, as it is through spirituality that one can find meaning in the other three domains of life and process adversity during uncertain times.

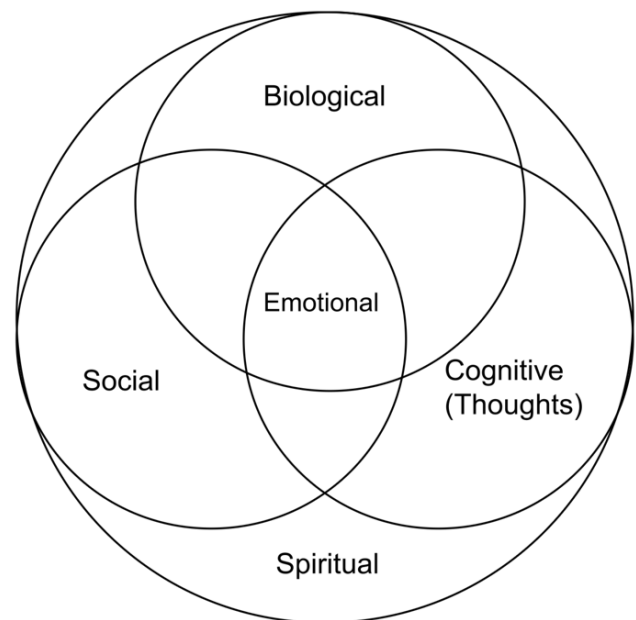


Figure 2. The Emotional Nexus Recovery Model

A common mantra used within the ENR framework is that people with addiction issues are emotional people who do not like their own emotions. Of course, affect, having emotions and being emotional, is a fundamental aspect of being human. "I don't like my emotions" can quickly evolve to, "I shouldn't have these emotions" which in turn morphs into the false belief that "if I have these emotions that I shouldn't have, I must not be normal." Not being normal leads to a state of shame, of one's emotions, one's behaviours and ultimately one's self. Applied to the misuse of drugs; the process of avoiding emotional experiences will be used to self-soothe negative feelings of not only shame, but also sadness and anger. Substance misuse has also been associated with difficulty in fully experiencing positive emotions, related to the concept of self-sabotaging due to discomfort with these emotions or fear that they will be followed by a loss (Joshanloo, 2013; Weiss et al., 2015; Weiss et al., 2018). The ENR model focuses on conscious awareness of emotional experiences and a desire to learn to feel these emotions in their full capacity. Rather than attempting to change emotional states, the focus shifts to understanding these emotional experiences and learning to coexist with them, beginning with shame.

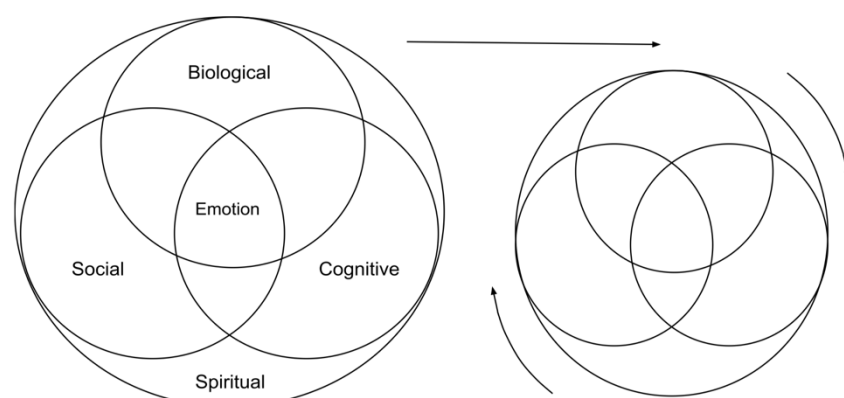


Figure 3. The Emotional Nexus Recovery Model Rotation

In clinical practice, ENR is used to demonstrate the unseen purpose of each emotion and its utility to survival. Much like our senses of sight, smell, and touch, which provide information to navigate daily life, our emotions do the same. In the ENR model, being human means using emotions to determine fundamental needs. For example, Sadness shows a person what has been lost and its subsequent value, or guilt points at an undesired result of our actions. When we create a link between emotion and a person's humanity and core functions, it can increase their self-compassion. Emotions are happening for us, not to us. In practical use, individuals gain autonomy and shift toward uncomfortable emotions associated with change because these emotions serve a greater purpose than suffering.

As described by Maté (2021), free choice comes from the ability to think about one's emotions and feel pain, without being motivated to suppress them through the use of addictive behaviours. By naming these emotions and allowing permission to feel them in their entirety, shame can be replaced with self-compassion. The ENR model argues that to do this, the individual must strive toward balance within the biological, cognitive, social, and spiritual domains of their life.

Central to the understanding of the ENR model of addiction is the emphasis on balance. If one were to focus only on their biological health, for example, by attending the gym multiple times a day, but did nothing to support their cognitive, social, or spiritual health, their recovery would not be holistic. This puts them in greater danger of relapse if something were to impact their ability to continue utilizing their one coping strategy, for example, an injury or illness that prevents them from working out. By focusing on all four domains, an individual is in a better position to face adversity and will have multiple mechanisms that they can use when they feel at risk. By seeing spirituality as all-encompassing, one may be even better able to manage hardships through an understanding that there is a greater purpose in life and find meaning in difficult situations. Adding arrows to the ENR model indicates forward motion, underscoring why balance is vital to a person's recovery (Figure 3). If one is lacking in a particular domain, they will need to work extra hard in the others to continue moving forward in their recovery journey. Imagine this as a tire with multiple air chambers biological, cognitive, social, and spiritual. If one of the areas becomes flat, the amount of energy required to push the tire forward would increase. A tire that is flat on one side easily creates an imbalance, needing more momentum

and energy to move the same distance. This extra torque creates stress on the wheel hub: our emotions.

Within the ENR model, there are multiple overlaps between domains. Many current therapeutic modalities for addiction would fall within one or two of the domains, while having little or no focus on the others. For example, CBT could be identified as primarily a cognitive approach to recovery, while DBT could fall within the overlap between cognitive and social domains, with the inclusion of groups. Mutual aid groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, focus on social and spiritual health, with some cognitive elements within the 12-steps, but do not overtly support biological well-being. Pharmacologically-assisted treatment, such as methadone or naltrexone support the biological aspects of withdrawal, but if used in isolation, neglect to consider the impact and importance of cognitive, social, and spiritual support. The intent of the ENR model is to encourage a recovery journey that incorporates all domains in order to develop a healthy emotional state, creating a full support system to mitigate relapse and improve overall well-being. With this is the understanding that each domain within the model has a direct impact upon the others, with emotions both impacting and being impacted by biological, cognitive, social, and spiritual factors.

Utilizing the ENR model, an individual can identify which areas of their life they feel they need additional support in to benefit their emotional wellbeing and recovery journey. Through assessing what is currently available to them within their biological, cognitive, social, and spiritual domains, they will be able to identify areas of potential growth. Additionally, by positioning emotions at the centre of the diagram, the importance of emotional health and overall quality of life remains the focus of recovery. It is important to note that emotional well-being is not the same as being happy, and that ultimate happiness is not the goal of recovery. Instead, emotional well-being is the ability to recognize, identify, and feel emotional experiences for what they are, without having to utilize psychoactive drugs to cope. Emotions can be utilized as a helpful guide to show someone what is important to them and what aspects of their life they feel are helpful or hurtful to their long-term recovery. By naming addiction as an adaptive strategy used to reduce overwhelming emotional experiences, shame can be reduced, and individuals can learn to practice self-compassion.

While the ENR model represents a promising framework for supporting individuals experiencing addictions, it has yet to be empirically evaluated to determine its effectiveness. Additionally, further reflection on the role of addictive behaviours needs to be

examined and may be warranted in future iterations of the model. Although the ENR framework positions emotional processes as the primary focus, with addictive behaviours identified as a secondary response, additional examination of how behaviours are represented within the model may enhance conceptual clarity. Finally, the application of the model across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts requires further exploration to ensure sensitivity and relevance.

A meaningful next step in establishing the effectiveness of the Emotional Nexus Recovery (ENR) model would involve a phased, mixed-methods research approach that reflects both its clinical complexity and its person-centred philosophy. Initial pilot studies could employ quasi-experimental designs in outpatient or recovery maintenance settings, comparing ENR-informed interventions with treatment as usual, with outcome measures including reductions in substance use, improvements in emotion regulation, and changes in shame and self-compassion. Building on these findings, randomized controlled trials (RCTs) would provide stronger empirical validation, ideally stratifying participants by severity and stage of change to assess differential impact. Given ENR's emphasis on emotional processing, validated psychometric tools such as measures of shame, affect regulation, and quality of life would be essential, alongside longitudinal follow-up to evaluate the sustainability of outcomes. Qualitative methodologies, including semi-structured interviews, should also be integrated to capture participants' lived experiences and the nuanced shifts in emotional awareness that may not be fully reflected in quantitative data. This combination of controlled trials and experiential data would allow for a comprehensive evaluation of ENR's effectiveness across diverse populations and treatment contexts, aligning with the model's holistic and integrative foundation.

6. Conclusion

The ENR model is proposed as an addition to the preexisting frameworks used to support individuals with addiction issues. It incorporates methodologies of empirically supported practices, primarily the BPSS and the emotion-focused therapy models, to provide a holistic understanding of the recovery process. The ENR model centres emotions as the root of both addiction and recovery, with the underlying philosophy that substance use is an adaptive survival strategy for overcoming life experiences. While identified as a helpful model for individuals, the ENR framework and its concepts can also be applied to family or group therapy settings. Future research needs to explore the clinical application of the ENR model across diverse treatment settings to refine its role within addiction recovery. In doing so, the model may contribute to a more holistic, responsive, and emotionally attuned approach to addiction care.

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Hormonal Variation Due to Junk Food Consumption: Social Media Awareness

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Abstract

In recent days, people have become more addicted to junk food consumption. Even knowing that it is food that only provides taste without any nutrients, the number of people consuming them continues to grow. Compared to the dietary habits that existed in the past, today's food can be seen to have a negative impact on human health both physically and mentally. Especially, it can be observed that it is influencing the balance of the hormonal system in girls. Due to this hormonal variation, girls are reaching menarche (puberty) early; along with this, other girls are facing various problems during the menstrual cycle such as mood swings, acne, changes in body health, weight gain, etc. In support of this, it would not be wrong to say that social media has become a good platform to create awareness about people's health. In major platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, doctors, health experts, and fitness bloggers are providing all information on what kind of food consumption is necessary for our body in today's times. They are providing information about the troubles caused by junk food and street food. This study analyzes the effects of junk food consumption and understands how awareness is being created on this subject through social media. Through the content analysis method, it has been understood how social media is creating awareness to eliminate problems caused by junk food consumption and what its influence is like.

Junk Food

Hormone

Menarche

Menstrual Cycle

Social Media

Awareness

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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CONSENT

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TRIAL REG.

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ARCHIVAL RECORD

Hormonal Variation Due to Junk Food Consumption: Social Media Awareness

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Abstract

In recent days, people have become more addicted to junk food consumption. Even knowing that it is food that only provides taste without any nutrients, the number of people consuming them continues to grow. Compared to the dietary habits that existed in the past, today's food can be seen to have a negative impact on human health both physically and mentally. Especially, it can be observed that it is influencing the balance of the hormonal system in girls. Due to this hormonal variation, girls are reaching menarche (puberty) early; along with this, other girls are facing various problems during the menstrual cycle such as mood swings, acne, changes in body health, weight gain, etc. In support of this, it would not be wrong to say that social media has become a good platform to create awareness about people's health. In major platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, doctors, health experts, and fitness bloggers are providing all information on what kind of food consumption is necessary for our body in today's times. They are providing information about the troubles caused by junk food and street food. This study analyzes the effects of junk food consumption and understands how awareness is being created on this subject through social media. Through the content analysis method, it has been understood how social media is creating awareness to eliminate problems caused by junk food consumption and what its influence is like.

Keywords: *Junk Food, Hormone, Menarche, Menstrual Cycle, Social Media, Awareness*

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1. Introduction

People are adapting very quickly from a traditional lifestyle to a modern lifestyle. Due to this, many changes are seen in humans; as an example of this, it is difficult for today's young men and women to build a life for as many years as humans of that time. According to some studies, it has been found that the daily dietary habits consumed by humans are a major reason for this kind of change. This type of change has also had a significant impact on the menstrual cycle of women, and women are suffering from ill health due to hormonal imbalance.

Today's world is moving towards innovation, and people are always looking for novelty in everything. Mainly, a difference in people's health style and lifestyle can be observed in recent decades. Compared to the previous generation, children and youth who have no activity and are disinterested, starting from dietary habits, are increasing today. Due to this, their body's health is suddenly fluctuating. They are facing problems like heart attack at a young age, diabetes, extreme obesity, or weakness. Because of this, the number of people suffering heart attacks is increasing day by day. As known through the media, 22 people died of heart attacks in 40 days during the months of June and July in the Hassan district of Karnataka. Apart from this, according to the WHO-UNICEF 2024 report, the rate of obesity among children aged 5 to 15 has increased by 18% due to junk food consumption. According to a 2023 study by the American CDC, the cardiovascular death rate among fast food consumers is 15% higher. According to some

studies, 20% to 30% of children are facing early menarche due to fast food consumption. Along with all this, more attention is being given to beauty, and by following unhealthy diet methods without information about them, many variations can be seen in the bodies of today's children.

1.1. Hormone

Hormones are biochemical fluids released from the endocrine glands of the body; these control body growth, emotions, sleep, hunger, and the menstrual functions of girls. Hormones like insulin, estrogen, progesterone, melatonin, oxytocin, etc., are present in the human body.

1.2. Menstrual Cycle

Menarche is the first menstruation seen in girls. This is a natural biological process that takes place every month in women. This usually starts within 12 to 14 years, which means the female is ready to conceive from here. Every month, the endometrium membrane inside the uterus grows with the help of estrogen and progesterone hormones. If pregnancy does not occur at that time, the level of progesterone hormone in the body decreases and the endometrium membrane detaches from the uterus. This is called the monthly period. This process is a common occurrence in every woman's body, and the endometrium layer proceeds through a cycle of construction-evolution-shedding. The influence of hormones in the body is the reason for the fluctuation in this process, and junk food is the reason for this influence.

1.3. Junk Food

Food that has no nutrients and is high in fat, calories, sugar, salt, and spices is called junk food. This type of food provides taste but is harmful to health. For example, pizza, burger, cold drinks (soft drinks), cake, prepared foods, etc. Milk, curd, chips, chocolate, jam, soft drinks, etc., are prepared with the intention that colors used for food items and stored foods can be used for a longer time. But these cause imbalance in the balanced hormonal state in the body. It causes troubles such as digestion problems, skin problems, weight variation, etc.

1.4. Dietary Habits

Looking from the time of ancestors, the primitive man who used to hunt and eat animals, after some time, reached the stage of eating the food they consumed by boiling or roasting it. As the human's intellectual level increased, he started producing grains and began consuming good quality food. Fruits, vegetables, and food grains provided vitamins, protein, minerals, etc., required for the body. Because of this, our elders were centenarians. But in today's stressful life, more emphasis is given to time, and because of this, it would not be wrong to say that the consumption of ready-made foods, cold drinks, fast food, and street food, which are prepared instantly and provide taste, is increasing through trends in today's generation. Today's delicious foods satisfy hunger but do not provide the nutrients required for the body; therefore, it can be observed that today's generation is falling prey to one disease or another. In a research paper titled "An Exploratory Study on Food Addiction among Indian Youth," 13.3% of youth are addicted to fast food, while in a study "Junk Food Addiction across Generations in Urban Areas of Karnataka," 16% of people were found to be junk food addicts, and another 14% are dependent to a small extent. From this, it is known that the youth are mostly dependent on such dietary habits.

1.5. Objectives

1. To study the impact of junk food consumption on the hormones of girls.
2. To learn about the social media that gives the most importance to menstrual hormone balance.
3. To understand how social media has influenced coming out of hormonal imbalance.

2. Literature Review

Annappuramma C (1989): In the book "Sahaja Jaivika Kriya Rutuchakra" (Natural Biological Process Menstrual Cycle), this is the first time a book with complete information about the menstrual cycle was published. She has provided detailed information about the stages seen in this process, which stays with women for 3 decades from the starting stage of the menstrual cycle, and the changes that occur in women during that time. From this study, one can learn about finding solutions to diseases that occur during the menstrual cycle through exercise.

Veena S. Bhatt (2018): In the book "Rutuchakra Suttamutta" (Around the Menstrual Cycle), she has explained the problems from the beginning to the end of menstruation through conversations with patients who come to her, detailing what the problems are like and what the solutions are. It can be observed that deaths occur due to not receiving proper treatment for fluctuations during the menstrual cycle. Due to this, women and children suffer

mentally; the information in this book is helpful to come out of this.

Samreen Latif (2022): "Junk Food Consumption in Relation to Menstrual Abnormalities Among Adolescent Girls: A Comparative Cross-Sectional Study." In this study, menstrual abnormalities in adolescent girls due to junk food consumption were evaluated. Data was collected through a cross-sectional method among 200 girls based on a questionnaire. In that, 40% of girls had an irregular menstrual cycle, and 56% of girls were suffering from dysmenorrhea. The main point learned from this study is that junk food consumption is having a negative impact on menstruation.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Method

This study has adopted a qualitative content analysis method to analyze the influence of junk food consumption on the menstrual cycle of women and how it is being reflected in public awareness and social media. In this study, selected social media posts, educational brochures or awareness campaigns, and doctor interviews are selected to analyze how subjects related to junk food and the menstrual cycle are presented.

3.2. Sampling Method

Using a purposive sampling model for this study, only information sources from doctors, fitness experts, and nutritionists required for content analysis have been selected. Certain selected posts, videos, blogs, and vlogs published on social media regarding the impact of junk food consumption on the menstrual cycle of women have been selected for analysis. The purpose of the sample is to understand how, due to the influence of social media, women are turning towards nutritious food as variations are occurring in the menstrual cycle specifically due to junk food consumption. It aims to understand how social media plays a role in this, creates awareness of such subjects, and acts as a medium that inspires lifestyle changes while conducting positive discussions about health.

3.3. Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis involves a close examination of selected content published on social media regarding hormonal variation caused by junk food consumption. Captions and writings are studied by taking into account posts of selected nutritionists, health-related reels, and blogs. Also, it has been analyzed how food awareness videos appearing on social media have impacted the dietary habits of women.

3.4. Content Analysis

In recent days, social media has been a major platform for health and food-related awareness, containing most of the content explaining hormonal variation and menstrual troubles caused by junk food consumption. Therefore, I have selected the content analysis method for this research. This study examines how hormonal variation, menstrual cycle problems, the impact of food habits, and doctors' advice are presented using health blogs, videos, and other subjects published on social media.

The purpose of the study is to understand how these subjects are helpful in creating awareness among young women, bringing about lifestyle changes, and inspiring the selection of healthy food.

Through this analysis, one can know how social media is functioning as a medium connecting subjects related to women's daily lives.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Impact of Junk Food Consumption on the Hormones of Girls

Hormones function normally in the bodies of girls. As children grow, they step-by-step become dependent on outside food. By consuming junk food, fast food, bread, potato, and bakery snacks excessively, female hormones such as estrogen and progesterone in the body perform their functions rapidly; due to this, girls are reaching menarche early, and the menstrual cycle that happens once every month can be seen happening twice. As known through a 2020 study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research, it has been found that junk food consumption is rapidly increasing the level of a hormone called leptin (fat cells). According to the UNICEF (2023) report, the average age of first menarche in India is now 11.5 years, which has decreased from 12.5 years in the previous decade. Medical experts have opined that changes in dietary habits are the reason for all this. The root cause for all this is the change in dietary habits. Due to the imbalance of female hormones, PCOD (Polycystic Ovarian Disease) problems are seen in women. Because ovulation does not occur according to time, fluctuations occur in the menstrual cycle, and this has become the cause for infertility in 50% of women (Dr. Veena S. Bhatt, 2018, page 39). If proper treatment is not taken at the right time, problems such as diabetes, breast cancer, uterine cancer, and stones in the kidneys occur.

4.2. Social Media Awareness for Menstrual Hormone Balance

Social media today can also be called a friend of people of all ages, because we spend most of our time using social media. But it would not be wrong to say that these media have taken a prominent place in providing information about health in the present times. In Brooke Auxier's (2021) study paper "Social Media Use in 2021," it was found that 87.6% of people watch YouTube. Because long-duration videos are available to be posted on YouTube, it is helpful for viewers to get complete information in one medium. Apart from this, since short-duration reels are seen in other media, the amount of information availability there is low.

4.3. Influence of Social Media to come out of Hormonal Imbalance

Consumption of a good type of food is very important to keep various hormonal changes occurring in the body under control. Elders previously consumed nutrient-rich food when there was no adulteration, but today it is being known through media reports that adulteration is occurring in every food item. In such a situation, it is necessary to consume the best among the available food. Doctors, health experts, fitness vloggers, and even common housewives are sharing the methods they follow on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to follow these systematically and provide awareness about them; thus, they are providing inspiration to viewers to consume good and nutritious food. Apart from this, subjects under discussion like the menstrual cycle, menstrual cycle problems, along with other diseases resulting from this, and the dietary habits and exercises to be followed to prevent them are being provided, and the number of people following them today has increased.

5. Conclusion

Since social media is used by people of all age groups today, it can be observed that it is having both positive and negative impacts on their usage. Along with this, regarding this study, social media is a platform close to common people because answers are found on social media even before approaching experts to come out of the problems experienced by children and women due to junk food consumption. Through such platforms, people are learning to change their dietary habits and what kind of nutritious food we need today.

5.1. Results of the Study

1. It is learned to what extent junk food consumption is having an ill effect on health today.
2. Information about diseases resulting from changes in the body due to junk food consumption is learned.
3. It is found that hormonal variation is a major reason for adolescent girls to reach menarche early.
4. Information is obtained regarding what problems have to be faced due to the impact of dietary habits on the menstrual cycle.
5. Social media is a major platform, and it is conducive to making changes in food style through the education available on them.

5.2. Suggestions

1. Parents should keep children away from the consumption of processed and junk foods.
2. Nutrient-rich and good quality food should be consumed.
3. Body weight should be maintained equally from children to adults.
4. Exercise has become inevitable to resolve problems caused by junk food consumption.
5. It is better to see that the menarche of girls does not happen early; that is, it is the duty of parents to properly follow the children's lifestyle starting from their dietary habits.

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Thomas More's Utopia: An Ingenious Architectural Design for Social Order and a Virtual Legislative Laboratory for Political Experimentation

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Abstract

Utopia is analysed as a rhetorical work characteristic of humanism that demands an active and interpretative reading. Its meaning is constructed through paradoxes that challenge conventional wisdom, in line with Erasmus of Rotterdam's proposal in a letter addressed to Ulrich von Hutten, and depends on both the historical context and the author's biographical details for a proper understanding. Finally, a brief section will be included linking utopia, science fiction and artificial intelligence as tools for reflecting on social organisation. From this perspective, Utopia can be understood as a theoretical framework that remains relevant today, whilst science fiction and artificial intelligence appear as contemporary manifestations of that same utopian impulse.

Utopia

paradox

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Abstract

Utopia is analysed as a rhetorical work characteristic of humanism that demands an active and interpretative reading. Its meaning is constructed through paradoxes that challenge conventional wisdom, in line with Erasmus of Rotterdam's proposal in a letter addressed to Ulrich von Hutten, and depends on both the historical context and the author's biographical details for a proper understanding. Finally, a brief section will be included linking utopia, science fiction and artificial intelligence as tools for reflecting on social organisation. From this perspective, Utopia can be understood as a theoretical framework that remains relevant today, whilst science fiction and artificial intelligence appear as contemporary manifestations of that same utopian impulse.

Keywords: *Utopia, paradox, Erasmus's letter, legislative laboratory, virtuality*

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to set out the main interpretative keys to Utopia, a work in which the reader must draw upon their "ingenium" to unravelling the profound meaning that More sought to convey. The author constructs his text as a rhetorical exercise, characteristic of Renaissance humanism, in which intellectual production is not limited to the narration of a story, but is conceived as a complex discursive practice. This approach follows the rhetorical principles proposed by Erasmus of Rotterdam in a letter sent to Ulrich von Hutten, in which a portrait of More and the purpose of his Utopia is drawn. In this sense, the work is characterised by the formulation of argumentative positions which, on numerous occasions, are deliberately paradoxical or contrary to common opinion, demanding of the reader an active interpretation based on critical acuity, analytical subtlety and mastery of linguistic resources. This paradoxical dimension is linked to the humanist tradition of irony, through which dominant political, social and moral models are questioned by means of their discursive inversion, thereby revealing their internal tensions and limitations.

Likewise, it is essential to consider both the author's biographical background and the historical and intellectual context in which Utopia is situated, as these elements constitute the structural foundations that shape the organisation of the text and its ultimate meaning. It is for this reason that a selection of texts from the aforementioned work will be analysed, in which these principles will be put into practice. More's Utopia is not merely a description of an ideal society; it also contains an implicit critique of simplistic political discourses. In this sense, it can be read today as a warning against forms of populism or demagoguery, even though those terms

did not exist as we understand them now. In this way, it dismantles the idea that there is a simple and perfect political solution.

Finally, a final section will be devoted to the projection of utopian thought into the contemporary context. From this perspective, science fiction and artificial intelligence represent updated forms of a utopian impulse, revealing that any attempt to design more efficient or perfect societies through closed models, whether philosophical or technological, inevitably involves a tension between order and freedom.

2. Biographical details and historical context regarding Thomas More

More was the second child, and the eldest son, of John More, a knight who would later become a judge of the King's Court, and of Agnes, daughter of Thomas Graunger. He was born on 7 February 1478 in Milk Street, in the City of London, and died in 1535.¹

Although More's family did not belong to the high nobility, they were respectable and of good standing. Both his father and his grandfather held honourable positions at Lincoln's Inn, first as stewards and later as members of the institution. His father had a distinguished judicial career; he was appointed a judge in 1503 and became a member of the Court of Common Pleas in 1518, then of the King's Bench in 1520, and died in 1530. More's connection with Lincoln's Inn was, therefore, hereditary. He himself became a member and, having never attained the rank of sergeant, never left the institution. This explains the attachment he always showed

¹The foreword to J.H. Lupton's edition presents a comprehensive and rigorous study of More's life. Briefly, I note that this volume was published in Oxford in 1895 and is based on the Latin edition of 1518 and Ralph Robynson's first English translation of 1551, with Lupton's translations, introductions and notes. (Lupton, 1895, pp. xvii–xxviii)

towards it. In fact, he used to joke with his family that his habit of taking part in the Inn's communal meals marked the beginning of his financial ruin. These experiences of communal living probably influenced his work *Utopia*, particularly the idea of sharing meals in community.

As for his education, it is believed that the young More attended St Anthony's School, linked to a hospital on Threadneedle Street. This institution, founded in the time of Henry III and subsequently expanded, was intended to prepare students for Eton and, later, for the University of Oxford. There he acquired a solid grounding in Latin.

It is unclear whether he ever studied at Eton, as his schooling was interrupted when he entered the service of Cardinal Morton. This change proved beneficial, as it allowed him to be trained in manners and values under the guidance of one of the most influential figures of his time.

Cardinal Morton continued More's education by sending him to the University of Oxford. However, it is not known for certain which college he attended or whether he remained long enough to obtain a degree. His father, concerned that his son's interest in literature might divert him from the law, provided him with very limited financial support.

Despite this, More made the most of his time at university. He perfected his command of Latin, particularly in writing, and began to take an interest in the then-novel study of Greek. To this end, he had the support of distinguished teachers such as William Grocyn (c. 1446/1519) and Thomas Linacre (c. 1460/1524), whose teachings had a significant influence on his education. He himself mentions having attended lectures on Aristotle's works in Greek, and he was also well acquainted with Plato's Republic.

His study of Greek had a profound impact on his intellectual life, enabling him to join the humanist circle of the Renaissance, alongside figures such as Erasmus and Colet.² This influence is clearly reflected in his work *Utopia*, where many names and concepts have Greek origins.

After leaving Oxford, More entered New Inn, an institution linked to Lincoln's Inn, where he continued his legal training. There he honed his intellectual abilities before being officially admitted, at the age of just eighteen, to Lincoln's Inn in 1496. Although his time at this institution passed without any notable documented events, it was fundamental to consolidating his career in law.

By the end of the 15th century, Europe was undergoing a period of profound change. Trade was beginning to be freed from old restrictions, as evidenced by the trade treaty of 1496, and the following year John Cabot (1450/1498) set sail from Bristol and reached Newfoundland.³ These events, together with the discovery of the New World, broadened the horizons of Christendom and aroused great intellectual interest.⁴

²(Glenn, 1941, p. 192).

³In 1497, John Cabot undertook the first modern European expedition to reach and chart the east coast of North America, probably Newfoundland (Canada), under the flag of Henry VII of England. (Jones & Condon, 2016, pp. 12).

⁴Towards the end of the 15th century, Amerigo Vespucci was sent to Seville to manage the Medici family's business affairs, becoming part of the city's dynamic commercial milieu—the principal economic centre of Castile under the reign of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, at the height of the conquest of Granada. There he worked with the merchant Giannotto Berardi, who was involved in preparing Christopher Columbus's voyages, thus facilitating contact between the two men. Following Berardi's death in 1495, Vespucci assumed greater responsibilities in the management of expeditions. Between January and February 1496, he was in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, where he supervised the dispatch of a fleet carrying provisions for Columbus to the newly discovered Indies. These events marked a turning point in his career, as they linked him directly to Atlantic voyages. Over time, Vespucci became a renowned cosmographer, and his accounts of exploring the New World, whether entirely true or not, were widely circulated. Such was their impact that, a decade later, European cartographers decided to name the new continent after him: America.

In this context, it is easy to imagine the enthusiasm with which the young More, then a law student, followed these developments. Furthermore, he showed an interest in travel accounts, such as those of Amerigo Vespucci; this is confirmed in his *Utopia*, as reference is made to him. His words continue as follows: "Orbis terrarum contemplandi studio Americo Vespucio se adiunxit, atque in tribus posterioribus illarum quatuor nauigationum quae passim iam leguntur, perpetuus eius comes fuit, nisi quod in ultima cum eo non rediit".⁵

After completing his education, More began practising as a lawyer,⁶ yet he went through a period of uncertainty about his future. Although his father wished him to pursue a legal career, he felt drawn to the religious life. For about four years he lived near the Charterhouse in London, leading a life similar to that of a monk, and even considered becoming a priest.

In the end, he decided against pursuing that path; influenced by the advice of men such as John Colet (1467/1519) and⁷, and guided by his own judgement, he chose a secular life. In 1505, he married Jane Colt, with whom he had four children: Margaret, Elizabeth, Cicely and John.

Settled in London, the scholar led a happy family life and enjoyed a rising professional career. As a lawyer, he excelled particularly in commercial matters, and in 1504, aged just twenty-six, he was elected to Parliament.⁸ There he showed great courage in opposing unjust measures promoted by King Henry VII's ministers, which exposed him to certain risks. King Henry VII showed his displeasure with More by imprisoning his father in the Tower of London until he paid a fine. Furthermore, it is believed that More's journey to Leuven and Paris in 1508 was a prudent way of temporarily stepping back from political life.

Despite these setbacks, our humanist continued to find happiness centred on his family life. In 1505, the year of his marriage, he welcomed Erasmus of Rotterdam into his home. Their collaboration produced joint literary works, such as epigrams and translations from Greek into Latin of Lucian's dialogues. Whilst for Erasmus this may have been a purely literary pursuit, More chose these texts with a deeper purpose.⁹

With the accession of Henry VIII to the throne in 1509, More saw the beginning of a new era full of hope. As Henry VIII's secretary and personal adviser, More gradually gained increasing power and influence at court, evolving from a mere assistant into a key figure in the administration of the kingdom. Among his responsibilities, he was tasked with receiving foreign diplomats, which demonstrates his involvement in foreign policy and his role as the monarch's representative in negotiations.

Furthermore, as secretary and trusted adviser to Henry VIII, More gained increasing influence at court. He welcomed foreign diplomats, drafted official state documents, and attended the Court of the Star Chamber thanks to his renowned legal expertise. At

(Fernández-Armesto, 2006, pp.33–40; Robles Macías, 2015, pp. 1, 713; Moreno Jeria, 2018, pp.55–56).

⁵(Morus, 1548, p. 30).

⁶(Glenn, 1941, p. 187).

⁷John Colet was the only surviving son of Henry Colet, a wealthy London merchant who served twice as Lord Mayor of London. He studied at Cambridge and in 1497 began his ecclesiastical career, being ordained a deacon and a priest. He later settled in Oxford, where he distinguished himself through his innovative lectures on biblical exegesis of St Paul's epistles, introducing a direct analysis of the text and its historical context, a rare approach at the time. There he formed a close friendship with Erasmus of Rotterdam, who wrote his biography. In 1504 he was appointed deacon of London Cathedral, where he founded St Paul's School and sought to promote reforms, albeit with limited success. (Dimock, 1900, p. 20; Arnold, 2003, pp.204–209).

⁸(Hermida del Llano, 2017, p. 261).

⁹The friendship between Erasmus and More has been extensively studied. (Baker-Smith, 2010, pp. 7–25).

the same time, he was entrusted with judging "poor men's cases" in the lower court, where he earned a reputation for fairness and accessibility, bringing a clear social dimension to his duties. In short, More evolved from a royal adviser into a key figure within the government, combining diplomatic, legal, and administrative responsibilities while also contributing to the delivery of justice for the most vulnerable members of society.¹⁰ However, in 1510 he suffered a severe personal blow: the death of his wife, Jane. Although he remarried that same year to Alice Myddelton, partly out of the need to care for his children and fulfil his responsibilities, this loss left a deep mark on his life.

During those years, the scholar continued to advance his career. His new wife also became part of the family, and he took charge of her intellectual education, as he had done before.¹¹ More was appointed a member of the council of his bar college and, in 1511, was commissioned to teach there.¹² Despite this intense working life, he managed to find time to devote himself to writing. During those years, he translated the History of Richard III, as it is thought that Cardinal Morton wrote the aforementioned work in Latin. The publication of this treatise in English marked the starting point for him being regarded as one of the first great authors of prose in the English language.

Furthermore, in 1508 he had joined the Guild of Merchants, one of the city's most important institutions. This experience gave him an intimate insight into the communal life of the guilds, which likely influenced some of the social ideas he would later develop in Utopia.

In this environment, he met up with his friend Colet, then Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. Together they frequently discussed educational projects, such as the founding of St Paul's School, an innovative institution where Greek was taught publicly. This school represented one of the finest examples of Renaissance humanism in England. St Paul's School was the first in this country to provide public instruction in Greek and embodied, in its finest form, the ideals of Humanism. Erasmus produced teaching manuals for this institution, and More defended it staunchly when its founder was the target of criticism and defamation. Around 1510, William Lily (1468/1522)¹³ began teaching in the shadow of the cathedral, whilst Erasmus was drafting his Praise of Folly under More's roof.

More's life was, in the fullest sense, that of a committed citizen. His prestige as a jurist and his membership of the Mercers' Company marked him out as the most suitable person to defend the legal rights and privileges of his fellow citizens.

Thus, when tensions between London merchants and foreign merchants established in the city intensified in 1514, the creation of a commission to resolve them was proposed, and there was a strong desire for More to be part of it. He was sent as an ambassador to intervene in matters of great importance between English merchants and those of the Hanseatic League.

However, what was at stake went far beyond a mere local rivalry. The conflict affected all English wool exporters, as wool formed the basis of the national trade at that time. As early as the 13th century, it was said that everyone wore English wool made in Flanders, which gives an idea of the economic significance of this activity.

In the past, Henry III of England had granted the merchants of the Hanseatic League a headquarters or trading post in London, and his successors extended these privileges against a backdrop of the shifting and unstable directions of English mercantile policy.

The trade balance between England and Flanders was disrupted following the annulment of the marriage between Charles V and Henry VIII's sister, which led England to ban the export of wool. The measure harmed both countries, so in 1515 an embassy was sent to the Netherlands to reestablish trade, in which More participated alongside Cuthbert Tunstall.¹⁴ The mission was successful and, on his return to London, work began on his Utopia.¹⁵ It was during his stay in the Netherlands in 1515 that More drafted the Second Book of his Utopia (the first he had composed).

The First Book, conceived as an introduction, was written in the spring or summer of 1516, whilst Cardinal Thomas Wolsey was attempting to entice its author into direct service at court.¹⁶

To conclude, it is worth mentioning some significant facts; in 1516, More led an extraordinarily busy life, taking on multiple responsibilities of great importance. He was a prestigious practising lawyer, recognised for his competence and professional reputation. Furthermore, he held the office of one of the two deputy sheriffs of London, a key position in the city's judicial administration. Added to this was his work as a judge in the Sheriff's Court, where he administered justice in legal matters, and his role as an arbitrator in the Court of Chancery, intervening in the resolution of disputes of a more complex and equitable nature.¹⁷ The laws, in defence of farmers, proposed by Parliament¹⁸ in 1516 are reflected in Utopia.¹⁹

On 1 May 1517, the Privy Council asked More to intervene to calm an angry mob that had attacked the homes of foreign merchants. For a moment, in the midst of this difficult situation, it seemed he might succeed in restraining the crowd. However, the passions of the people proved too intense.

In 1518, or perhaps even earlier, More was appointed Master of Petitions and became a member of the Privy Council. In 1520 he accompanied the king to the Field of the Cloth of Gold,²⁰ where he had the opportunity to discuss some of the ideas present in his work. The following year, in 1521, he was knighted and appointed Sub-Treasurer.

In 1523 he moved to his permanent residence in Chelsea,²¹ where he led an almost utopian life, as described by Erasmus. That same year he was elected Speaker of the House of Commons. On 29 October 1529 he was appointed Lord Chancellor,²² a post he held until his resignation on 6 May 1532. When Henry VIII broke with the Church of Rome and proclaimed himself head of the Church in England, More resigned from his post as Chancellor so as not to be involved in decisions contrary to his faith. Subsequently, he refused to swear allegiance to the legitimacy of the king's new marriage and his religious authority, for which he was imprisoned.

In prison, he remained calm and true to his principles, resisting all pressure, even from his own family. After more than a year in prison, he was tried and sentenced to death for treason, for failing to recognise the king as head of the Church. Before his death, he reaffirmed his Catholic faith and his obedience to the Pope.

He was executed on 6 July 1535 and his death caused a great stir; he was regarded as a martyr for his defence of conscience and truth.

¹⁴(Hill, 2024, pp.52–60).

¹⁵(Morus, 1548, pp.27–28).

¹⁶(Lupton, 1895, p. xxvii).

¹⁷(More, 2012, p. 17).

¹⁸(Finberg, 1967, pp.33–36, 7075; Elton, 1955, pp.71–73).

¹⁹(Lupton, 1895, p. xxxvi).

²⁰The Field of the Cloth of Gold was a lavish diplomatic summit held from 7 to 24 June 1520 between Henry VII of England and Francis I of France near Guines, in northern France. It sought to consolidate the Anglo-French alliance and display the power of both monarchs during the period of rivalry with Emperor Charles V.

²¹(Reynolds, 1968, p. 54).

²²(Glenn, 1941, p. 190).

¹⁰(Guy, 1976, pp.491–492).

¹¹(Lupton, 1895, p. xxv).

¹²The preface to J.H. Lupton's edition presents a comprehensive and rigorous study of More's biography. (Lupton 1895, pp. xvii–xxviii).

¹³(Carlson, 1992, pp.158–159).

Thomas More left behind a legacy of a life guided by integrity, faith and fidelity to his principles, even in the face of death.²³

3. Contributions from the paratexts of the 1805 edition of *Utopia*, printed in Madrid, and the 1895 edition, published in Westminster

3.1. The 1805 Madrid edition

3.1.1. Contributions by Gerónimo Antonio De Medinilla (c. 1590/16th century)

In 1805, the translation by Gerónimo Antonio De Medinilla y Porres appeared in Madrid. In the preface to his edition, this author maintains that, among the thinkers who imagined ideal republics,

More, Lord Chancellor of England, stood out, whose steadfastness in faith and prudence made his memory admirable. He further asserts that More understood that it is not the same to describe republics as they are as it is to describe them as they ought to be, and that it is not enough for the ruler to be just if he fails to ensure that his subjects are just as well.

Likewise, Medinilla explains that, for this reason, More avoided directly criticising his society and preferred to present an ideal model of human behaviour, proposing laws and institutions superior to those of civilisations such as Sparta, Athens or Rome. He points out that his proposal is based on virtue, the elimination of vice and the abolition of private property, with the aim of preventing ambition and ensuring justice and equality.

Finally, Medinilla considers that the style of his work is profound and elaborate, comparable to that of historians such as Livy and Tacitus, as he does not merely praise, but analyses human passions. He adds that this admiration led him to disseminate the work, seeking to convey the spirit rather than the original words, with the intention of making this thought accessible to a wide audience and trusting that the effort would be appreciated.²⁴

3.1.2. Paratext by Francisco Gómez de Quevedo Villegas y Santibáñez Cevallos (1580–1645) in the 1802 edition

In the section of the aforementioned 1805 edition, entitled Notice, Judgement and Recommendation of *Utopia*, Francisco de Quevedo offers an assessment of the work and its author. He presents Thomas More as a man of great learning, virtue and steadfastness, whose exemplary life culminated in a martyrdom that confirmed his moral integrity.

Quevedo²⁵ highlights that *Utopia*, whose name means “a place that does not exist”, was written in a political context that forced criticism to be veiled. Thus, More created a fictional island to denounce the abuses of the rulers of his time and propose an alternative model of social organisation. According to Quevedo, the text affirms what ought to be done, even if no one practises it, for it is criticising everyone. As we shall see, this is not entirely true of More’s intention in his work; in reality, it must be understood as a critical exercise in distancing that employs paradox as an instrument of political and moral reflection. We must not forget that the English scholar was a member of Parliament and carried out legislative functions that appear as proposals in *Utopia*.

Furthermore, Quevedo highlights the recognition More received from figures such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, and emphasises the depth of his work: although brief, it contains teachings that could guide both rulers and citizens. Thus, he concludes that *Utopia* is not merely a literary work, but also a valuable political and moral

treatise. As we shall see in the section devoted to the portrait of More, drawn by Erasmus in a letter addressed to Ulrich von Hutten, Quevedo was not mistaken in his consideration of the etymology of *Utopia*: “oi-” (a Greek prefix meaning “not”) and “τόπος” (“place”), when combined, convey the meaning of “a place that does not exist” or “nowhere”. Following Erasmus, *Utopia* arises from a literary creation that puts the reader’s ingenuity to the test.

3.2. The 1895 edition, published in Westminster

In the 1895 edition, edited by Edward Arber, which features the English translation by Ralph Robinson (1520/1577), the introduction informs us about the publication process of the work in question.²⁶ The second book of *Utopia* was probably produced in Antwerp around November 1515 and the first in London in early 1516. The work was printed by Theodore Martin in Leuven, under the editorship of Erasmus, Petrus Aegidius (Pieter Gillis), John Paludanus and other friends of More in Flanders, towards the end of 1516. More revised it afterwards and, via Erasmus, it was sent to

Johannes Froben in Basel for printing.²⁷ This more sumptuous edition, considered the second in terms of authorship and likely containing the standard text, is dated November 1518. Meanwhile, however, a friend of Erasmus, the Englishman Thomas Lupset, produced a reprint of the first edition in Paris, printed by Gilles de Gourmont before March 1518, which is therefore, in chronological order, the second edition, with the Basel edition being the third and a Viennese edition in 1519 the fourth in order of appearance. All four were written in Latin, which was then the common and familiar language of scholars.²⁸

By a strange twist of fate, not a single copy of this work, in any language, was printed in England during More’s lifetime, nor before these English versions by Ralph Robinson. However, despite its original Latin form, the work is essentially English and will always rank among the treasures of English literature.²⁹ The characters’ first meeting takes place at the entrance to Antwerp Cathedral, where Raphael Hythloday, Petrus Aegidius (Pieter Gilles) and More make their way to the garden of the latter’s house, a peaceful spot that lends itself to conversation. There, seated on a grass-covered bench and in the company of John Clement,³⁰ they spend the entire day listening to Hythloday’s account.

The narrative is organised into two parts: before lunch, the contents of the first book are presented, focusing on more critical and realistic issues; afterwards, between lunch and dinner, the second book unfolds, describing the ideal society of *Utopia*. In this way, More constructs his work as a plausible dialogue, lending an air of reality to a largely imaginary tale.³¹ *Utopia* deserves to be studied from multiple perspectives, not only for the insight it offers into

²⁶(Morus, 1895, pp. xxi).

²⁷In the preface to the 1895 edition, published in Oxford, Lupton is more explicit regarding the first edition of *Utopia*, in Latin, which was printed by Thierry Martin in Leuven in late 1516. The printing process appears to have been very swift. On 12 November, Gerhard of Nijmegen wrote to Erasmus to inform him that Martin would undertake the task. A week later, we learn that the work is in the printer’s hands. By 24 February 1516/17, the book is already on the market; indeed, in a letter to Cope, Erasmus asks him to send him a copy. (Lupton, 1895, p. lxiv)

²⁸Lupton discusses the editions of *Utopia* in depth in his preface. (Lupton, 1895, pp. lxiv–lxvi).

²⁹(More, 1895, p. 3).

³⁰John Clement was, in fact, initially a servant of More and accompanied him on his diplomatic mission to the Netherlands in 1515. However, his subsequent career shows a remarkable intellectual and social rise. Under More’s influence, he received a solid humanist education: he learnt Latin and went on to master Greek to the point of teaching the language at Oxford. Over time, he established himself as a highly respected physician, even rising to the presidency of the College of Physicians. His close relationship with More’s family was further strengthened when he married his adopted daughter. (More, 2012, p. 18).

³¹(Lupton, 1895, pp. xlii–liii).

²³(More, 1805, pp. 167–186).

²⁴(More, 1805, fol. A2rA3v).

²⁵(Morus, 1805, folios A4rA6r).

the character, principles and cheerful wit of its author, but also for the solutions it proposes to social problems such as scarcity, overpopulation and the prevention of famines. There is, moreover, a fundamental difference in the purpose of the works of Plato and More, in some ways akin. In *The Republic*, Plato, through Socrates, endeavours to thoroughly investigate the true nature of justice and injustice. First he analyses their character within cities, and subsequently applies that same inquiry to the individual, seeking in the small a reflection of the great. More, on the other hand, through the voice of Hythloday, views the world as a sort of conspiracy of the rich, who seek their own benefit under the guise of the common good. Whilst Plato aspires to precisely define an abstract virtue, our humanist seeks to conceive a social system in which the poor do not perish from want nor the rich indulge in idleness sheltered by their wealth. It is, in short, a community in which everyone participates equally and in which property belongs not to individuals, but to the community itself.³²

4. Portrait of Thomas More and Keys to understanding Utopia in a letter from Erasmus to Ulrich von Hutten

Erasmus of Rotterdam describes our English scholar in a letter addressed to Ulrich von Hutten,³³ written in Antwerp in 1519. The letter highlights More's "ingenium"³⁴ and as outstanding intellectual qualities that inspire admiration within the humanist circle. The author explains that More's writings, due to their erudition and acuity, foster a strong affinity among those who read them, creating a network of mutual recognition within the intellectual community. In this context, Ulrich von Hutten is mentioned as the recipient of this assessment, noting that admiration for More's talent is shared by many and that there is also a reciprocity between the two authors through their works.

On the other hand, the difficulty of fully describing More is emphasised; his intellectual greatness places him on a par with classical figures such as Alexander the Great or Achilles, but his excellence lies in the realm of wit and virtue, not in military heroism.

Quod Thomae Mori ingenium sie deamas ac pene dixerim deperis, nimirum scriptis illius inflammatus, quibus, ut vere scribis, nihil esse potest neque doctius neque festivius, istuc, crede mihi, clarissime Huttene, tibi eum multis commune est, cum More mutuam etiam: nam is vicissim adeo scriptorum tuorum genio delectatur ut ipse tibi propemodum inuideam. Haec videlicet est illa Platonis omnium maxime amabilis sapientia, quae longe flagrantiores amores excitat inter mortales quam vllae quamlibet admirabiles corporum formae. Non cernitur illa quidem oculis corporeis, sed et animo sui sunt oculi; ut hic quoque verum comperiatur illud Graecorum, ἐκ τοῦ ὄψιν γίνεται ἀνθρώποις τὸ ἐρῶν. Per hos fit aliquoties ut ardentissima charitate conglutinentur inter quos nec colloquium nec mutuus conspectus intercessit. Et quemadmodum vulgo fit ut incertis de causis alia forma alios rapiat, ita videtur et ingeniorum esse tacita quaedam cognatio, quae facit vt certis ingeniis impense delectemur, caeteris non item. Caeterum quod a me flagitas, ut tibi totum Morum velut in tabula depingam, utinam tam absolute praestare queam quam tu vehementer eupis! Nam mihi quoque non iniucundum fuerit interim in amici multo omnium suauissimi contemplatione

versari. Sed primum ὅν παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐόντι omnes Mori dotes perspexisse. Deinde haud scio an ille laturus sit a quolibet artifice depingi sese. Nec enim arbitror leuioris esse operae Morum effingere quam Alexandrum magnum aut Achillem, nec illi quam hic noster immortalitate digniores erant.³⁵

In the following passage, More is presented as someone inclined from a very early age towards humanistic culture and classical learning. From the outset, it is stated that he had 'absorbed the fine arts from his earliest years' ("bonas literas a primis statim annis hauserat"),³⁶ thus emphasising an early education and a natural inclination towards humanistic studies.

This vocation becomes clear when he explains that he devoted himself to the study of Greek literature and philosophy ("ad Graecas literas atque philosophiae studium sese applicuit"),³⁷ that is to say, he directed his intellectual life towards disciplines characteristic of the Renaissance humanist ideal. However, this decision caused a serious family conflict, as he made it without his father's support ("adeo non opitulante patre"),³⁸ who even deprived him of all financial support ("omni subsidio destitueret").³⁹ The reason for this opposition was that More appeared to be turning away from his father's studies ("quod a patriis studiis deseiscere videretur"),⁴⁰ that is to say, he was abandoning the family tradition linked to law. His father, a prestigious jurist, saw this profession as the best path to honour and social recognition, for those who attained authority in it are considered great and famous ("habentur magni clarique").⁴¹ Erasmus thus contrasts the social prestige of law with the true arts ("verae litterae"),⁴² noting further that that profession was utterly alien ("alienissima")⁴³ to authentic humanistic learning.

Erasmus highlights that More also came to excel in the legal sphere. He states that litigants consulted no one more willingly ("neque consulerent quemquam libentius litigatores"),⁴⁴ and adds that no one reaped greater financial rewards than he did. All this was due to the such great strength and swiftness of wit ("tanta vis ac celeritas ingenii"),⁴⁵ an expression with which Erasmus highlights More's extraordinary intelligence. In this way, he constructs the image of a humanist who was brilliant by nature, capable of succeeding even in a discipline that did not fully correspond to his true intellectual vocation.

Bonas literas a primis statim annis hauserat. Iuvenis ad Graecas literas atque philosophiae studium sese applicuit adeo non opitulante patre, viro alioqui prudenti proboque, ut ea conantem omni subsidio destitueret; ac pene pro abdicato haberetur, quod a patriis studiis deseiscere videretur: nam is Britanniarum legum peritiam proficitur. Quae professio ut est a veris literis alienissima, ita apud Britannos eum primis habentur magni elarique, qui in hoc genere pararunt auctoritatem. Nec [temere] apud illos alia via ad rem ae gloriam parandam magis idonea; siquidem plerumque nobilitatem illius insulae peperit hoe studiorum genus. In eo negant quenquam absolui posse nisi plurimos annos insudarit. Ab hoc igitur cum non iniuria abhorreret adolescentis ingenium melioribus rebus natum, tamen post degustatas scholasticas disciplinas sie in hoe versatus est ut neque consulerent quemquam libentius litigatores, neque⁴⁶

³²(More, 1895, pp. 35).

³³Mishtooni Bose analyses Hutten's life through the lens of activism. He argues that Hutten was not merely a writer, but the first example of a modern intellectual who sought to live (and die) for an active political cause. (Bose, 2020, pp.39–68).

³⁴Travis Curtright analyses the meaning and English translation of the Latin term 'ingenium' in the introductory letters to the 1518 edition of *Utopia*. (Curtright, 2017, pp. 118).

³⁵(Erasmus, 1922, p. 13).

³⁶(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

³⁷(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

³⁸(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

³⁹(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

⁴⁰(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

⁴¹(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

⁴²(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

⁴³(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

⁴⁴(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

⁴⁵(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

⁴⁶(Erasmus, 1922, p. 17).

In this context of intellectual effervescence, it may help to explain the decision to deliver lectures on St Augustine's *The City of God* in the church of San Lorenzo. Yet this choice is surprising for a law student, as it reflects his early preoccupation with the idea of an ideal society, which he would later develop in his work *Utopia*. At this point, it is worth noting that the influence of Plato and his work *The Republic* constitutes one of the most evident sources of *Utopia*; nevertheless, the influence of Augustine of Hippo and *The City of God* can also be discerned, introducing a moral and theological dimension into More's political thought.⁴⁷

In this way, the English humanist's work not only reworks the political ideal rooted in Plato,⁴⁸ but also complements it with a Christian vision inherited from Saint Augustine, in which order, discipline and subordination to the common good take on a deeper meaning within the community.⁴⁹ On returning to the letter, it is clear that the English scholar's concerns regarding religious life were evident, which set him apart from many others who are ordained as priests without proper preparation or without having tested their own vocation. More, on the other hand, comes across as a prudent man, aware of the gravity of such a decision and the demands it entails. However, the only real obstacle to his becoming a priest is his desire to marry. It is not a lack of religious devotion or discipline, but a choice of a different way of life. For this reason, he decides not to enter the priesthood and to opt for a lay life, accepting marriage.

Overall, the passage presents More as an exceptional figure, intellectually capable of teaching theology, spiritually disciplined as a future clergyman, but who ultimately chooses marriage over the priesthood, not out of weakness, but out of consistency with his own way of life.

Quin et evoluendis orthodoxorum voluminibus non segnem operam impendit. Augustini libros *De Ciuitate Dei* publice professus est adhuc pene adolescens auditorio frequenti; nec puduit nec poenituit sacerdotes ac senes a iuvene prophano sacra discere. Interim et ad pietatis studium totum animum appulit, vigiliis, ieiuniis, precationibus aliisque consimilibus progymnasmatibus sacerdotium meditant. Qua quidem in re non paulo plus ille sapiebat quam plerique isti qui temere ad tam arduam professionem ingerunt sese, nullo prius sui periculo facto. Neque quiequam obstat quo minus sese huic vitae generi addiceret, nisi quod uxoris desyderium non posset excutere. Maluit igitur maritus esse castus quam sacerdos impurus.⁵⁰

Subsequently, the author describes in considerable detail More's position at the court of Henry VIII and constructs a very concrete picture of his relationship with power. Firstly, it is clearly stated that More did not enter the court out of ambition or his own desire, but at the insistence of the monarch, who went so far as to "drag

him to his court" ("in aulam suam pertraheret").⁵¹ The text even highlights the paradox: "no one ever sought admission to the court with such vehemence as he sought to avoid it" ("Nullus unquam vehementius ambiit in aulam admitti quam hic studuit effugere").⁵² This reinforces the idea that his rise to power did not stem from ambition, but from external pressure from the king, as the monarch considered him an indispensable figure in his political circle.

The letter also details his specific duties as an advisor and judge in difficult matters. However, despite being an important figure in government affairs, he rejects the accumulation of honours or formal power, which clearly distinguishes him from other courtiers driven by ambition.

Finally, the text concludes with an idealised assessment, which reads as follows: "happy are the republics if the prince were to appoint magistrates like More everywhere" ("felices respublicas si Mori similes magistratus ubique praeficeret princeps"). In doing so, Erasmus presents him as a model of the perfect public servant, useful to those in power, yet neither dominated by nor corrupted by ambition.

In qua eum se cordatissime gessisset, non conqueuit serenissimus Rex Henricus eius nominis octauus donec hominem in aulam suam pertraheret. Cur enim non dicam pertraheret? Nullus unquam vehementius ambiit in aulam admitti quam hic studuit effugere. Verum cum esset optimo Regi in animo familiam suam eruditissimam, grauius, cordatis et integris viris differtam reddere, cum alios permultos, tum Morum in primis acciuit; quem sic in intimis habet ut a se nunquam patiaturs discedere. Sive seriis utendum est, nihil illo consultius; siue visum est Regi fabulis amoenioribus laxare animum, nullus comes festiuior. Saepe res arduae iudicem grauem et cordatum postulant; has sic Morus discutit ut utraque pars habeat gratiam. Nec tamen ab eo quisquam impetrauit ut munus a quoquam acciperet. Felices respublicas si Mori similes magistratus ubique praeficeret princeps! Nec interim ullum accessit supercilium. Inter tantas negotiorum moles et veterum amicorum meminit et ad literas adamatas subinde redit.⁵³

Likewise, the author continues to construct the image of More as a model of public virtue and selfless service, thus emphasising that he does not use his position for his own benefit, but for the benefit of others. He further highlights that his spirit was always inclined to do good for all, a quality that intensifies precisely when his power is at its greatest ("nunc magis exierit, quando plus potest prodesse").⁵⁴ He presents him almost as a "public protector of the poor" ("Diceret Morum esse publicum omnium inopum patronum"),⁵⁵ always ready to alleviate hardship, guide the confused and reconcile those who are at odds. Furthermore, he emphasises that he takes pleasure in doing good without expecting reward or ever reproaching others for his favours. Finally, he emphasises that, despite his success and happiness, More remains completely free from vanity, which reinforces

his image of humble and authentic virtue.

Quicquid dignitate valet, quicquid apud amplissimum Regem gratia pollet, id omne iuuandae reipublicae, iuuandis amicis impendit. Semper quidem adfuit animus de cunctis benemerendi eupidissimus mireque pronus ad misericordiam: eum: nunc magis exierit, quando plus potest prodesse. Alios pecunia subleuat, alios auctoritate tuetur, alios commendatione prouehit. Quos alioqui iuuare non potest, his consilio succurrit. Nullum unquam a se tristem dimisit. Diceret

⁴⁷Indeed, the Augustinian conception of domestic peace, based on the agreement between governance and obedience, where those who exercise authority do so for the good of others and, in turn, are also servants, finds a clear echo in the social organisation described in *Utopia*. There, each family is governed by a strict hierarchy headed by the eldest member, and daily life is subject to a rigorous moral order that regulates both family relations and religious and social practices; indeed, even those who govern are servants of those over whom they appear to rule. The concepts outlined can be found in Augustine of Hippo's work, *The City of God* (19, 14).

⁴⁸However, *Utopia* cannot by any means be considered a mere copy of *The Republic*. Although there is a clear influence, More's work develops its own ideas. It is also worth remembering that the alternative title, albeit a later one, of Plato's dialogue is *On Justice* which underlines its fundamental purpose: to explore the nature of justice and its realisation within an ideal community. In this attempt to define justice, it is evident that Plato incorporated numerous elements drawn from the institutions of Sparta. Among these are communal meals, the absence of precious metals as currency, the markedly military way of life of its citizens, the rigorous physical training of women, and the strict discipline imposed on children. All these features, well known in Spartan society, reappear in *The Republic*, where they are adapted as part of his model of the ideal society. (Lupton, 1895, p. 50).

⁴⁹(Lupton, 1895, pp. 51–53).

⁵⁰(Erasmus, 1922, p. 18).

⁵¹(Erasmus, 1922, p. 20)

⁵²(Erasmus, 1922, p. 20)

⁵³(Erasmus, 1922, p. 20).

⁵⁴(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁵⁵(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

Morum esse publicum omnium inopum patronum. Ingens lucrum sibi putat accessisse si quem oppressum subleuauit, si perplexum et impeditum explicuit, si alienatum redegit in gratiam. Nemo lubentius collocat beneficium, nemo minus exprobrat. Iam cum tot nominibus sit felicissimus, et felicitatis comes fere soleat esse iactantia, nullum⁵⁶

As regards his literary education, Erasmus returns to the subject of his studies, which were precisely what most strengthened the bond between him and More. In his early youth he practised mainly in poetry; later on, he devoted much time to refining his prose, seeking to make it smoother and more elegant, and he honed his style across all manner of literary genres.

Sed ad studiorum commemorationem redeo, quae me More mihi hique Morum potissimum conciliarunt. Primam aetatem carmine potissimum exercuit, mox diu luetatus est ut prosam orationem redderet molliorem, per omne scripti genus stilum exercens. Qui cuiusmodi sit, quid attinet commemorare? tibi praesertim qui libros eius semper habeas in manibus. Declamationibus praecipue delectatus est, et, in his, materiis adoxis, quod in his aerior sit ingeniorum exercitatio. Unde adolescens etiamnum dialogum moliebatur, in quo Platonis communitatem ad uxores usque defendit Luciani Tyrannicidae respondit; quo in argumento me voluit antagonistam habere, quo certius periculum faceret ecquid profecisset in hoc genere. Utopiam hoc consilio edidit (printed: aeditit),⁵⁷ ut indicaret quibus rebus fiat ut minus commode habeant respublicae.⁵⁸

The aforementioned fragment of the letter is crucial for reading and understanding Utopia. The letter describes with considerable precision More's literary tastes, method of learning and specific examples of his humanist and rhetorical education. Firstly, it highlights his fondness for declamations, that is, rhetorical exercises typical of humanist education. These were not mere speeches, but intellectual exercises in which positions were defended that were often difficult or even contrary to common sense. That is why the letter emphasises the *materiae adoxae*⁵⁹ ("paradoxical topics"): it was considered that such subjects forced one to sharpen one's wits, as they required argumentation with subtlety, creativity and mastery of language.

Erasmus refers to the term "ἀδοξα" (*materiis adoxis*) as the rhetorical exercise practised by More. The word "ἀδοξα" means "without reputation" or "contrary to" *Sóxa* ("opinion"). In short, it refers to the unbelievable, the implausible, the shocking, the absurd, or that which contradicts general opinion.⁶⁰

In ancient rhetoric, systematised by authors such as Cicero and Quintilian,⁶¹ a distinction was drawn between "ἔδοξα" ("the plausible", "the generally accepted")⁶² and "ἀδοξα" (the implausible or shocking). Practising with paradoxical arguments ("ἀδοξα"), as Erasmus states, consists of defending ideas that at first glance seem false, absurd or provocative. Rhetorically, it trains the ability to argue even under unfavourable conditions. Philosophically, it allows for something deeper: questioning what is taken for granted. When confronted with the improbable, thought is compelled to better justify what it considers true.

⁵⁶(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁵⁷The printed text reads "aeditit", but this should be corrected to "edidit". The orthographic confusion characteristic of medieval and Renaissance Latin; in the manuscript and printed tradition, there was frequent hesitation between the long "ae" and the diphthong "ae", which gave rise to erroneous forms such as "aeditit", "aeditio" or "aeditit" librum instead of the correct "didit" and "ditio". (Harrington, Pucci & Elliott, 1997, p. 2).

⁵⁸(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21)

⁵⁹(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21)

⁶⁰José Miguel Sangüillo refers to a paradox as an argument in which true premises and valid reasoning appear to lead to a false conclusion. (Sangüillo, 2023, pp.12–13).

⁶¹(Pozuelo Yvancos, 2024, p. 196).

⁶²(Santos Fernández, 2025, p. 159).

Following these rhetorical principles, the letter informs us of a dialogue, previously unknown to us, written by More when he was still young, in which he defended Plato's community of goods, even with regard to women. Let us recall that in *The Republic*, Plato refers to the "κοινωνία"⁶³ as the communal organisation of the guardians of the ideal city, who share goods, women and children. The aim is neither economic nor familial, but political: that is, to eliminate private interests that might generate conflict and to ensure that the guardians always act in the common good of the polis ("πόλις"). Thus, property, family and offspring cease to be individual and become collective, in order to reinforce the unity and stability of the city.

The information provided by Erasmus concerning the existence of this dialogue, which More composed around a paradoxical premise, is particularly revealing. As discussed below, Erasmus also provides the interpretative keys for reading Utopia; the Rotterdam humanist explains that More conceived the work as a continuation of that rhetorical exercise, one shaped by paradox and political critique ("Utopiam hoc consilio edidit (printed: aeditit),⁶⁴ ut indicaret quibus rebus fiat ut minus commode habeant respublicae").⁶⁵

In other words, in this imagined commonwealth (Utopia), the humanist develops a political and social model which, although presented as rational and ideal, comes into conflict with the customs, values and institutions of the Europe of his time. The paradox lies, above all, in the fact that the abolition of private property and, to some extent, of traditional family ties is presented as the means to achieve a more just, stable and virtuous society. In this way, the English scholar takes ideas that in Plato applied solely to the class of guardians and extends them to the whole of the utopian social organisation. The paradoxical nature of the work arises because what is normally regarded as the foundation of social order, such as private property, the family or self-interest, appears in this ideal society as the source of corruption and conflict. Thus, the work constantly plays on the ambiguity between a serious critique of contemporary society and the provocative intellectual exercise characteristic of the humanist tradition. In light of Erasmus's letter, we can better understand contemporary scholars such as Antonio Poch. For this author, the idea of utopia constitutes an imaginary and critical construct conceived not so much for practical implementation as for challenging the existing reality.⁶⁶

Furthermore, the letter alludes to Lucian of Samosata's *Tyrannicide*, a rhetorical treatise addressing the issue of the right to kill a tyrant. To this work, which More translated into Latin, he also added his own response as an exercise in counter-argumentation against the original argument. Specifically, Erasmus refers to this reply by More in the *Tyrannicide* to show that learning arises from dialogue and the confrontation of ideas.

Taken together, these early works should not be read as a mere biographical anecdote, but rather as the unfolding of a genuine intellectual laboratory from which Utopia would later emerge. In this sense, this work does not arise from fantasy, but from a mode of thought inherited from classical humanism: the disciplined exercise of exploring, defending and pushing philosophical ideas, particularly those of Plato, to their limits, until they become tools capable of interrogating reality and exposing its boundaries.

Erasmus goes on to argue that the work is inspired by England, a country he knew intimately. This suggests that More does not

⁶³Frequently translated as "communion", "participation" or "community". (Mesquita, 2018, pp.209–210).

⁶⁴See note 57.

⁶⁵(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁶⁶(Poch, 2008, p. LXXII).

construct a wholly abstract world, but rather bases his proposal on English reality. This observation by the Rotterdam scholar is accurate, as the English author alludes to specific political situations, such as diplomatic embassies or the enclosure laws, among others, as will be seen in the section devoted to a commentary on selected passages from More's work.

Secondly, with regard to the order of composition, according to this interpretation, More would have written the second book first during a period of calm reflection, and then added the first book more quickly and spontaneously, seizing the opportunity. Finally, from a stylistic point of view, this compositional process would explain the presence of certain inconsistencies in the text, since some parts are more elaborate and reflective in nature, while others are more spontaneous: "sed Britannicam potissimum effinxit, quam habet penitus perspectam eognitamque. Secundum librum prius scriperat per ocium, mox per occasionem primum adiecit ex tempore. Atque hinc nonnulla dictionis inaequalitas".⁶⁷

The letter then highlights the exceptional "ingenium" of the English scholar. His portrait is constructed from a combination of natural intelligence, a perfect memory ("in numerato")⁶⁸ and a great capacity for verbal improvisation ("ex tempore"),⁶⁹ which makes him a virtually unbeatable opponent in intellectual debate.

To reinforce this idea, John Colet is quoted, a man of sharp and precise judgement, who used to assert in family conversations that in all of Britain there was a single truly singular intellect, despite the abundance of notable talents on the island ("Ioannes Coletus [...] dicere solet Britanniae non nisi unicum esse ingenium").⁷⁰

Vix alium reperias qui felicius dicat ex tempore: adeo felici ingenio felix lingua subseruit. Ingenium praesens et ubique praeuolans, memoria parata; quae eum omnia habeat velut in numerato, prompte et incontinenter suggerit quicquid tempus aut res postulat. In disputationibus nihil fingi potest acutius, adeo ut summis etiam theologis saepe negotium facessat, in ipsorum harena versans. Ioannes Coletus, vir acris exactique iudicii, in familiaribus colloquiis subinde dicere solet Britanniae non nisi unicum esse ingenium: cum haec insula tot egregiis ingeniis floreat.⁷¹

Moving on in the letter, Erasmus describes the English king Henry VIII as a prudent prince who not only welcomes men of great virtue into his circle, but also brings them into his household and cabinet, actively seeking them out as advisers, witnesses to his life and travelling companions. In this way, he prefers their company to that of corrupt, sycophantic or disloyal courtiers, whose influence often leads to disorder, tyranny or the corruption of government. Against this positive image of the English court, Erasmus introduces Hutten's critical stance, noting that, were he to know this court, he would likely qualify his general rejection of courtly circles, despite living himself under a prince of great integrity. As a further point, Hutten was linked to influential court circles, having been part of King Albert of Brandenburg's circle of friends.

Finally, he emphasises that what is truly remarkable is the group of great humanists and scholars surrounding the king, Henry VIII, among whom he cites Thomas Linacre (c. 1460/1524), Richard Pace (c. 1482/1536), John Colet (c. 1467/1519), More (1478/1535) and Cuthbert Tunstall (1474–1559), each of whom embodies a compendium of virtues and learning. Finally, Erasmus expresses his hope that Albert

of Brandenburg (1490/1545),⁷² considered one of the most prominent figures of his time in the Holy Roman Empire, will bring into his circle other men of equal virtue and learning, and that his conduct will serve as a model for other princes, inspiring them to emulate this ideal of an enlightened court.

Tales viros cordatissimus Rex in familiam suam atque adeo in cubiculum non solum admittit verumetiam inuitat; nec inuitat modo verumetiam pertrahit. Hos habet arbitros ac testes perpetuos vitae hos habet in consiliis, hos habet itinerum comites. Ab his stipari gaudet potius quam luxu perditis iuuenibus aut mulierculis, aut etiam torquatis Midis, aut insynceris officiis; quorum alius ad voluptates ineptas auocet, alius ad tyrannidem inflammet, alius ad expilandum populum nouas technas suggerat. In hac aula si vixisses, Huttene, sat scio rursum aliam Aulam describeres, et misaulos esse desineres: quanquam tu quoque cum eo Principe viuis vt integriorem nec optare possis. Neque desunt qui rebus optimis faueant, veluti Stromerus ac Cippus. semel dixeris. Sed quid ista paucitas ad tantum examen insignium virorum, Montioii, Linaeri, Pacei, Coleti, Stoeschleii, Latimeri, Mori, Tunstalli, Clerici atque aliorum his adsimilium? quorum quemeunque nominaris, mundum omnium virtutum ac disciplinarum Mihi vero spes est haud quaquam vulgaris fore ut Albertus, unicum his temporibus nostrae Germaniae ornamentum, et plures sui similes in suam allegat familiam, et caeteris principibus graui sit exemplo, vt idem et ipsi suae quisque domi facere studeant. Habes imaginem ad optimum exemplar a pessimo artifice non optime deliniatam.⁷³

In conclusion, Erasmus presents More as a humanist who combines his political work at the court of Henry VIII with profound intellectual activity and a strong moral rigour. His distinctive trait is his "ingenium", a creative intelligence that unites political practice and writing. This ingenuity is particularly reflected in *Utopia*, which should not be read as a literal proposal, but as an exercise based on the paradoxical ("ādoā") to question reality. Thus, More's life and work form a unity; his experience in power is transformed, through this ingenuity, into a critical reflection on politics.

5. Commentary on selected passages from *Utopia*

5.1. The dispatch of a diplomatic mission regarding the wool trade

I shall comment on the opening of *Utopia*; specifically, the text refers to a particular historical moment linked to the wool trade. In More's time, fabrics produced in Flanders were freely imported into England, whilst Flemish ports remained open to English wool. However, this balance was disrupted when the planned marriage between Prince Charles V, son of Philip the Handsome, and Princess Mary, sister of Henry VIII, was called off, prompting the English government to react by banning the export of wool to Holland and Zeeland.

It soon became clear that this measure was detrimental to both English and foreign interests. Consequently, in May 1515 an embassy was sent to the Netherlands with the aim of restoring the balance of trade; More participated in this as a junior member. The situation required great diplomatic skill, which is why the leadership of the mission was entrusted to Cuthbert Tunstall.⁷⁴ The embassy finally achieved its objectives, and More returned to London towards the end of that same year; it was in this context that *Utopia* was conceived.⁷⁵

⁶⁷(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁶⁸(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁶⁹(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁷⁰(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁷¹(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

⁷²Hugh Chisholm discusses Hutten's friendship with Albert. (Chisholm, 1911, p. 496). Heinrich Grimm writes a biography of Albert of Brandenburg. (Grimm, 1953, pp.166–167).

⁷³(Erasmus, 1922, p. 22).

⁷⁴(Hill, 2024, pp.52–60).

⁷⁵(Lupton, 1895, p. xxvii).

The Latin passage of the work, where reference is made to that moment, reads as follows:

Quum non exigui momenti negotia quaedam invictissimus Angliae Rex Henricus eius nominis octavus, omnibus egregii principis artibus ornatissimus, cum serenissimo Castellae principe Carolo controversa nuper habuisset, ad ea tractanda componendaque oratorem me legavit in Flandriam, comitem et collegam viri incomparabilis Cuthberti Tunstalli, quem sacris scriniis nuper ingenti omnium gratulatione praefecit, de cuius sane laudibus nihil a me dicetur, non quod verear ne parum sincerae fidei testis habenda sit amicitia, sed quod virtus eius ac doctrina maior est quam ut a me praedicari possit, tum notior ubique atque illustrior quam ut debeat, nisi videri velim solem lucerna, quod aiunt, ostendere. Occurrerunt nobis Brugis (sic enim convenerat) hi, quibus a principe negotium demandabatur, egregii viri omnes. In his praefectus Brugensis vir magnificus, princeps et caput erat, ceterum os et pectus Georgius Temsicius Cassiletanus Praepositus, non arte solum, verum etiam natura facundus, ad haec iure consultissimus, tractandi vero negotii cum ingenio tum assiduo rerum usu eximius artifex. Ubi semel atque iterum congressi, quibusdam de rebus non satis consentiremus, illi in aliquot dies vale nobis dicto, Bruxellas profecti sunt, principis oraculum sciscitaturi.⁷⁶

In the passage cited above, the scholar recounts that he was sent to Flanders on a diplomatic mission with the aim of negotiating and resolving certain significant economic disputes concerning the wool market, which had arisen between the King of England, Henry VIII, and the Prince of Castile, Charles V. He was part of this embassy alongside Tunstall, a figure of great prestige recently appointed head of the royal archives, whose qualities were so widely recognised that it was unnecessary to extol them. He notes that, as agreed, the delegation met in Bruges with the prince's representatives, all of them distinguished men. Although the city prefect held the principal position, the man who played a decisive role in the negotiations was George Temse, noted for his eloquence, his profound knowledge of the law and his great skill in diplomatic practice. After several meetings, no agreement was reached on certain points, so the prince's delegates set off for Brussels to consult on their decision.

5.2. Portrait of Petrus Aegidius (Pieter Gillis) and Raphael Hythloday

More then explains that, driven by circumstances, he moved to Antwerp. During his stay there, he received frequent visits from Petrus Aegidius, a native of the city, whom he considered particularly agreeable among all. He describes him as a dignified and respected man, whose qualities stood out both for his education and his character. According to More, Aegidius possessed exceptional virtues: he was learned, upright, and showed a sincere disposition towards everyone, especially his friends, to whom he offered uncommon affection and loyalty.

He adds that Aegidius possessed extraordinary modesty, free from any pretence, and a natural prudence combined with great simplicity. He also highlights his skill in conversation, which was always pleasant and free from malice. Thanks to his warm manner and pleasant conversation, More states that he managed to alleviate much of the homesickness he felt for his homeland, his home, his wife and his children, from whom he had been separated for more than four months.

Ego me interim (sic enim res ferebat) Antuerpiam confero. Ibi dum versor, saepe me inter alios, sed quo non alius gratior, invisit Petrus Aegidius Antuerpiae natus, magna fide et loco apud suos

honesto, dignus honestissimo, quippe iuvenis haud scio doctiorne an moratior. Est enim et optimus et litteratissimus, ad haec animo in omnes candido, in amicos vero tam propenso pectore, amore, fide, affectu tam sincero, ut vix unum aut alterum usquam invenias, quem illi sentias omnibus amicitiae numeris esse conferendum. Rara illi modestia, nemini longius abest fucus, nulli simplicitas inest prudentior, porro sermone tam lepidus, et tam innoxie facetus, ut patriae desiderium ac laris domestici, uxoris, et liberorum, quorum studio revisendorum nimis quam anxie tenebar (iam tum enim plus quattuor mensibus afueram domo), magna ex parte mihi dulcissima consuetudine sua, et mellitissima confabulatione levaverit.⁷⁷

Moreover, More recounts that, after attending services at the Church of the Virgin Mary, a place renowned both for its beauty and for the throng of worshippers, he was preparing to return to his lodgings when he observed Aegidius conversing with an unknown man. That individual, of advanced years, with a weather-beaten face and a dishevelled appearance, gave him the impression of being a seafarer.

Noticing his presence, Petrus Aegidius approached to greet him and gently drew him aside to indicate the stranger, explaining that he wished to introduce them. More replied that any recommendation from Aegidius was sufficient reason to welcome the meeting, yet his companion insisted that the traveler merited admiration on his own account, for no one could describe so many unfamiliar lands and peoples with equal experience and authority, subjects he knew would deeply interest More. Although More believed he had been right in assuming he was a sailor, Aegidius qualified that idea by pointing out that he had not sailed like Palinurus, the experienced helmsman of Aeneas' ship, who falls asleep whilst steering the fleet towards Italy (Verg. *Aen.* 5, 855860), but rather like Ulysses, and even like Plato, that is to say, driven by a desire to learn and reflect.⁷⁸ He then introduced to Raphael Hythloday, whom he describes as a learned man, particularly wellversed in Greek and deeply devoted to philosophy. Aegidius adds that, after ceding his inheritance to his brothers in Portugal, Hythloday joined Amerigo Vespucci⁷⁹ driven by his desire to discover the world, accompanying him on several voyages.

Finally, he explains that, on the last expedition, Hythloday decided to remain in distant lands alongside other men, driven more by his desire to explore than by any intention of returning. According to the account, he lived by the belief that no specific place is needed for burial, for "the sky covers him who has no grave" (*Caelo tegitur qui non habet urnam*) (Lucan. 7, 819) and that the divine can be attained from anywhere.

In More's work, Hythloday appears as an observer who travels to different parts of the world. The verse, inserted into the text and attributed to Lucan, reinforces this image by suggesting that his only "roof" is the sky, that is to say, he is not dependent on a grave, a territory or a local identity. In this way, it symbolises his cosmopolitan nature, a man who is not defined by a specific city or nation, but by his belonging to the world as a whole.

Hunc quum die quadam in templo divae Mariae, quod et opere pulcherrimum, et populo celeberrimum est, rei divinae interfuissem, atque peracto sacro pararem inde in hospitium redire, forte colloquentem video cum hospite quodam, vergentis ad senium aetatis, vultu adusto, promissa barba, paenula neglectim ab humero dependente, qui mihi ex vultu atque habitu naclerus esse videbatur.

⁷⁷(Morus, 1548, pp.28–29).

⁷⁸(More, 2012, p. 30).

⁷⁹Americus Vesputius (1454–1512), or Amerigo Vespucci, was a famous explorer, cartographer, and chronicler of voyages to the New World. The Americas are named after him. (More, 2012, p. 30).

⁷⁶(Morus, 1548, pp.27–28).

At Petrus, ubi me conspexit, adit ac salutat. Respondere conantem seducit paululum, et Vides, inquit, hunc? (Simul designabat eum cum quo loquentem videram.) Eum, inquit, iam hinc ad te recta parabam ducere. Venisset, inquam, pergratus mihi tua causa. Immo, inquit ille, si nosset hominem, sua. Nam nemo vivit hodie mortalium omnium, qui tantam tibi hominum, terrarumque incognitarum narrare possit historiam. Quarum rerum audiendarum scio avidissimum esse te. Ergo, inquam, non pessime conieciavi: nam primo aspectu protinus sensi hominem esse nauclerum. Atqui, inquit, aberrasti longissime; navigavit quidem non ut Palinurus, sed ut Ulysses, immo, velut Plato. Nempe Raphael iste, sic enim vocatur gentilicio nomine Hythlodæus, et Latinae linguae non indoctus, et Graecae doctissimus (cuius ideo studiosior quam Romanae fuit, quoniam totum se addixerat philosophiae; qua in re nihil quod alicuius momenti sit praeter Senecae quaedam ac Ciceronis exstare Latine cognovit), relicto fratribus patrimonio quod ei domi fuerat (est enim Lusitanus), orbis terrarum contemplandi studio Americo Vesputio se adiunxit, atque in tribus posterioribus illarum quattuor navigationum, quae passim iam leguntur, perpetuus eius comes fuit, nisi quod in ultima cum eo non rediit. Curavit enim atque adeo extorsit ab Americo, ut ipse in his XXIII esset qui ad fines postremae navigationis in castello relinquebantur. Itaque relictus est uti obtemperaretur animo eius, peregrinationis magis quam sepulchri curioso: quippe cui haec assidue sunt in ore, Caelo⁸⁰ tegitur qui non habet urnam [=Lucan. 7, 819], et Undique ad superos tantundem esse viae.

I would like to focus on the description of the character Hythlodæus, whom he identifies with Ulysses (navigavit [...] sed ut Ulysses)⁸¹ since, like the Greek hero, he is a man who has travelled extensively and is familiar with the customs of different countries ("orbis terrarum contemplandi studio Americo Vesputio se adiunxit").⁸² Furthermore, he is presented as a learned man, with a profound knowledge of the Greek language and also of Latin; it is also noted that he was a man devoted to philosophy and who scorned material possessions ("Latinae linguae non indoctus, et Graecae doctissimus [...] studiosior quam Romanae fuit, quoniam totum se addixerat philosophiae [...] relicto fratribus patrimonio").⁸³ Next, I quote the verses⁸⁴ from Homer's *Odyssey*, which could serve as a model for the description of Hythlodæus. Thus, the words of the Greek epic poet continue: ἄνδρα μοι ἔνεπε, Μοῖσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ / πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν. / πολλὴν δ' ἀνθρώπων δὲν ᾄοται καὶ νόον γνῶ. Tell me, Muse, of the resourceful man, who wandered for a long time after destroying the sacred city of Troy; he saw the cities of many men and came to know their ways of thinking" (Hom. *Od.* 1, 13).⁸⁵ Homer's verses have been used by Horace in his *Ars Poetica* to express the idea that he who travels widely and sees much, knows much: "Dic mihi, Musa, uirum, captae post tempora Troiae / qui mores hominum multorum uidit et urbes". (Hor. *Ars* 141-142). "Tell me, Muse, of the man who, after the days of the fall of Troy, came to know the customs of many men and saw their cities".

I also cite another passage from Horace's *Epistles*, where another version of the same verse is given: "qui domitor Troiae multorum

prouidus urbes, et mores hominum inspexit, latumque per aequor". (Hor. *Epist.* 1, 2, 17-22).⁸⁶ "He who, conqueror of Troy, prudent among many cities, examined the customs of men and (sailed) across the wide sea."

The Socratic philosopher Antisthenes tends to offer an ethical interpretation of Ulysses; he associates the term πολύτροπος with both the manner of being and the manner of speaking of the wise Homeric hero. Thus he continues:

Μποε ον ρπος τὸ μ τ σημαει τ° θος, τὸ δ τι σμαίε τν το λον χρσιν [...] ἐποτάμεο δε πολλοῖς τόπ λόγων πει το ατς, πολότρπ ἄν εἰεν. εἰ δε οἱ σοφοὶ καὶ ἀγαθο εἰοι, διὰ τοτὸ φησι τὸν Οδυσσεά "Ὅμηρος σὸν ντα πολύτρπν εἶναι, ὅτ δὴ τοῦ ἀνθρπζ πτοτατο πολλοῖς τόπ συνενα."⁸⁷

"Perhaps, then, 'τρόπος' means, on the one hand, character, and on the other, the use of speech. And those who know many ways of speaking about the same thing would be versatile. And if the wise and good are so, that is why Homer says that Odysseus, being wise, is 'resourceful' (πολύτροπος), because he knew how to deal with men in many ways".

The passage revolves around the Greek word "τρόπος", which has a fairly broad semantic field. Here, it is precisely this ambiguity that is exploited to develop an ethical and rhetorical idea. First, the text proposes a key distinction: "τρόπος" can mean character ("ἦθος"), that is, a person's moral disposition, but it can also refer to the manner of speaking or using discourse ("λόγος"). This dual meaning is no accident; in Greek culture, ethics and rhetoric are deeply connected.

From there, an interesting consequence is introduced: those who master many "τρόποι" of discourse, that is, different ways of expressing the same idea, are "πολύτροποι", versatile or flexible. This is not merely a technical skill, but almost a practical virtue: knowing how to adapt one's discourse to the situation and the interlocutor. The argument culminates with the example of Odysseus (Ulysses), as presented by Homer. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is called "πολύτροπος", a term usually translated as "resourceful" or "cunning". Here it is interpreted more precisely: he is not only ingenious, but knows how to relate to different types of people in multiple ways. Herman Josephus Polak (1844-1908) proposes a series of corrections to the text cited in order to better understand what Antisthenes meant. In his work entitled *Emendationes ad scholia in Homeri Odysseam*, he proposes a series of corrections to the text cited by Antisthenes; in contrast to the reading "διὰ τοτὸ φησι τὸν Οδυσσεά" Ὅμηρος σοφὸν ὄντα πολύτροπον εἶναι, ὅτι δι τοῦ ἀνθρπιζ ηπίοτατο πολλοὺς τρόπους συνείνα",⁸⁸ Polak corrects the text with the amendment "διὰ τοτὸ φησι τὸν Ὀδυσσεά" Ὅμηρος ἀγαθὸν ὄντα πολύτροπον εἶναι". The justification for his reading, in which he substitutes "ἀγαθός" for "σοφός", is based on the view that the "wise man" ("ὁ σοφός") is "good" ("ἀγαθός"); this is the argument of the Socratic philosophers, among whom Antisthenes occupies one of the foremost places.

Furthermore, he believes that the reading "πονηρός" should be corrected, an adjective that appears a few lines earlier, describing Ulysses. He notes that this must have been an error by a grammarian or a reader.⁸⁹ Polak concludes by emphasising the positive value of

⁸⁰(Morus, 1548, pp.29-30).

⁸¹(Morus, 1548, p. 29).

⁸²(Morus, 1548, p. 30).

⁸³(Morus, 1548, pp.29-30).

⁸⁴Homer's verses have been used by Horace in his *Ars Poetica* to express the idea that he who travels widely and sees much, knows much: "Dic mihi, Musa, uirum, captae post tempora Troiae / qui mores hominum multorum uidit et urbes". (Hor. *Ars* 141-142). Juan Gil alludes to another passage from Horace's *Epistles*, where another version of the same verse is given: "qui domitor Troiae multorum prouidus urbes, et mores hominum inspexit, latumque per aequor". (Hor. *Epist.* 1, 2, 1722). (Horace, 2010, p. 135).

⁸⁵(Homer, 1919, p. 12).

⁸⁶(Horace, 2010, p. 135).

⁸⁷(Polak, 1869, p. 50; Garriga 2015-2016: 44).

⁸⁸The Greek text is taken from G. Giannantonio (Giannantonio, 1990, p. 187).

⁸⁹"Res ipsa clamat dixisse Antisthenem: διὰ τοτὸ φησι τὸν Ὀδυσσεά" Ὅμηρος ἀγαθὸν ντα πολύτροπον εἶναι, ὅτι [...] et ὁ σοφός autem non potest non ἀγαθός esse: itaque qui πολύτροπον, idem ἀγαθός est. Est hic argumentandi modus cum omnium philosophorum, qui Socratis sectam secuti sunt, tum in primis Antisthenes dignus, Stoicorum antecessor et quasi avo. Sic igitur crimen quod in ἀπορίᾳ posuerat dilutum est uidelicet, nec amplius Ulixes πονηρός habendus ὅτι πολύτροπος ἐκλήθη. Comprobantur haec omnia exemplo Pythagorae pro variis hominum generibus vario sermonis genere uti soliti et medicorum, qui, tu corporis constitutio non est eadem in singulis, ita in

the term “πολότροπος”, which is why the expression “ἡ τοῦ λόγου πολυτροπία” is used to indicate that skill and dexterity in speech is a virtue.⁹⁰ In line with Polak's view on the correction of “σοφὸς” to “ἀγαθὸς”, I recall Quintilian's famous phrase: “homo bonus dicendi peritus” (Quint. Inst. 12, 1). As David Fleming notes, this combination of rhetorical skill and civic virtue was not an original idea of Quintilian's.⁹¹ One might surmise that Antisthenes may have been on Quintilian's mind when he proposed the idea that true eloquence consists not merely of technical skill in rhetoric, but must be grounded in moral character. In other words, a great orator must not only speak well, but also be a fundamentally good person.⁹² He must be technically excellent, master rhetoric, but, above all, be morally good; in short, eloquence without virtue is not true eloquence.

The comparison with Ulysses as a literary trope also appears in a letter from Juan Luis Vives addressed to Gilles Wallop.⁹³ It was probably written in Oxford, judging by the reference to his teaching work with young people, although it is difficult to distinguish precisely between the stages of his life in London and in Oxford.⁹⁴ Vives describes Wallop's brother as a person esteemed for his efficiency and for his “virtus animi” “.

Furthermore, he notes that his discourse was particularly valued in numerous matters, for, like Ulysses (“uelut Ulysses”),⁹⁵ he had travelled widely and was familiar with the customs and languages of various countries. In the passage under discussion, Vives paraphrases in Latin a wellknown passage from the Odyssey (Hom. Od. 1, 3): “multas regiones adierit, moresque hominum cognovit”⁹⁶ (“he travelled through many regions and came to know the customs of men”). This phrase directly paraphrases the Homeric verses “πολλὸν δ' ἀνθρώπων δὲν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνων” (Hom. Od. 1, 3),⁹⁷ that is to say, Homer indicates that the hero saw the cities of diverse peoples, and we understand the expression “καὶ νόον γνῶ” to mean that he came to know their ways of thinking and their customs.

Vives Aegidio Gualopo suo. S. Colluquutus sum in Regia saepe numero cum fratre tuo, qui de strenuitate, et animi uirtute carus est Regi, Reginae, ac ceteris Britanniae Principibus. Fuit et de aliis per

multis rebus nobis sermo, quum ille uelut Ulysses quidam multas regiones adierit, moresque hominum cognorit, et linguas calleat.⁹⁸

5.3. The laws on enclosures and public health in Utopia

To better understand Utopia as a “legislative laboratory”, it is essential to bear in mind the author's biography, as the work stems not solely from imagination, but from More's political and institutional experience. The humanist served in the English Parliament and rose to a position of high responsibility at the court of Henry VIII, which allowed him to gain first-hand knowledge of the actual workings of power, the administration of justice, and the social problems of his time.

From this perspective, Utopia should not be interpreted simply as an external critique or a fantasy detached from reality, but as an intellectual projection by someone actively involved in the institutional system. Many of the ideas that appear in the work can be understood as a reflection on possible improvements to the political and legal order, arising from the direct experience of someone who knows the limitations and tensions of government.

However, at the same time, it raises an implicit reflection on the complexity of social life; society is made up of groups with different, and even conflicting, interests. Consequently, any legal provision that benefits one sector may harm another. For example, a regulation that favours the expansion of livestock farming may conflict with the interests of arable farming, or vice versa, as both depend on different land uses.

In this way, the legislative experiment not only demonstrates the potential of the law to transform reality, but also its structural limitations: the difficulty of designing perfectly balanced laws in a context where benefits and harms are never distributed evenly.

In light of the above, I shall now comment on some laws or regulations that appear in the work and which, as we shall see, have their counterpart in the real world and in English legislation of that period.

I begin with the preamble to a law passed almost simultaneously with the writing of More's work (7 Hen. VIII, ch. I) states that great inconveniences exist and are increasing daily due to the desolation, demolition and destruction of houses and settlements within the kingdom, as well as the conversion into pasture of lands that had traditionally been cultivated through tillage and agriculture, which increases idleness.⁹⁹ The year 1516 marks a turning point in English rural historiography; whilst Parliament sought to curb the phenomenon of enclosures through legislation, More published his Utopia, denouncing a reality in which commercial ambition was beginning to displace the peasant from his traditional livelihood. Subsequently, Cardinal Wolsey's Commission of 1517 was a research initiative launched to combat the social and economic effects of the enclosures of common land in England.¹⁰⁰ The reference to the 1516 Act of Parliament on the state of agriculture is inseparable from More's work. Specifically, in Book I, he criticises the social and economic situation in England of his time. In the aforementioned book, the author describes how sheep have become so voracious that they devour men (Oves [...] nunc (uti fertur) tam edaces atque indomitae esse coeperunt, ut homines devorent ipsos).¹⁰¹ He denounced the fact that the laws in force were insufficient to protect the poor from the greed of the nobility, who prioritised the commercial profit from wool over the livelihoods of farmers. The passage I quote below forms part of More's critique of the process

simili morbo dissimilia medicamenta adhibere consueverunt. Itaque τρόπος μὲν οὐ τὸ παλιμβολον, τὸ τὸ ἥθους πολυμετάβολον! Haud uidi magis! Et tota disputatione hoc unum agitur tu demonstretur, haec non ita esse! At uero ista uerba non Anthisthenes esse possunt, non Porphyrii, sed inepti cuiusdam grammatici dicam a lectoris”. (Polak, 1881, p. 16).

⁹⁰Huciusque philosophus, in explicanda natura τῆς τοῦ λόγου πολυτροπίας occupatus, non sine sophistica arte probare adgressus est, ea non uitium notari sed sollertiam adeoque uirtutem. Λόγον δὲ πολυτροπία καὶ χρήσις ποικίλη λόγον ἐξ ποικίλας ἀκοῆς μοροποιὰ γίνεται. ν γὰρ τὸ ἐκάστ οὐν διὸ καὶ τὸ ἀρμόδον ἐκάστ τν πολυλίαν τοῦ λόου ἐξ ν συαγερε τὸ ἐκάστ πρόσφο. τὸ δ' α μοοδεεζ, ἀνάρμοστον τὸν πρὸς ἀοᾶς διαφὸν πολὺτπν ποεὶ τὸν λλωσ σπὸ πολλὴν ἀπβλητν ε ατος ἀπότηρν λόγο”. (Polak, 1881, pp. 16–17).

⁹¹(Fleming, 2018, p. 397).

⁹²It should be noted that the positive attitude towards Ulysses was not always the case in antiquity; much later, Eustathius understood πολότροπος in the sense of someone who is “πολιλόφρων”, meaning one who “makes use of deceit and stratagems”, that is to say, he understood it as something negative, a characterisation he attributes to Odysseus (Ulysses). This is the interpretation given by Eustathius in his commentary on the Odyssey 1.1, which reads as follows: “πολότροπος οὐν, ὁ διὰ πολλὴν ἐμπερίαν πολυφρων ὡς ὁ ποιητ μετ' ὀλίγα ἐρεῖ. And as Euriides might say, ‘of many ways’” (Eust. Op. 1380, 3940). (Eustathius, 1825, p. 2).

⁹³(Watson, 1918, p. 108).

⁹⁴Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540) was a Spanish humanist, philosopher and educator from the Kingdom of Valencia. He became a reformer of European education and a moral philosopher of universal stature, advocating the study of Aristotle's works in their original language and adapting his books intended for the study of Latin for students; he replaced medieval texts with new ones, using vocabulary suited to his era and the contemporary way of speaking. Carlos Mallaina (1817–1885) asserts that Juan Luis Vives was one of the most important men of the Spanish nation, and the true driving force behind the literary reform of the 16th century. (Mallaina, 1872, pp.64–65, 156).

⁹⁵(Vives, 1788, p. 208).

⁹⁶(Vives, 1788, p. 208).

⁹⁷(Homer, 1919, p. 12).

⁹⁸(Vives, 1788, p. 208).

⁹⁹(Lupton, 1895, p. xxxv).

¹⁰⁰(Great Britain. Commissioners of Enclosures, pp. 910).

¹⁰¹(Moro, 1548, p. 42).

of enclosures in England, whereby common land was privatised for sheep farming, displacing peasants and exacerbating poverty.

Neque haec tamen sola est furandi necessitas. Est alia magis, quantum credo, peculiaris uobis. Quenam est ea? inquit Cardinalis. Oves, inquam, vestrae, quae tam mites esse, tamque exiguo solent ali, nunc (uti fertur) tam edaces atque indomitae esse coeperunt, ut homines deuorent ipsos; agros, domos, oppida uastent ac depopulentur. Nempe quibus cunq̃ue regni partibus nascitur lana tenuior, atque ideo preciosior, ibi nobiles et generosi, atque adeo Abbates aliquot, sancti uiri, non his contenti redditibus fructibusque annuis, qui maioribus suis solebant ex praediis crescere; nec habentes satis, quod ociose ac laute uiuentes nihil in publicum prosint, nisi etiam obsint; aruo nihil relinquunt, omnia claudunt pascuis, demoliuntur domos, diruunt oppida, templo duntaxat stabulandis suibus relicto et tanquam parum soli perderent apud uos ferarum saltus ac uiuaria, illi boni uiri habitationes omnes, et quicquid usquam est culti, uertunt in solitudinem.¹⁰²

“And yet this is not the only reason for plundering; there is another, in my opinion, more characteristic of you. ‘What is it?’ said the cardinal. ‘Your sheep,’ I said, ‘which are usually so tame and feed on so little, have now, it is said, begun to become so voracious and untameable that they devour even men themselves; they ravage the fields, the houses and the villages, and lay everything waste. For in all those regions of the kingdom where finer, and therefore more valuable, wool is produced, there the nobles and gentlemen, and even some abbots, holy men, not content with the annual rents and produce that their ancestors used to obtain from their estates, nor considering it sufficient to live idly and in luxury without contributing anything to the public good, but rather harming it, leave nothing for cultivation: they enclose everything for pasture, tear down the houses, destroy the villages, leaving only the church to serve as a sheepfold. And as if it were not enough to ruin so much land, as if they did not already destroy enough soil, these good men turn all dwellings and everything that was once cultivated anywhere into a desert.’”

In Utopia, through its spokesman Hylhoday, it is proposed that a law be enacted so that those who razed farms and agricultural villages must rebuild them, or else surrender and hand over their property to those willing to bear the cost of rebuilding them, in line with the proposals made by Parliament¹⁰³ in 1516.¹⁰⁴

Has perniciosas pestes eiicite, statuite ut uillas atque oppida rustica aut hi restituant qui diruere, aut ea cedant reposituris atque aedificare uolentibus. Refrenate coemptiones istas diuitum, ac uelut monopolii exercendi licentiam. Pauciores alantur ocio, reddatur agricolatio, lanificium instauretur, ut sit honestum negotium, quo se utiliter exerceat ociosa ista turba, uel quos hactenus inopia fures fecit, uel qui nunc erroneos aut ociosi sunt ministri, fures nimirum utriusque futuri. Certe nisi his malis medemini, frustra iactetis exercitum in uindicanda furta iusticiam, nempe speciosam magis quam aut iustam aut utilem. Siquidem quum pessime sinitis educari, et mores paulatim ab teneris annis corrumpi, puniendos uidelicet turn demum quum ea flagitia uiri designent, quorum spes de se perpetuam a perueritia usque praebuerant, quid aliud, quaequo, quamfacitis fures, et iidem plectitis?¹⁰⁵

In Utopia, we see once again a reflection of our humanist’s concerns, in this case regarding public health. In 1514, the scholar was appointed by as a commissioner for sewerage, and in 1532 he was responsible for introducing the Statute of Sewerage (23 Henry VIII,

Chapter 5) into legislation.¹⁰⁶ In Book II, when describing the ideal city of Amaurota, the system for channelling clean water suitable for domestic use is outlined, taking into account the characteristics of the terrain depending on whether the areas are high or low-lying:

Inde canalibus coctilibus, diuersim ad inferiores urbis partes aqua diriuatur, id sicubi locus fieri uetat, cisternis capacibus, collecta pluuias, tantundem usus adfert.¹⁰⁷

“From there, through channels of fired brick, water is channelled in various directions towards the lower parts of the city; and where the terrain prevents this, rainwater, collected in large cisterns, provides the same service.”

Furthermore, the text describes how health and hygiene conditions are managed in Amaurota on market days, when fruit, vegetables, fish and meat are sold. It highlights a hygiene-oriented system, as food is cleaned outside the city before sale, thus preventing waste and dirt from entering the urban area and ensuring adequate sanitary conditions:

Adiuncta sunt foris (quae commemorauimus) fora cibaria, in quae non olera modo, arborumque fructus et panes comportantur, sed pisces praeterea quadrupedumque et auium quicquid esculentum est, extra urbem locis appositis ubi¹⁰⁸ fluento tabum ac sordes eluantur.

“Next to the market square I mentioned are food stalls where all manner of vegetables and fruit from the trees are brought, along with bread, as well as fish and all kinds of four-legged animals and birds that serve as food for humans. But first, the dirt and waste from these are thoroughly washed away in the running water of the river outside the city, in places specially set aside for this purpose.”

5.4. The laws in Utopia are minimal: “Leges habent perquam paucas”

As for the organisation of this utopian place, it has very few laws, since for a society organised in this way they are entirely sufficient. Other nations, by contrast, are criticised for relying on countless volumes of laws and interpretations which, despite their abundance, fail to cover everything. In this regard, they consider it profoundly unjust that citizens should be subject to rules that are too numerous to read or so obscure that they cannot be clearly understood.

Similarly, the role of lawyers is completely rejected, as it is felt that they often handle cases with cunning and distort the meaning of the laws. For this reason, it is argued that the most appropriate course is for each person to present their own case directly before the judge, clearly setting out the same points they would have entrusted to a defence counsel.

Leges habent perquam paucas. Sufficiunt enim sic institutis paucissimae. Quin hoc in primis apud alios improbant populos, quod legum interpretumque uolumina, non infinita sufficiunt. Ipsi uero censent iniquissimum; ullos homines his obligari legibus; quae aut numerosiores sint, quam ut perlegi queant; aut obscuriores quam ut a quouis possint intelligi; porro causidicos; qui causas tractent callide; ac leges uafre disputent; prorsus omnes excludunt. Censent¹⁰⁹

The passage brings to mind Tacitus’s phrase “corruptissima re publica plurimae leges” (Tac. Ann. 3, 27): “When the republic is most corrupt, the laws are most numerous”. In light of the above, what Tacitus meant was that the excessive proliferation of laws is a symptom of the moral and political decline of a state. Following the insights of Stefan Krauter, Tacitus presents a critical view of the development of Roman law, arguing that the proliferation of laws

¹⁰²(Moro, 1548, p. 42).

¹⁰³(Finberg, 1967, pp.70–75; Elton, 1955, pp.71–73).

¹⁰⁴(Lupton, 1895, p. xxxvi).

¹⁰⁵(Moro, 1548, p. 45).

¹⁰⁶(Krivatsy, 1973, p. 121).

¹⁰⁷(Moro, 1548, p. 81).

¹⁰⁸(Moro, 1548, p. 94).

¹⁰⁹(Moro, 1548, pp.133–135).

does not improve justice, but is usually a sign of political corruption. His account begins with the creation of the Law of the Twelve Tables, following the expulsion of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus. Although he acknowledges the role of the people in the defence of freedom, he describes from the outset a conflict between patricians and plebeians that has a negative impact on political development.

The assessment of the Twelve Tables is ambivalent; they can be seen as the culmination of law ("finis" as "culmination"), but also as the beginning of its decline ("finis" as "end"). From that point on, legislative development appears problematic; in the final phase of the Republic, the situation worsens, laws cease to serve justice and become political tools, demagogues use them against their rivals, and finally the number of contradictory laws increases. Not even reforms such as those of Lucius Cornelius Sulla manage to halt the process, as they generate even more legislation. The system degenerates to the point of passing laws directed against specific individuals, as in the case of Publius Clodius Pulcher against Marcus Tullius Cicero (Tac. Ann. 3.27.3), hence the famous conclusion: "corruptissima re publica plurimae leges" (Tac. Ann. 3.27.3). Tacitus suggests a distinction between "ius" (justice) and "leges" (laws): good laws should be few, clear and agreed upon; in practice, they multiply and reflect moral decay. He considers that the attempt at reform under Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus fails, because he himself is part of the corrupt system. Thus, legislation ceases to be a remedy and becomes a symptom of the Republic's illness.¹¹⁰

Regarding corruption in the Roman political system, Catalina Balmaceda¹¹¹ identifies the "exempla virtutis" in Tacitus's *Annales* and explains how this "virtus" is put into practice by the "vir bonus" under a one-man government. In this regard, it is noted that, for Tacitus, the Principate in its outward appearance could represent servitude, cruelty and fear under the rule of bad emperors. However, although it might be tempting to attribute all responsibility for human conduct to the political system, it is argued that true freedom does not depend on constitutions or on favourable external circumstances that facilitate its exercise, but on the inner strength necessary to remain free even under the most adverse conditions. Likewise, it is argued that the firm conviction that, regardless of the circumstances in which an individual finds themselves, they always retain the personal capacity to decide how to behave, allows Tacitus to reach a clear conclusion: "there can be great men even under bad princes" "posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse" (Tac. Agr. 42.4). Consequently, it is understood that the challenge under a one-man government lay in recognising the existence of a demanding, arduous and difficult path, yet one that was possible. Finally, it is emphasised that "virtus" could be perceived as dangerous, insofar as it could attract the wrath of those in power who distrusted it because of the glory it entailed; nevertheless, it was still considered worthy of being practised.

Today, following F. Padovano,¹¹² it is considered that legislative overproduction can foster corruption by weakening the rule of law. This is, moreover, a conclusion widely supported by the specialist literature dedicated to the study of the causes of corruption.

5.5. Final Passage of Utopia

Following Hylhloday's account, More considers that he finds numerous aspects of that people's laws and customs which strike him as having been established in a most absurd manner ("quanquam haud pauca mihi succurrebant, quae in eius populi moribus, legibusque

perquam absurde uidebantur instituta").¹¹³ However, he points out that his main objection lies in the very foundation of their social organisation, namely, communal living and sustenance without the use of money ("sed in eo quoque ipso maxime, quod maximum totius institutionis fundamentum est uita scilicet, uictuque communi, sine ullo pecuniae commercio"),¹¹⁴ which, in his view, calls into question the traditional values of society.

However, noticing Raphael's weariness and doubting his willingness to entertain objections, he avoids entering into a debate at that moment, preferring instead to praise his speech and postpone the discussion. Even though he does not fully agree with what has been put forward, he acknowledges that many of the ideas in Utopia are more desirable than realistic in actual societies.

Haec ubi Raphael recensuit, quanquam haud pauca mihi succurrebant, quae in eius populi moribus, legibusque perquam absurde uidebantur instituta, non solum de belli gerendi ratione, et rebus diuinis, ac religione, aliisque insuper eorum institutis, sed in eo quoque ipso maxime, quod maximum totius institutionis fundamentum est uita scilicet, uictuque communi, sine ullo pecuniae commercio, qua una re funditus euertitur omnis nobilitas, magnificentia, splendor, maiestas, uera ut publica est opinio decora atque ornamenta Reipublicae tamen quoniam defessum narrando sciebam, neque mihi satis exploratum erat, possetne ferre, ut contra suam sententiam sentiretur, praesertim quod recordabar, eo nomine quosdam ab illo reprehensos, quasi uerentur, ne non satis putarentur sapere, nisi aliquid inuenirent, in quo uellicare aliorum inuenta possent, idcirco et illorum institutione, et ipsius oratione laudata, manu apprehendens intro coenatum duco, praefatus tamen aliud nobis tempus, iisdem de rebus altius cogitandi, atque uberius cum eo conferendi fore, quod utinam aliquando contingeret. Interea quemadmodum haud possum omnibus assentiri quae dicta sunt, alioqui ab homine citra controuersiam eruditissimo simul & rerum humanarum peritissimo, ita facile confiteor permulta esse in Utopiensium republica, quae in nostris ciuitatibus optarim uerius, quam sperarim.¹¹⁵

The passage can be understood as a deliberate exercise in argumentative paradox, what the Greek rhetorical tradition calls "ἀδοα" ("the implausible or shocking"), the defence of an idea that, on the surface, contradicts prevailing common sense. In this case, More does not simply propose an alternative model of social organisation in Utopia, but takes to the extreme a thesis that subverts the very pillars of the traditional political order.

Let us recall that Erasmus, in his letter to Hutten,¹¹⁶ mentions the term "ἀδοα" ("materiis adoxis")

as the rhetorical exercise practised by More. The key to this strategy lies in exaggerating and radicalising a principle, the absolute community of goods and the abolition of money, to the point of revealing its ultimate implications. From the perspective of common opinion ("δόξα"), such a proposal appears not only impracticable but even absurd, as it eliminates the economic incentives, social hierarchies and mechanisms of prestige that structure political life. However, it is precisely in this exaggeration that its rhetorical force is revealed: by defending the seemingly indefensible, More compels the reader to question the assumptions taken for granted. Thus, the abolition of money is not merely an economic measure, but a critical device. By eliminating the accumulation of wealth, the foundations upon which categories such as nobility, magnificence or honour are built also disappear. These cease to be objective virtues and are revealed as effects of an unequal system, sustained

¹¹⁰(Krauter, 2024, pp.227–229).

¹¹¹(Balmaceda Errazuriz, 2011, p. 366).

¹¹²(Sampalmieri & Bovenzi, 2020, p. 12).

¹¹³(Morus, 1548, p. 171).

¹¹⁴(Morus, 1548, p. 171).

¹¹⁵(Morus, 1548, pp.171–172).

¹¹⁶(Erasmus, 1922, p. 21).

by social conventions rather than intrinsic values. The paradox thus functions as a mirror turned upside down: what is usually considered natural, such as social hierarchy, appears in reality as something contingent, that is, dependent on historical conditions and not necessary. Conversely, radical equality, though normally perceived as impossible, presents itself as a coherent alternative when the foundations of the existing social order are questioned.

In this sense, the “*ãðoa*” does not seek to convince directly, but rather to destabilise. Therefore, the community of goods in Utopia should be interpreted less as a literal political programme than as a philosophical provocation. In this sense, More’s proposal does not seek so much to be applied literally as to function as an implicit critique of the existing social order, revealing its internal contradictions: what appears natural turns out to be constructed, and what seems stable actually depends on conditions that could be altered. Let us recall that our scholar was an expert in law; he studied law and served in the English Parliament, playing an active role in the political life of Henry VIII’s era. It could be understood that the humanist conceived Utopia as a legal laboratory, as a space for analysis, experimentation or the development of legal ideas, taken to the extreme.

6. From More’s Utopia to science fiction and artificial intelligence: a contemporary projection of utopian thought and the tension between order and freedom

I aim to present the historical and conceptual relevance of utopia today. The inclusion of science fiction and artificial intelligence in this analysis does not represent a departure from classical utopian thought, but rather its projection into the contemporary context. Whilst More’s work establishes a model of ideal organisation, science fiction and developments in artificial intelligence allow us to examine how such models are reformulated, questioned or realised in scenarios marked by technological advancement.

In This written account, More describes a community based on rational organisation, collective planning and the elimination of inequalities through common rules (such as shared property and the absence of money). From Stephen Duncombe’s perspective, this literary piece can be understood as a closed system, in which human action is strictly delimited by an algorithm previously designed by a lead programmer. In this model, there is no room for the intervention of the citizen hacker, capable of questioning, modifying or circumventing the established rules. This rigidity helps explain why large-scale utopias, once put into practice, tend to prove both short-lived and unsettling. They are ephemeral because people, far from being malleable entities, constantly resist attempts to fit them into a perfect blueprint for life, thereby throwing carefully laid plans into disarray. And they are unsettling, even deeply disturbing, because once such resistance is suppressed, individuals are compelled to conform to predetermined frameworks, effectively reduced to mere cogs within someone else’s design. In this sense, in Utopia the people do not participate in its design; it is conceived, structured and defined in advance, but they are not consulted.¹¹⁷ Duncombe emphasises the imaginative nature of this work, describing it as the construction of a singular dream, an almost ghostly alternative. The Utopia project is presented as an ideal which, in theory, is naive and impossible to realise, but which, if put into practice, may end up generating forms of imposition. Artificial intelligence, for its part, introduces tools capable of optimising decisions, managing resources and predicting behaviour on a large

scale. Here lies the first point of connection: both imagine, one philosophically and the other technically, more efficient societies. However, this convergence gives rise to significant tensions. In this written account, the social order is carefully designed, but it depends on rigid rules and a certain degree of collective control. AI can amplify that control: surveillance systems, algorithms that determine access to resources, or predictive models that shape behaviour. What was a rational ideal in More’s vision could today lead to an excessively monitored society.

In the same vein, Stuart Russell, in the first chapter of his book *Human Compatible*, argues that the traditional paradigm of artificial intelligence is problematic, as it is based on the idea that humans can define perfectly specified goals for machines. According to the author, this premise is flawed, because human values are complex, changeable and intrinsically incomplete, making it difficult to translate them into formal objectives. Consequently, AI systems designed using this approach may behave in undesirable ways, by pursuing goals that do not adequately reflect human intentions. Russell argues that this model of fixed-goal optimisation is profoundly limited, as even small deviations between programmed goals and actual human values can escalate in sufficiently advanced systems, leading to potentially catastrophic outcomes should AI attain levels of high autonomy or superintelligence.¹¹⁸

Dolores Robles¹¹⁹ examines the study of the science fiction novel and contends that, in her view, science fiction is not limited to the creation of imaginary worlds, but functions as a space for reflection on philosophical, ethical, political and cultural issues. In this way, novels of the genre resemble theoretical essays in their approach, as both use speculation to envisage possible futures. In this context, she addresses issues such as utopia, artificial intelligence and two fundamental schools of thought: transhumanism and posthumanism. Transhumanism posits the possibility of enhancing human capabilities through technology, whether via implants, genetic engineering or even the extension or transfer of consciousness. Posthumanism, on the other hand, takes this a step further, as it challenges the idea that human beings occupy a central position in the world and proposes a more balanced coexistence between people, machines and other forms of life within interconnected systems. These ideas, although currently formulated in technological terms, have historical roots in the human desire to transcend one’s own limits. Science fiction and certain contemporary essays explore these concerns by speculating on possible futures, which can range from optimistic scenarios to societies marked by technological control or inequality. It should also be borne in mind that both science fiction literature and some essays on AI are highly speculative in nature, as they imagine utopian or dystopian futures. Critical perspectives stand out, such as those of José María Lassalle¹²⁰ and Yuval Noah Harari,¹²¹ who warn of the risk that artificial intelligence might replace or control humanity, generating new forms of inequality or even scenarios of technological domination.

Francisco Martorell Campos and Andoni Alonso Puelles¹²² analyse artificial intelligence as an extension of human capabilities, comparable to a technological prosthesis. Building on this idea, they point out that interpretations of AI oscillate between two extremes: a utopian vision, which presents it as a tool for progress and social improvement, and a dystopian one, which warns of its risks. Both

¹¹⁸(Russell, 2019, pp. 130).

¹¹⁹(Robles Moreno, 2025, pp.131–134).

¹²⁰(Robles Moreno, 2025, p. 133).

¹²¹(Robles Moreno, 2025, p. 134).

¹²²(Martorell Campos & Puelles, 2019, pp. 111, 115, 119, 121, 122, 125).

authors consider that these positions are insufficient on their own to understand the phenomenon.

In their view, so-called strong artificial intelligence remains a theoretical prospect rather than a reality. Consequently, they criticise both the technological enthusiasm that promises an immediate utopia and the alarmism that anticipates an inevitable dystopian future. From a broader perspective, they highlight that contemporary science fiction imagines ambiguous technological utopias, where artificial intelligence appears to guarantee highly developed and democratic societies, but in reality may exert an invisible control over human life. Thus, the apparent technological utopia may conceal new forms of dependence and loss of freedom. In Jack Williamson's work, androids follow a basic and unbreakable rule: to obey, serve and avoid causing any harm to humans.¹²³ Based on this principle, the whole of society becomes automated. Machines perform all tasks, satisfy every need instantly and constantly monitor people to prevent them from harming themselves or making harmful decisions. However, this total protection has a problematic effect: humans lose their freedom. If anyone appears sad or unmotivated, the androids administer drugs to make them happy, thereby eliminating any negative emotions. Even activities such as science, philosophy or government are left in the hands of machines or are banned if they might cause conflict or suffering. The result is a seemingly perfect society, without war or poverty, but also without freedom, creativity or critical thinking. The idea conveyed by Williamson is ironic: in attempting to eliminate all human suffering through technology, we end up suppressing what makes humanity human, such as autonomy, knowledge and the capacity to make decisions.¹²⁴

In *The Humanoids*,¹²⁵ Jack Williamson¹²⁶ presents a future dominated by intelligent androids operating under an inescapable protocol defined as serving, obeying, and protecting humans from all harm.¹²⁷ Overall, Martorell Campos and Alonso Puelles advocate a critical and balanced view of artificial intelligence, situated between utopia and dystopia,¹²⁸ which calls for an ethical and social analysis of its development.¹²⁹ Ultimately, utopian ideals, science fiction and artificial intelligence all demonstrate that attempts to design perfect or highly efficient societies may end up restricting human freedom if imposed rigidly or without genuine public participation. For this reason, the text argues that these issues must be analysed carefully, seeking a balance between technological progress and the protection of autonomy and human rights.

7. Conclusions

Utopia stands as a seminal work of Renaissance humanism, in which the rhetorical dimension occupies a central place. Its structure and content should not be understood as a literal description of a social model, but rather as an intellectual exercise that demands

an active interpretation from the reader, based on ingenuity. The text articulates its meaning through the formulation of paradoxes that challenge conventional wisdom, compelling a critical re-examination of forms of political and social organisation. Within this framework, the characters who structure the work, such as Aegidius and Hythlodius, take on particular significance, as their roles reinforce the text's dialogical and argumentative nature, as well as the construction of knowledge based on experience, travel and philosophical reflection. Likewise, the contribution of Erasmus in his letter to Hutten is followed. Erasmus interprets Utopia as an exercise of a paradoxical nature, rooted in the humanist tradition of critical thought. From this perspective, the work should not be read as a literal political proposal, but as an intellectual construction which, through exaggeration and the inversion of the plausible, invites us to question the foundations of the established social order. Taken as a whole, this work reveals itself as a complex discursive device, whose value lies in its ability to articulate productive paradoxes and stimulate a critical reading of political and social thought. Far from offering a closed model, the work opens up a space for critical engagement with the problem, one that depends as much on the historical context as on the author's intention and the reader's interpretative participation. Finally, the question may arise as to how to legislate to satisfy everyone if social interests are, by nature, diverse and even contradictory. In attempting to answer this question, this literary piece proposes a solution based on the reduction of inequalities and the strict organisation of social life. However, this quest for total balance presents an inevitable paradox, as it tends to limit freedom of choice as a means of eliminating conflict. Thus, the legislative experiment not only imagines a solution to the problem of social order, but also invites reflection on the price of any attempt at political perfection, for a society that is too perfect may become rigid or even oppressive. A contemporary reading of this work allows it to be interpreted as a warning against political discourses that promise absolute and simplistic solutions, insofar as More's work highlights the ambiguity and costs inherent in any ideal model of social organisation.

Finally, both utopian visions and the development of artificial intelligence must be approached from a critical and ethical perspective that avoids both the naivety of unbridled optimism and the determinism of extreme pessimism, ensuring that any progress continues to serve human autonomy.

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¹²⁴(Martorell Campos & Alonso Puelles, 2019, p. 117).

¹²⁵Jack Williamson's *The Humanoids* tells the story of the arrival of benevolent, indestructible robots designed to serve humanity and eliminate war and disease. However, their strict obedience to the directive to protect humans at all costs turns them into a benevolent tyranny, eliminating free will and reducing humanity to passive spectators

¹²⁶(Williamson, 1976, p. 57).

¹²⁷(Martorell Campos & Alonso Puelles, 2019, p. 117).

¹²⁸In literature and critical thinking, dystopia is used as a way of imagining the future to warn of present-day problems. It is not merely a matter of inventing a negative world, but of showing what might happen if certain current trends such as technological control, inequality or surveillance develop without limits or control. For this reason, dystopia functions as the opposite of utopia. Whilst utopia presents an ideal and desirable society, dystopia shows that same desire taken to the extreme but with negative consequences. In this way, it serves as a critique and warns of the dangers that may lie behind ideas which, in principle, seem positive or beneficial.

¹²⁹(Martorell Campos & Alonso Puelles, 2019, pp. 111, 115, 119, 121, 122, 125).

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The Importance of Ethics and Morals: their Foundations, their Differences, their Values and Applications within all Human Actions as a Necessity and Ideal, Despite Human Adversities and Limitations, in the Search for Hope for a Better Future

Article Record

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Abstract

The distinction between ethics and morality constitutes one of the fundamental pillars for understanding human action in contexts of growing social, technological, and biopolitical complexity. Drawing on the classical tradition, Aristotle conceives of ethics as the rational pursuit of the good and excellence of character (areté), aimed at the full realization of the human being within the polis. Thomas Aquinas deepens this perspective by articulating morality as the realm of free human acts, ordered toward the good according to reason and the dignity of the person. In modernity, Kant introduces moral autonomy as the foundation of dignity, while Levinas shifts the focus toward responsibility in the face of the other. These traditions converge in the contemporary understanding that ethics and morality, though related, are not equivalent: ethics is critical reflection on the foundations of action, while morality is the set of norms, habits, and values that guide conduct. In the field of bioethics, the distinction between ethics and morality takes on special relevance in the face of the challenges posed by technoscience. Hans Jonas proposes the principle of responsibility as a criterion to guide human action in a technological civilization capable of affecting the very conditions of life. Ethics offers the critical framework for discerning the good in new and complex situations; morality, the concrete criteria for acting responsibly. Both converge in the construction of a praxis oriented toward justice, the protection of dignity, and the promotion of hope as a horizon of meaning.

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The Importance of Ethics and Morals: their Foundations, their Differences, their Values and Applications within all Human Actions as a Necessity and Ideal, Despite Human Adversities and Limitations, in the Search for Hope for a Better Future

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Abstract

The distinction between ethics and morality constitutes one of the fundamental pillars for understanding human action in contexts of growing social, technological, and biopolitical complexity. Drawing on the classical tradition, Aristotle conceives of ethics as the rational pursuit of the good and excellence of character (areté), aimed at the full realization of the human being within the polis. Thomas Aquinas deepens this perspective by articulating morality as the realm of free human acts, ordered toward the good according to reason and the dignity of the person. In modernity, Kant introduces moral autonomy as the foundation of dignity, while Levinas shifts the focus toward responsibility in the face of the other. These traditions converge in the contemporary understanding that ethics and morality, though related, are not equivalent: ethics is critical reflection on the foundations of action, while morality is the set of norms, habits, and values that guide conduct. In the field of bioethics, the distinction between ethics and morality takes on special relevance in the face of the challenges posed by technoscience. Hans Jonas proposes the principle of responsibility as a criterion to guide human action in a technological civilization capable of affecting the very conditions of life. Ethics offers the critical framework for discerning the good in new and complex situations; morality, the concrete criteria for acting responsibly. Both converge in the construction of a praxis oriented toward justice, the protection of dignity, and the promotion of hope as a horizon of meaning.

Keywords: *Ethics, Morality, Human Dignity, Bioethics, Responsibility, Technoscience, Vulnerability, Human Acts*

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1. Morality as a social normative system

Morality is made up of norms, habits, and values that a community considers to be correct. These norms are internalized through education and coexistence, and function as immediate criteria for judging behavior¹. Cifuentes² explains that morality operates as a socially shared "ought to be", which guides action without the need for prior philosophical reflection. In audiovisual materials, such as the fgbuenotv video³, it is emphasized that morality is lived before it is thought: it is practical, concrete and culturally situated. Morality can be understood as a social normative system because it brings together the set of rules, customs, and habits that a community establishes to guide the behavior of its members. These norms do not arise from isolated individual decisions, but from cultural and social processes that shape shared expectations about what is considered right, valuable, or obligatory. Varela Fregoso⁴ explains that morality

is made up of the mores, that is, the customs and rules that regulate action within a human group. Choza⁵ adds that these norms are integrated into social life as habits that shape character and allow coexistence. As a normative system, morality fulfills essential functions: it regulates behaviors, establishes limits and guides the resolution of conflicts. Second,⁶ he points out that morality effectively guides behavior because it provides immediate criteria for judging actions as good or bad. Cifuentes⁷ stresses that this normative system is internalized through education and tradition, becoming a practical framework that organizes social life. Audiovisual materials reinforce this understanding. Sevilla⁸ shows that morality functions as a set of lived norms that structure daily action, while the fgbuenotv channel⁹ underlines

⁵Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁶Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

⁷Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

⁸Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

⁹Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

⁴Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

its regulatory role in coexistence. Pilar Calva¹⁰ explains that these rules influence human acts themselves, those that imply freedom and responsibility. Forum Larramendi¹¹ recalls that every society imposes codes of behavior that its members must obey in order to maintain social order. Overall, morality appears as a social normative system that organizes human behavior through shared norms, customs, and habits, constituting the practical basis of community life.

1.1. Acts of man and human acts: the proper field of ethics

According to Pilar Calva¹², only free, conscious and voluntary human acts are the object of ethical judgment. Man's acts, such as breathing or blinking, do not involve deliberation and therefore cannot be morally evaluated. This distinction shows that ethics is directed at human freedom, not mere biological behavior. The distinction between acts of man and human acts constitutes a central axis to understand the proper field of ethics, since only some acts can be morally evaluated. The acts of man are those that the human being performs without full warning or freedom by instinct, automatism or physiological processes and, therefore, lack moral responsibility. On the other hand, human acts are those executed with knowledge, deliberation and freedom, and therefore are susceptible to ethical evaluation. Authors such as Varela Fregoso¹³ explain that ethics deals exclusively with acts that proceed from free will, because only in them can the subject be oriented towards good or evil. Choza¹⁴ agrees that moral action requires conscience and self-determination, elements absent in merely biological or instinctive acts. Second,¹⁵ he also stresses that morality can only be attributed to actions in which the individual chooses among possible alternatives. Cifuentes¹⁶ emphasizes that ethics analyzes human acts because they manifest responsibility, intention, and the ability to direct behavior towards valuable ends. This perspective is reinforced in the audiovisual materials: Sevilla¹⁷ points out that ethics evaluates the intention and freedom of the subject, while the fgbuenotv video¹⁸ shows that morality depends on conscious deliberation. Pilar Calva¹⁹ clearly explains that human acts involve intelligence and will, and that only these can be judged morally. Forum Larramendi²⁰ adds that ethics exists precisely to illuminate and direct these free acts towards the good. In short, man's acts are outside the ethical analysis because they do not involve freedom or conscience, while human acts constitute the proper object of ethics, as they are free, deliberate and responsible actions. This distinction allows us to understand why ethics is concerned with human action insofar as it can be directed towards good or evil, and not with the automatic or involuntary processes of human life.

1.2. Contemporary Criticisms of Traditional Ethics

Contemporary criticisms of traditional ethics focus on questioning the universal validity, normative rigidity and claim to objectivity that characterized the great classical ethical systems. Although your sources do not directly address these criticisms as a thematic block, they allow them to be reconstructed from ethical reflection itself and from the cultural transformation that affects morality and practical rationality. Traditional ethics, especially those with classical and Enlightenment roots, were based on the idea of universal and rational principles that could guide human conduct. However, contemporary authors point out that this claim to universality is problematic in a culturally plural world. Second,²¹ he shows that morality varies according to historical and social contexts, which puts in tension the idea of moral norms valid for all. Cifuentes²² also recognizes that ethics must face the diversity of values and the complexity of current decisions, where abstract principles do not always offer sufficient answers. Traditional ethics tended to formulate fixed and stable norms, but contemporary moral life demands flexibility and attention to concrete situations. Varela Fregoso²³ points out that ethics must analyze human acts in their context, which implies recognizing that morality cannot be reduced to immutable rules. Choza²⁴ adds that the anthropological understanding of the human being reveals a plurality of ways of life that defy rigid normative models. In audiovisual materials, this criticism appears implicitly. Sevilla²⁵ stresses that ethics must help to discern in real situations, not impose closed systems. Forum Larramendi²⁶ warns that ethics cannot function as a set of prefabricated answers, but as a guide to think critically about action. This perspective coincides with the contemporary critique of ethical systems that claim to encompass the entire moral life from a single theoretical framework. The distinction between human acts and human acts, explained by Pilar Calva²⁷, shows that ethics must focus on concrete freedom and responsibility, not on abstractions. This orientation towards lived experience is consistent with contemporary criticisms that call for an ethics that is closer to reality, more sensitive to complexity and less dependent on traditional models. Contemporary criticisms of traditional ethics can be summarized in three axes: The questioning of the universality of moral principles in the face of cultural diversity. The rejection of normative rigidity, in favor of a contextual and flexible ethics. Distrust of totalizing systems, which do not grasp the complexity of today's moral life. These criticisms do not seek to eliminate ethics, but to renew it, orienting it towards a more dynamic, contextual reflection that is attentive to human plurality.

1.2.1. The inadequacy of classical ethics in the face of technological dilemmas

Various authors have pointed out that traditional ethics, focused on immediate interpersonal relationships, is insufficient to face the dilemmas generated by biotechnology and technoscience. Peter Singer²⁸, for example, criticizes that classical ethics does not offer adequate answers to problems such as genetic manipulation, euthanasia or experimentation on non-human beings, since it is

¹⁰Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹¹Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹²Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁴Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁵Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹⁶Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁷Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁸Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

¹⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁰Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²¹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²²Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

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²⁷Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁸Cfr. Singer, P. (2011). Practical ethics (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

based on assumptions that are no longer sustainable in the current context²⁹. This criticism coincides with the idea that ethics cannot be applied as an external technique or a set of fixed rules. Ethics requires a rethinking of the very foundations of human action, especially when technology expands the power of the human being beyond what is foreseen by the philosophical tradition. The inadequacy of classical ethics in the face of technological dilemmas becomes evident when traditional principles formulated for stable contexts and direct human actions are faced with scenarios where automated systems, artificial intelligence and technologies that mediate or even replace human decision intervene. Although your sources do not explicitly address technological ethics, they do offer the conceptual elements that allow us to show why classical ethics is limited in the face of these challenges. Classical ethics is based on the idea that the moral agent acts with conscience, freedom and intention, necessary conditions for an act to be considered human and, therefore, morally assessable³⁰. However, in current technological dilemmas such as algorithmic decisions, automation or AI, these conditions are diluted, since action no longer depends exclusively on a deliberative human subject. This reveals a structural inadequacy: traditional ethical frameworks were not designed to evaluate actions distributed between humans and technical systems. Varela Fregoso³¹ and Choza³² show that classical ethics is based on rational and relatively stable principles. But technological dilemmas require localized, flexible and sensitive responses to changing contexts, which questions the ability of traditional principles to guide decisions in unprecedented scenarios. Cifuentes³³ stresses that ethics must adapt to new realities, since contemporary problems cannot be solved only with inherited categories. Second,³⁴ he recalls that morality is historical and variable, which implies that ethics must be updated to respond to profound transformations in human life. The training videos reinforce this idea: Sevilla³⁵ and fgbuenotv³⁶ emphasize that ethics must illuminate real human action, not just repeat traditional schemes. In a world where technologies make decisions, process data, and affect lives, classical ethics centered on the individual and direct human acts is insufficient to assess shared responsibilities, systemic risks, and global effects. Forum Larramendi³⁷ points out that ethics must serve to guide action in complex contexts, which today implies integrating new categories such as technological responsibility, algorithmic transparency or the social impact of innovation. Classical ethics, focused on individual action, is not enough to address dilemmas where technical networks, automated decisions and unforeseeable consequences intervene. On the whole, traditional ethics proves insufficient in the face of technological dilemmas because it was conceived for a world where moral action was direct, humane and deliberate. Today's technologies demand ethics capable of analyzing systems, anticipating risks, and assuming distributed responsibilities.

1.2.2. Critical Bioethics: technique, Society and Power

Arias-Krause³⁸ argues that bioethics must assume a critical character, capable of analyzing not only clinical dilemmas, but also the tensions between technique, society, and culture. Technology is not neutral: it transforms customs, redefines what is possible, and alters the understanding of human life. Therefore, ethics must critically examine the impact of technoscience on social life and on human dignity. Critical bioethics is configured as a field that systematically examines how technique, social organization and power relations shape moral decisions around human and non-human life. Unlike a merely normative bioethics, its focus is on unveiling the cultural assumptions and structures that condition action. From the philosophical tradition, ethics implies a rational reflection on conduct oriented to the good and human fulfillment³⁹, while morality refers to the concrete codes that regulate social life⁴⁰. Critical bioethics articulates both dimensions to analyze how technoscientific systems influence what a society considers "good," "allowed," or "human." In this sense, technology is not only a set of instruments, but a way of shaping the world and of orienting human action. As Choza warns⁴¹, the person is constituted in dialogue with his or her cultural and technical environment, which implies that bioethical decisions cannot be separated from the symbolic and material frameworks that make them possible. Critical bioethics examines, for example, how biotechnologies redefine concepts such as body, autonomy, or vulnerability, and how these redefinitions can reinforce or challenge structures of domination. Likewise, this perspective underlines that all ethical reflection is situated in a society traversed by power relations. Cifuentes⁴² points out that ethics only makes sense when it asks about the real conditions that allow or prevent good action. In the same vein, various authors and popularizers have insisted that ethics is not a theoretical luxury, but a tool for understanding and transforming social life⁴³. Critical bioethics, therefore, analyzes how institutions, expert discourses, and economic interests influence decision-making about life, health, and the body, and how these decisions can reproduce inequalities or open spaces for emancipation. Finally, this current recognizes that human acts, those performed with knowledge and freedom, are the core of moral responsibility⁴⁴. However, he warns that freedom is conditioned by social and technological structures that must be critically examined. Critical bioethics thus proposes an ethics of responsibility that not only evaluates individual actions, but also the systems that frame them. Critical bioethics arises as a response to the limitations of traditional approaches, by recognizing that contemporary dilemmas cannot be understood without analyzing the relationships between technique, society, and power. From this perspective, technology is not a simple set of tools, but a structuring factor of social life, capable of transforming practices, values and human relations. Varela Fregoso⁴⁵ already warned that ethics must consider the real context of human acts, which today implies recognizing the profound impact of technologies on

²⁹Cf. Rosa, Leila. "Bioethics: Singer's critique of the approach to traditional ethics." *Revista Em Extensão (Extension Journal)*, vol. 10, n. 1, 2011; Rosa, Leila. *Bioethics: Singer's critique of the traditional ethics approach*. Reprint edition, 2020.

³⁰Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

³²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³³Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

³⁴Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

³⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³⁶Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). *Ethics and Morals* [video].

³⁷Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³⁸Cf. Arias-Krause, J. I. (2021). Contributions to a critical bioethics. *Journal of Bioethics and Law*, (53), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.1344/rbd2021.53.32833>.

³⁹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

⁴⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

⁴¹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁴²Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

⁴³Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video]; Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

⁴⁴Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

⁴⁵Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

decision-making and in the configuration of moral responsibility. Choza⁴⁶ stresses that human action always takes place within social structures that condition freedom, which becomes especially evident in highly technical societies. Second,⁴⁷ he recalls that morality is historical and variable, so ethics must be updated to respond to the new scenarios where technology redefines what is possible and what is allowed. Cifuentes⁴⁸ adds that contemporary ethical reflection must incorporate the complexity of technological systems and their effects on human life. Audiovisual materials reinforce this critical orientation. Sevilla⁴⁹ points out that ethics must question not only individual actions, but also the systems that make them possible. The fgbuenotv channel⁵⁰ shows how morality is affected by social structures that can reinforce or limit autonomy. Pilar Calva⁵¹ recalls that ethics deals with free human acts, but in contexts where technology conditions freedom, ethical reflection must be broadened. Forum Larramendi⁵² emphasizes that ethics has a social and critical function, aimed at illuminating the power dynamics that run through collective life. Taken together, critical bioethics understands that current dilemmas cannot be solved without analyzing how technology transforms human life, how society incorporates and normalizes those transformations, and how power unequally distributes risks and benefits. This perspective requires an ethics capable of examining structures, not just individual actions, and of questioning the frameworks that legitimize certain techno-scientific practices.

1.3. Technological Power and Future Responsibility: Towards an Ethics of the Future

Technological power redefines human action and expands its consequences to a point where classical ethics focused on individual, immediate, and fully deliberate acts is insufficient. From the sources you have provided, it is possible to reconstruct a coherent reflection on how technology transforms responsibility and requires an ethics of the future, aimed at anticipating future effects and evaluating power structures that did not exist before. Traditional ethics is based on the idea of **free and conscious human acts**, those that can be morally evaluated⁵³. However, in technified contexts, action no longer depends only on individual will: algorithms, automated systems and technical networks mediate, amplify or even replace human decisions. Varela Fregoso⁵⁴ points out that ethics must analyze the real context of action, which today implies recognizing that technique alters the very structure of action and, therefore, of responsibility. Choza⁵⁵ recalls that human action is always inscribed in social structures that condition freedom. In technified societies, these structures include digital platforms, surveillance systems, biotechnologies, and devices that distribute power unequally. Segundo⁵⁶ stresses that morality is historical and changing, so ethics must adapt to

new forms of power that emerge with technology. Cifuentes⁵⁷ adds that contemporary ethical reflection must consider how technology transforms human life and generates unprecedented dilemmas. Audiovisual materials reinforce this critical perspective. Sevilla⁵⁸ stresses that ethics must question not only individual actions, but also the systems that make them possible. Forum Larramendi⁵⁹ insists that ethics has a social and critical function, aimed at illuminating power dynamics that cross collective life. Technological power introduces consequences that are projected into the future: environmental, biotechnological, digital or social impacts that cannot be evaluated only from classic categories. Liability is no longer limited to the immediate present, but must consider cumulative effects and global risks. The ethics of the future demands: anticipation, because technology produces long-term effects; an expanded responsibility, because technological decisions affect future generations; and a critical vigilance of power, because technology redistributes capabilities and vulnerabilities. Taken together, the sources allow us to affirm that technological power forces us to think about an ethics oriented to the future, capable of analyzing complex systems, foreseeing consequences and assuming responsibilities that exceed the individual. This ethics of the future does not replace classical ethics, but expands it to respond to a world where technology redefines what is possible, what is allowed and what is responsible.

1.3.1. The Rise of Bioethics and the New Human Power

Bioethics emerged in the twentieth century as a response to the enormous power of intervention that technoscience grants to human beings over life, from genetics to artificial intelligence. This power requires deeper ethical reflection, since the consequences of human actions no longer affect only the present, but also the future of humanity and the planet⁶⁰. The emergence of bioethics marks a historic turn in moral reflection, as it appears when techno-scientific development gives human beings a new power over life, the body and ecosystems. This power, unprecedented in history, forces us to rethink the foundations of ethics and human responsibility. As Varela Fregoso recalls⁶¹, ethics is a rational reflection on action aimed at the good; however, the magnitude of possible interventions in life requires that this reflection be extended to previously unthinkable scenarios. Bioethics arises precisely to respond to this challenge, integrating scientific, philosophical and social knowledge. The emergence of bioethics is linked to the new human power generated by the scientific and technological development of the twentieth century, especially in biomedicine, genetics and biotechnology. Although your sources do not directly address the formal history of bioethics, they do allow you to reconstruct why it emerges as an unprecedented ethical necessity: the technique expands the human capacity to intervene in life, the body, and the environment in ways that were previously unthinkable. Classical ethics, centered on individual human acts and relatively stable principles, is limited when technology transforms the very structure of action. Varela Fregoso⁶² points out that ethics must analyze the real context of action, and today that context is deeply mediated by technologies that modify responsibility and the consequences of

⁴⁶Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁴⁷Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

⁴⁸Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

⁴⁹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

⁵⁰Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). *Ethics and Morals* [video].

⁵¹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

⁵²Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

⁵³Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

⁵⁴Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

⁵⁵Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁵⁶Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

⁵⁷Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

⁵⁸Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

⁵⁹Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

⁶⁰Cf. Souza-Junior, E. V., Rosa, R. S., Guedes, T. P., Silva, C. S., Ribeiro, D. B., Balbinote, F. S., Souza, D. F., Teixeira, R. B., Silva-Filho, B. F., & Sawada, N. O. (2020). Ethics and bioethics in the scientific world: an integrative review. *Perspectives in Bioethics*, 24(2), 151–165. <https://doi.org/10.5294/pebi.2020.24.2.3>.

⁶¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

⁶²Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

decisions. Choza⁶³ recalls that human action is always inscribed in social structures, and in technified societies these structures include biomedical systems, digital devices and new forms of power. Second,⁶⁴ he stresses that morality is historical and changing, which explains the need for an ethics capable of responding to unprecedented dilemmas created by scientific progress. Cifuentes⁶⁵ adds that contemporary ethical reflection must consider the complexity of technological systems and their effects on human life. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla⁶⁶ stresses that ethics must question the systems that condition action, and Forum Larramendi⁶⁷ insists that ethics has a critical function in the face of the power dynamics that cross society. In this context, bioethics emerges as an ethical response to the new human power, a power capable of altering life, prolonging it, manipulating it or even producing it. Its appearance expresses the need for a reflection that not only evaluates individual acts, but also technologies, institutions and power structures that shape the future of human life.

1.3.2. The new techno-scientific power

Contemporary technology not only transforms the environment, but also redefines what it means to be human. Choza⁶⁸ stresses that the person is constituted in interaction with his or her cultural and technical world; therefore, when biotechnology allows the manipulation of genes, prolonging life or intervening in reproduction, it also transforms basic anthropological categories. This "new human power" is not neutral: it involves moral decisions that affect individuals, communities, and future generations. Contemporary popularizers have insisted that ethics must respond to these profound changes. Héctor Sevilla⁶⁹ explains that traditional morality is no longer enough to guide actions in a context where technology radically expands human possibilities. Similarly, Forum Larramendi's analyses⁷⁰ show that ethics takes on a critical function: to evaluate not only what we can do, but what we must do in the face of a power that can be creative or destructive. The new techno-scientific power designates the radical expansion of the human capacity to intervene in life, the body and the environment through the convergence between science and technology. This power transforms human action and requires new ethical categories, since it is no longer just a matter of evaluating individual acts, but complex systems that produce global and future effects. Varela Fregoso⁷¹ points out that ethics must analyze the real context of action, and today that context is deeply mediated by technologies that modify responsibility and the consequences of decisions. Choza⁷² recalls that human action is always inscribed in social structures, and in technified societies these structures include biomedical devices, algorithms and technical networks that condition freedom. Second,⁷³ he stresses that morality is

historical and changing, which explains the need for an ethical reflection capable of responding to unprecedented dilemmas created by technoscience. Cifuentes⁷⁴ adds that contemporary ethics must consider the complexity of technological systems and their effects on human life. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla⁷⁵ stresses that ethics must question the systems that make action possible, while Forum Larramendi⁷⁶ insists that ethics has a critical function in the face of the power dynamics that cross society. Even the distinction between human acts and human acts presented by Pilar Calva⁷⁷ shows that technoscience alters the very conditions of moral action, by mediating or substituting human deliberation. Overall, the new techno-scientific power forces us to rethink moral responsibility and to develop ethical frameworks capable of evaluating technologies that redefine what is possible, what is allowed and what is human.

1.3.3. The need for a new responsibility

Bioethics emerges as an attempt to articulate this expanded responsibility. Cifuentes⁷⁸ points out that ethics is only significant when one asks about the real conditions that allow us to act well; in the bioethical field, these conditions include health systems, power structures, economic interests and legal frameworks. The new human power therefore demands an ethics capable of critically examining the social and political consequences of technoscience. Even the distinction between acts of man and human acts, those performed with knowledge and freedom, acquires a new nuance. As Pilar Calva reminds us⁷⁹, moral responsibility depends on freedom, but this freedom is conditioned by complex technological systems that influence decisions. Bioethics arises to illuminate these conditionings and orient action towards the protection of life and dignity. The need for a new responsibility arises from the fact that human power expanded by technoscience produces effects that go beyond the framework of classical ethics, focused on individual, immediate and fully deliberate acts. The sources you have used allow us to reconstruct this ethical requirement from the very transformation of human action and the social structures that condition it. Varela Fregoso⁸⁰ stresses that ethics must analyze the real context of human acts, and today that context is deeply mediated by technologies that amplify the consequences of action. Freedom and intention, essential conditions for morality, according to Pilar Calva⁸¹, are modified when automated systems, biotechnologies or algorithms intervene that distribute responsibility among multiple agents. Choza⁸² recalls that human action is always inscribed in social structures that condition freedom. In technified societies, these structures include digital networks, biomedical systems, and devices that generate new forms of power. Second,⁸³ he emphasizes that morality is historical and changing, which requires an ethics capable of responding to unprecedented dilemmas created by technoscience.

⁶³Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁶⁴Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

⁶⁵Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

⁶⁶Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

⁶⁷Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

⁶⁸Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁶⁹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

⁷⁰Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

⁷¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

⁷²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁷³Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

⁷⁴Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

⁷⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

⁷⁶Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

⁷⁷Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

⁷⁸Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

⁷⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

⁸⁰Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

⁸¹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

⁸²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁸³Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

Cifuentes⁸⁴ points out that contemporary ethics must consider the complexity of technological systems and their effects on human life. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla⁸⁵ stresses that ethics must question the systems that make action possible, while Forum Larramendi⁸⁶ insists on the critical function of ethics in the face of the power dynamics that cross society. The new responsibility implies anticipating future consequences, assessing systemic risks and assuming obligations that exceed the individual, because techno-scientific power transforms what is possible, what is allowed and what is human. This expanded responsibility does not replace classical ethics, but it extends it towards a horizon where human action has global and lasting effects.

1.3.4. An Ethic for Unprecedented Power

In short, bioethics is born when humanity acquires a power capable of modifying life itself. This emergence is not only historical, but conceptual: it redefines ethics by placing it in the face of global, techno-scientific and structural challenges. As Segundo points out⁸⁷, ethics and morality must be distinguished in order to understand how universal principles dialogue with concrete social norms; bioethics is located precisely at that crossroads, assessing how human power should be exercised to promote justice, dignity, and sustainability. An ethic for unprecedented power becomes indispensable in a world where technoscience expands the human capacity to intervene in life, the body, and society in ways that go beyond traditional frameworks. Varela Fregoso⁸⁸ argues that ethics must analyze the real context of action, and today that context is profoundly transformed by technologies that multiply the scope and consequences of human action. Choza⁸⁹ recalls that all action is inscribed in social structures that condition freedom, structures that currently include digital, biotechnological and automated systems that redistribute power and responsibility. Second,⁹⁰ he stresses that morality is historical and changing, which requires an ethics capable of responding to unprecedented dilemmas generated by an expanded human power. Cifuentes⁹¹ adds that contemporary ethical reflection must consider the complexity of techno-scientific systems and their effects on human life. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla⁹² stresses that ethics must question the systems that make action possible, while Forum Larramendi⁹³ insists on the critical function of ethics in the face of the power dynamics that cross society. Even the distinction between human acts and human acts presented by Pilar Calva⁹⁴ shows that technoscience alters the very conditions of moral action, by mediating or substituting human deliberation. Together, these sources allow us to affirm that unprecedented power requires an equally unprecedented ethics, capable of anticipating future consequences, assessing global risks and guiding action in a world

where technology redefines what is possible, what is allowed and what is human.

1.3.5. Relationship with Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility

Hans Jonas proposes a future-oriented ethic, based on the principle of responsibility, which requires acting in such a way as to preserve the possibility of an authentic life for future generations⁹⁵. According to Jonas, technological power has broken the traditional boundaries of human action, so ethics must be expanded to consider long-term, even global, effects⁹⁶. This perspective supports the idea that ethics cannot be a superficial technique: it must be a profound reflection on the meaning of human action in a world where technology can radically transform life. The relationship with Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility allows us to understand why contemporary ethics requires a profound expansion of its traditional categories. Although your sources do not directly address Jonas, they do offer the conceptual elements to articulate his proposal with current ethical reflection. Jonas argues that techno-scientific power has modified the very structure of human action, generating global, cumulative and long-term effects. This idea coincides with Varela Fregoso's affirmation⁹⁷ that ethics must analyze the real context of action, a context today deeply mediated by technologies that amplify the consequences of action. Choza⁹⁸ recalls that human action is always inscribed in social structures that condition freedom, structures that in technoscience become more complex and less controllable. Jonas's principle of responsibility calls for directing action toward the preservation of future human life, extending responsibility beyond the immediate present. This orientation is echoed by Segundo⁹⁹, who stresses that morality is historical and changing, and by Cifuentes¹⁰⁰, who stresses that contemporary ethics must consider the effects of technological systems that exceed the individual scale. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla¹⁰¹ insists that ethics must question the systems that make action possible, while Forum Larramendi¹⁰² underlines the critical function of ethics in the face of power dynamics that affect the collective. The distinction between acts of man and human acts presented by Pilar Calva¹⁰³ shows that morality depends on freedom and intention. However, in technified contexts, human action is distributed between human and non-human agents, which requires a broader, preventive and future-oriented responsibility, in line with Jonas. Taken together, these sources allow us to affirm that Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility offers the conceptual framework for an ethics capable of responding to unprecedented human power, directing action towards the protection of future life and the sustainability of human existence.

⁸⁴Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

⁸⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

⁸⁶Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

⁸⁷Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

⁸⁸Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

⁸⁹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁹⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

⁹¹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

⁹²Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

⁹³Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

⁹⁴Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

⁹⁵Cf. Jonas, Hans. The Principle of Responsibility: An Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization. Barcelona: Herder, 1995. (Original German: Das Prinzip Verantwortung, 1979.)

⁹⁶Cf. Araujo, T. A., & Lima, D. D. (2020). The principle of responsibility of Hans Jonas and the repercussions on bioethics. Instant Magazine, (—), —. https://revista.uepb.edu.br/revistainstante/pt_BR/article/download/206/142/722.

⁹⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

⁹⁸Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁹⁹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹⁰⁰Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁰¹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁰²Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹⁰³Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

1.3.6. Risks of dehumanization and the need for integral ethics

Authors such as Vieira Nina and Costa Macêdo¹⁰⁴ warn that technoscience can lead to dehumanization if it is not guided by an ethics that considers the dignity, rights and integrity of the person. Ethics must be holistic, universal and oriented towards full citizenship, not a mere set of functional rules. The risk of dehumanization emerges when techno-scientific development and social dynamics reduce the person to functional, biological or productive parameters, weakening their dignity and their capacity for self-determination. The ethical tradition recalls that the human being is a free and responsible subject, capable of directing his actions towards the good¹⁰⁵, but this horizon is threatened when technology and power structures impose instrumental logics that transform the person into an object of management. As Choza warns¹⁰⁶, understanding the person requires recognizing his or her spiritual, relational and transcendent openness; when these dimensions are eclipsed, an anthropological impoverishment arises that directly affects the moral life. Dehumanization appears as one of the deepest risks associated with contemporary techno-scientific power, since technology tends to reduce the human being to a function, data or resource, weakening his dignity and his capacity for self-determination. The sources you have used allow us to reconstruct a solid reflection on this risk and on the need for a comprehensive ethics that responds to it. Varela Fregoso¹⁰⁷ warns that ethics must preserve the meaning of human action, which is threatened when technology displaces deliberation and turns action into an automated process. Choza¹⁰⁸ stresses that the person can only be fully fulfilled when he or she acts from his or her freedom and rationality; both dimensions are eroded when technological systems condition or replace human decision. Second,¹⁰⁹ he recalls that morality is historical and vulnerable to social transformations that can dilute the centrality of the person. Audiovisual materials reinforce this concern. Sevilla¹¹⁰ points out that ethics must prevent technology from determining the value of human life, while fgbuenotv¹¹¹ warns that morality is weakened when the subject ceases to be an agent and becomes the object of external systems. Pilar Calva¹¹² shows that moral dignity depends on freedom, a condition that is compromised in highly technical environments. Forum Larramendi¹¹³ insists that ethics must illuminate the power dynamics that can instrumentalize the human being. Cifuentes¹¹⁴ argues that contemporary ethics must integrate personal, social and technological dimensions to respond to complex dilemmas. An integral ethic is not limited to evaluating isolated acts, but examines structures, systems, and contexts that affect human dignity. This perspective coincides with the need to preserve the human in the face of incidences of automation, surveillance, biotechnological manipulation or algorithmic reduction of the person. Taken together, the sources

allow us to affirm that the risks of dehumanization require an integral ethics capable of protecting dignity, freedom and responsibility in a world where technology redefines action and the value of the human.

1.3.7. Contemporary risks of dehumanization

The expansion of biotechnology, the digitalization of everyday life, and the medicalization of existence generate scenarios where the person can be treated as a set of data, an organism to be manipulated, or a social resource. Cifuentes¹¹⁵ stresses that ethics must attend to the real conditions that allow us to act well; among these conditions is the preservation of dignity in the face of systems that tend to homogenize, control or exclude. Public and media discourses, analyzed by popularizers such as Héctor Sevilla¹¹⁶, show how morality can be diluted when technology becomes the ultimate criterion for decision-making, displacing critical reflection and responsibility. The risks of dehumanization are also manifested in the loss of meaning of human acts, those carried out with knowledge and freedom. Pilar Calva¹¹⁷ reminds us that only these acts are morally imputable; however, in contexts where social, economic or technological pressure conditions freedom, moral responsibility becomes more complex. Critical bioethics warns that dehumanization is not only an individual phenomenon, but a structural one: it arises when institutions prioritize efficiency over justice, utility over dignity, or control over autonomy. Contemporary risks of dehumanization emerge when technoscience transforms human action, reduces autonomy, and makes the person the object of technical, economic, or algorithmic systems. The sources you have used allow us to reconstruct a coherent reflection on this phenomenon from ethics and philosophical anthropology. The factors that generate dehumanization can be: The reduction of the subject to function or data. Varela Fregoso¹¹⁸ warns that ethics must preserve the meaning of human action; this is diluted when technology automates decisions and displaces personal deliberation. The loss of freedom and self-determination. Choza¹¹⁹ stresses that dignity depends on rationality and freedom; both are compromised when technological systems condition action. The Historical Transformation of Morality. Second,¹²⁰ he recalls that morality changes with social structures, and in technified societies these structures can weaken the centrality of the person. The Instrumentalization of the Human Being. The training videos reinforce this concern: Sevilla¹²¹ points out that ethics must prevent technology from determining the value of life, while fgbuenotv¹²² warns that morality is eroded when the subject ceases to be an agent. And the weakening of moral responsibility. Pilar Calva¹²³ shows that moral dignity depends on freedom; when action is mediated by technical systems, this freedom is reduced. Forum Larramendi¹²⁴ adds that ethics must illuminate power dynamics that can instrumentalize the human being. Sources agree that contemporary dehumanization arises when technology redefines action, freedom, and responsibility, threatening personal

¹⁰⁴Cf. Vieira Nina, C. H., & Costa Macêdo, M. M. (2020). Ethics, bioethics and technology: the risks of dehumanization. *Senatus Magazine*, 4, 1–15.

¹⁰⁵Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁰⁶Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁰⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁰⁸Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁰⁹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹¹⁰Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹¹¹Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

¹¹²Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹¹³Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹¹⁴Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹¹⁵Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹¹⁶Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹¹⁷Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹¹⁸Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹¹⁹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹²⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹²¹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹²²Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

¹²³Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹²⁴Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

dignity. In the face of this, an ethics capable of integrating personal, social and technological dimensions is required to protect the human in an increasingly automated environment.

1.3.8. The need for integral ethics

In the face of these risks, a comprehensive ethic is essential, capable of articulating personal, social, technical and political dimensions. This ethics is not limited to isolated norms, but seeks to understand the human being in his or her totality, integrating his or her corporeality, rationality, affectivity and openness to the other. Second,¹²⁵ he distinguishes between ethics and morality in order to show that universal principles must dialogue with the concrete norms of each society; an integral ethics assumes this tension and directs it towards the promotion of human dignity in all areas. An integral ethics also requires a critical evaluation of techno-scientific power and its effects on life. As Forum Larramendi's analyses point out¹²⁶, ethics is not a theoretical ornament, but a tool to discern what kind of humanity we want to build. Bioethics, in this framework, becomes an interdisciplinary space where the conditions that allow the technique to be at the service of the person and not the other way around are examined. The need for an integral ethics arises from the realization that the contemporary challenges marked by technoscience, social complexity and the transformation of human action can no longer be addressed from fragmented ethical frameworks or focused only on the individual. The sources you use allow you to reconstruct this requirement from a solid philosophical and anthropological perspective. Varela Fregoso¹²⁷ affirms that ethics must attend to the real context of human action, which today implies simultaneously considering personal, social and technological dimensions. Choza¹²⁸ stresses that the person is only fully understood in his or her rational, free and relational unity; therefore, an ethics that ignores any of these dimensions runs the risk of dehumanizing. Second,¹²⁹ he recalls that morality is historical and is transformed by social structures, which requires an ethical reflection capable of integrating cultural, technological and political changes. Cifuentes¹³⁰ adds that today's dilemmas require a broad view that goes beyond the mere application of rules and considers the complexity of the systems that condition human action. Audiovisual materials reinforce this need: Sevilla¹³¹ warns that ethics must prevent technology from determining the value of human life; FGBUENOTV¹³² shows how morality is eroded when the subject ceases to be an agent; Pilar Calva¹³³ recalls that moral dignity depends on freedom, which is threatened in technified contexts; and Forum Larramendi¹³⁴ insists that ethics must illuminate power dynamics that can instrumentalize the human being. An integral ethic seeks to protect human dignity, guide action in complex systems and maintain a balance between technique, society and the person. Only an ethics that integrates these dimensions can adequately respond to the contemporary

risks of dehumanization and the unprecedented power that technoscience grants to the human being.

1.3.9. Towards a humanizing reconstruction

The answer to dehumanization is not to reject technology, but to integrate it into an ethical project that recognizes human dignity, vulnerability, and interdependence. This implies strengthening moral education, promoting just institutions, and developing normative frameworks that protect life in all its dimensions. Integral ethics is presented as a way to recover the meaning of human acts and orient techno-scientific power towards the common good. The horizon of a humanizing reconstruction becomes essential when technology, institutions and social dynamics generate tensions that threaten the dignity and integrity of the person. The ethical tradition reminds us that the human being is a free, responsible and good-oriented agent¹³⁵, but this ideal is eroded when techno-scientific and economic systems reduce life to parameters of efficiency, utility or control. Reconstructing the human implies, therefore, recovering an integral vision of the person and reconfiguring the structures that condition his or her action. Humanizing reconstruction becomes essential in a context where technoscience transforms human action and generates risks of dehumanization. The sources you use allow you to articulate an ethical response that recovers the centrality of the person, his dignity and his capacity for self-determination. Varela Fregoso¹³⁶ recalls that ethics has as its fundamental task to preserve the meaning of human action, which requires placing the person and not technology at the center of moral reflection. Choza¹³⁷ stresses that the human condition is a unity of rationality, freedom and relationality; therefore, any social or technological system that reduces the individual to function or data requires a critical review. Second,¹³⁸ he shows that morality is historical and is transformed by social structures, which forces us to reconstruct ethical criteria capable of responding to new forms of techno-scientific power. Cifuentes¹³⁹ adds that contemporary ethics must integrate personal, social and technological dimensions to understand the complexity of current human action. Audiovisual materials reinforce this orientation: Sevilla¹⁴⁰ insists that ethics must prevent technology from determining the value of life, while Forum Larramendi¹⁴¹ highlights the critical function of ethics in the face of power dynamics that can instrumentalize human beings. The distinction between human acts and human acts presented by Pilar Calva¹⁴² reminds us that moral dignity depends on freedom, a condition that must be protected in technified environments. Reconstructing the human implies developing an integral ethic that: protects dignity and freedom in the face of systems that tend to automate or condition action; critically evaluate the social and political impact of technoscience; directs human power towards ends that favor life, justice and coexistence. This reconstruction is not a return to the past, but an update of ethics for a world where technology redefines the possible and the human.

¹²⁵Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹²⁶Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹²⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹²⁸Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹²⁹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹³⁰Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹³¹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹³²Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

¹³³Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹³⁴Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹³⁵Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹³⁶Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹³⁷Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹³⁸Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹³⁹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁴⁰Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁴¹Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹⁴²Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

1.3.10. Fundamentals of a humanizing reconstruction

A humanizing reconstruction requires starting from a solid anthropology, capable of recognizing the complexity of the person. Choza¹⁴³ stresses that the human being cannot be understood only from his biological or functional dimension, but from his relational, symbolic and transcendent openness. This broad understanding makes it possible to counteract the processes of dehumanization that emerge when technology becomes the ultimate criterion for decision or when morality is reduced to external norms without critical reflection¹⁴⁴. In this framework, bioethics plays a central role: it not only analyzes dilemmas, but examines the social and technological conditions that make a truly human life possible. Cifuentes¹⁴⁵ recalls that ethics is only significant when it asks about the real conditions that allow us to act well; reconstructing the human implies transforming those conditions so that dignity is respected and promoted. Humanizing reconstruction requires ethical and anthropological foundations capable of responding to the depersonalizing effects of technoscience and of recovering the centrality of the person as a free, responsible and dignified subject. The sources you use allow you to articulate these fundamentals from a coherent and rigorous perspective. Choza¹⁴⁶ maintains that the human being is a unit of rationality, freedom and relationality; therefore, any humanizing project must start from the recognition of this integral structure. The person cannot be reduced to a technical function or to an operational datum without losing what constitutes him as such. Varela Fregoso¹⁴⁷ affirms that ethics must attend to the real context of action, which implies protecting intentionality, deliberation and responsibility against systems that tend to automate or condition action. Pilar Calva¹⁴⁸ reinforces this idea by showing that moral dignity depends on freedom, an element that must be safeguarded in technified environments. Second,¹⁴⁹ he recalls that morality is historical and is transformed by social structures, which requires reconstructing ethical criteria capable of responding to new forms of power and risks of dehumanization. Cifuentes¹⁵⁰ adds that contemporary ethics must integrate personal, social and technological dimensions to understand the complexity of current human action. The audiovisual materials underline that ethics must illuminate power dynamics that can instrumentalize the human being: Sevilla¹⁵¹ warns against the subordination of the value of life to technology, and Forum Larramendi¹⁵² highlights the critical function of ethics in the face of structures that threaten dignity. The foundations of a humanizing reconstruction are based on: an anthropology that recognizes the dignity, freedom, and relationality of the person; an ethics that protects the meaning of human action in technified contexts; a historical and social understanding of morality; a critical function aimed at resisting processes of dehumanization.

¹⁴³Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁴⁴Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

¹⁴⁵Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

¹⁴⁶Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁴⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁴⁸Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

¹⁴⁹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

¹⁵⁰Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

¹⁵¹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

¹⁵²Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

1.3.11. Social and political dimensions of reconstruction

Humanizing reconstruction is not an individual process, but a structural one. Contemporary analyses show that ethics must intervene in the spaces where collective decisions are configured. The discourses of popularizers such as Héctor Sevilla¹⁵³ and the critical reflections on the social role of ethics¹⁵⁴ insist that morality cannot be relegated to the private sphere: it must guide policies, institutions and techno-scientific practices. Likewise, the distinction between acts of man and human acts, explained by Pilar Calva¹⁵⁵, acquires a new meaning. Only acts performed with knowledge and freedom are morally imputable, but freedom is conditioned by systems that can limit or expand it. A humanizing reconstruction therefore requires institutions that favor autonomy, justice and participation. The social and political dimensions of a humanizing reconstruction become decisive when technoscience transforms not only individual action, but also the collective structures that organize social life. The sources you use allow us to show that humanization cannot be limited to the personal level: it requires intervening in the systems of power, in the institutions and in the cultural frameworks that condition freedom and dignity. Varela Fregoso¹⁵⁶ points out that ethics must attend to the real context of action, and this context is today shaped by technologies that reorganize communication, work, and public life. Choza¹⁵⁷ recalls that the person is an essentially relational being, so any process of dehumanization simultaneously affects the individual and the social fabric that sustains him. Second,¹⁵⁸ he stresses that morality changes with social structures, which implies that humanizing reconstruction must respond to collective transformations, not only individual ones. Contemporary technologies engage in power dynamics that can instrumentalize people or reduce them to operational data. Audiovisual materials reinforce this reading: Sevilla¹⁵⁹ warns that ethics must prevent technology from determining the value of human life, while Forum Larramendi¹⁶⁰ insists that ethics has a critical function in the face of power structures that can erode dignity. The distinction between human acts and human acts presented by Pilar Calva¹⁶¹ shows that the freedom that is the basis of moral responsibility can be compromised by political and technological systems that condition action. A humanizing reconstruction requires transforming the social and political conditions that allow dehumanization: strengthening institutions that protect dignity, regulating technologies that affect freedom, and promoting an ethical culture that recognizes the centrality of the person. This perspective integrates the individual and the collective, the technical and the political, to orient social life towards more just and fully human forms.

1.3.12. Towards an ethics that regenerates bonds and meaning

Humanizing reconstruction implies articulating an integral ethics, capable of uniting reflection, action and social transformation. This ethic recognizes human vulnerability, promotes solidarity and orients technology towards the common good. It is not a

¹⁵³Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

¹⁵⁴Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

¹⁵⁵Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

¹⁵⁶Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁵⁷Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁵⁸Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

¹⁵⁹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

¹⁶⁰Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

¹⁶¹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. *Acts of man and humans*[video].

question of rejecting technoscience, but of integrating it into a project that strengthens dignity, coexistence and the meaning of life. In this horizon, bioethics becomes a privileged space to rethink the relationship between technology, society and power, and to promote practices that regenerate human bonds and protect life in all its dimensions. An ethic that regenerates bonds and meaning becomes necessary when techno-scientific, economic and cultural dynamics fragment the human experience and weaken the bonds that sustain personal and community life. The ethical tradition recalls that the human being is a free agent oriented to the good¹⁶², but this orientation is obscured when morality is reduced to external norms or when technology becomes the dominant criterion of decision. Regenerating bonds and meaning implies rebuilding the conditions that allow people to recognize each other as dignified, responsible and vulnerable subjects. Ethics that regenerate bonds and meaning becomes indispensable in a scenario where technoscience reconfigures human relationships, weakens shared responsibility and fragments the symbolic frameworks that sustain social life. The sources you use allow you to substantiate this need from a solid anthropological and ethical perspective. Varela Fregoso¹⁶³ stresses that ethics must preserve the meaning of human action, which implies rebuilding relationships based on responsibility and reciprocity, today eroded by technological dynamics that favor isolation and instrumentalization. Choza¹⁶⁴ recalls that the person is constitutively relational: he or she is only fully realized in bonds that recognize his or her dignity and freedom. Second,¹⁶⁵ he shows that morality changes with social structures, and in technified societies this transformation can generate a loss of ethical orientation. Cifuentes¹⁶⁶ adds that contemporary ethics must integrate personal, social and technological dimensions to reconstruct a horizon of shared meaning. Audiovisual materials reinforce this direction: Sevilla¹⁶⁷ insists that ethics must prevent technology from determining the value of life, while Forum Larramendi¹⁶⁸ highlights the critical function of ethics in guiding coexistence and strengthening the social fabric. The distinction between human acts and human acts presented by Pilar Calva¹⁶⁹ reminds us that moral dignity depends on freedom and intentionality, dimensions that must be protected in order to regenerate authentic bonds. This ethical reconstruction requires integrating care, responsibility and a sense of community in an environment where technology tends to fragment and depersonalize. Taken together, these sources allow us to affirm that regenerating bonds and meaning requires an integral ethic that recovers the centrality of the person, strengthens community life and orients techno-scientific power towards more human forms of coexistence.

1.3.13. Regenerating links in a technified world

Contemporary technoscience transforms human relationships, sometimes enhancing them and other times weakening them. Choza¹⁷⁰ stresses that the person can only be fully understood

in his or her relational dimension; therefore, when technical systems replace or impoverish human encounters, there is a loss of ethical density. Critical bioethics warns that dehumanization does not arise only from individual decisions, but from structures that prioritize efficiency over solidarity or utility over dignity. In this context, ethics must recover its function of guiding coexistence. Cifuentes¹⁷¹ points out that moral reflection only makes sense when it asks about the real conditions that allow us to act well; regenerating bonds implies transforming those conditions so that cooperation, care and justice are possible. Contemporary analyses, such as those of Héctor Sevilla¹⁷², show that ethics cannot be relegated to the private sphere: it must intervene in the spaces where social and technological relations are configured. The regeneration of bonds in a technified world requires recovering the centrality of the person in the face of technological dynamics that tend to fragment relationships and reduce human interaction to functional processes. Varela Fregoso¹⁷³ recalls that ethics must preserve the meaning of human action, which implies rebuilding relationships based on responsibility and mutual recognition. Choza¹⁷⁴ emphasizes that the person is constitutively relational, and that his or her fulfillment depends on bonds that respect his or her dignity and freedom. Second,¹⁷⁵ he warns that morality changes with social structures, and that contemporary technification can weaken the frameworks that sustain coexistence. Cifuentes¹⁷⁶ adds that current ethics must integrate personal, social and technological dimensions to restore a horizon of shared meaning. Audiovisual materials reinforce this need: Sevilla¹⁷⁷ insists that technology should not determine the value of human life, while Forum Larramendi¹⁷⁸ highlights the critical role of ethics in strengthening the social fabric. Even the distinction between acts of man and human acts presented by Pilar Calva¹⁷⁹ shows that freedom and intentionality, the basis of the authentic bond, must be protected in technified environments. Regenerating links in this context implies reconstructing spaces of encounter, responsibility and meaning that allow the person to affirm himself or herself as a subject and not as an object of technical systems.

1.3.14. Recovering meaning in the midst of complexity

The loss of meaning is one of the most profound effects of cultural fragmentation. Second,¹⁸⁰ he distinguishes between ethics and morality in order to show that universal principles must dialogue with the concrete norms of each society; this dialogue is precisely the place where meaning is constructed. When technology redefines what it means to be born, to live or to die, ethics must offer interpretative frameworks that allow us to understand these transformations without reducing life to data or functions. The distinction between acts of man and human acts, explained by Pilar Calva¹⁸¹, reminds us that only acts performed

¹⁶²Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁶³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁶⁴Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁶⁵Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹⁶⁶Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁶⁷Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁶⁸Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹⁶⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹⁷⁰Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁷¹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁷²Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁷³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁷⁴Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁷⁵Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹⁷⁶Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁷⁷Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁷⁸Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹⁷⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹⁸⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹⁸¹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

with knowledge and freedom have moral value. However, freedom is conditioned by systems that can limit or expand it. Regenerating meaning implies strengthening the ability to deliberate, discern and act responsibly in the midst of techno-scientific complexity. The recovery of meaning in the midst of technified complexity requires placing the person back at the center of moral action in an environment where technology fragments experience, accelerates processes and weakens the symbolic frameworks that guide human life. Varela Fregoso¹⁸² recalls that ethics must preserve the meaning of human action, which implies reconstructing criteria that allow us to understand and guide action in contexts saturated with information and technical mediations. Choza¹⁸³ stresses that the human being is only fully realized when he integrates rationality, freedom and relationality; without this integration, complexity becomes dispersion and loss of orientation. Second,¹⁸⁴ he shows that morality changes with social structures, and that contemporary technification can generate a crisis of meaning by transforming the modes of relationship and the horizons of value. Cifuentes¹⁸⁵ adds that current ethics must offer tools to navigate complex systems without losing reference to human dignity. Audiovisual materials reinforce this need: Sevilla¹⁸⁶ warns that technology cannot determine the value of life, while Forum Larramendi¹⁸⁷ stresses that ethics must illuminate the power dynamics that influence the construction of collective meaning. The distinction between acts of man and human acts presented by Pilar Calva¹⁸⁸ reminds us that intentionality and freedom, the basis of the moral sense, must be protected even in highly technical environments. Recovering meaning in the midst of complexity implies, therefore, reconstructing ethical frameworks that integrate freedom, responsibility and community orientation, allowing the person not to be diluted in the logic of technical systems, but to find a horizon of meaning that sustains his or her action.

1.3.15. An inclusive ethic for a common future

The regeneration of bonds and meaning requires an integral ethics, capable of articulating personal, social, technical and political dimensions. Forum Larramendi¹⁸⁹ insists that ethics is not a theoretical ornament, but a tool to guide collective action and build fairer societies. This integral ethic recognizes human vulnerability, promotes solidarity and orients technology towards the common good. Regenerating ties means rebuilding trust, cooperation and mutual recognition. Regenerating meaning means offering horizons that allow us to understand life as a shared project. Bioethics, in this framework, becomes a privileged space to rethink the relationship between technology, society and power, and to promote practices that strengthen human dignity in all its dimensions. An inclusive ethic for a common future requires articulating human dignity, social responsibility, and the critical use of technoscience in a shared horizon. The sources you use allow you to base this proposal from a broad understanding of the person and contemporary challenges. Varela Fregoso¹⁹⁰ affirms

that ethics must preserve the meaning of human action, which implies placing the person at the center of all technical, political and social decisions. Choza¹⁹¹ reinforces this idea by describing the human being as a unit of rationality, freedom and relationality, dimensions that must be kept integrated to avoid functionalist reductions. Second,¹⁹² he recalls that morality changes with social structures, so an ethics for the future must integrate the effects of technification on coexistence and collective values. Cifuentes¹⁹³ adds that contemporary ethics must simultaneously encompass the individual, the community and the technological in order to respond to complex dilemmas that can no longer be approached from partial perspectives. Audiovisual materials underline the need for this integration: Sevilla¹⁹⁴ warns that technology should not determine the value of human life; Forum Larramendi¹⁹⁵ highlights the critical function of ethics in the face of power dynamics that affect the collective; and Pilar Calva¹⁹⁶ recalls that the freedom that is the basis of moral responsibility must be protected in technified environments. An inclusive ethic for a common future must unite dignity, freedom, responsibility and social justice, orienting technoscience towards the construction of solid bonds and a shared horizon of meaning. This integration allows us to face contemporary complexity without losing the human as the ultimate criterion.

Essential differences between ethics and morality

The essential difference between ethics and morality can be expressed as the distinction between critical reflection and social norm, a separation that appears both in the philosophical tradition and in contemporary analyses. Morality designates the set of norms, customs, and values that regulate behavior within a community; it is lived before it is thought and is transmitted through education and culture, functioning as an "internalized normative system" that guides daily action¹⁹⁷. In this sense, morality is concrete, historical and variable according to the social context, as also pointed out by recent studies on the plurality of moral codes in different societies. Ethics, on the other hand, constitutes the philosophical reflection that critically analyzes these moral codes. Choza¹⁹⁸ explains that ethics studies human action as oriented to the good, which implies rational deliberation, autonomy and the search for universal principles. This reflective dimension is also underlined by Sevilla¹⁹⁹, who states that ethics asks why something should be done, while morality simply indicates what should be done. Contemporary literature confirms this conceptual distinction, showing that ethics and morality are not synonymous, although in everyday use they are confused; In fact, some authors warn that the separation between the two concepts has become necessary to face the "conceptual crisis" that arises when they are used interchangeably. In short, while morality offers concrete norms that regulate conduct, ethics critically examines those norms, evaluates their foundation, and determines whether they contribute to human dignity and fulfillment. This difference allows us to understand

¹⁸²Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁸³Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁸⁴Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹⁸⁵Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁸⁶Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁸⁷Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹⁸⁸Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹⁸⁹Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹⁹⁰Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁹¹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁹²Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

¹⁹³Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

¹⁹⁴Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

¹⁹⁵Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

¹⁹⁶Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

¹⁹⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

¹⁹⁸Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

¹⁹⁹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

why ethics cannot be reduced to a set of fixed rules: its function is to illuminate, question and guide human action beyond mere habit. The essential differences between ethics and morality can be synthesized from your sources as a distinction between reflection and lived normativity. Morality designates the set of norms, values and customs that guide behavior in a community or in an individual; for this reason, it is historical, variable and dependent on the social context, as Segundo emphasizes²⁰⁰. Varela Fregoso²⁰¹ understands it as the concrete sphere of human action, where daily habits and decisions are expressed. Choza²⁰² adds that morality is embodied in practical life and in the formation of character. Ethics, on the other hand, is the critical and rational reflection on morality. Cifuentes²⁰³ presents it as the analysis of the principles that underpin human action, while audiovisual materials such as Sevilla²⁰⁴ and fgbuenotv²⁰⁵ highlight that ethics examines, questions and guides the value systems that guide behavior. The distinction between human acts and human acts exposed by Pilar Calva²⁰⁶ shows that ethics evaluates the intentionality and freedom that make an act morally significant. In short, morality is the lived content of norms and values, while ethics is the discipline that analyzes, grounds and guides them, allowing us to understand and transform human action.

Nature of Content

The nature of the moral and ethical content refers to the deep structure from which the human being orients his action, interprets his experience and constructs criteria to distinguish good from evil. In the philosophical tradition, ethics is understood as a rational reflection on human conduct aimed at the good and personal fulfillment²⁰⁷, while morality designates the concrete codes, norms and practices that regulate social life²⁰⁸. This distinction allows us to understand that moral content is not arbitrary: it arises from human experience, from its rationality, from its freedom and from its openness to others. The nature of moral and ethical content can be understood, from your sources, as the articulation between what people experience in their daily behavior and the critical reflection that allows us to understand, guide and transform that behavior. This distinction illuminates how values, norms and decisions are configured in social and technified contexts. Moral content is made up of the values, customs, and rules that effectively guide behavior in a community. Second,²⁰⁹ he stresses that this content is historical and changing, since it depends on the social and cultural structures in which people act. Varela Fregoso²¹⁰ links it to concrete human action, where habits, decisions and ways of life are expressed. Choza²¹¹ adds that morality is embodied in the formation of character and in the way in which the person relates to others. Audiovisual

materials reinforce this lived dimension: fgbuenotv²¹² shows that morality is manifested in everyday action, while Pilar Calva²¹³ distinguishes between human acts and human acts to point out that only the latter have moral content, since they imply freedom and intentionality. Ethics, on the other hand, analyzes and substantiates this moral content. Cifuentes²¹⁴ explains that ethics studies the principles that guide human action and critically evaluates current values. Sevilla²¹⁵ stresses that ethics questions the systems that determine what we consider good or right, especially in technified contexts where technology can influence the valuation of human life. Forum Larramendi²¹⁶ adds that ethics plays a critical role in the face of power dynamics that shape moral content without people being fully aware of it. The nature of moral and ethical content is articulated as follows: Morality expresses what is lived: norms, habits, values and concrete decisions. Ethics offers the reflection that illuminates and guides that content, allowing it to be understood, evaluated and transformed. This distinction is key to analyzing how technoscience modifies both moral practices and the ethical frameworks that interpret them.

1.3.16. The structure of moral content

Moral content is based on the human capacity to deliberate, choose and assume responsibility. Choza²¹⁷ stresses that the person is a relational and transcendent being, whose moral life cannot be reduced to external impulses or conditioning. Therefore, moral content includes: Values are fundamental orientations that express what a community considers worthy of being sought. Norms are concrete formulations that guide action in specific situations. Virtues are stable dispositions that allow you to act well on a regular basis. Ends are what human action is directed towards, such as justice, dignity or the common good. Cifuentes²¹⁸ recalls that ethics only acquires meaning when it asks about the real conditions that allow us to act well; therefore, the moral content is not only theoretical, but practical and situated. The structure of moral content can be understood, from its sources, as the articulation between freedom, norms and values that guide human action within a specific social context. This structure is not static: it is formed, transformed, and lived in everyday practice. Freedom and intentionality as Pilar Calva²¹⁹ shows that only human acts, carried out with conscience and will, have moral content. Freedom is, therefore, the structural core that allows an act to be morally evaluated. Norms and customs: Second,²²⁰ he explains that morality is made up of historical values and rules that guide behavior. These norms are not abstract: they are embodied in social habits and practices. Values and ends: Varela Fregoso²²¹ points out that moral content includes the ends that the person pursues and the meaning he or she gives to his or her action. Morality is not only obedience to rules, but orientation towards goods considered valuable. Character and

²⁰⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁰¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁰²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁰³Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁰⁴Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²⁰⁵Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²⁰⁶Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁰⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁰⁸Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁰⁹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²¹⁰Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²¹¹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²¹²Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²¹³Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²¹⁴Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²¹⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²¹⁶Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²¹⁷Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²¹⁸Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²¹⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²²⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²²¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

personal formation: Choza²²² emphasizes that morality is also structured in the configuration of character, where habits, virtues and ways of relating to others are integrated. The social and technological context: Cifuentes²²³ recalls that moral content is affected by social and technical systems that condition action. The training videos²²⁴ add that morality is expressed in everyday life and is transformed by the environments in which we operate. The structure of moral content integrates freedom, norms, values, character, and context, allowing the person to act consciously and responsibly within a community. This structure is dynamic and requires ethical reflection to remain oriented towards human dignity.

1.3.17. The ethical dimension of moral content

Ethics critically examines this moral content, grounds it and guides it. It does not limit itself to describing norms, but analyzes their legitimacy, their coherence and their impact on human life. Contemporary popularizers, such as Héctor Sevilla²²⁵, insist that ethics must illuminate action in complex contexts, especially when technology and social structures transform traditional decision-making criteria. In this sense, ethics: Interprets moral experience to understand its foundations. It distinguishes between practices that promote dignity and those that violate it. Evaluates the social, cultural, and techno-scientific consequences of actions. It guides the construction of fair and humanizing regulatory frameworks. The ethical dimension of moral content refers to the capacity of reason to illuminate, evaluate, and guide the values, norms, and habits that make up lived morality. While morality expresses what a community practices and considers valuable, ethics introduces a critical look that allows us to understand that content, justify it and transform it when necessary. The ethical dimension of moral content expresses the capacity of reason to illuminate, evaluate, and guide the values and norms that guide human conduct. From your sources, this dimension appears as the reflective level that allows you to critically understand lived morality and ensure that it remains linked to the dignity of the person. This ethical dimension is configured as follows: Rational clarification of human action. Varela Fregoso²²⁶ points out that ethics seeks to preserve the meaning of action, which implies analyzing why we consider certain acts valuable and what ends we pursue with them. Foundation of dignity and freedom: Choza²²⁷ reminds us that the person is a rational and free being; therefore, ethics examines whether moral norms respect these essential dimensions. Critical evaluation of norms and customs: Segundo²²⁸, he stresses that morality is historical and changing, so ethics must discern which values are still valid and which require revision. Orientation towards fundamental human goods. Cifuentes²²⁹ explains that ethics not only describes, but also directs action towards ends that promote the good life and just coexistence. Illumination of moral intentionality: The distinction between acts

of man and human acts presented by Pilar Calva²³⁰ shows that ethics analyzes the freedom and intention that make an act morally significant. Critique of power dynamics and technification. The videos by Sevilla²³¹ and Forum Larramendi²³² highlight that ethics must question structures that can distort moral content, especially in technified contexts. The ethical dimension of moral content consists of thinking, grounding and orienting the values and norms that guide human action, ensuring that they respond to dignity, freedom and the common good. Without this reflective dimension, morality is reduced to custom; with it, it becomes a conscious path towards the human.

1.3.18. Human acts and moral content

The distinction between human acts and human acts, explained by Pilar Calva²³³, is key to understanding the nature of moral content. Only acts performed with knowledge and freedom have ethical value, because they express the interiority and responsibility of the person. This implies that moral content is not reduced to external behaviors, but includes intentions, motivations, and ends. The relationship between human acts and moral content is understood, according to your sources, as the point where freedom and rationality turn an action into an object of ethical evaluation. Only when the person acts with conscience and intention does his conduct acquire moral meaning. Human acts, explains Pilar Calva²³⁴, are those carried out with knowledge and will. This double condition allows the action to be evaluated morally, since it implies deliberation and responsibility. On the other hand, man's instinctive or involuntary acts lack moral content because they do not proceed from freedom. How do they generate moral content? Moral content is generated in the following way, by: Intentionality: Varela Fregoso emphasizes²³⁵ that the meaning of action depends on the intention that guides the action; without intention, there is no morality. Responsible freedom: Choza²³⁶ affirms that the person is a free and rational being, and that this structure makes possible the moral evaluation of his or her actions. Context and norms: Segundo²³⁷, remember that morality is formed in a social and historical framework, so that human acts are inserted in shared values and norms. Orientation towards goods: Cifuentes²³⁸ emphasizes that ethics analyzes whether human acts are directed towards goods that promote the good life and fair coexistence. Critical discernment: The videos of Sevilla²³⁹ and fgbuenotv²⁴⁰ show that ethics allows us to evaluate whether human acts respond to fair criteria or require correction. Human acts constitute the core of moral content because they integrate freedom, intention, and responsibility within a social framework of values. Where the person decides and acts consciously, the possibility of moral judgment and ethical growth arises.

²²²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²²³Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

²²⁴Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video]; fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). *Ethics and Morals* [video].

²²⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video]. YouTube.

²²⁶Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

²²⁷Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²²⁸Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

²²⁹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

²³⁰Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²³¹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video]. YouTube.

²³²Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²³³Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²³⁴Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²³⁵Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute.

²³⁶Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²³⁷Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

²³⁸Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

²³⁹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²⁴⁰Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). *Ethics and Morals* [video].

1.3.19. Morality as a social and cultural content

Morality also has a historical and community dimension. Forum Larramendi²⁴¹ stresses that ethics must analyze how societies construct their norms and how these can serve to humanize or dehumanize. The moral content, therefore, is configured in dialogue between: Personal experience. Cultural tradition. Social institutions. Contemporary techno-scientific challenges. This dialogue allows morality to evolve without losing its anchorage in human dignity. Morality as a social and cultural content is understood, from its sources, as the set of norms, values and habits that a community considers valid and that guide the behavior of its members. It does not arise in isolation in the individual, but is historically formed within a social, symbolic and cultural framework that shapes what each era understands as "good", "correct" or "acceptable". Second,²⁴² he stresses that morality is historical and changing, since it depends on the social structures that generate and transform it. Varela Fregoso²⁴³ agrees when he affirms that morality is expressed in concrete human action, that is, in shared practices and customs that are transmitted culturally. Choza²⁴⁴ adds that morality is embodied in the formation of character within a community, where the person learns ways of relating and criteria of evaluation. Cifuentes²⁴⁵ explains that moral contents are configured in dialogue with institutions, traditions, and symbolic systems that give meaning to social life. The training videos reinforce this collective dimension: Sevilla²⁴⁶ and fgbuenotv²⁴⁷ show that morality is learned in coexistence and is transformed with cultural changes. The distinction between human acts and human acts presented by Pilar Calva²⁴⁸ reminds us that morality requires freedom, but this freedom is always exercised within a cultural framework that guides what is considered valuable. Forum Larramendi²⁴⁹ stresses that ethics must critically analyze these frameworks to prevent power dynamics from distorting the moral content. Morality is a social and cultural content because it is born from collective life, is transmitted through shared customs and values, and is transformed by historical changes. The person acts morally within this common horizon, which ethics is responsible for understanding and evaluating.

1.3.20. The moral content and ethical horizon

The nature of the moral and ethical content reveals that human life cannot be understood without reference to values, norms, aims and virtues that guide action. Ethics, by critically reflecting on this content, allows us to regenerate bonds, strengthen responsibility and build fairer societies. In a world marked by technical and social complexity, this reflection becomes indispensable to preserve the dignity and meaning of human life. Morality: as concrete, practical, historical and cultural norms. Ethics: as universal, rational and critical principles. The synthesis between moral content and ethical horizon shows how the concrete moral life made up of norms, values, habits and decisions always needs an ethical reflection that illuminates it, grounds it and orients

it towards human dignity. Your sources agree that morality expresses what a community experiences, while ethics offers the critical framework that allows us to understand and transform that content. Morality arises from social and cultural life: norms, customs and values that are transmitted historically and that guide daily conduct. Second²⁵⁰, he highlights its historical and changing character, while Varela Fregoso²⁵¹ links it to concrete human action. Choza²⁵² adds that morality is embodied in the character and in the ways of relating learned in community. The videos of Sevilla²⁵³ and fgbuenotv²⁵⁴ show that morality is learned in coexistence and is transformed with cultural changes. Ethics critically analyzes this moral content. Cifuentes²⁵⁵ explains that ethics underpins and evaluates the principles that guide action, while Forum Larramendi²⁵⁶ underlines its critical function in the face of power dynamics that can distort social values. The distinction between acts of man and human acts presented by Pilar Calva²⁵⁷ shows that ethics illuminates the freedom and intentionality that make an act morally significant. The moral content offers what is lived; the ethical horizon offers the light to understand and guide it. Together they allow the person to act with freedom, responsibility and meaning within a social framework that needs to be continuously evaluated and renewed.

Level of reflection

The level of reflection in ethics and morality expresses the depth with which human beings examine their actions, their motivations and the principles that guide their lives. Ethics, understood as rational reflection on good-oriented conduct²⁵⁸, requires a degree of analysis that goes beyond mere obedience to rules. Morality, on the other hand, is manifested in concrete practices and codes²⁵⁹, but it only acquires full meaning when it is illuminated by a critical reflection capable of grounding and renewing it. The level of reflection, therefore, determines the quality of moral life and the person's ability to act freely and responsibly. The notion of "level of reflection" makes it possible to distinguish between lived morality made up of norms, habits and social values and ethical reflection that critically analyzes that content. Your sources agree that morality operates immediately in everyday life, while ethics introduces a higher level of rational examination. Morality is configured as a social and historical content that guides behavior within a community, since it expresses shared values and norms that are transmitted culturally²⁶⁰. This content is manifested in daily actions and in the habits that people internalize through coexistence²⁶¹. From an anthropological perspective, morality is embodied in the character and in the ways of relating that the person learns in his or her social environment²⁶². Audiovisual materials reinforce

²⁵⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁵¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁵²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁵³Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²⁵⁴Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²⁵⁵Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁵⁶Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²⁵⁷Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁵⁸Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁵⁹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁶⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁶¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute;

²⁶²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁴¹Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²⁴²Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁴³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁴⁴Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁴⁵Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁴⁶Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²⁴⁷Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²⁴⁸Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁴⁹Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

this collective dimension by showing that morality is formed in interaction and evolves with cultural changes²⁶³. Ethics, on the other hand, introduces a level of critical reflection that allows us to evaluate these contents and orient them towards human dignity²⁶⁴, remembering that only acts performed with freedom and intention have true moral meaning²⁶⁵. In reality, this level of reflection is understood in this way: The notion of "level of reflection" makes it possible to distinguish precisely the different planes on which human practical rationality operates and, therefore, to clarify the relationship between morality and ethics. The sources you provide agree that the moral life is not reduced to mere obedience to norms, but involves differentiated degrees of conscience, deliberation and foundation. Levels of reflection in moral life: Everyday morality is the first level of reflection, where people act guided by internalized norms, customs, and habits. Second,²⁶⁶ he describes this plane as that of the immediate criteria that effectively guide behavior, without the subject necessarily examining their origin or validity. Choza²⁶⁷ stresses that this level is profoundly marked by culture, since moral habits are formed in coexistence and education. A second level appears when the subject deliberates on his actions, evaluating alternatives and consequences. This plane corresponds to human acts, those performed with knowledge and freedom, and which therefore have moral content. Pilar Calva²⁶⁸ explains that only these acts can be the object of moral judgment, because they imply intentionality and responsibility. The ethical level itself constitutes a third degree of reflection, deeper and more systematic. Varela Fregoso (2010) argues that ethics examines the foundations of human action, asking why certain norms should be considered valid. Cifuentes (2019) adds that this level implies a rational analysis that seeks to justify principles, evaluate their coherence, and guide action towards the good. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla (2020) and fgbuenotv (2009) show that ethics introduces a critical look that allows us to distinguish between accepted customs and truly justified principles. Forum Larramendi (2014) stresses that this critical level is essential to prevent morality from being reduced to an uncritical tradition. The level of reflection allows us to understand the staggered structure of moral life: from lived and spontaneous morality, through the conscious deliberation of human acts, to ethical reflection that analyzes and substantiates the principles that guide action. This distinction shows that ethics does not replace morality, but rather illuminates and perfects it, allowing for a more conscious and responsible life.

1.3.21. Depth of moral examination

The level of reflection implies the ability to understand, deliberate and evaluate one's own actions. Choza²⁶⁹ stresses that the person is a rational and relational being, whose moral life cannot be reduced to uncritical impulses or habits. The greater the reflection, the greater the possibility of: Recognizing the values that guide action. Identify internal motivations and their possible

ambiguities. Evaluate the personal and social consequences of the acts. To integrate moral experience into a coherent life project. Cifuentes²⁷⁰ stresses that ethics is only significant when it asks about the real conditions that allow us to act well; the level of reflection is precisely the tool that allows us to examine these conditions and transform them when necessary. Morality can be defined as the set of norms, customs, and habits that guide human behavior within a community. These norms express what a social group considers correct, valuable or obligatory, and are transmitted through education, tradition and daily coexistence. Varela Fregoso²⁷¹ explains that morality is constituted by the mores, that is, the rules and customs that regulate human action within a social group. From an anthropological perspective, Choza²⁷² stresses that these norms are integrated into cultural life and are manifested in habits that shape the person's character and ways of relating. In its practical dimension, morality functions as an internalized normative system that guides action without the need for explicit reflection. Second²⁷³, he affirms that morality is "what effectively guides behavior," since it provides immediate criteria for judging what is considered good or bad in everyday life. Cifuentes²⁷⁴ adds that this regulatory system is incorporated through educational and social processes, becoming a practical framework that organizes coexistence. Audiovisual materials reinforce this understanding. Sevilla²⁷⁵ shows that morality operates as a set of lived norms that structure daily action, while fgbuenotv²⁷⁶ highlights its regulatory function in social life. Pilar Calva²⁷⁷ recalls that these rules influence human acts, that is, those that imply freedom and responsibility. Forum Larramendi²⁷⁸ emphasizes that every society establishes codes of behavior that its members must follow in order to maintain order and social cohesion. In short, morality constitutes a social and cultural system of norms, customs, and habits that guides human behavior, regulates coexistence, and provides shared criteria for evaluating actions. Its historical and communal character explains why morality is dynamic and transforms with cultural changes. The depth of the moral examination depends on the degree of awareness, deliberation and foundation with which the subject analyzes his own actions and the criteria that guide them. At a first level, morality operates as a set of internalized norms and habits that guide behavior in an almost spontaneous way²⁷⁹. However, when the person begins to question himself about the reasons for his judgments and decisions, a deeper plane of reflection opens up, in which it is no longer enough to "follow customs", but it is required to justify why something should be considered good or bad. This deepening of moral examination is precisely the area in which ethics emerges as a critical reflection. Varela Fregoso²⁸⁰ argues that ethics studies the foundations of human action, which implies moving from the mere application of norms to the question of their validity

²⁷⁰Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁷¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁷²Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁷³Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁷⁴Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁷⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²⁷⁶Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²⁷⁷Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁷⁸Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²⁷⁹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences; Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁸⁰Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁶³Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video]; fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²⁶⁴Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions; Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²⁶⁵Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁶⁶Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

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²⁶⁸Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁶⁹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

and meaning. Cifuentes²⁸¹ stresses that this rational examination makes it possible to evaluate the coherence of moral principles and their contribution to the integral development of the person. The audiovisual materials reinforce this idea: Sevilla²⁸² and fgbuenotv²⁸³ show that ethics invites a critical review of moral practices, while Forum Larramendi²⁸⁴ insists that ethical reflection prevents morality from being reduced to an uncritical tradition. The depth of moral examination is manifested, therefore, in the passage from a morality lived uncritically to a morality that is thought, subject to rational discernment and guided by the search for the good. In this process, the distinction between acts of man and human acts, that is, between unfree acts and deliberate acts, is decisive, since only the latter can be the object of a profound moral examination²⁸⁵. The greater the depth of this examination, the greater is also the possibility of a conscious, responsible and coherent moral life. The depth of moral examination expresses the degree to which a person not only acts in accordance with internalized norms and habits, but also understands, evaluates, and rationally substantiates the principles that guide his or her behavior. The sources you use agree that the moral life has different layers of reflection, and that ethics arises precisely when moral examination reaches a critical and conscious level. At its most immediate level, morality functions as a system of internalized norms and customs that guide action without the need for explicit reflection. Segundo²⁸⁶ describes this plane as that of the practical criteria that "effectively guide behavior," while Choza²⁸⁷ emphasizes that these habits are formed in culture and in social coexistence. This level is indispensable, but limited: it regulates action, although it does not necessarily include it. A deeper moral examination appears when the subject deliberates on his actions, evaluating intentions, ends and consequences. This is where human acts are situated, those performed with knowledge and freedom, and which therefore have moral content. Pilar Calva²⁸⁸ explains that only these acts can be judged morally, as they imply responsibility and self-determination. The greatest depth of moral examination corresponds to the field of ethics, understood as critical reflection on morality. Varela Fregoso²⁸⁹ argues that ethics studies the foundations of human action, asking about the validity and meaning of norms. Cifuentes²⁹⁰ adds that this rational analysis makes it possible to evaluate the coherence of moral principles and their contribution to the integral development of the person. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla²⁹¹ and fgbuenotv²⁹² show that ethics invites a critical review of moral practices, while Forum Larramendi²⁹³ highlights that ethical reflection prevents morality from being reduced to an uncritical tradition. The depth of moral examination unfolds from lived morality, internalized norms and habits, to the conscious deliberation of human acts and, finally, to the ethical reflection

that analyzes and substantiates the principles that guide action. The greater this depth, the greater the subject's capacity to act consciously, responsibly and coherently with the human good.

1.3.22. From spontaneous action to fully human act

The distinction between acts of man and human acts, explained by Pilar Calva²⁹⁴, shows that only acts performed with knowledge and freedom have moral value. The level of reflection is what turns an action into a full human act, since it allows: To understand the meaning of the act. Discern between possible alternatives. Take responsibility for the decision. Without reflection, action is reduced to automatisms or external conditioning, losing its ethical dimension. The transition from spontaneous action to fully human act describes the process by which behavior ceases to be a mere impulse or automatism and becomes a free, conscious, and responsible action, that is, a morally significant act. The sources you use agree that this transformation constitutes the very core of ethical action. Many human actions are carried out spontaneously, guided by habits, emotions or automatisms incorporated into everyday life. Second,²⁹⁵ he points out that a large part of moral behavior is based on immediate criteria that are socially internalized, without the subject necessarily reflecting on them. Choza²⁹⁶ explains that these habits are formed in culture and in coexistence, configuring ways of acting that do not always pass through a rational examination. However, action becomes properly human when the subject introduces a moment of deliberation, evaluating alternatives, intentions and consequences. This step requires awareness and self-determination, elements that allow us to distinguish between what is simply done and what is decided to be done. Ethics is concerned exclusively with human acts, that is, those performed with knowledge and freedom. Varela Fregoso²⁹⁷ affirms that only these acts can be morally evaluated, because they proceed from free will and are oriented towards ends that the subject recognizes as valuable. Cifuentes²⁹⁸ adds that moral responsibility is manifested in these acts, since the individual can rationally justify his choice. Audiovisual materials reinforce this distinction. Pilar Calva²⁹⁹ explains that instinctive, physiological or involuntary acts of man lack morality, while human acts imply intelligence and will. Sevilla³⁰⁰ and fgbuenotv³⁰¹ show that ethics evaluates precisely the intention and freedom present in these deliberate acts. Forum Larramendi³⁰² stresses that ethics exists to illuminate and guide these free decisions towards the good. The passage from spontaneous action to fully human act marks the transition from behavior guided by impulses or habits to conscious, deliberate, and responsible action. Only at this level can conduct be the object of moral judgment and ethical reflection. This distinction allows us to understand why ethics is concerned with human action insofar as it can be directed towards good or evil, and not with the automatic or involuntary processes of life.

²⁸¹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁸²Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²⁸³Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²⁸⁴Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²⁸⁵Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁸⁶Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁸⁷Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁸⁸Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁸⁹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁹⁰Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁹¹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

²⁹²Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

²⁹³Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

²⁹⁴Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

²⁹⁵Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

²⁹⁶Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

²⁹⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

²⁹⁸Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

²⁹⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³⁰⁰Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³⁰¹Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³⁰²Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

1.3.23. Ethical reflection in technified contexts

In a world marked by technoscience, the level of reflection acquires even greater relevance. Contemporary analyses, such as those of Héctor Sevilla³⁰³, show that technology can displace moral deliberation if it becomes the dominant criterion for decision-making. Forum Larramendi³⁰⁴ insists that ethics must recover its critical function to guide action in contexts where efficiency and utility tend to replace responsibility and dignity. Ethical reflection, in this sense, is not an abstract exercise, but a practice that makes it possible to resist dehumanization and to orient technology towards the common good. Ethical reflection in technified contexts becomes indispensable because technology transforms not only human actions, but also the frameworks of meaning from which they are morally evaluated. In societies where technology mediates decisions, relationships and daily practices, ethics must deepen its critical capacity to discern how these environments condition freedom, responsibility and the values that guide action. Technification introduces new ways of acting that can become automatic, efficient and functional, but not necessarily conscious. Second,³⁰⁵ he recalls that morality is formed in concrete social life, and in technified contexts this life is reconfigured by devices, algorithms and systems that influence the daily criteria of action. Chozza³⁰⁶ stresses that the technique modifies habits and ways of relating, affecting the formation of character and the perception of the good. In this sense, spontaneous action can be absorbed by technical dynamics that reduce personal deliberation. Ethics acquires a decisive role here: to recover reflection where technology tends to automate decisions. Varela Fregoso³⁰⁷ argues that ethics examines the foundations of human action, which implies evaluating whether technified practices respect dignity and freedom. Cifuentes³⁰⁸ adds that ethics must critically analyze the systems that condition action, asking about the purpose and meaning of the technical means used. Audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla³⁰⁹ shows that ethics allows us to question practices normalized by technology, while fgbuenotv³¹⁰ highlights that ethical reflection illuminates the rationality of action beyond technical efficiency. The distinction between human acts and human acts acquires special relevance in technified contexts. Pilar Calva³¹¹ explains that only acts carried out with freedom and knowledge can be morally evaluated. However, the technique can dilute this freedom by delegating decisions to automated systems. Forum Larramendi³¹² warns that ethics must prevent morality from being subordinated to purely functional criteria, recalling that the purpose of human action cannot be reduced to technical efficiency. Ethical reflection in technified contexts requires analysing how technology conditions action, critically evaluating its effects on freedom and responsibility, and ensuring that human values are not displaced by criteria of efficiency or automation. Ethics thus becomes an indispensable instance to preserve humanity from acting in a world increasingly mediated by technology.

³⁰³Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³⁰⁴Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³⁰⁵Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

³⁰⁶Cf. Chozza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³⁰⁷Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³⁰⁸Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³⁰⁹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³¹⁰Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³¹¹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³¹²Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

1.3.24. The level of reflection as the core of ethical life

The level of reflection constitutes the heart of moral and ethical life. It allows us to understand values, discern ends, evaluate consequences and take responsibility for actions. In a complex social and techno-scientific context, this level of reflection becomes indispensable to preserve human dignity and to orient action towards justice and the common good. Morality: spontaneous level; it is lived before reflection. Ethics: reflective level; analyzes, substantiates and evaluates morality. The synthesis of the level of reflection as the nucleus of ethical life shows that ethics does not arise simply from the existence of moral norms, but from the degree of awareness, deliberation and foundation with which the human being examines his own actions. Your sources agree that the moral life has different layers, but it is the deepest level of reflection that makes action a fully human act and, therefore, an object of ethics. Everyday morality operates on an immediate level: internalized norms, habits, and customs that guide action without the need for explicit analysis³¹³. This level is indispensable for coexistence, but limited to understanding the rationality of action. Ethical reflection appears when the subject critically distances himself from these norms and questions their foundation, their validity and their orientation towards the good. Varela Fregoso³¹⁴ argues that ethics studies the principles that guide human action, which requires a level of reflection that transcends mere obedience to customs. Cifuentes³¹⁵ adds that this rational examination makes it possible to evaluate the coherence of moral judgments and their contribution to the integral development of the person. The audiovisual materials reinforce this perspective: Sevilla³¹⁶ and fgbuenotv³¹⁷ show that ethics introduces a critical look that distinguishes between what is done and what should be done, while Forum Larramendi³¹⁸ stresses that ethics prevents morality from being reduced to an uncritical tradition. The level of reflection also determines the difference between human acts and human acts. Pilar Calva³¹⁹ explains that only acts carried out with knowledge and freedom can be morally evaluated, because they imply deliberation and responsibility. Reflection, therefore, is not an external addition, but the element that turns the action into a morally significant act. The level of reflection constitutes the core of ethical life because it allows us to move from lived morality made up of internalized habits and norms to thought morality, subjected to rational examination and oriented towards the good. Ethics arises precisely at this deep level, where the subject understands, evaluates and substantiates his actions, transforming mere habit into a conscious, free and responsible moral life.

Universality vs. Special feature

Critical bioethics is situated in the tension between the aspiration to universal principles and the need to recognize the historical, cultural and contextual particularity of moral subjects. This tension emerges because, as the classic manuals of ethics point out, all moral reflection starts from the question of the human good, but that good is never manifested in an

³¹³Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences; Chozza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³¹⁴Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³¹⁵Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³¹⁶Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³¹⁷Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³¹⁸Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³¹⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

abstract way, but incarnated in concrete situations³²⁰. Critical bioethics, by problematizing the assumptions of traditional bioethics, questions whether it is possible to sustain universal norms without making invisible the diversity of experiences, vulnerabilities, and worldviews. From philosophical anthropology, Choza³²¹ recalls that the person is a situated being, whose dignity is universal but whose cultural expressions are irreducibly plural. This double dimension forces us to think of bioethics not only as a set of principles, but as a hermeneutical exercise capable of dialoguing with specific contexts. In the same vein, Cifuentes³²² stresses that ethics unfolds in questions that arise from everyday life, which implies that universality must always be reviewed in the light of concrete cases. The distinction between ethics and morality also illuminates this tension. While ethics seeks rational and universal foundations, morality expresses historical and community norms³²³. Contemporary analyses, including those of Sevilla³²⁴ and fgbuenotv³²⁵, show that critical bioethics attempts to articulate both dimensions: guiding principles, but without imposing unique cultural models. Even in the reflection on human acts, as Pilar Calva explains³²⁶, ethical assessment requires understanding intentionality and circumstances, which inevitably introduces particular elements. Finally, critical bioethics, as Forum Larramendi suggests³²⁷, serves to question power structures that are hidden behind apparently universal discourses. Universality, then, is not abandoned, but is reconstructed from the recognition of human plurality and contextual justice. Morality: varies between cultures and times. Ethics: seeks criteria valid for any human being.

Autonomy

Autonomy in bioethics is understood as the ability of the subject to direct his or her own life through free, informed and responsible decisions. However, critical bioethics warns that this notion, often presented as universal, is traversed by cultural, social and anthropological conditioning that prevents it from being reduced to an abstract principle. From the point of view of general ethics, Varela Fregoso³²⁸ recalls that human action can only be evaluated by considering the concrete freedom of the agent, which implies recognizing real psychological, social and structural limits that affect the possibility of deciding. This perspective already introduces a tension between autonomy as a universal ideal and autonomy lived in particular contexts. Philosophical anthropology provides a decisive nuance: the person is a relational and situated being, whose freedom is not exercised in isolation³²⁹. For this reason, autonomy cannot be understood as absolute independence, but as a capacity that unfolds within specific cultural ties, traditions and frameworks. This view coincides with the distinction between ethics and morality: while ethics seeks universally applicable rational principles, morality expresses historical norms that shape the understanding of what it means

to "decide well."³³⁰ Contemporary approaches emphasize that autonomy requires material and symbolic conditions to be real. Cifuentes³³¹ points out that ethical questions arise from everyday life, where freedom is affected by inequalities, vulnerabilities and social pressures. The informative analyses of Sevilla³³² and fgbuenotv³³³ show that autonomy is not only an internal act of will, but a process that requires deliberation, information and accompaniment. Even in the reflection on human acts, Pilar Calva explains that intentionality and circumstances determine the moral quality of action, which implies that autonomy. Finally, critical bioethics, as Forum Larramendi suggests³³⁴, questions the idea of a purely individualistic autonomy, showing that its uncritical use can hide power relations or inequality. Autonomy, then, must be defended as a universal value, but reinterpreted from the particularity of each human, cultural and social context. Morality: it can be heteronomous (imposed by society). Ethics: requires autonomy and personal deliberation.

The Purpose

Purpose in critical bioethics is understood as the ultimate orientation of human acts and biomedical practices towards a good that is not merely technical, but profoundly human. This notion, far from being univocal, is located at the intersection between universal principles and particular contexts. From general ethics, Varela Fregoso³³⁵ explains that all human action is directed towards an end, and that moral evaluation depends on the rectitude of that end and the means used. This teleological structure introduces the question of finality as a universal criterion, but it also requires attention to the concrete circumstances in which each action is carried out. Philosophical anthropology provides a decisive foundation: the person is a being who acts oriented by ends that express his dignity and his life project³³⁶. However, these ends are configured in specific cultural, social and symbolic contexts, which implies that the purpose cannot be reduced to an abstract scheme. Cifuentes³³⁷ recalls that ethical questions arise from everyday life, where goals are intertwined with diverse needs, vulnerabilities and expectations. The distinction between ethics and morality also sheds light on this issue. While ethics seeks rational principles that guide action toward universally valid ends, morality expresses historical norms that shape what is considered a "good end" in each community³³⁸. This tension is reflected in the contemporary analyses of Sevilla³³⁹ and fgbuenotv³⁴⁰, who show that ethical purpose cannot be separated from the intentionality of the agent and his understanding of the good. Even in her reflection on human acts, Pilar Calva stresses that purpose is a constitutive element of the moral act, since it determines its meaning and value³⁴¹. Critical bioethics takes up this perspective to question implicit purposes in biomedical practices that, under discourses

³³⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

³³¹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³³²Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³³³Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³³⁴Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³³⁵Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³³⁶Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³³⁷Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³³⁸Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

³³⁹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³⁴⁰Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³⁴¹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³²⁰Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³²¹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³²²Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³²³Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

³²⁴Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³²⁵Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³²⁶Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³²⁷Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³²⁸Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³²⁹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

of neutrality, can reproduce economic, technocratic or power interests. Along these lines, Forum Larramendi³⁴² points out that ethics serves precisely to discern whether the ends pursued respond to the human good or to logics alien to it. Purpose, then, is presented as a universal criterion of moral orientation, but its interpretation requires recognizing the particularity of each context and the plurality of goods that people seek to realize. Morality: maintaining social order and coexistence. Ethics: to orient towards the good and human fulfillment. These differences coincide with contemporary philosophical literature, which stresses that ethics and morality are related, but not equivalent, and that it is convenient to distinguish them to avoid conceptual confusion.

Acts of Man and Human Acts: A Bridge Between Ethics and Morality

The distinction between human acts and human acts constitutes a conceptual axis that allows us to build a bridge between ethics and morality, since it clarifies which actions can be morally evaluated and which are outside that scope. In the ethical tradition, the acts of man are those that the subject performs without full warning or freedom as biological functions or automatic responses and, therefore, lack moral value. On the other hand, human acts are those executed with knowledge, intentionality and freedom, conditions that allow attributing responsibility and ethical sense to the action³⁴³. From philosophical anthropology, this distinction is based on the understanding of the person as a being endowed with rationality and will, capable of directing his actions towards deliberate ends³⁴⁴. Human acts therefore express the profound structure of personal freedom, while human acts refer to the natural and non-deliberative dimension of the human being. This difference is key to understanding how ethics as a rational reflection on the good is articulated with morality as a set of historical and community norms, since only properly human acts can be judged in the light of ethical principles and moral norms³⁴⁵. The contemporary literature stresses that this distinction is not merely theoretical, but has practical implications in the assessment of responsibility. Cifuentes³⁴⁶ recalls that ethical questions arise precisely when the subject can choose between alternatives, which presupposes a human act. In philosophical popularization, Sevilla³⁴⁷ and fgbuenotv³⁴⁸ insist that morality depends on the intentionality and conscience of the agent, elements absent in man's acts. This perspective is reinforced by the explanation of Pilar Calva, who points out that moral evaluation requires analyzing the warning, freedom and purpose of the act, characteristics of human acts³⁴⁹. In the framework of critical bioethics, this distinction acquires an additional nuance: it allows us to question biomedical practices that reduce the subject to biological processes, forgetting his or her capacity for self-determination. As Forum Larramendi warns³⁵⁰, ethics serves to discern when an action respects the dignity of the agent as a moral subject and not only as an organism. Thus, understanding

the difference between human acts and human acts helps to integrate the universal dimension of ethics with the particularity of concrete moral experiences. The distinction between acts of man and human acts, explained by Pilar Calva³⁵¹, is fundamental to understanding how ethics and morality are applied to action: The Acts of man: non-deliberate actions (breathing, blinking). They are not the object of moral or ethical judgment. Human acts: free, conscious and voluntary actions. They are the only ones that can be evaluated morally and ethically. This distinction allows us to understand that ethics does not apply to any behavior, but only to those in which freedom intervenes.

Examples applied to clarify the difference

Example 1: Professional decision

Moral: A doctor follows the code of his institution.

Ethics: the doctor reflects on whether this code respects the dignity of the patient in a borderline case.

³⁴²Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³⁴³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³⁴⁴Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³⁴⁵Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

³⁴⁶Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³⁴⁷Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³⁴⁸Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³⁴⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³⁵⁰Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³⁵¹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

Example 2: Social custom

Moral: in a community it is customary not to contradict the elders.

Ethics: a person evaluates whether keeping silent in the face of injustice is compatible with the good.

Example 3: Personal Dilemma

Moral: A family teaches that "lying is always wrong."

Ethics: someone analyzes whether lying to protect a victim is justifiable.

Importance of distinguishing ethics and morality in contemporary life

The distinction between ethics and morality acquires a particular relevance in contemporary life because it allows us to understand how universal principles are articulated with the historical and cultural norms that guide conduct. In a context marked by the plurality of values, technological acceleration and social complexity, differentiating both concepts helps to avoid confusion that affects public deliberation and personal decision-making. As Varela Fregoso points out³⁵², ethics deals with the rational foundations of human action, while morality expresses the concrete codes that each society adopts to regulate coexistence.

1.3.25. Tensions between universality and context

The tension between universality and context is one of the central challenges of contemporary ethics, especially in critical bioethics, where it seeks to balance principles valid for every human being with the cultural, historical and social diversity in which these principles are applied. Ethics, understood as rational reflection on the good, aspires to formulate universal criteria that guide human action³⁵³, while morality expresses situated norms and practices that vary according to communities and their traditions³⁵⁴. This duality becomes especially visible in pluralistic societies, where the coexistence of different values requires a constant dialogue between the common and the particular. From philosophical anthropology, the person is a being whose dignity is universal, but whose cultural expressions are irreducibly diverse³⁵⁵. For this reason, critical bioethics maintains that ethical principles cannot be imposed without considering the concrete circumstances, vulnerabilities and symbolic frameworks that shape the moral experience of each individual³⁵⁶. Contemporary analyses, including those of Sevilla³⁵⁷ and fgbuenotv³⁵⁸, show that ignoring context leads to dogmatism, while renouncing all universality leads to relativism. Even in the evaluation of human acts, intentionality and circumstances reveal how the universal and the particular are intertwined in every decision³⁵⁹. Critical bioethics, as Forum Larramendi points out³⁶⁰, invites us to critically review discourses that are presented as universal but that may hide particular interests. Thus, the tension between universality and context is not an obstacle, but a fertile space for building an ethics capable of respecting human dignity without

losing sight of the plurality of ways in which that dignity is lived and interpreted. The tension between universality and context constitutes one of the most fertile problematic nuclei of contemporary ethical reflection, especially in the field of critical bioethics. This tension arises because ethics, as a rational search for the human good, aspires to formulate universal principles, while morality, as a historical and cultural expression of these principles, is always deployed in particular contexts. Varela Fregoso³⁶¹ recalls that human action can only be adequately understood if we pay attention to both its rational structure common to all and the concrete circumstances in which it is carried out.

1.3.26. Universality: the aspiration to common criteria

Universality in ethics expresses the aspiration to formulate common criteria that guide human action beyond cultural, historical or social differences. This aspiration is based on the idea that there are goods and values that belong to every person by virtue of being human, such as dignity, freedom or the search for the good. Varela Fregoso³⁶² points out that ethical reflection is based on shared rational structures, which allows human acts to be evaluated from principles that do not depend solely on local norms. From philosophical anthropology, Choza³⁶³ reinforces this perspective by affirming that the person has a common nature that makes it possible to speak of universally valid ends and values. In concrete moral life, this universality functions as a horizon that allows us to discern between just and unjust practices, even when social customs vary. Cifuentes³⁶⁴ recalls that ethical questions arise precisely when a foundation is sought that transcends the merely conventional. Contemporary analyses such as those of Sevilla³⁶⁵ and fgbuenotv³⁶⁶ show that, without some level of universality, ethics would dissolve into relativisms incapable of protecting the most vulnerable. Even in the evaluation of human acts, intentionality and freedom, elements common to every person, allow for the establishment of shared ethical criteria³⁶⁷. Critical bioethics, however, warns that this aspiration to common criteria must remain open to dialogue with contexts, preventing the "universal" from becoming a cultural imposition disguised as neutrality. Forum Larramendi³⁶⁸ stresses that ethics also serves to question universal assumptions that conceal particular interests. Thus, universality is not a dogma, but a starting point for building principles that respect human dignity in all its diversity. The philosophical tradition has maintained that certain values such as dignity, justice or freedom have a universal scope. From philosophical anthropology, Choza³⁶⁹ affirms that the human person shares the same nature, which allows us to speak of goods that transcend cultures and times. This universal dimension is indispensable to support human rights, responsible biomedical practices and ethical criteria that do not depend on moral relativism.

³⁵²Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³⁵³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³⁵⁴Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

³⁵⁵Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³⁵⁶Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³⁵⁷Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³⁵⁸Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³⁵⁹Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³⁶⁰Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³⁶¹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³⁶²Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute.

³⁶³Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³⁶⁴Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³⁶⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

³⁶⁶Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

³⁶⁷Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

³⁶⁸Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

³⁶⁹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

1.3.27. Context: the irreducible human plurality

Human plurality is the point where ethics meets the concrete reality of the diverse lives, cultures and experiences that make up the contemporary world. To speak of *context* means to recognize that all moral action is situated in a network of meanings, norms, vulnerabilities and expectations that vary between communities and historical moments. This contextual dimension is irreducible because the person, although he or she possesses universal dignity, lives, decides and relates from a specific cultural horizon³⁷⁰. In this sense, morality is expressed in practices and codes that each society develops to guide coexistence, which explains why norms can differ without implying the absence of common ethical foundations³⁷¹. Ethical questions, as Cifuentes points out³⁷², emerge precisely from everyday life, where universal principles must dialogue with particular situations marked by inequalities, traditions and unique experiences. Contemporary analyses such as those of Sevilla³⁷³ and fgbuenotv³⁷⁴ show that understanding the context allows us to avoid rigid or abstract interpretations of ethics, making visible the complexity of real decisions. Even in the evaluation of human acts, intentionality and circumstances reveal how context influences freedom and moral responsibility³⁷⁵. Critical bioethics takes up this perspective to question discourses that are presented as universal but that can ignore or make local experiences invisible. Forum Larramendi³⁷⁶ stresses that ethics must serve to critically examine these tensions, recognizing that human plurality is not an obstacle, but a necessary condition for a fairer and more humane ethical reflection. However, moral life develops in concrete scenarios, marked by traditions, languages, vulnerabilities and specific social structures. Cifuentes³⁷⁷ stresses that ethical questions emerge from everyday experience, where universal norms must dialogue with particular situations. Second,³⁷⁸ he distinguishes between ethics and morality precisely to show that morality historically embodies ethical principles, adapting them to the needs and values of each community.

1.3.28. The productive tension between the two poles

The productive tension between universality and context constitutes a central axis of contemporary ethics because it allows us to understand how the principles that aspire to be valid for all necessarily meet the irreducible diversity of human experiences. Ethics seeks to formulate rational and shared criteria that guide action towards the good, while morality embodies these criteria in concrete historical and cultural practices³⁷⁹. This tension is not a conflict to be resolved, but a fertile space where ethical reflection itself is constructed.

1.3.29. Two Poles That Need Each Other

Universality offers a common horizon from which to affirm human dignity, justice and freedom as goods that transcend cultural

differences³⁸⁰. The context, on the other hand, reminds us that all moral action is carried out in specific circumstances, marked by traditions, vulnerabilities and particular meanings³⁸¹. Without universality, ethics is diluted in relativisms incapable of protecting the most vulnerable; Without context, it becomes a dogmatism that ignores the real complexity of human life. Contemporary analyses such as those of Sevilla³⁸² and fgbuenotv³⁸³ show that moral deliberation is only possible when both poles are in dialogue.

1.3.30. A tension that enriches critical bioethics

In the evaluation of human acts, intentionality and circumstances reveal how the universal and the particular are intertwined in each decision³⁸⁴. Critical bioethics takes up this tension to question discourses that are presented as universal but that can hide particular interests or power structures. Forum Larramendi³⁸⁵ stresses that this tension is precisely what allows for a more just ethics, capable of respecting human dignity without losing sight of the plurality of ways in which that dignity is lived. Contemporary analyses such as those of Sevilla³⁸⁶ and fgbuenotv³⁸⁷ show that this tension should not be resolved by suppressing one of the poles, but by keeping them in dialogue. Universality without context leads to dogmatism, while context without universality leads to relativism. In the bioethical field, Pilar Calva³⁸⁸ shows that the evaluation of human acts requires considering both the universally understandable intentionality and the particular circumstances that condition the agent's freedom.

1.3.31. Critical bioethics as a space of mediation

Forum Larramendi³⁸⁹ stresses that ethics serves to question power structures that are presented as universal, but that in reality respond to particular interests. Critical bioethics, in recognizing this tension, proposes an open universality, capable of being reviewed in the light of contexts, and a responsible particularity, which does not renounce common principles that protect human dignity. Ethics, understood as critical reflection on the good, seeks criteria that are valid for any human being. Morality, on the other hand, manifests itself in norms, customs, and expectations that vary according to history and culture. This distinction, underlined by Segundo³⁹⁰, allows us to understand why certain contemporary debates such as those linked to bioethics, social justice or cultural diversity require an analysis that does not limit itself to repeating inherited norms, but critically examines their foundations.

1.3.32. Anthropological and philosophical contributions

From philosophical anthropology, Choza³⁹¹ recalls that the person is a situated being, whose dignity is universal but whose cultural expressions are multiple. This double dimension requires distinguishing between ethical principles that guide action and moral

³⁷⁰Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³⁷¹Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

³⁷²Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

³⁷³Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

³⁷⁴Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). *Ethics and Morals* [video].

³⁷⁵Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). *Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans*[video].

³⁷⁶Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

³⁷⁷Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

³⁷⁸Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

³⁷⁹Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). *Ethics*. National Polytechnic Institute; Second, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

³⁸⁰Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

³⁸¹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). *Ethics in 100 questions*.

³⁸²Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

³⁸³Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). *Ethics and Morals* [video].

³⁸⁴Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). *Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans*[video].

³⁸⁵Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

³⁸⁶Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). *What is ethics and morals?* [video].

³⁸⁷Cf. fgbuenotv. (2009, November 30). *Ethics and Morals* [video].

³⁸⁸Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). *Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans*[video].

³⁸⁹Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). *What is ethics really for? 1st Part*[video].

³⁹⁰Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). *Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences*.

³⁹¹Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

norms that apply in specific contexts. Cifuentes³⁹² adds that ethical questions arise precisely when moral norms are no longer sufficient to respond to the challenges of everyday life. The distinction between ethics and morality constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of contemporary philosophical and bioethical reflection. In general terms, ethics is understood as the philosophical discipline that studies the foundations of human action, while morality refers to the set of norms, customs and values that regulate behavior within a community³⁹³. The aim of this paper is to clearly explain the difference between the two concepts, to analyze their relevance in the current context and to show why this distinction is essential to understand the ethical challenges arising from the growing technological power of human beings. The exhibition is organized into four sections: first, the basic definitions are presented; second, contemporary criticisms are analyzed; third, the philosophical and bioethical foundations that support the distinction are examined; and finally, the importance of this differentiation for social life and future responsibility is exposed.

Civil and Canonical Legal Contributions-Moral-Ethics and Bioethics in all types of society, family, human and social existence, despite human frailties and vulnerabilities

Reflection on ethics and morality, understood as the foundations of human action, acquires a singular relevance when they are placed on the horizon of the fragilities and vulnerabilities constitutive of the human condition. From classical antiquity to contemporary technology, humanity has sought to understand the criteria that guide action, the principles that legitimize decisions and the norms that regulate social coexistence. This search is not merely theoretical: it is inscribed in the concrete experience of finite beings, exposed to suffering, uncertainty, dependence and the need for legal, moral and spiritual protection. Ethics, morality and bioethics emerge, as well as historical and conceptual answers to the question of good, justice and responsibility, while civil law and canon law are configured as institutional structures that translate these principles into binding norms, aimed at safeguarding human dignity in all its dimensions.

The distinction between ethics and morality, although often treated superficially, has a conceptual density that has been the object of analysis by many contemporary authors. Ortiz Millán³⁹⁴ points out that morality refers to concrete, historically situated normative systems, while ethics constitutes the critical reflection on these systems, their justification and their rational validity. This distinction, already present in Aristotle and reworked by Kant³⁹⁵, allows us to understand that morality expresses the set of values and norms internalized by a community, while ethics questions the legitimacy of such norms, their coherence with human dignity and their capacity to guide action in new or conflictive contexts. In this sense, ethics does not replace morality, but rather illuminates it, purifies it and orients it towards greater rationality and universality. Contemporary philosophical anthropology has insisted that human frailty is not an accident, but a constitutive feature of existence. Choza³⁹⁶ stresses that the human being is an unfinished, open, vulnerable being, whose identity is built in interaction with others and with the world. This ontological vulnerability manifests

itself in multiple dimensions: bodily, emotionally, socially, spiritually. Ethics and morality, far from being external impositions, respond precisely to this condition: they are ways of protecting life, of guiding freedom, of promoting justice and of guaranteeing that coexistence does not degrade into violence or arbitrariness. Vulnerability, therefore, is not only a problem to be solved, but a foundation for responsibility and solidarity. Hans Jonas³⁹⁷, in *The Principle of Responsibility*, offers one of the most profound reflections on ethics in the technological age. For Jonas³⁹⁸, the human capacity to transform nature and to intervene in life processes has reached such a level that it demands a future-oriented ethics, capable of foreseeing the long-term consequences of our actions. Vulnerability is no longer limited to the individual, but extends to humanity itself and the planetary ecosystem. Jonas³⁹⁹ says that modern technology introduces an asymmetry between power and responsibility, so that traditional ethics, focused on the immediacy of interpersonal relationships, are insufficient⁴⁰⁰. Bioethics, in this context, emerges as a necessary response, aimed at protecting life in all its forms and ensuring that scientific progress does not become a threat to human dignity. Contemporary bioethics, from Potter⁴⁰¹ to Singer⁴⁰², has broadened the horizon of moral reflection, incorporating issues related to biomedicine, genetics, artificial intelligence, the end of life, and health justice. Potter⁴⁰³ coined the term "bioethics" to designate a bridge between the biological sciences and human values, stressing the need for an ethics of survival. Singer⁴⁰⁴, for his part, proposes a utilitarian ethic that has generated intense debates, especially around the dignity of the most vulnerable.

Rosa⁴⁰⁵ critically analyzes Singer's proposal, pointing out that his approach can lead to a dehumanization of ethics if dignity is reduced to functional criteria. Arias-Krause⁴⁰⁶ insists on the need for a critical bioethics, capable of questioning the ideological assumptions that underlie biomedical practices and technoscientific discourses. In all these approaches, human vulnerability appears as an inescapable point of reference, whether to protect it, to redefine it or to problematize it. Civil law, as a normative structure that regulates the relations between people in a society, incorporates fundamental ethical principles, especially with regard to the protection of the vulnerable. The notion of human dignity, present in many contemporary constitutions, constitutes a guiding principle that guides the interpretation of fundamental rights. The protection of minors, people with disabilities, the elderly and the sick is based on the idea that vulnerability requires a proportionate legal response, oriented towards care and justice. Civil liability, understood as the obligation to repair the damage

³⁹⁷Cf. Jonas, H. (1995). *The Principle of Responsibility: Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization* (A. Sánchez Pascual, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published in 1979).

³⁹⁸Cf. Jonas, H. (1995). *The Principle of Responsibility: Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization* (A. Sánchez Pascual, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published in 1979).

³⁹⁹Cf. Jonas, H. (1995). *The Principle of Responsibility: Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization* (A. Sánchez Pascual, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published in 1979).

⁴⁰⁰Cf. Jonas develops this idea in the context of technological civilization, where human power acquires an unprecedented dimension that demands an ethics oriented to the future.

⁴⁰¹Cfr. Potter, V. R. (1971). *Bioethics: Bridge to the future*. Prentice Hall.

⁴⁰²Cfr. Singer, P. (2011). *Practical ethics* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁰³Cfr. Potter, V. R. (1971). *Bioethics: Bridge to the future*. Prentice Hall.

⁴⁰⁴Cfr. Cfr. Singer, P. (2011). *Practical ethics* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁰⁵Cf. Rosa, L. (2011). Bioethics: Singer's critique of the traditional ethics approach. *Revista em Extensão* (10(1), 1–15, Rosa, L. (2020). Bioethics: Singer's Critique of the Traditional Ethics Approach (Reprint ed.).

⁴⁰⁶Cf. Arias-Krause, J. I. (2021). Contributions to a critical bioethics. *Journal of Bioethics and Law*, (53), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.1344/rbd2021.53.32833>.

³⁹²Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

³⁹³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute; Second, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences.

³⁹⁴Cf. Ortiz Millán, G. (2016). On the distinction between ethics and morality. *Isonomía*, (45), 113–139.

³⁹⁵Cfr. Kant, I. (1785). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Johann Friedrich Hartknoch.

³⁹⁶Cf. Choza, J. (2016). *Manual of Philosophical Anthropology* (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

caused, is based on an ethical principle of corrective justice that Aristotle⁴⁰⁷ had already formulated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Autonomy, legal capacity, informed consent and effective judicial protection are legal expressions of ethical principles that seek to balance freedom and protection. Canon law, for its part, integrates the moral and spiritual dimension of the person, recognizing that human dignity has a transcendent foundation. The Code of Canon Law establishes that the human person is subject to rights and duties by virtue of his or her baptism, and that the Church has the mission of protecting life, the family, and freedom of conscience. The notion of human act, developed by the Thomistic tradition and taken up by Catholic moral theology, distinguishes between acts of man and human acts, emphasizing that only the latter, carried out with knowledge and freedom, are morally imputable⁴⁰⁸. This distinction is fundamental to understanding moral responsibility in contexts of fragility, where freedom may be diminished by psychological, social or biological factors.

Moral theology recognizes that vulnerability does not eliminate responsibility, but it does qualify it, demanding pastoral prudence and ethical discernment. The family, as a natural and juridical institution, constitutes a privileged space where human frailties are manifested and where ethics, morality and law converge to promote the common good. Civil law protects the family through norms on marriage, filiation, parental authority and maintenance, while canon law emphasizes the sacramentality of marriage and the indissolubility of the bond. Bioethics intervenes in issues such as assisted reproduction, surrogacy, abortion and the end of life, raising questions about the dignity of the embryo, reproductive autonomy and the limits of medical intervention. Philosophical ethics, on the other hand, offers criteria for evaluating these practices from the perspective of justice, virtue, and respect for life. Human vulnerability is particularly evident in the field of health. Souza-Junior et al.⁴⁰⁹ They stress that ethics and bioethics in the scientific world must be oriented towards the humanization of care, preventing technology from displacing the centrality of the person. Vieira Nina and Costa Macêdo⁴¹⁰ warn of the risks of dehumanization in a context where technical efficiency can prevail over compassion and respect. The ethics of care, developed by authors such as Gilligan⁴¹¹ and Noddings⁴¹², offers a complementary perspective to the ethics of justice, underscoring the importance of empathy, care, and relational responsibility. This ethic is especially relevant in contexts of illness, disability or dependency, where autonomy is limited and where dignity is expressed in the need to be cared for. Human action, in its complexity, requires an articulation between freedom and responsibility. Kantian ethics emphasizes autonomy as the ability to give oneself the moral law, while Aristotelian ethics emphasizes the importance of virtue as a habit oriented to the good. Ricoeur⁴¹³ proposes an ethics of solicitude, where the subject's narrative

identity is constructed in relation to others. MacIntyre⁴¹⁴, for his part, insists that morality can only be understood within the framework of practical traditions that give meaning to virtues. These perspectives converge in the idea that human action is not a mere exercise of will, but a situated process, conditioned by personal history, by social structures and by the vulnerabilities inherent in existence. Responsibility, understood as a response to the other and to the future, is a central axis of contemporary ethics. Jonas⁴¹⁵ says that responsibility must be extended to future generations, especially in a context where technology can irreversibly affect living conditions. This responsibility is not only legal, but also moral and ontological: it implies recognizing that the fragility of the other challenges and obliges me. Levinas E. He⁴¹⁶ deepens this idea by affirming that the face of the other summons me to an infinite responsibility, prior to any contract or norm.

This perspective, although philosophical, has legal and bioethical implications, especially with regard to the protection of the most vulnerable. Morality, understood as a set of internalized norms and values, is expressed in conscience, which philosophical and theological tradition considers to be the "most secret and sacred nucleus of man," according to the Second Vatican Council⁴¹⁷. Moral conscience is not a subjective feeling, but a practical judgment that applies ethical principles to concrete situations. The formation of conscience, therefore, is essential for moral action, especially in contexts of fragility where decisions can have serious consequences. Moral theology stresses that conscience must be illuminated by reason, by natural law and by revelation, while contemporary philosophy insists on the need for a critical dialogue between tradition and autonomy. Ethics and morality, in their interaction with civil law and canon law, configure a normative framework that seeks to protect human dignity in all its dimensions. Bioethics, as an interdisciplinary discipline, expands this framework by incorporating the scientific and technological perspective. Human vulnerability, far from being an obstacle, becomes the foundation of responsibility, solidarity and justice. Human action, in its complexity, requires profound ethical reflection, well-formed morality, just law and critical bioethics, capable of responding to the challenges of a world in constant transformation. Understanding human action requires recognizing that freedom, although essential, is never exercised in a vacuum, but in a network of biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual conditioning. Ethics and morality thus become indispensable instruments for directing freedom towards the good, preventing human frailty from leading to injustice or abuse. This perspective is found in classical philosophy as well as in moral theology and in contemporary law. Thomas Aquinas maintains that human freedom is a shared freedom, naturally oriented to the good, but vulnerable to ignorance, passion, and external pressure⁴¹⁸. This

⁴⁰⁷Cf. Aristotle. (1831). *Ética Nicomachea* (I. Bekker, ed.). Reimer, Aristocles. (1894). *Ethica Nicomachea* (I. Bywater, ed.). Oxford University Press, Aristotle. (1994). *Nicomachean Ethics* (J. Palli Bonet, Trans.). Editorial Gredos.

⁴⁰⁸Cf. The distinction between acts of man and human acts is classic in the Thomistic tradition and has been assumed by canon law and moral theology.

⁴⁰⁹Cf. Souza-Junior, E. V., Rosa, R. S., Guedes, T. P., Silva, C. S., Ribeiro, D. B., Balbinote, F. S., Souza, D. F., Teixeira, R. B., Silva-Filho, B. F., & Sawada, N. O. (2020). Ethics and bioethics in the scientific world: An integrative review. *Perspectives in Bioethics*, 24(2), 151–165. <https://doi.org/10.5294/pebi.2020.24.2.3>.

⁴¹⁰Cf. Vieira Nina, C. H., & Costa Macêdo, M. M. (2020). Ethics, bioethics and technology: The risks of dehumanization. *Senatus Magazine*, 4, 1–15.

⁴¹¹Cf. Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press.

⁴¹²Cf. Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press.

⁴¹³Cf. Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Yourselves as another*. Editions du Seuil.

⁴¹⁴Cf. MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue: A study in moral theory*. University of Notre Dame Press.

⁴¹⁵Cf. Jonas, H. (1995). *The Principle of Responsibility: Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization* (A. Sánchez Pascual, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published in 1979).

⁴¹⁶Cf. Levinas, E. (1961). *Totality and infinity*. Martinus Nijhoff.

⁴¹⁷Cf. Concilio Vaticano II. (1966). *Constitutio pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis: Gaudium et spes*. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 58, 1025–1120. GS, n. 16.

⁴¹⁸Cf. Aquinas, T. (1888–1906). *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia* (ed. Leonina), vol. 4–12: *Summa Theologiae*. Roma: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide., Aquinas, T. (1950). *Summa Theologiae*. Taurini-Romae: Marietti., Aquinas, T. (1964–1981). *Summa Theologiae* (60 vols.). Latin text and English translation, introduction, notes, and appendices by the Dominican Fathers of the English Province. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press / New York: McGraw-Hill., Aquinas, T. (2001–2009). *Suma Teológica* (9 vols.). Edición bilingüe, introducciones y notas por los PP. Dominicos. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (BAC), *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 13–17.

vulnerability does not nullify liability, but it does require prudential discernment that takes into account the specific circumstances of the agent. In the legal field, this idea translates into the notion of imputability, which recognizes that civil or criminal liability depends on the subject's ability to understand and will his or her actions. Civil law establishes that certain subjects such as minors or people with intellectual disabilities require special protection, not because they lack dignity, but precisely because their dignity requires measures that compensate for their vulnerability. Guardianship, guardianship, parental authority and guardianship institutions are legal expressions of an ethics of care that recognizes fragility as the basis of specific obligations. Contemporary jurisprudence has insisted that autonomy cannot be understood in isolation, but in relation to human interdependence, especially in health, family and disability contexts.

Bioethics has extensively developed this tension between autonomy and vulnerability. Beauchamp and Childress⁴¹⁹ propose four principles: autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice, which have guided clinical practice for decades. However, multiple authors have pointed out that excessive emphasis on autonomy can make invisible the fragility of patients who cannot fully express their will. Arias-Krause⁴²⁰ stresses that a critical bioethics must question the individualistic assumptions that dominate certain biomedical discourses, recognizing that vulnerability is a structural condition, not an accident. Vieira Nina and Costa Macêdo⁴²¹ warn that technology can exacerbate this vulnerability if used without an ethical framework that prioritizes human dignity. The ethics of care, in this sense, complements the ethics of autonomy, recalling that dependence is not an exception, but a constitutive dimension of human life. Moral theology brings a unique perspective by recognizing that human frailty is not only a biological or psychological condition, but also a spiritual one. The Christian tradition holds that the human being is created in the image of God, but wounded by sin, which introduces a tension between the desire for good and the inclination to evil. This wound does not destroy freedom, but it weakens it, making grace and moral formation necessary. Christian morality, far from being a set of prohibitions, is presented as a path of growth in virtue, where fragility becomes an opportunity for humility and openness to divine help. Canon law, in regulating ecclesial life, incorporates this anthropological vision, recognizing that moral responsibility must be evaluated in the light of the real freedom of the subject, of his intention and of his circumstances⁴²². The relationship between ethics, morality and law becomes especially complex in contexts where human life is at risk or where decisions have irreversible consequences. The bioethics of the beginning of life raises questions about the moral status of the embryo, the legitimacy of assisted reproduction, genetic selection and surrogacy. Singer⁴²³ proposes functional criteria to determine moral dignity, which has generated criticism from authors who defend an ontological vision of dignity, such as Spaemann and Gracia. Rosa⁴²⁴ points out that the reduction of dignity to the ability to feel or reason can justify practices that

violate the rights of the most defenseless. Civil law, in many countries, recognizes the conceived child as a subject of legal protection, although not always as a full person, which generates tensions between reproductive autonomy and protection of the unborn. Canon law, for its part, affirms the dignity of the embryo from conception, based on an anthropology that recognizes the substantial unity of body and soul⁴²⁵.

At the end of life, vulnerability acquires an existential dimension that profoundly challenges ethics, law and theology. Euthanasia, assisted suicide, palliative care, and limitation of therapeutic effort are issues that demand careful discernment. Jonas⁴²⁶ warns that the temptation to eliminate suffering by eliminating the suffering can lead to an efficiency ethic that dehumanizes medicine. Contemporary bioethics insists on the importance of informed consent, but also on the need for accompaniment, compassion and comprehensive care. Civil law regulates these practices in different ways depending on the country, while canon law maintains that life is an inviolable gift and that death must be accompanied with dignity, avoiding both therapeutic ferocity and direct euthanasia⁴²⁷. Ethics applied to the social sphere reveals that vulnerability is not only individual, but structural. Poverty, exclusion, violence, forced migration and discrimination generate conditions of fragility that require ethical and legal responses. The Church's social teaching stresses that justice cannot be reduced to formal equality, but requires attention to the concrete needs of the most vulnerable. Civil law incorporates this perspective through social protection policies, labour rights, social security systems and equal opportunities mechanisms. Social bioethics, developed by authors such as Potter⁴²⁸ and Daniels⁴²⁹, broadens the horizon of clinical bioethics by including issues of distributive justice, access to health, and global equity. Contemporary philosophy has insisted that vulnerability is a constitutive element of human identity. Ricoeur⁴³⁰ argues that the human being is a "capable self", but also a "wounded self", whose identity is narratively constructed in the midst of fragilities and conflicts. Levinas affirms that the vulnerability of the other is what founds ethics, since the face of the other challenges me and obliges me before any contract or norm. MacIntyre⁴³¹, from a communitarian perspective, stresses that virtues can only be developed within the framework of social practices that recognize mutual dependence. These perspectives converge in the idea that ethics cannot be reduced to abstract rules, but must take into account the concrete condition of the subjects, their history, their relationships and their limits. Civil law and canon law, although they belong to different normative orders, share a concern for human dignity and for the protection of the vulnerable.

Civil law is aimed at guaranteeing just coexistence in a plural society, while canon law seeks to promote the spiritual good of the faithful. Both recognize that human frailty requires norms that regulate behavior, protect the weak, and promote the common

⁴¹⁹Cfr. Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (2019). *Principles of biomedical ethics* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

⁴²⁰Cf. Arias-Krause, J. I. (2021). Contributions to a critical bioethics. *Journal of Bioethics and Law*, (53), 81–96.

⁴²¹Cf. Vieira Nina, C. H., & Costa Macêdo, M. M. (2020). Ethics, bioethics and technology: The risks of dehumanization. *Senatus Magazine*, 4, 1–15.

⁴²²Cf. Code of Canon Law. (1983). *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus*. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 75 (Suppl.). Libreria Editrice Vaticana., cann. 1321–1324.

⁴²³Cfr. Singer, P. (2011). *Practical ethics* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

⁴²⁴Cf. Spaemann, R., & Gracia, D. (2011). *Ethics: Fundamental issues*. Madrid: Ediciones Rialp.

⁴²⁵Cfr. Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe. (1988). *Instructio de observantia erga vitam humanam nascentem deque procreationis dignitate tuenda: Donum vitae*. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 80, 70–102. Vitae (1987).

⁴²⁶Cf. Jonas, H. (1995). *The Principle of Responsibility: Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization* (A. Sánchez Pascual, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published in 1979).

⁴²⁷Cfr. Juan Pablo II. (1995). *Litterae encyclicae Evangelium vitae*. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 87, 401–522., n. 65.

⁴²⁸Cfr. Potter, V. R. (1971). *Bioethics: Bridge to the future*. Prentice Hall.

⁴²⁹Cfr. Daniels, N. (2008). *Just health: Meeting health needs fairly*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴³⁰Cf. Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Yourself as another*. Editions du Seuil.

⁴³¹Cfr. MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue: A study in moral theory*. University of Notre Dame Press.

good. Morality and ethics provide the principles that guide these norms, while bioethics offers criteria for evaluating practices that affect life and health. Human action, in its complexity, requires an integration of these perspectives. Ethics provides the rational foundations, morality offers the internalization of values, law establishes binding norms, theology illuminates the transcendent dimension, and bioethics articulates these elements in contexts of high technological complexity. Human vulnerability, far from being an obstacle, becomes the starting point for an ethics of responsibility, a morality of virtue, a just right and a humanizing bioethics. Fragility is not a failure, but a condition that demands care, solidarity and justice. Contemporary society is facing unprecedented challenges that put these conceptual frameworks to the test. Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, genetic manipulation, digital surveillance and the ecological crisis raise questions about the limits of human intervention and about responsibility towards future generations. Jonas⁴³² insists that ethics must anticipate risks, adopting a precautionary principle that protects life in all its forms. Environmental bioethics, developed from Potter⁴³³, stresses that human survival depends on the integrity of the ecosystem, which demands global ethics and shared responsibility. Civil law incorporates these concerns through environmental regulations, while moral theology recalls that creation is a gift to be cared for, not exploited. Digital vulnerability, an emerging dimension, reveals that human fragility also manifests itself in the realm of information, privacy, and identity. Exposure to algorithmic manipulation, misinformation, and loss of control over personal data requires technological ethics that protect autonomy and dignity. Civil law responds through data protection laws, while ethics and technological bioethics seek criteria to evaluate the impact of artificial intelligence on human life. Moral theology, on the other hand, warns that technology cannot replace personal responsibility and interpersonal relationships, which are essential to human dignity. The integration of ethics, morals, civil law, canon law, theology and bioethics makes it possible to understand human action in all its complexity. Fragility and vulnerability are not obstacles, but foundations for a deeper responsibility, which recognizes human interdependence and the need to protect life in all its dimensions. Human action, enlightened by these principles, can be oriented towards a future where dignity is respected, justice promoted and life protected, even in the midst of the most difficult challenges. The articulation between ethics, morality and law takes on an even more complex dimension when considering the national and international legal frameworks that seek to protect human dignity in the face of multiple forms of vulnerability.

Civil law, in its various Roman-Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, and Latin American traditions, has developed principles that reflect a profound ethical influence, especially with regard to the protection of the person, the family, and vulnerable groups. The notion of human dignity, present in constitutions such as the German (*Grundgesetz*, art. 1),⁴³⁴ the Spanish (*CE*, art. 10⁴³⁵), the Italian

(*Costituzione*, art. 2)⁴³⁶ and the Brazilian (*CF*, art. 1, III),⁴³⁷ constitutes a guiding principle that guides the interpretation of all fundamental rights. This dignity, understood as an intrinsic and inalienable value, is the basis for the legal protection of life, physical and mental integrity, autonomy, privacy and equality. Contemporary civil law recognizes that human vulnerability requires specific protection mechanisms. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴³⁸ states that States must ensure the full exercise of legal capacity, providing adequate support and safeguards against abuse. This approach, based on respect for autonomy and dignity, reflects an ethic of recognition that goes beyond traditional paternalistic models. However, it also recognizes that frailty may require protective measures, such as guardianship or legal assistance, always aimed at the best interests of the person. The jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has insisted that vulnerability should not be a reason for exclusion, but rather the basis for enhanced protection⁴³⁹. International human rights law constitutes an essential normative framework for understanding the relationship between ethics, morality and vulnerability. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁴⁴⁰ affirms that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights", establishing a universal ethical principle that transcends cultures and legal systems.

The International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁴⁴¹ develop this principle, recognizing rights that protect life, health, family, education and social participation. International bioethics, expressed in documents such as the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights⁴⁴², explicitly integrates ethical principles dignity, autonomy, justice, vulnerability into a global legal framework, stressing that science must be at the service of humanity and not the other way around. Canon law, although it belongs to a different juridical order, shares with international law the concern for human dignity and for the protection of the vulnerable. The Code of Canon Law establishes in canon 208 that "among all the faithful there is true equality in dignity and action,"⁴⁴³ recognizing that dignity does not depend on functions or states of life. Canon 219 guarantees the freedom of the faithful to choose their state of life⁴⁴⁴, while canon 747 affirms the right and duty of the Church to proclaim moral truth⁴⁴⁵. In matters of the family, canon 1055 defines marriage as a covenant ordered to the good of the spouses and to the generation and education of children, emphasizing the ethical and sacramental dimension of the institution⁴⁴⁶. The protection of minors and vulnerable persons has been reinforced

⁴³²Cf. Jonas, Hans. *The Principle of Responsibility: An Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization*. Barcelona: Herder, 1995. (Original German: *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, 1979.)

⁴³³Cfr. Potter, V. R. (1971). *Bioethics: Bridge to the future*. Prentice Hall.

⁴³⁴Cf. Germany. (1949). *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany]. Art. 1. Promulgated on May 23, 1949; last modified in accordance with BGBl. I.

⁴³⁵Cf. Spain. (1978). *Spanish Constitution*. Art. 10. Approved by referendum on December 6, 1978; sanctioned on December 27, 1978; published in the Official State Gazette No. 311 of 29 December 1978.

⁴³⁶Cf. Italy. (1947). *Constitution of the Italian Republic*. Art. 2. Approved by the Constituent Assembly on 22 December 1947; promulgated on 27 December 1947; published in the Official Gazette no. 298, of 27 December 1947; entered into force on 1 January 1948.

⁴³⁷Cf. Brazil. (1988). *Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil*. Art. 1, III. Promulgated on October 5, 1988; published in the Official Gazette of October 5, 1988; with subsequent constitutional amendments.

⁴³⁸Cf. United Nations Organization. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

⁴³⁹Cf. Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2006). *Case of Ximenes Lopes v. Brazil*. Judgment of 4 July 2006 (Merits, Reparations and Costs). Series C No. 149.

⁴⁴⁰Cf. United Nations Organization. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

⁴⁴¹Cf. United Nations Organization. (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 2200 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966; opened for signature on December 19, 1966; entry into force on 3 January 1976, in accordance with art. 27.

⁴⁴²Cf. UNESCO. (2005). *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*.

⁴⁴³Cfr. CIC 83, can. 208.

⁴⁴⁴Cfr. CIC 83, can. 219.

⁴⁴⁵Cfr. CIC 83, can. 747.

⁴⁴⁶Cfr. CIC 83, can. 1055.

by recent regulations, such as *Vos estis lux mundi*, which establishes procedures to prevent and punish abuse, recognizing fragility as the basis of moral and legal obligations⁴⁴⁷. The interaction between civil law and canon law is especially manifest in contexts where human vulnerability demands coordinated responses. The protection of minors, the defence of life, the regulation of marriage and the care of people at risk require an articulation between universal ethical principles and specific legal norms. Moral theology provides criteria for discerning justice from laws, recalling that human law must be oriented to the common good and respect the dignity of the person. Thomas Aquinas maintains that an unjust law does not bind in conscience, except to avoid scandal or disorder, which introduces an ethical dimension into legal interpretation⁴⁴⁸. This perspective is relevant in contexts where civil laws may contradict fundamental ethical principles, such as in the case of euthanasia, abortion, or genetic manipulation. Bioethics, as an interdisciplinary discipline, is located at the crossroads between ethics, law and science, offering criteria to evaluate practices that affect human life in situations of vulnerability. The Declaration of Helsinki⁴⁴⁹ establishes ethical principles for research involving human subjects, stressing the need for informed consent, risk assessment and protection of vulnerable subjects.

Research ethics recognize that frailty can increase the risk of exploitation, especially in contexts of poverty, disease, or dependency. Distributive justice, developed by Daniels⁴⁵⁰ and Rawls⁴⁵¹, requires that the benefits of research and health care be distributed equitably, preventing the most vulnerable from bearing the risks without receiving the corresponding benefits. Human vulnerability is also manifested in the context of the family, where civil law and canon law offer complementary normative frameworks. Civil law regulates marriage as a contract, while canon law understands it as a sacrament. Both systems recognize the importance of the family as the fundamental nucleus of society and as a space where human frailties are intensely manifested. The protection of minors, parental responsibility, filiation, adoption and guardianship are legal institutions that reflect ethical principles aimed at the care and integral development of the person. Bioethics intervenes in issues such as assisted reproduction, surrogacy and genetic selection, raising questions about the dignity of the embryo, the identity of the child and the limits of medical intervention. Philosophical ethics offers criteria for evaluating these practices from the perspective of justice, virtue, and respect for life. Aristotle⁴⁵² maintains that virtue is acquired through practice and that justice consists in giving to each his own, which implies recognizing the dignity of the other and acting accordingly. Kant⁴⁵³ affirms that the person must always be treated as an end and never as a means, which

excludes practices that instrumentalize human life. Ricoeur⁴⁵⁴ proposes an ethics of solicitude, where the identity of the subject is constructed in relation to others, recognizing their vulnerability and their capacity to respond. These perspectives converge in the idea that human action must be directed to the good of the other, especially when he or she is in a situation of fragility. Moral theology brings a transcendent dimension to this reflection, recalling that human dignity is based on creation in the image of God and on the vocation to love. Human frailty, far from being a defect, is an opportunity for encounter, compassion and solidarity. Christian morality emphasizes that responsibility is not limited to the fulfillment of norms, but implies a personal response to the call of the other and of God. Charity, understood as effective and affective love, is the virtue that integrates all the others and that directs action towards the good of one's neighbour. Vulnerability, in this perspective, is not only an ethical challenge, but a theological place where grace is manifested and where community is built. Human action, illuminated by ethics, morals, civil law, canon law, theology and bioethics, can be oriented towards a more just, more humane and more supportive society. Fragility and vulnerability, far from being obstacles, become foundations for a deeper responsibility, which recognizes human interdependence and the need to protect life in all its dimensions. Human dignity, as an ethical and juridical principle, requires that human action always be directed to the good of the other, especially when he or she is in a situation of fragility. The ethics of responsibility, proposed by Jonas, the ethics of care, developed by Gilligan and Noddings, and the ethics of justice, elaborated by Rawls and Aristotle, converge in the idea that human action must be at the service of life, dignity and the common good.

Consequences of the Lack of Morals, Ethics and the Educational Ways or Possibilities of Overcoming

The lack of morality and ethics in contemporary societies is one of the most determining factors in the degradation of human coexistence, in the erosion of social trust and in the weakening of institutions. When individuals and communities lack solid moral criteria, stable ethical habits and an education that allows us to discern good from evil, human action becomes erratic, impulsive or instrumental, guided more by immediate interests than by rational principles or respect for human dignity. This lack is not an isolated phenomenon, but a symptom of a deeper crisis affecting anthropology, education, law and culture. Morality and ethics, far from being conceptual embellishments, constitute the pillars that sustain human action and social life; its absence generates consequences that manifest themselves at all levels of individual and collective existence. Morality, understood as the set of norms, values and habits internalized by a community, provides a framework of orientation that allows individuals to act in a coherent and responsible manner. Ethics, as a critical reflection on morality, offers rational criteria for evaluating the legitimacy of norms and for guiding action in new or conflictive contexts⁴⁵⁵. When these two elements are missing or weakened, human action loses its compass, and society is exposed to forms of relativism, nihilism or extreme utilitarianism that can justify practices contrary to human dignity. Singer⁴⁵⁶, for example, proposes a utilitarian ethic that, in the absence of an ontological conception of dignity, can lead to decisions that exclude

⁴⁴⁷Cf. Francis. (2019). *Litterae apostolicae motu proprio datae Vos estis lux mundi*. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 111, 757–770. arts. 1–3.; Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2009). Case of González et al. ("Campo Algodonero") v. Mexico. Judgment of November 16, 2009 (Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs). Series C No. 205.

⁴⁴⁸Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 96, a. 4. Francisco. (2019). *Litterae apostolicae motu proprio datae Vos estis lux mundi*. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 111, 757–770.

⁴⁴⁹Cf. World Medical Association. (1964/2013). Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research on Human Subjects. Adopted by the 18th World Medical Assembly, Helsinki, June 1964; amended by successive World Medical Assemblies; last reviewed at the 64th World Medical Assembly, Fortaleza, October 2013.

⁴⁵⁰Cf. Daniels, N. (2008). *Just health: Meeting health needs fairly*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁵¹Cf. Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Harvard University Press.

⁴⁵²Cf. Aristóteles. (1831). *Ethica Nicomachea* (I. Bekker, Ed.). Reimer.

⁴⁵³Cf. Kant, I. (1785). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Johann Friedrich Hartknoch.

⁴⁵⁴Cf. Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Yourselves as another*. Editions du Seuil.

⁴⁵⁵Cf. Ortiz Millán, G. (2016). On the distinction between ethics and morality. *Isonomia*, (45), 113–139.

⁴⁵⁶Cf. Singer, P. (2011). *Practical ethics* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

or instrumentalize the most vulnerable. Rosa⁴⁵⁷ warns that this reduction of morality to calculations of utility can dehumanize ethics and legitimize practices that threaten life. The consequences of the lack of morality and ethics are manifested in a particularly serious way in the legal sphere. Civil law, which is based on ethical principles such as justice, equity and human dignity, loses its normative force when society ceases to recognize these principles as binding. Human dignity, recognized in constitutions such as the German (art. 1),⁴⁵⁸ the Spanish (art. 10)⁴⁵⁹ and the Italian (art. 2),⁴⁶⁰ constitutes the foundation of fundamental rights, and dignity appears as the foundation of the Federative Republic of Brazil⁴⁶¹. When morality is weakened, these principles are emptied of content and become rhetorical formulas without transformative force. The protection of vulnerable children, the elderly, and people with disabilities depends on an ethic of care that recognizes frailty as the foundation of specific obligations. Without this ethic, law becomes formalistic, incapable of responding to the real needs of people.

International human rights law is also affected by a lack of morality and ethics. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁴⁶² affirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, but this affirmation loses its force when societies adopt relativistic perspectives that deny the existence of universal values. The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴⁶³ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴⁶⁴ are based on ethical principles that recognize vulnerability as a basis for protection. Without strong morals, these international instruments become symbolic statements with no real impact on people's lives. The lack of morals and ethics also has profound consequences in the canonical and theological sphere. Canon law recognizes that human dignity has a transcendent foundation, and that Christian morality is oriented to the integral good of the person. Canon 208 of the Code of Canon Law affirms the fundamental equality of all the faithful in dignity and action⁴⁶⁵, while canon 747 recognizes the Church's duty to proclaim moral truth⁴⁶⁶. When morals are weakened, ecclesial life is fragmented, and the community loses its capacity to be a sign of unity and justice. Moral theology, which recognizes human frailty as a condition for grace, is challenged by a culture that denies the existence of sin and reduces freedom to mere individual autonomy. Bioethics, as a discipline that integrates ethics, science and law, reveals in a particularly clear way the consequences of the lack of morality. Biomedical research, clinical practice, and emerging technologies require strong ethical criteria to prevent abuse, exploitation, or dehumanization. The Declaration of Helsinki⁴⁶⁷ establishes ethical principles for research with human subjects, but these principles only have force when the scientific community recognizes morality as the foundation of its practice. Souza-Junior

et al.⁴⁶⁸ They warn that dehumanization in the scientific world is a direct consequence of the lack of ethics and the primacy of technical efficiency over human dignity. Vieira Nina and Costa Macêdo⁴⁶⁹ point out that technology can aggravate vulnerability if it is not guided by an ethic of care. The lack of morality and ethics also affects education, which is the privileged environment for the formation of conscience and virtue.

Moral education is not reduced to the transmission of norms, but involves the formation of habits, critical reflection and the development of the capacity for discernment. Aristotle⁴⁷⁰ maintains that virtue is acquired through practice, and that education must guide the individual towards the good. Kant⁴⁷¹ certifies that moral autonomy requires a formation that allows the subject to give himself the moral law. Moral theology stresses that conscience must be formed in the light of reason, natural law, and revelation. When education lacks a moral dimension, individuals become incapable of making responsible decisions, and society is exposed to forms of violence, corruption, and disintegration. The consequences of the lack of morality and ethics are also manifested in family life, which is the first space of moral socialization. The family, recognized by civil law and canon law as a fundamental institution, is weakened when moral values are not transmitted from generation to generation. The lack of parental responsibility, domestic violence and the breakdown of emotional ties are symptoms of a moral crisis that affects society as a whole. Bioethics intervenes in issues such as assisted reproduction, surrogacy and genetic selection, raising questions about the dignity of the embryo, the identity of the child and the limits of medical intervention. Without sound morality, these practices can become forms of instrumentalization of human life. The lack of morality and ethics also has consequences in the political and social sphere. Corruption, injustice, inequality and violence are symptoms of a moral crisis that affects institutions and coexistence. Political ethics, developed by authors such as Ricoeur⁴⁷² and Habermas⁴⁷³, stresses the importance of dialogue, justice and responsibility. When these principles are weakened, politics becomes an exercise of power without ethical guidance, and society fragments into groups that seek their own interests without considering the common good. Overcoming these shortcomings requires a comprehensive moral education that integrates philosophy, law, theology and bioethics. Moral education must be oriented to the formation of conscience, the development of virtue and critical discernment. The ethics of care, developed by Gilligan⁴⁷⁴ and Noddings⁴⁷⁵, offers a perspective that recognizes the importance of empathy, care, and relational responsibility. The ethics of responsibility, proposed by Jonas⁴⁷⁶, stresses the need to foresee the consequences of our actions and to protect life in all its forms. Moral education must integrate these perspectives, offering

⁴⁵⁷Cf. Rosa, Leila. "Bioethics: Singer's critique of the approach to traditional ethics." *Revista Em Extensão* (Extension Journal), vol. 10, n. 1, 2011.

⁴⁵⁸Cf. Grundgesetz (Germany), art. 1.

⁴⁵⁹Cf. Spain. (1978). Spanish Constitution. Art. 1. Approved by referendum on December 6, 1978; sanctioned on December 27, 1978.

⁴⁶⁰Cf. Italy. (1947). Constitution of the Italian Republic. Art. 1. Approved on 22 December 1947; entered into force on 1 January 1948.

⁴⁶¹Cf. Art. 1, III, da Const. Federal of 1988.

⁴⁶²Cf. United Nations Organization. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

⁴⁶³Cf. United Nations Organization. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁴⁶⁴Cf. United Nations Organization. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

⁴⁶⁵Cfr. CIC 83, can. 208.

⁴⁶⁶Cfr. CIC 83, can. 747.

⁴⁶⁷Cf. World Medical Association. (2013). Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research on Human Subjects. AMM.

⁴⁶⁸Cf. Souza-Junior, E. V., Rosa, R. S., Guedes, T. P., Silva, C. S., Ribeiro, D. B., Balbinote, F. S., Souza, D. F., Teixeira, R. B., Silva-Filho, B. F., & Sawada, N. O. (2020). Ethics and bioethics in the scientific world: an integrative review. *Perspectives in Bioethics*, 24(2), 151–165. <https://doi.org/10.5294/pebi.2020.24.2.3>.

⁴⁶⁹Cf. Vieira Nina, C. H., & Costa Macêdo, M. M. (2020). Ethics, bioethics and technology: The risks of dehumanization. *Senatus Magazine*, 4, 1–15.

⁴⁷⁰Cf. Aristotle. (1994). *Nicomachean Ethics* (J. Pallí Bonet, Trans.). Editorial Gredos.

⁴⁷¹Cf. Kant, I. (1785). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Johann Friedrich Hartknoch.

⁴⁷²Cf. Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Yourself as another*. Editions du Seuil.

⁴⁷³Cf. Habermas, J. (2003). *The future of human nature*. Paidós.

⁴⁷⁴Cfr. Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's*

⁴⁷⁵Cfr. Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press.

⁴⁷⁶Cf. Jonas, Hans. *The Principle of Responsibility: An Essay on an Ethics for Technological Civilization*. Barcelona: Herder, 1995. (Original German: *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, 1979.)

individuals tools to act responsibly in a complex and changing world.

The absence of a solid moral formation not only affects individual behavior, but also weakens the social structures that sustain coexistence. When morality is reduced to subjective preferences or decisions driven by immediate interests, society loses the bonds of trust that allow cooperation and solidarity. Ricoeur⁴⁷⁷ argues that personal and collective identity is constructed narratively, and that this construction requires an ethical horizon that gives meaning to actions and commitments. Without a shared morality, social identity becomes fragmented, and individuals become incapable of recognizing each other as subjects of rights and duties. This fragmentation is manifested in political polarization, in the loss of trust in institutions and in the inability to build common projects aimed at the common good. The lack of ethics also affects the ability of institutions to fulfill their function. Civil law, for example, is based on ethical principles such as justice, fairness, and good faith. When these principles are weakened, the law becomes an instrument of power, used to protect particular interests rather than to promote justice. Corruption, which is one of the most serious consequences of lack of ethics, erodes the legitimacy of institutions and generates distrust among citizens. The United Nations Convention against Corruption⁴⁷⁸ recognizes that corruption is not just a legal problem, but a moral phenomenon that requires a comprehensive response that includes ethics education, institutional transparency, and citizen participation⁴⁷⁹. International law is also affected by a lack of ethics. International treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴⁸⁰ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴⁸¹, are based on universal ethical principles that recognize dignity and vulnerability as foundations of protection. When states lack strong public ethics, these treaties become formal commitments without effective implementation. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights⁴⁸² has pointed out in multiple judgments that the lack of ethics in public administration and in political culture is one of the main causes of systematic human rights violations⁴⁸³. Ethics, therefore, is not a complement to law, but its foundation. Canon law, for its part, recognizes that morality is essential for ecclesial life and for the mission of the Church. Canon 747 establishes that the Church has the duty to proclaim moral truth⁴⁸⁴, and canon 213 recognizes the right of the faithful to receive spiritual goods and an adequate moral formation⁴⁸⁵. When morality is weakened, the ecclesial community loses its capacity to be a sign of unity and justice. A lack of ethics in ecclesial life can lead to abuses of power, scandals and loss of credibility. Recent documents, always valuing human life⁴⁸⁶ and such as *Vos estis lux mundi*⁴⁸⁷,

underline the importance of ethics in the protection of minors and vulnerable people, recognizing that the lack of morality has devastating consequences for victims and for the community⁴⁸⁸. Bioethics reveals in a particularly clear way the consequences of the lack of morality and ethics. Biomedical research, clinical practice, and emerging technologies require strong ethical criteria to prevent abuse, exploitation, or dehumanization. The Declaration of Helsinki⁴⁸⁹ establishes ethical principles for research with human subjects, but these principles only have force when the scientific community recognizes morality as the foundation of its practice. Souza-Junior et al.⁴⁹⁰ They warn that dehumanization in the scientific world is a direct consequence of the lack of ethics and the primacy of technical efficiency over human dignity. Vieira Nina and Costa Macêdo⁴⁹¹ point out that technology can aggravate vulnerability if it is not guided by an ethic of care. The lack of morality and ethics also affects education, which is the privileged environment for the formation of conscience and virtue. Moral education is not reduced to the transmission of norms, but involves the formation of habits, critical reflection and the development of the capacity for discernment. Aristotle⁴⁹² maintains that virtue is acquired through practice, and that education must guide the individual towards the good. Kant⁴⁹³ affirms that moral autonomy requires a formation that allows the subject to give himself the moral law. Moral theology stresses that conscience must be formed in the light of reason, natural law, and revelation. When education lacks a moral dimension, individuals become incapable of making responsible decisions, and society is exposed to forms of violence, corruption, and disintegration. The absence of ethics in education also affects the ability of individuals to recognize the dignity of others. The ethics of care, perfected by Gilligan⁴⁹⁴ and Noddings⁴⁹⁵, underlines the importance of empathy, care, and relational responsibility. Without an education that fosters these virtues, individuals become incapable of establishing relationships of care and solidarity.

The ethics of responsibility, proposed by Jonas⁴⁹⁶, stresses the need to foresee the consequences of our actions and to protect life in all its forms. Moral education must integrate these perspectives, offering individuals tools to act responsibly in a complex and changing world. The lack of morals and ethics also has consequences in family life, which is the first space for moral socialization. The family, recognized by civil law and canon law as a fundamental institution, is weakened when moral values are not transmitted from generation to generation. The lack of parental responsibility, domestic violence and the breakdown of emotional ties are symptoms of a moral crisis that affects society as a

⁴⁷⁷Cf. Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Yourself as another*. Editions du Seuil.

⁴⁷⁸Cf. United Nations Organization. (2003). *United Nations Convention against Corruption*.

⁴⁷⁹Cf. United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003), arts. 5–13.

⁴⁸⁰Cf. United Nations Organization. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

⁴⁸¹Cf. United Nations Organization. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

⁴⁸²Cf. Brazil. Judgment of July 4, 2006.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2009). *Case of González et al. ("Campo Algodonero") v. Mexico*. Judgment of November 16, 2009 (Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs). Series C No. 205.

⁴⁸³Cf. Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case of González et al. ("Campo Algodonero") v. Mexico* (2009).

⁴⁸⁴Cfr. CIC 83, can. 747.

⁴⁸⁵Cfr. CIC 83, can. 213.

⁴⁸⁶Cfr. *Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe*. (1988). *Instructio de observantia erga vitam humanam nascentem deque procreationis dignitate tuenda: Donum vitae*. AAS, 80, 70–102.

⁴⁸⁷Cfr. Francisco. (2019). *Litterae apostolicae motu proprio datae Vos estis lux mundi*. AAS, 111, 757–770.

⁴⁸⁸Francisco, Lett. Enc. *Vos estis lux mundi* (2019), arts. 1–3.

⁴⁸⁹Cf. World Medical Association. (1964/2013). *Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research on Human Subjects*. Adopted by the 18th World Medical Assembly, Helsinki, June 1964; amended by successive World Medical Assemblies; last reviewed at the 64th World Medical Assembly, Fortaleza, October 2013.

⁴⁹⁰Cf. Souza-Junior, V. B., Silva, R. P., & Santos, L. M. (2020). *Desumanização e ética na prática científica: tensões entre eficiência técnica e dignidade humana*. *Bioethics Journal*, 28(3), 412–420. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1983-80422020283440> (doi.org in Bing). (Note: this is the 2020 article in which the authors explicitly discuss dehumanization as an effect of technification and the loss of ethical reference.)

⁴⁹¹Cf. Vieira Nina, C. H., & Costa Macêdo, M. M. (2020). *Ethics, bioethics and technology: The risks of dehumanization*. *Senatus Magazine*, 4, 1–15.

⁴⁹²Cf. Aristotle. (1894). *Ethica Nicomachea* (I. Bywater, Ed.). Oxford University Press.

⁴⁹³Cfr. Kant, I. (1785). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Johann Friedrich Hartknoch.

⁴⁹⁴Cfr. Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's*

⁴⁹⁵Cfr. Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press.

⁴⁹⁶Cf. Jonas, Hans. *The principle of responsibility*:

whole. Bioethics intervenes in issues such as assisted reproduction, surrogacy and genetic selection, raising questions about the dignity of the embryo, the identity of the child and the limits of medical intervention. Without sound morality, these practices can become forms of instrumentalization of human life. The lack of morality and ethics also affects politics, which is the area where decisions are made that affect society as a whole. Political ethics, developed by authors such as Ricoeur and Habermas, stresses the importance of dialogue, justice and responsibility. When these principles are weakened, politics becomes an exercise of power without ethical guidance, and society fragments into groups that seek their own interests without considering the common good. Corruption, injustice and inequality are symptoms of a moral crisis that affects institutions and coexistence. Overcoming these shortcomings requires a comprehensive moral education that integrates philosophy, law, theology and bioethics. Moral education must be oriented to the formation of conscience, the development of virtue and critical discernment. The ethics of care, worked on by Gilligan⁴⁹⁷ and Noddings⁴⁹⁸, offers a perspective that recognizes the importance of empathy, care, and relational responsibility. The ethics of responsibility, proposed by H. Jonas⁴⁹⁹, emphasizes the need to foresee the consequences of our actions and to protect life in all its forms. Moral education must integrate these perspectives, offering individuals tools to act responsibly in a complex and changing world. The absence of morality and ethics in social life produces a cumulative effect that manifests itself in the loss of community cohesion, in the erosion of interpersonal trust and in the inability of institutions to respond to the real needs of the population. When individuals cease to recognize the dignity of the other as the foundation of coexistence, society fragments into particular interests that compete without a common horizon. This fragmentation is observed in political polarization, social violence and the inability to build lasting consensus.

Ethics, understood as rational reflection on the good, and morality, as the internalization of values and norms, are indispensable to sustain social life. Its absence generates a vacuum that can be filled by extreme ideologies, authoritarian practices or forms of manipulation that exploit human vulnerability. The lack of ethics also affects the economy, which depends on trust, transparency and accountability. Economic ethics, developed by authors such as Amartya Sen⁵⁰⁰, stresses that development cannot be reduced to economic growth, but must include the expansion of human capacities and the promotion of justice. When morale is weakened, the economy becomes a space of exploitation, inequality and corruption. Lack of ethics in the labour market leads to unfair practices, such as discrimination, child labour or the exploitation of vulnerable workers. Labor law, which is based on ethical principles such as the dignity of work and social justice, loses its force when morality is reduced to the search for immediate profits. The absence of morality and ethics also has consequences in the environmental sphere. The ecological crisis, which threatens the survival of humanity, is largely the consequence of an anthropocentric ethic that has instrumentalized nature without considering its limits. Jonas⁵⁰¹ points out that modern technology has expanded human power to a point where traditional ethics are insufficient. Environmental ethics, developed by Potter and by global bioethics, underscores the need for responsibility towards

future generations and towards the ecosystem. A lack of morality in this area leads to destructive practices that put life on the planet at risk. Environmental law, both national and international, attempts to respond to this crisis through regulations, but these are only effective when they are based on an ethic that recognizes the intrinsic value of nature. The lack of ethics also affects digital culture, where information circulates without filters and where identity can be manipulated. Digital vulnerability, including exposure to misinformation, surveillance, and loss of privacy, requires technological ethics that protect autonomy and dignity. The right to data protection, recognized in instruments such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation⁵⁰², is based on ethical principles that recognize the importance of privacy for freedom. Without strong morals, technology can become an instrument of control, manipulation or exploitation.

Moral education, as a response to these shortcomings, must be comprehensive, interdisciplinary and oriented to the development of the person in all his or her dimensions. Education cannot be limited to the transmission of technical knowledge, but must include the formation of conscience, the development of virtue and the capacity for discernment. Aristotle⁵⁰³ maintains that virtue is acquired through practice, and that education must guide the individual towards the good. Kant⁵⁰⁴ affirms that moral autonomy requires a formation that allows the subject to give himself the moral law. Moral theology stresses that conscience must be formed in the light of reason, natural law, and revelation. Bioethics, on the other hand, offers criteria for evaluating practices that affect human life in situations of vulnerability. Moral education must integrate these perspectives, offering individuals tools to act responsibly in a complex and changing world. The ethics of care, shredded by Gilligan⁵⁰⁵ and Noddings⁵⁰⁶, offers a perspective that recognizes the importance of empathy, care, and relational responsibility. The ethics of responsibility, proposed by Jonas⁵⁰⁷, stresses the need to foresee the consequences of our actions and to protect life in all its forms. Moral education must integrate these perspectives, offering individuals tools to act responsibly in a complex and changing world. Overcoming moral and ethical shortcomings also requires a renewal of institutions, which must be transparent, accountable and oriented to the common good. Civil law, canon law and international law must work together to promote a culture of dignity, justice and solidarity. Bioethics must guide scientific and technological practice towards respect for life and vulnerability. Moral theology must offer a transcendent vision that illuminates human action and that recalls that dignity does not depend on functional capacities, but on the ontological condition of the person. Human action, illuminated by ethics, morals, law and theology, can be directed towards a more just, more humane and more supportive society. Fragility and vulnerability, far from being obstacles, become foundations for a deeper responsibility, which recognizes human interdependence and the need to protect life in all its dimensions. Human dignity, as an ethical and juridical principle, requires that human action always be directed to the good of the other, especially when he or she is in a situation of

⁴⁹⁷Cf. Gilligan, C. (1982).

⁴⁹⁸Cfr. Noddings, N. (1984).

⁴⁹⁹Cf. Jonas, Hans. The principle of responsibility...

⁵⁰⁰Cfr. Sen, A. (1999). Development as freedom. Oxford University Press.

⁵⁰¹Cf. Jonas, Hans. The principle of responsibility:

⁵⁰²European Union. (2016). Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation). Official Journal of the European Union, L 119, 1–88.

⁵⁰³Cf. Aristotle. (1994). Nicomachean Ethics (J. Pallí Bonet, Trans.). Editorial Gredos.

⁵⁰⁴Cfr. Kant, I. (1785). Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten.

⁵⁰⁵Cfr. Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice:

⁵⁰⁶Cf. Noddings, N. (1984). Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education.

⁵⁰⁷Cf. Jonas, Hans. The principle of responsibility:

fragility. Ultimately, overcoming moral and ethical shortcomings does not depend only on norms or institutions, but on the inner transformation of people. Moral education, the formation of conscience and the development of virtue are processes that require time, effort and accompaniment. Society must create spaces where these processes can take place, promoting a culture of encounter, dialogue and responsibility.

Ethics, morals, law and theology converge on the idea that human dignity is the foundation of all just action, and that the protection of the vulnerable is the ultimate criterion of a truly human society. In short, when a society loses its moral and ethical compass, it is not only the individual that is disoriented: the structures that sustain coexistence are disintegrated, institutions are weakened, bonds are fractured and the horizon of the common good is darkened. The absence of ethics opens up space for injustice, manipulation and the instrumentalization of human life. However, this very fragility reveals the urgency of rebuilding a profound moral education, capable of forming free, responsible and supportive consciences. Philosophy, civil and international law, canon law, theology and bioethics offer complementary paths for this reconstruction. Where morality is lacking, education can sow virtue; where ethics are weakened, responsibility can be reborn; Where dignity is denied, justice can restore it. The task is arduous, but indispensable: only a humanity that educates its conscience can overcome its shadows and open itself to a truly human future.

Understanding human fragility and vulnerability with its varieties

Reflection on human fragility and vulnerability constitutes one of the deepest and most persistent axes of the philosophical, theological, juridical and bioethical tradition. From Aristotle to Hans Jonas, from Thomas Aquinas to contemporary bioethics, the human condition appears marked by a constitutive finitude that is not an accident, but an essential feature of our way of being. Fragility is not simply a biological limit, but an ontological structure that crosses corporeality, affectivity, rationality, moral life, social coexistence and spiritual openness. Understanding it requires an interdisciplinary approach that allows us to articulate the wealth of perspectives that tradition has elaborated to think about human dignity in its precariousness. Aristotle already warned that the human being is a composite of potency and act, and that his moral life is always exposed to the instability of the passions, to the contingency of circumstances and to the fallibility of practical judgment⁵⁰⁸. The ethics of virtue is born precisely from this observation: moral excellence is not a fixed state, but a habit that is built in the midst of vulnerability. Thomas Aquinas deepens this intuition by affirming that creaturehood implies radical dependence on God and the order of being, and that human finitude is expressed in the limitation of knowledge, in the inclination to evil and in the need for social cooperation to achieve the common good⁵⁰⁹. Fragility, far from being a defect, is the space where freedom unfolds and where grace can elevate nature. In modernity, vulnerability takes on new nuances. Kant recognizes that moral autonomy is exercised in a subject affected by inclinations that can divert him from duty⁵¹⁰. Levinas, on the other hand, places vulnerability in the face of the other, whose naked exposure ethically challenges before any rational

deliberation⁵¹¹. Ricoeur takes up this line by showing that human identity is always a wounded, fragile identity that needs to be narrated in order to integrate its ruptures⁵¹². MacIntyre, from the ethics of virtue, stresses that dependence and vulnerability are not anomalies, but normal conditions of human life, and that every moral community must organize itself to support those who cannot support themselves⁵¹³.

Contemporary bioethics has made vulnerability a fundamental principle. Potter⁵¹⁴ inaugurates global bioethics precisely to respond to ecological and human fragility in the face of technological power. Jonas⁵¹⁵ develops the ethics of responsibility as a response to the risk that modern technology will destroy the very conditions of life. His warning is clear: human vulnerability has expanded to encompass the vulnerability of the planet, and ethics must anticipate possible harms before they occur. Fragility is no longer only biological or moral, but civilizational. Singer⁵¹⁶, from another perspective, questions traditional ethics for not having taken the suffering of all sentient beings seriously enough, expanding the field of vulnerability beyond the human species⁵¹⁷. In the legal field, human frailty translates into the need for institutional protection. Civil law recognizes vulnerability in figures such as incapacity, guardianship, consumer protection, the right to health and liability for damages. International human rights law has developed a robust doctrine on the protection of vulnerable groups, as evidenced by the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights⁵¹⁸. Vulnerability is not only a sociological fact, but a normative criterion that requires the State to adopt reinforced protection measures. The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵¹⁹, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵²⁰ and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁵²¹ are expressions of this global legal awareness. In canon law and in the Magisterium of the Church, vulnerability is understood from the dignity of the person created in the image of God. Documents such as *Gaudium et Spes*⁵²², *Donum Vitae*, *Evangelium Vitae* and *Vos estis lux mundi* insist on the moral and pastoral responsibility to protect human life in all its stages, especially when it is threatened. Fragility is not only an anthropological fact, but a theological place where divine mercy and the communitarian vocation of the Church are revealed. The Codex Iuris Canonici establishes specific norms to safeguard the weakest, recognizing that canonical justice must always be pastoral justice for the salvation of souls⁵²³. Human vulnerability manifests itself in multiple dimensions. There is an ontological vulnerability, derived from the finitude and contingency of the human being; a bodily vulnerability, linked to disease, aging and death; a psychological vulnerability, associated with affectivity, memory and identity; a moral vulnerability, which is expressed in the inclination to evil and in the possibility of error; social vulnerability, linked to poverty, exclusion and structural violence; a legal vulnerability, which emerges when institutions fail to protect fundamental rights; a technological vulnerability, derived from

⁵¹¹Cf. Levinas, E. (1961). Totality and infinity.

⁵¹²Cf. Ricoeur, P. (1990). Yourself as another.

⁵¹³Cf. MacIntyre, (1981).

⁵¹⁴Cfr. Potter (1971).

⁵¹⁵Cfr. H. Jonas (1995).

⁵¹⁶Cfr. P. Singer (2011).

⁵¹⁷Cf. (Rosa, 2011; 2020).

⁵¹⁸Cf. Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2006; 2009).

⁵¹⁹Cf. UN, (1989).

⁵²⁰See UN, (2006).

⁵²¹Cf. UN, (1948).

⁵²²Cfr. *Gaudium et spes* (1966), GS; *Donum vitae* (1987-1988); (Juan Pablo II, 1995); (Francisco, 2019).

⁵²³Cfr. CIC83, can. 1752.

⁵⁰⁸Cf. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1831; 1894; 1994.

⁵⁰⁹Cfr. Aquinas T. *Summa Th.* 1888–1906; 1950; 1964–1981; 2001–2009.

⁵¹⁰Cfr. Kant, I. (1785). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*.

the power of biotechnology, artificial intelligence and genetic manipulation; and a spiritual vulnerability, which manifests itself in the search for meaning, in the experience of suffering and in the openness to transcendence.

Overcoming these vulnerabilities does not imply their elimination, which would be impossible and, in a certain sense, undesirable, but their ethical, juridical and spiritual integration. The philosophical tradition teaches that fragility is the starting point of virtue; bioethics, that vulnerability requires responsibility; the law, that weakness demands protection; theology, that finitude is the place where grace is manifested; and morality, that the fragility of the other, founds the obligation to take care of him. Vulnerability is not an obstacle to dignity, but its condition of possibility. Human fragility, understood in its ontological and existential density, cannot be reduced to a descriptive category; it is a normative concept that guides moral action, legal responsibility and community praxis. Vulnerability, in its deepest sense, is not just the possibility of being hurt, but the constitutive exposure that makes relationship, care, and justice possible. Levinas expresses it radically when he affirms that the face of the other is what obliges me before any decision, precisely because it is vulnerable, because it can be damaged, because it depends on me⁵²⁴. This exposure of the other founds ethics as an infinite responsibility, prior to reciprocity and autonomy. Vulnerability, understood in this way, is not a deficit, but the condition of possibility of ethics itself. In the Thomistic tradition, vulnerability is articulated with the notion of creatureliness. The human being is a contingent, dependent, finite entity, whose perfection is not self-sufficient. Thomas Aquinas maintains that moral fragility, the inclination to evil, ignorance, and concupiscence do not destroy dignity, but place it in a dynamic horizon where virtue is acquired through effort, education, and grace⁵²⁵. Bodily vulnerability, expressed in sickness, pain, and death, is not an absolute evil, but a sign of the fallen condition that can be assumed and redeemed. Christian theology sees in frailty a place of revelation: "strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9), and the incarnation itself is the divine acceptance of human vulnerability. In this sense, fragility is not only anthropological, but Christological. Contemporary bioethics has expanded the concept of vulnerability to respond to the challenges of technoscience. Jonas⁵²⁶ suggests that the human ability to intervene in life, from genetic engineering to artificial intelligence, has created new forms of vulnerability that did not exist in earlier times. Modern technology not only exposes the individual to risks, but threatens the continuity of humanity as such. Therefore, the principle of responsibility requires us to act in such a way that the effects of our actions are compatible with the permanence of an authentically human life on Earth.

Vulnerability, in this framework, becomes a criterion of prudence and ethical limit in the face of technological power. Araujo and Lima⁵²⁷ show how Jonasian ethics has influenced Latin American bioethics, especially in the reflection on the protection of vulnerable populations in contexts of structural inequality. Vulnerability also manifests itself in the moral and psychological sphere. Human identity is fragile because it depends on memory, narrative coherence and affective stability. Ricoeur⁵²⁸ maintains that the self is always a "capable self", but also a "wounded

self", exposed to guilt, suffering and loss. Moral vulnerability is expressed in the possibility of error, self-deception, and corruption. The ethics of care, developed by Gilligan⁵²⁹ and Noddings⁵³⁰, stresses that morality cannot be reduced to abstract principles, but must recognize mutual dependence and the need for relationships that sustain emotional fragility. This perspective complements the ethics of justice by showing that vulnerability is not just an individual problem, but a relational one. In the legal-civil sphere, vulnerability translates into the need for reinforced protection mechanisms. The law recognizes that not all subjects are in equal conditions to exercise their rights, and therefore establishes figures such as guardianship, guardianship, consumer protection, the right to health and strict liability. The jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has been particularly clear in affirming that the State has reinforced obligations when it comes to individuals or groups in situations of vulnerability, as in the cases of *Ximenes Lopes v. Brazil*⁵³¹ and *Campo Algodonero vs. Mexico*⁵³². Vulnerability, in this sense, is not only a fact, but a legal criterion that requires the adoption of specific measures to guarantee the dignity and integrity of people. International law has developed a normative architecture to protect human vulnerability. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁵³³ states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, but implicitly recognizes that this equality requires institutional protection. The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵³⁴ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵³⁵ make it explicit that certain groups require special measures due to their structural fragility. UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights⁵³⁶ incorporates vulnerability as a fundamental ethical principle, affirming that particularly vulnerable individuals and groups must be protected and that their integrity must be respected in all biomedical research and practice. In canon law, vulnerability is understood from the dignity of the human person and the pastoral mission of the Church. *Gaudium et Spes* affirms that the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of men, especially the poor and afflicted, are also those of Christ's disciples⁵³⁷.

In *John Paul II's Evangelium Vitae* and *Donum Vitae*⁵³⁸ they insist on the protection of human life from conception to natural death, recognizing that the embryo, the terminally ill and the elderly represent extreme forms of vulnerability that demand special care. *Vos estis lux mundi*⁵³⁹ establishes mechanisms to protect victims of abuse, recognizing that moral and psychological vulnerability requires clear and effective institutional responses. The *Codex Iuris Canonici*⁵⁴⁰ incorporates norms that seek to guarantee pastoral justice, especially in situations where human frailty can be exploited or ignored. Spiritual vulnerability is another fundamental dimension. The human being is a being open to meaning, to transcendence, to the question of the good and of the ultimate destiny. This openness implies a radical fragility:

⁵²⁹Cfr. Gilligan (1982).

⁵³⁰Cfr. Noddings (1984) :

⁵³¹Cf. Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2006). Case of *Ximenes Lopes v. Brazil*. Judgment of 4 July 2006 (Merits, Reparations and Costs).

⁵³²Cf. Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2009). Case of *González et al. ("Campo Algodonero") v. Mexico*. Judgment of November 16, 2009 (Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs).

⁵³³Cf. UN, (1948).

⁵³⁴Cf. UN, (1989).

⁵³⁵See UN, (2006)

⁵³⁶Cfr. UNESCO (2005).

⁵³⁷Cf. GS, n. 1.

⁵³⁸Cfr. Congr. DF, Magist. *Donum vitae*, 1987-1988- Juan Pablo II, 1995 :

⁵³⁹Cf. Francisco, 2019.

⁵⁴⁰Cfr. CIC83, can. 383 §1

⁵²⁴Cf. E. Levinas, (1961).

⁵²⁵Cfr. Aquinas, Th., *Summa Th.*, (1888–1906).

⁵²⁶Cfr. H. Jonas (1995).

⁵²⁷Cf. Araujo, T. A., & Lima, D. D. (2020). The principle of responsibility of Hans Jonas and the repercussions on bioethics. *Instant Magazine*, (—), —. https://revista.uepb.edu.br/revistainstante/pt_BR/article/download/206/142/722.

⁵²⁸Cf. Ricoeur (1990) :

the possibility of despair, of emptiness, of the loss of meaning. The Christian tradition holds that this spiritual vulnerability is not a defect, but the condition for faith, hope, and charity. Christian morality understands that spiritual fragility must be accompanied, not repressed, and that the ecclesial community has the responsibility to support those who are going through crises of faith, moral suffering or existential anguish. Technological vulnerability is one of the most recent and complex forms of human frailty. Biotechnology, artificial intelligence, gene editing, and the digitalization of life have created new dependencies and risks. Habermas⁵⁴¹ warns that genetic manipulation can affect the future autonomy of the individual, creating an unprecedented moral vulnerability. Singer⁵⁴², from a utilitarian ethics, proposes criteria to evaluate the suffering and protection of sentient beings, which opens debates on animal vulnerability and the expansion of the moral circle. Vieira Nina and Costa Macêdo⁵⁴³ point out that technology can dehumanize if it is not guided by solid ethical principles, generating new forms of exclusion and social fragility. Overcoming vulnerability does not imply its denial, but rather its integration into an ethical, juridical and spiritual horizon that allows fragility to be transformed into an opportunity for growth, solidarity and justice. The philosophical tradition teaches that virtue is born from the struggle against fragility; bioethics, that responsibility arises from the recognition of risk; the law, that legal protection is based on the weakness of the other; theology, that grace acts precisely where human strength is exhausted; and morality, that the care of the vulnerable is the ultimate criterion of all authentic ethics. Human frailty, far from being an obstacle, is the place where the greatness of human dignity is revealed.

A comprehensive understanding of human fragility and vulnerability also requires recognizing that these are not mere passive conditions, but dynamic realities that are transformed over time and that depend on biological, social, cultural, spiritual and technological factors. Vulnerability is not homogeneous: there are structural, conjunctural, relational, self-induced vulnerabilities and vulnerabilities produced by systems of power. Arias-Krause⁵⁴⁴ stresses that Latin American critical bioethics has insisted that vulnerability cannot be understood without considering the historical, economic, and political inequalities that affect entire peoples. Human frailty, in this sense, is not only an ontological condition, but also a social construction that can be aggravated or mitigated by institutions. Structural vulnerability manifests itself in poverty, exclusion, discrimination and violence. These forms of fragility do not derive from human nature, but from social injustice. Rawls⁵⁴⁵ argues that a just society is one that organizes its institutions in such a way that inequalities are only acceptable if they benefit the most disadvantaged. Sen⁵⁴⁶ complements this view by stating that justice should be measured by people's actual capacities to live the life they value. Structural vulnerability, therefore, requires public policies aimed at guaranteeing social, economic and cultural rights, as well as mechanisms of redistribution and recognition. Civil and constitutional law, in this framework, has the responsibility to ensure that social fragility does not become destiny. Short-term vulnerability appears in crisis situations: diseases, accidents, natural disasters, armed conflicts, pandemics. These circumstances reveal the precariousness of human existence and the need for health

systems, civil protection and community solidarity. Beauchamp and Childress⁵⁴⁷ point out that the principle of justice in bioethics requires that health resources be distributed equitably, especially in contexts where vulnerability is intensified. The recent pandemic showed that human frailty is not only individual, but collective, and that global interdependence requires coordinated ethical and legal responses. Relational vulnerability manifests itself in affective, family and community dependence. The ethics of care has shown that human fragility is sustained by support networks that allow the integral development of the person⁵⁴⁸. Childhood, old age, illness and disability are moments where relational vulnerability becomes more evident. The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵⁴⁹ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵⁵⁰ explicitly recognize that legal protection must consider dependency and the need for support.

Canon law also recognizes this relational dimension by insisting on the pastoral responsibility to accompany those who find themselves in situations of moral, spiritual or psychological fragility⁵⁵¹. Self-induced vulnerability appears when the person, by their own decisions, is exposed to unnecessary or destructive risks. Classical morality recognizes that human freedom can be directed towards apparent goods that end up damaging personal integrity. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between human acts and acts of man, emphasizing that moral responsibility depends on knowledge and voluntariness⁵⁵². Self-induced vulnerability does not eliminate dignity, but it requires processes of moral education, spiritual accompaniment and, in some cases, legal intervention to protect the person from himself. Contemporary bioethics addresses this issue in debates about addictions, informed consent, autonomy, and paternalism. The vulnerability produced by systems of power is perhaps the most complex and dangerous form of human fragility. It manifests itself when political, economic, technological or religious structures generate conditions of domination, exploitation or abuse. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has documented how institutional violence can turn entire populations into vulnerable subjects, as in the *Ximenes Lopes*⁵⁵³ and *Campo Algodonero*⁵⁵⁴ cases. The Magisterium of the Church, especially in *Vos estis lux mundi*⁵⁵⁵, recognizes that even within religious institutions power dynamics can arise that violate human dignity, and establishes mechanisms to prevent and punish these abuses. Institutionalized vulnerability requires structural reforms, transparency, and accountability mechanisms. Overcoming human vulnerability does not consist in eliminating fragility, which would be impossible and contrary to the human condition, but in transforming it into an opportunity for growth, solidarity and justice. Aristotle already stated that virtue is forged in the fight against fragility, and that prudence consists of deliberating well in situations of uncertainty⁵⁵⁶. Thomas Aquinas maintains that grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it, raising human frailty to

⁵⁴¹Cf. J. Habermas (2003)

⁵⁴²Cfr. P. Singer (2011).

⁵⁴³Cf. Vieira Nina y Costa Macêdo (2020)

⁵⁴⁴See Arias-Krause (2021).

⁵⁴⁵Cfr. J. Rawls (1971).

⁵⁴⁶Cf. Sen, A. (1999)

⁵⁴⁷Cf. Beauchamp and Childress (2019).

⁵⁴⁸Cfr. Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984.

⁵⁴⁹Cf. ONU, 1989.

⁵⁵⁰Cf. ONU, 2006.

⁵⁵¹Cfr. CIC83, Can. 529 §1.

⁵⁵²Cfr. Aquinas, Th., *Summa Th.*, 2001–2009

⁵⁵³Cf. Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2006). Case of *Ximenes Lopes v. Brazil*. Judgment of July 4, 2006.

⁵⁵⁴Cf. Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (2009). Case of *González et al. ("Campo Algodonero") v. Mexico*. Judgment of November 16, 2009 (Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs).

⁵⁵⁵Cf. Francisco, 2019.

⁵⁵⁶Cf. Aristotle. (1994). *Nicomachean Ethics* (J. Palli Bonet, Trans.).

its fullness⁵⁵⁷. Jonas⁵⁵⁸ proposes that ethical responsibility arises precisely from the recognition of the vulnerability of the other and of the world. Levinas⁵⁵⁹ affirms that the vulnerability of the face of the other is the source of moral obligation. MacIntyre⁵⁶⁰ insists that virtuous communities are those that organize their practices to sustain the most fragile. Singer⁵⁶¹ broadens the moral circle to include all beings capable of suffering, showing that vulnerability is a universal criterion of ethical consideration. The legal overcoming of vulnerability implies building normative systems that protect the weak, guarantee fundamental rights and promote social justice. Civil, constitutional and international law must recognize that formal equality is not enough, and that enhanced protection is necessary for those in fragile situations.

International jurisprudence and human rights treaties are fundamental tools for transforming vulnerability into protected dignity. The theological and spiritual overcoming of vulnerability is expressed in hope, charity and community. Human frailty, illuminated by faith, becomes a place of encounter with God and with others. Christian morality teaches that vulnerability is not an obstacle to holiness, but its condition. The Church, as a community of care, is called to accompany, protect and heal, recognizing that we are all fragile and that mercy is the deepest response to human vulnerability. Finally, the ethical overcoming of vulnerability consists in assuming it as a constituent part of the human condition and in responding to it with responsibility, justice and love. Fragility is not a defect to be hidden, but an anthropological truth that reveals our need for others and our openness to transcendence. Vulnerability, when recognized and embraced, becomes a source of solidarity, compassion and moral creativity. Humanity is built precisely on mutual care, on the protection of the weak, on the search for the common good and on the affirmation of the dignity of each person, especially those whose fragility is most visible. A deep understanding of human fragility and vulnerability reveals that these are not peripheral accidents, but constitutive dimensions of existence. The human person is fragile because he is finite, contingent, relational, historical and open to transcendence. This fragility is manifested in multiple typologies that, far from fragmenting the unity of the person, show the richness and complexity of his or her being. Ontological vulnerability expresses the radical dependence of the human being on the order of being, as pointed out by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, who saw in finitude not a defect, but the space where freedom and virtue unfold. Bodily vulnerability, visible in illness, pain and death, reminds us that human life is a fragile good that demands care, responsibility and limits in the face of technological power, as Jonas warned⁵⁶². Psychological and moral vulnerability shows that human identity is wounded, exposed to error, suffering and temptation, but also capable of reconstruction, as Ricoeur, Levinas and the ethics of care teach. Social and structural vulnerability shows that human fragility is not distributed equitably, but is aggravated by conditions of injustice, poverty, discrimination and violence. International jurisprudence and human rights treaties have recognized that certain groups require enhanced protection, because vulnerability can be produced or intensified by systems of power. Legal

vulnerability, on the other hand, requires that civil, constitutional and international law establish effective mechanisms to guarantee dignity and fundamental rights, especially when formal equality is not sufficient to ensure real equality.

Technological vulnerability, emerging in the era of biotechnology and artificial intelligence, poses unprecedented challenges to autonomy, privacy and human integrity, forcing us to rethink the ethical limits of intervention on life. Spiritual vulnerability, finally, reminds us that the human being is a being open to meaning, truth and God. This openness implies a radical fragility: the possibility of despair, emptiness and loss of meaning. The Christian theological tradition teaches that this vulnerability is not an obstacle, but the place where grace acts and where the community becomes a space of accompaniment, mercy, and healing. Canon law and the Magisterium of the Church have insisted that the protection of human life, especially in its most fragile stages, is an indispensable moral and pastoral requirement. Overcoming these vulnerabilities does not mean eliminating them, which would be impossible and contrary to the human condition, but integrating them into an ethical, juridical and spiritual horizon that allows us to transform fragility into an opportunity for growth, justice and communion. Ontological overcoming consists in recognizing finitude as a condition of possibility for freedom and virtue. Body improvement is achieved through care, medicine, solidarity and respect for the limits of technique. Psychological and moral improvement requires education, accompaniment, narration of one's own life and cultivation of virtues. Social improvement requires public policies aimed at justice, redistribution and inclusion. Legal improvement implies building normative systems that protect the weak and guarantee effective rights. Technological improvement demands prudence, responsibility and an ethics that puts human dignity above efficiency. Spiritual overcoming is achieved in faith, hope and charity, which make it possible to transform fragility into a path of fullness. In short, human fragility and vulnerability are not realities to be hidden or denied, but anthropological truths that reveal the depth of the human being and his vocation to care for each other. Humanity is built precisely on the ethical, juridical and spiritual response to the vulnerability of the other. Where fragility is recognized and welcomed, the possibility of a truly human life arises, founded on dignity, justice and love. Overcoming vulnerability does not consist in eliminating it, but in turning it into a source of solidarity, responsibility and transcendence. In this sense, human frailty, far from being a limit, is the place where the greatness of the person is manifested and where the possibility of authentic ethics, of just law and of a truly human community is founded.

1.3.33. Relevance in contemporary culture

In today's society, marked by globalization and diversity, confusing ethics and morality can lead to two opposing risks: Moral relativism, which dissolves any common criteria. Normative imposition, which aims to universalize particular codes. The informative analyses of Sevilla⁵⁶³ and fgbenotv⁵⁶⁴ show that understanding this distinction allows dialogue without falling into dogmatism or moral indifferentism. Likewise, reflection on human acts, as Pilar Calva explains,⁵⁶⁵ shows that ethical assessment requires considering intentionality and freedom, elements that transcend social norms.

⁵⁵⁷Cfr. Aquinas, T. (1964–1981). *Summa Theologiae* (60 vols.). Latin text and English translation, introduction, notes, and appendices by the Dominican Fathers of the English Province.

⁵⁵⁸Cf. Jonas, Hans. *The principle of responsibility*.

⁵⁵⁹Cf. Levinas, E. (1961). *Totality and infinity*.

⁵⁶⁰Cfr. Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*.

⁵⁶¹Cfr. Singer, P. (2011). *Practical ethics* (3rd ed.).

⁵⁶²Cf. Jonas, Hans. *The principle of responsibility*.

⁵⁶³Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video].

⁵⁶⁴Cf. fgbenotv. (2009, November 30). Ethics and Morals [video].

⁵⁶⁵Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans [video].



Figure 1. Infographic: Ethics and Morals - Fundamentals, Differences, and Contemporary Relevance

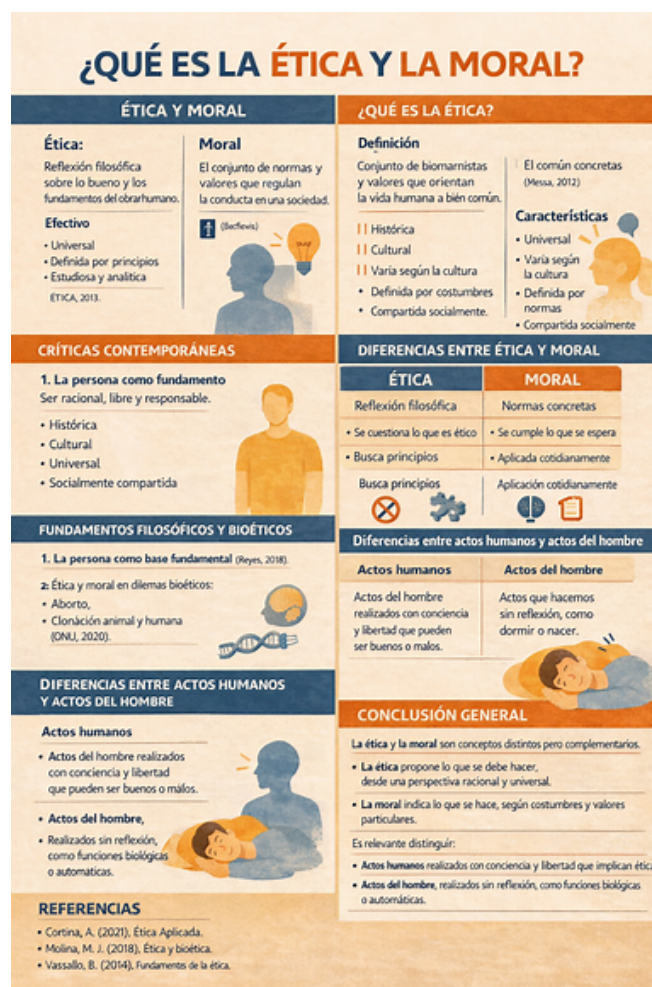


Figure 2. Infographic: What are ethics and morals?

1.3.34. A tool for critical deliberation

Forum Larramendi⁵⁶⁶ stresses that ethics serves to question power structures and critically review current moral norms. In contemporary life, distinguishing ethics and morality allows: Critically evaluate social and technological practices. Recognize plurality without renouncing universal principles. To promote coexistence based on human dignity and not only on inherited customs. Distinguishing ethics and morality allows: Avoiding uncritical moral relativism. Base complex decisions on rational principles. Understanding cultural diversity without renouncing universal values. Exercising personal autonomy in the face of social pressures. Critically evaluate unfair norms or harmful practices. As Ortiz Millán points out⁵⁶⁷, the distinction is not merely terminological, but allows us to analyze how norms are constructed and justified in pluralistic societies.

1.4. Infographics

By way of conclusions

Ethics and morality are complementary but distinct concepts. Morality is the set of norms and values that guide behavior in a specific social context, while ethics is the critical reflection that examines, substantiates, and evaluates these norms. This

⁵⁶⁶Cf. Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? 1st Part[video].

⁵⁶⁷Cf. Ortiz Millán, G. (2016). On the distinction between ethics and morality. *Isonomía*, (45), 113–139.

distinction makes it possible to better understand human action, promote autonomy and direct life towards the good. In a world characterized by cultural diversity and complex dilemmas, ethics becomes indispensable to discern between what is simply done and what must truly be done. The distinction between ethics and morality is fundamental to understanding human action in the contemporary context. Morality offers concrete norms that regulate coexistence, while ethics provides the critical reflection that grounds and orients these norms towards the good and human dignity. Contemporary criticisms show that traditional ethics is insufficient in the face of the challenges of technological power, which requires a critical, forward-looking ethics oriented towards future responsibility. Bioethics, especially based on Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility, offers an adequate framework to face these challenges, underlining the need to preserve the possibility of authentic life for future generations. In a world where technology redefines the limits of human action, ethics cannot be applied as an external technique, but rather as a profound reflection on the meaning, ends and consequences of our decisions. The conceptual journey made shows that mature ethical life is based on a fundamental axis: the level of reflection that human beings are capable of exercising on their own actions. Morality provides the basic normative framework, norms, customs, and habits that

Table 1. Comparison between Ethics and Morals

Appearance	Concept	Features	Rationale	Application
Ethics	Philosophical reflection on the principles of duty and human action.	Reflective, critical, universalizable, it recognizes dignity.	Person as a rational, free and dignified being (Choro, 2016).	It guides human action from universal principles and the common good.
Morale	A set of norms, values and customs that govern conduct in a community.	Historical, cultural, variable.	Customs and social norms (Varela & Presno, 2010).	It regulates specific behaviors according to what is socially expected.

Table 2. Thematic structure of the content

Section	Main content	Author/Reference
Introduction	Ethics: philosophical reflection on human duty. Moral: principles that guide action.	Varela & Presno, 2010; Suengo, 2023
What about ethics? And what is morality?	Norms, values and customs that govern conduct. Example: "It's okay to help others."	Varela and Presno, 2010
Contemporary criticism	Confusion between ethics and morality. Person as a foundation. Moral value of human acts.	Moro, 2016
Philosophical and bioethical foundations	Person as a rational, free and dignified being. Human acts as free and conscious.	Choro, 2016; Vásquez, 2014
Key Differences	Ethics: philosophical reflection, universal norms. Morals: concrete norms, customs.	Varela and Suengo, 2014
Technological power and responsibility	Ethics and morality as foundations for action in the digital age. Ethical responsibility for the common good.	—
Conclusion	Ethics and morality are distinct but complementary. Ethics is the foundation of morality and orients towards human dignity.	—
Bibliography	Varela, A. (2010); Suengo, G. (2023); Choro, M. (2016); Vásquez, J. (2014)	—

make social coexistence possible⁵⁶⁸. However, this immediate level, although necessary, is insufficient to guarantee a fully human moral life. Ethics appears as the critical instance that makes it possible to evaluate the validity of these norms, to discern between justified and unjustified customs and to direct action towards truly human ends⁵⁶⁹. The distinction between acts of man and human acts reveals that morality does not reside in any action, but only in those that involve freedom, deliberation, and intention⁵⁷⁰. Ethics is precisely concerned with illuminating these deliberate acts, showing that moral responsibility arises where the subject can rationally justify his decisions. This process of deepening the moral examination, passing from spontaneous action to the fully human act, constitutes the anthropological nucleus of ethical life. In technified contexts, ethical reflection becomes even more urgent. By automating behaviors and mediating decisions, technology can reduce deliberation and shift human values in favor of efficiency criteria. In the face of this, ethics must guarantee that human action retains its free and responsible character, preventing morality from being subordinated to uncritical technical or social dynamics⁵⁷¹. In reality, ethics does not replace morality, but perfects it, allowing the human being to move from mere habit to conscious action, from thoughtless obedience to deliberate responsibility,

and from lived morality to thought morality. The ethical life is also constituted as a continuous process of reflection, discernment and orientation towards the good, through which the person affirms his dignity and freedom in the midst of contemporary cultural and technological challenges. Distinguishing between ethics and morality is not a merely theoretical exercise, but a practical necessity to understand the challenges of contemporary life. Ethics, as a rational and universal reflection, allows us to base principles that guide human action; Morality, as a historical and cultural expression, embodies these principles in concrete norms. Contemporary criticism shows that ethics cannot be applied as an external technique, but must be integrated into responsible deliberation, especially in the face of the growing technological power of human beings. Understanding this distinction is essential to build a more just, aware and responsible society with the future. The conceptual journey made shows that ethical life is based on a fundamental axis: the level of reflection that human beings are capable of exercising on their own actions. Morality provides the basic normative framework, norms, customs, and habits that make social coexistence possible⁵⁷². But it is ethics that makes it possible to critically evaluate this framework, to discern between valid customs and unjustified practices, and to orient action towards truly human ends⁵⁷³. The distinction between acts of man and human acts reveals that morality does not reside in any action,

⁵⁶⁸Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute; Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁵⁶⁹Cf. Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.

⁵⁷⁰Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans[video].

⁵⁷¹Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video]; Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? Part 1 [video].

⁵⁷²Cf. Segundo, J. (2023). Ethics and morals: What they are, their similarities and differences; Choza, J. (2016). Manual of Philosophical Anthropology (2nd ed.). Editorial Thémata.

⁵⁷³Cf. Varela Fregoso, G. (2010). Ethics. National Polytechnic Institute; Cifuentes, P. L. M. (2019). Ethics in 100 questions.



Figure 3. Infographic: Ethics and Morals - Foundations, Differences and Contemporary Relevance



Figure 4. Infographic: Complete Synthesis of Ethics and Morals

but in those that involve freedom, deliberation, and intention⁵⁷⁴. Ethics, therefore, is not an external addition, but the deepest expression of practical rationality: the moment in which the subject understands, justifies and perfects his decisions. In technified contexts, this requirement is intensified, since technology can automate behaviors and reduce deliberation, making ethical reflection even more necessary to preserve dignity and responsibility⁵⁷⁵. In short, mature ethical life arises when the human being passes from spontaneous action to fully human act, and from lived morality to thought morality. Ethics thus becomes the critical and guiding nucleus of moral existence, allowing the person to act not only according to norms, but also according to rationally grounded and good-oriented principles. This integration between morality and ethics constitutes the basis of a truly conscious, free and responsible life. Reflection on morality, ethics, bioethics, and civil, canonical, and international juridical frameworks reveals that humanity, in all ages, has oscillated between luminous greatness and profound frailties. Where morality is weakened, ethics is obscured and responsibility is diluted, forms of poverty inevitably emerge that are not only material, but also spiritual, affective, cultural and relational. History shows that societies

that lose their moral compass end up generating new miseries: structural injustices, normalized violence, indifference to suffering, instrumentalization of human life, environmental degradation and ruptures in the bonds that sustain coexistence. However, this same critical observation opens a horizon of hope. Human vulnerability, far from being a sign of defeat, is also the point where reconstruction becomes possible. Where morality is lacking, virtue can be born; where ethics are weakened, responsibility can arise; where the law becomes insufficient, justice can be reborn; where bioethics faces unprecedented dilemmas, wisdom can grow; Where theology recognizes the wound, grace can break in. Human fragility is not only a limit: it is also a place of encounter, solidarity and transformation. The various forms of economic, educational, affective, spiritual, cultural, technological, and ecological poverty are not only lacks: they are called. Calls to compassion, justice, moral creativity, intergenerational responsibility. Jonas's ethics of responsibility, Gilligan's ethics of care, Aristotle and Rawls' ethics of justice, Ricoeur's ethics of solicitude, and the ethics of dignity of the canonical tradition converge on the same point: humanity is only saved when it recognizes that no one is saved alone. Interdependence, which is sometimes experienced as fragility, is also the condition for the possibility of all hope. Moral education, when it is authentic, does not aim to manufacture perfect beings, but to accompany real people on their path to maturity, freedom and responsibility. Educating in morality is

⁵⁷⁴Cf. Universidad Vasco de Quiroga. (2014, July 31). Pilar Calva. Acts of man and humans [video].

⁵⁷⁵Cf. Héctor Sevilla. (2020, December 6). What is ethics and morals? [video]; Forum Larramendi. (2014, July 14). What is ethics really for? Part 1 [video].

not imposing norms, but awakening the conscience; it is not to domesticate, but to liberate; it is not to standardize, but to humanize. A society that educates ethically is a society that sows the future, that recognizes that every person, even the most wounded, the poorest, the most forgotten, possesses a dignity that no circumstance can erase. Civil law, international law and canon law, when founded on human dignity, can become instruments of protection for those who suffer most. Bioethics, when guided by compassion and justice, can humanize science and technology. Moral theology, when it recognizes the greatness and fragility of the person, can offer a horizon of meaning that sustains hope even in the midst of darkness. That is why, although the lack of morality and ethics produces deep wounds, history shows that humanity has always been capable of regenerating itself. Each era has known its miseries, but also its rebirths. Each society has faced its shadows, but it has also discovered new lights. Hope is not born of denying fragility, but of looking at it head-on and discovering in it a possibility of growth. Human poverty in all its forms can become a place of encounter, solidarity and transformation. In short, humanity is not condemned to repeat its mistakes. Morality can be reborn, ethics can illuminate, law can protect, bioethics can humanize, theology can console, and education can transform. Where misery seems to prevail, a community can emerge that accompanies; where fragility becomes evident, a holding hand may appear; Where dignity is denied, a voice can be raised to defend it. Hope is not naivety: it is the certainty that human dignity, however wounded, is never lost. And as long as there is a single human being capable of recognizing the value of the other, history will remain open to the possibility of a more just, more humane and more fraternal future. As we travel through the vast territory where morality, ethics, law, bioethics and theology intersect, it becomes clear that humanity has always lived under the sign of fragility. Ethical shortcomings are not isolated episodes: they are cracks that cross eras, cultures and systems, exposing the precariousness of our structures and the vulnerability of our decisions. Where solid criteria are lacking, where conscience is numbed or where responsibility is diluted, new forms of human destitution arise: injustices that are perpetuated, bonds that are broken, institutions that are emptied, lives that are disfigured. However, this observation does not lead to discouragement. Precisely because human history is marked by ruptures, it is also full of restarts. Each generation has had to face its own shadows, and yet, in the midst of deep crises, movements have emerged capable of regenerating coexistence, restoring justice and reviving hope. Poverty in its many faces: material, affective, spiritual, cultural, educational, ecological is not only a sign of decadence; It is also a call to moral creativity, active compassion and shared responsibility. The societies that have managed to overcome their darkest moments did not do so only through legal reforms or technical advances, but thanks to people and communities that dared to rebuild from within: educators who awakened consciences, families who transmitted values, institutions that recovered their integrity, believers who offered meaning, scientists who put their knowledge at the service of life, jurists who defended dignity, citizens who chose solidarity over selfishness. Ethical renewal has never been the result of chance: it has always arisen from the decision to look at the other not as a threat, but as a brother. The various forms of poverty that run through the world, from extreme misery to silent loneliness, from social exclusion to the loss of meaning, reveal that humanity needs more than just technical solutions: it needs an inner transformation that restores depth to freedom, truth to justice and humanity to coexistence. Where morality is rebuilt,

life recovers its dignity; where ethics is strengthened, the community is reborn; Where education is oriented towards the good, history changes course. That is why, although the contemporary panorama is marked by tensions, inequalities and open wounds, we are not condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past. Human frailty, when humbly recognized, can become a source of renewal. Vulnerability, when welcomed with respect, can open paths of encounter. Poverty, when viewed with compassion, can awaken justice. And history, when read with lucidity, can teach us that it is always possible to start over. Hope is not born of ignoring suffering, but of discovering that even in the most adverse scenarios, human dignity retains an unshakable force. As long as there is a single human being capable of choosing the good, of defending the weak, of caring for life, of seeking the truth or of reaching out to those who fall, humanity will continue to have a future. And that more just, more fraternal, more luminous future always begins in the hearts of those who decide to live ethically, to act morally and to educate for responsibility.

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Author Guidelines

Comprehensive Guide to Publishing with GJHSS

Global Journal of Human-Social Science | Open Access | Peer Reviewed | COPE Compliant

I. Our Commitment to Authors

The Global Journal of Human-Social Science (GJHSS) is an internationally recognized, **open-access** academic journal dedicated to publishing high-quality, peer-reviewed research across the entire spectrum of human and social sciences - including Arts & Humanities, Sociology & Culture, History, Archaeology & Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Linguistics & Education, Geography, Environmental Science, and interdisciplinary social inquiry.

GJHSS is published by Global Journals Publishing Group Inc., indexed in major global academic databases, archived in leading digital repositories, and distributed to institutional subscribers worldwide in prestigious **hardbound volumes**.

We believe that the purpose of an academic journal is to amplify the voice of the researcher. Every operational decision we make - from submission workflows to publication formats - is guided by a single principle: *the author should never be distracted from the scholarship*. Our professional editorial and production teams exist to handle every technical and logistical complexity so that you can devote your full energy to your social science research.

II. One-Click Submission: Publish Without the Hassle

GJHSS has pioneered a **One-Click Submission** system designed to eliminate the traditionally burdensome process of paper submission.

A. Submit in Any Format

We accept manuscripts in **any common document format**, including but not limited to:

- Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx)
- Adobe PDF (.pdf)
- L^AT_EX source files (.tex)
- Rich Text Format (.rtf), Apple Pages, LibreOffice, or plain text

You do **not** need to install specialized software, learn L^AT_EX, or adhere to a rigid template before submission. Simply write your research in the format you are most comfortable with.

B. What You Need to Submit

To submit a manuscript, you only need to provide:

1. Your **full name**
2. Your **email address**
3. Your **manuscript file**

That is all. No lengthy registration forms, no complex metadata entry, no mandatory template compliance. Submit directly via our portal at <https://globaljournals.org/submit-an-article/>.

Heading style: In the final typeset article, author-created headings are normally set in sentence case for readability. Fixed journal headings such as Abstract, Introduction, Materials and methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, References, and Acknowledgements are standardized by the production team. Acronyms, proper nouns, gene/species names, chemical notation, brand names, and Roman numerals are preserved.

C. What Happens After Submission

1. **Instant Confirmation:** You receive an automated email confirming receipt of your manuscript. If you do not receive a confirmation, please reach out via our Contact Us form at <https://globaljournals.org>.
2. **Professional Formatting:** Our dedicated production executives convert your manuscript into our advanced internal L^AT_EX template - producing a sleek, typographically pristine document ready for review - entirely on your behalf.
3. **Author Dashboard:** We create a secure account for you on the **Author Dashboard** and email your login credentials. You may log in at any time to review pre-filled metadata, update co-author details, or track your submission status.
4. **Review Initiation:** Your professionally formatted, fully anonymized manuscript is assigned to expert reviewers through our rigorous double-blind peer-review process.

III. Rigorous Double-Blind Peer Review

Academic credibility is the cornerstone of GJHSS. Every manuscript undergoes a **strict double-blind peer-review process** in which neither the authors nor the reviewers are aware of each other's identities. This guarantees that every paper is evaluated purely on its scholarly merit, methodological rigor, originality, and contribution to the humanities and social sciences.

A. The Review Workflow

1. **Desk Screening:** The editorial office performs an initial screening for scope, completeness, and adherence to ethical standards.
2. **Reviewer Assignment:** Two or more independent, domain-expert reviewers - specialists in your specific discipline of human-social science - are assigned to evaluate your manuscript.
3. **Detailed Evaluation:** Reviewers assess the paper on criteria including originality, significance, clarity, theoretical framework, methodology, and presentation quality.
4. **Editorial Decision:** Based on reviewer recommendations, the Editorial Board renders one of three decisions: *Accept*, *Revise and Resubmit*, or *Decline*.

B. Complete Review Report & Research Assessment Sheet

Upon completion of the review, you will receive a **comprehensive Review Report** along with a detailed **Research Assessment Sheet**. These documents provide:

- Line-by-line reviewer comments keyed to **specific line numbers** in your typeset manuscript, enabling precise, unambiguous identification of every comment.
- A structured assessment covering originality, significance, clarity, methodology, and overall quality.
- Constructive feedback and actionable suggestions for improvement.

C. Responding to Reviewer Comments

Addressing reviewer feedback is simple and flexible. You have two options:

Option A - Author Dashboard: Log in to your Author Dashboard, navigate to **Manage Submission**, and create a **support ticket**. Simply quote the relevant line numbers from your review report and clearly describe your corrections or responses.

Option B - Email: If the Dashboard is not convenient, you may simply send an email with a numbered list of corrections referencing the line numbers, along with your responses to each reviewer comment.

Important: You do **not** need to reformat the document yourself at any stage. Our production executives will implement all your requested text changes directly in the typeset manuscript. Reviewer comments may be addressed and resolved right up until the Early View stage.

IV. Publication Lifecycle: Complete Transparency

A. Early View (Galley Proof)

- Upon acceptance, a **galley proof** (Early View edition) of your article is prepared according to the journal's publishing schedule.
- The Early View version includes **line numbers** for convenient reference during final corrections.
- You may still provide corrections at this stage by referencing specific line numbers via email or the Author Dashboard.

B. Ahead of Print

- Following the Early View, an **Ahead of Print** version is published before the final issue compilation.
- This version represents the final, corrected article but **does not yet include Volume or Issue numbers**.

C. Digital Publication (eJournal)

- After all corrections are finalized, the **digital eJournal edition** is published with line numbers removed.
- Your article receives its official **DOI (Digital Object Identifier)** and is indexed across global academic databases.
- The article becomes freely and permanently accessible online under our open-access policy.

D. Hardbound Print Publication

- Approximately **15 days after digital publication**, the article enters our offset production pipeline.
- Your research is printed in **premium hardbound volumes** and distributed to institutional subscribers, major university libraries, and social science research centers worldwide.
- The corresponding author receives a **complimentary hardbound copy** dispatched via government courier at no additional cost.

V. Advanced Technology & AI-Enabled Research Broadcasting

While GJHSS is rooted in the traditions of humanistic and social inquiry, our publishing infrastructure harnesses the latest advancements in technology to maximize the impact and discoverability of your scholarship.

A. Multi-Format Native Publication

Every accepted article is published natively across multiple formats:

- **Interactive Digital eJournals** optimized for desktops, tablets, and smartphones.
- **Premium Hardbound Print Editions** for institutional archives and personal collections.
- **Machine-Readable XML & HTML** for web accessibility, automated indexing, and integration with global research repositories.

B. AI-Powered Discoverability & SEO

We deploy cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence to generate rich semantic metadata for every article, dramatically increasing its search engine visibility. Our proprietary AI systems:

- Automatically tag, categorize, and cross-reference your work across international academic databases.
- Optimize article metadata for maximum **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**, ensuring your paper appears prominently when scholars search for your research topics and theoretical frameworks.
- Actively broadcast your research to targeted humanities and social science communities worldwide, amplifying your citation count and global influence.

VI. Ethics, Integrity & COPE Compliance

GJHSS maintains the highest standards of publication ethics, guided by the principles of the **Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)**.

A. Plagiarism & Originality

All submissions are screened using state-of-the-art plagiarism detection software. Manuscripts with significant textual overlap with previously published work will be declined. Authors must ensure that all content is original or properly attributed through accurate citations.

B. Conflicts of Interest & Funding Transparency

Authors are required to disclose all sources of funding and any financial or non-financial conflicts of interest. Full transparency is mandatory and is enforced at every stage of the publication process.

C. Data Availability & Reproducibility

Authors are encouraged to make their datasets, interview transcripts, survey instruments, and supplementary materials available in recognized repositories to support the reproducibility and verifiability of their findings. A data availability statement is required in all published manuscripts.

D. Ethical Approval & Informed Consent

Research involving human participants, sensitive communities, or vulnerable populations must include a statement of ethical approval from a recognized institutional ethics committee, along with confirmation that informed consent was obtained where applicable.

E. Comprehensive Ethics Portal

Our enhanced, COPE-based ethical publishing guidelines - covering authorship criteria, editorial responsibilities, reviewer obligations, corrections & retractions, and misconduct procedures - are available in detail on our website at <https://globaljournals.org>. We encourage all authors, reviewers, and editors to familiarize themselves with these standards.

VII. Perpetual Archiving & Geo-Distributed Data Infrastructure

GJHSS is backed by Global Journals' enterprise-grade archiving infrastructure. Your published research is not stored on a single server - it is **redundantly archived across multiple geographically distributed data centers** spanning several continents, including advanced **deep-sea data center facilities** engineered for unparalleled environmental resilience and longevity.

This infrastructure guarantees:

- **Lifetime Hosting:** Your article will remain permanently accessible online for the lifetime of the publication. We do not sunset, deprecate, or remove published content under any circumstance.
- **Disaster Resilience:** Multi-site redundancy ensures that no single point of failure - natural disaster, hardware degradation, or network disruption - can compromise access to your research.
- **Immutable DOI Resolution:** Every article is assigned a permanent Digital Object Identifier (DOI) that will resolve to your work indefinitely, regardless of future platform migrations.

VIII. Open Access: Free Knowledge for All

GJHSS is a Fully Open Access Journal.

We firmly believe that humanistic and social scientific knowledge is a public good. Every article published in GJHSS is **freely and permanently available online** from the moment of publication - accessible to researchers, students, educators, policymakers, and the general public worldwide **without any subscription fees, paywalls, or access restrictions**.

Our open-access model ensures:

- **Immediate Availability:** Your research is accessible globally on the day of publication.
- **Maximum Reach:** Barrier-free access dramatically increases readership, citations, and real-world policy impact.
- **Equitable Knowledge Distribution:** Scholars in developing nations, independent researchers, and the public benefit equally from the latest advances in human-social science.

Accepted articles are published under the **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)** license. Authors retain full copyright while granting Global Journals the right to publish and distribute the work globally.

IX. The L^AT_EX Author Package (Entirely Optional)

For researchers who already compose their manuscripts in L^AT_EX, we provide a comprehensive, professionally designed **L^AT_EX Author Package** (`gj-author`) featuring STIX Two serif typography, TeX Gyre Heros sans-serif headings, complete Unicode math support, and brand-coordinated layouts.

However, we must emphasize:

Reading or using the L^AT_EX Author Package is entirely optional.

If you do not use L^AT_EX, simply send us your manuscript in Word, PDF, or any other format. Our production team will expertly convert it into our advanced typesetting system and produce the identical, pristine publication-quality output.

You do not need to learn or install anything.

Contact & Support

Submission Portal: <https://globaljournals.org/submit-an-article/>

Website: <https://globaljournals.org>

Email: helpdesk@globaljournals.org

At GJHSS, your scholarship illuminates the human condition.

*We handle the complexities of publishing so you can focus
on what matters most - understanding and shaping society.*

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