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## THE TROUBLESOME CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

**ABSTRACT.** In today's bioethical debates, the concept of the person plays a major role. However, it does not hold this role justly. The purpose of this paper is to argue that the concept of the person is unsuited to be a central concept in bioethical debates, because its use is connected with serious problems. First, the concept is superfluous. Secondly, it is a confusing concept and it lacks pragmatic use. Thirdly, its use leads to simplifications. Finally, the concept can easily be used as a cover-up concept. Therefore, it is argued that relinquishing the concept of the person could enhance the clarity and quality of bioethical debate. Moreover, the historic origin of much of the present confusion surrounding the concept of the person is clarified. It is demonstrated that three influences resulting from Locke's ideas on the person and personal identity can be determined as contributing factors to the confusion and controversy within the present bioethical debates centering around the person.

**KEY WORDS:** bioethics, Descartes, dualism, Locke, moral status, person, personal identity

## INTRODUCTION

In the present bioethical debate, the concept of the person plays an important role. This role stems from the fact that many authors cherish the assumption that the concept of the person is necessary to describe a certain moral status. They suppose that a person, as a matter of principle, possesses certain moral rights that must be protected.<sup>1</sup>

In the present bioethical discussion, the moral concern mainly focuses on persons; it does not focus on human beings, as such. The concept of the human being is a biological abstraction whereas the one of the person is a philosophical or a psychological notion.<sup>2</sup> The latter consists, in the first place, of mental and behavioural characteristics, the former primarily of genetic, physiological and bodily properties.

To illustrate the important role of the concept of the person in bioethical debates, I would like to recall the controversy on abortion. In this debate, crucial moral decisions are considered to be fundamentally connected with the concept of the person. Here, the question is whether, in a given situation, a human being can already be regarded as a person. The argument



goes as follows: Each and every person has the fundamental right to live. Accordingly, when in a given situation a human being is said to be a person, its life cannot be taken without violating its right to live. The life of a human being, however, that is not considered to be a person can conversely be ended without special moral concern.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, to decide on the moral acceptability of abortion with regard to a particular foetus, it is of the utmost importance to know whether that foetus is already a person. If that is the case, then it cannot be aborted without violating its right to live.

In the debate on the moral acceptability of abortion, the answer to the question: 'When does a person begin to exist?' decides whether and, if yes, until which phase of development an embryo or a foetus can be aborted. However, with respect to this question there are many different views. There are authors who look upon abortion as morally justified because they have fixed a person's beginning at some point relatively late in its foetal development or in its infancy.<sup>4</sup> In their view, the properties that constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for personhood are acquired only in a relatively late stage of development. As the abortion takes place before the embryo becomes a person, the right to live that could be violated has not yet been obtained. According to other authors, the person comes already into existence at the conception or at a very early stage in development. In their opinion, the attributes constituting personhood are acquired in a very early stage of development. Correspondingly, they consider abortion to be a violation of the fundamental right to live.<sup>5</sup>

Although the concept of the person plays an important role in bioethical debates, it is not really clear what is meant by the term 'person', because it is used with such a wide variety of meanings.<sup>6</sup> It seems as though every author has his own particular concept of the person. Because of this enormous variety of concepts, discussions constantly arise about which entities it does and does not include. Moreover, the problems related to the concept of the person are so intricate that it seems most unlikely that a consensus pertaining to the definition of the concept will ever be reached.

In this article, it will be shown that the concept of the person as used in present Anglo-Saxon bioethics causes serious problems and that there are good reasons for relinquishing the concept. First, the concept is superfluous. Secondly, it is a confusing concept and it lacks pragmatic use. Thirdly, its use leads to simplifications. Finally, the concept can easily be used as a cover-up concept. Therefore, it will be argued that relinquishing the concept of the person could enhance the clarity and quality of bioethical debate. First, however, it will be argued that the historic origin

of much of the confusion surrounding the concept of the person can be traced back to John Locke's ideas on the person and personal identity. It will be demonstrated that three Lockian influences can be determined as contributing factors to the confusion and controversy within the present bioethical debates centering around the person.

### JOHN LOCKE'S IDEAS ON THE PERSON AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

Locke's ideas on the person and personal identity can be best understood as a reaction to Cartesian philosophy, especially to problems caused by Cartesian dualism. According to Descartes, the self is an entity, the nature of which lies in consciousness (*res cogitans*). It is a thing which doubts, feels, rejects or wants something.<sup>7</sup> This self is the soul, and, according to Descartes, it is able to exist independently of the body.<sup>8</sup> The body, on the other hand, consists of matter and is as such a *res extensa*, which Descartes defines in radical opposition to the concept of the soul so that each of them is defined by the negation of the qualifications belonging to the other. The *res extensa* is a material thing; the *res cogitans* on the other hand is an immaterial thing. The latter has consciousness, whereas the *res extensa* has no consciousness. Matter is extended in space, and it can always be divided into pieces.<sup>9</sup> The soul on the other hand does not possess any extension and is not divisible. The problem of explaining how these two radically different substances can interact turned out to be one of the weakest spots of Cartesian philosophy. It has caused many different philosophical reactions.

John Locke ranks among the many thinkers who reacted to Cartesian dualism. He rejects Descartes' unquestionable evidence for the immaterial nature of the entity that is thinking within us.<sup>10</sup> According to Locke, it is just as possible to regard this thinking thing as a material entity to which God has given intellectual capacity. This consideration, however, causes difficult problems. If man does not possess an immaterial soul, the traditional proof of human immortality, which is founded on the fundamental indestructibility of the immaterial soul, becomes open to question; so if the immaterial character of the soul comes under question, we can no longer be absolutely convinced of its indestructible nature. It is only one step further to the dreadful idea of man being only mortal.

Locke for his part, however, does not consider adhering to the dualism of body and soul as the one and only way of guaranteeing human immortality. According to him, God, being omnipotent, is certainly able to allow a man to rise from the dead and restore him to a state of con-

sciousness without any problems, regardless of the fact that he may have no immaterial soul at all and may be made up of matter only.<sup>12</sup> That is why for Locke, even in the case of an eventual rejection of the dualism of body and soul, traditional Christian dogmas such as the immortality of man, the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgement do not need to be questioned, let alone rejected. Thus, for Locke, the dualism of body and soul is not a necessary condition for the maintenance of the said Christian dogmas.

The following question, however, he considers to be problematical: Assuming that man does not have an immortal soul but is made up only of matter, how then can it be guaranteed that on Judgement Day there will rise from the dead exactly the same person as the one who died years before? Such a guarantee is of great importance to a just passing of sentences and rewards. On Judgement Day only that person who is identical to the one who actually carried out a particular act in his time, has to be called to account for it. That is why one important aim of Locke's reflections is to develop a suitable criterion with the help of which, on Judgement Day, it can be tested whether a particular person who is judged for having done certain things is identical to the person who in his time actually did these things. Locke wants to solve this problem without making any ontological suppositions pertaining to an eventual dualistic or monistic human constitution. He therefore develops the first theory of personal identity in the history of philosophy.<sup>13</sup> With the help of this theory he tries to substantiate the above-mentioned Christian dogmas and to make them immune to the weaknesses of Cartesian dualism. Since Locke consciously tries to form his view regarding personal identity independent of all concrete ontological prejudice, his corresponding concept of the person also lacks a clear ontological foundation. A person as he understands it is a:

... conscious thinking thing (*whatever substance made up of, whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not*) which is sensible, or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends.<sup>14</sup>

Locke views the concept of the person and the one of the self as identical concepts.<sup>15</sup> His reflections on these concepts mirror the loss of evidence of the traditional ontological foundation of the self as an indestructible immaterial soul. By viewing the concept of the person or the self in isolation from any ontological qualifications, Locke lifts the concept into a 'metaphysical vacuum'.

Within his definition of the concept of the person, Locke uses two further important concepts, namely, that of thinking and that of consciousness.

Both concepts are important in understanding his ideas on the person and personal identity.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of thinking comprises all sensations and perceptions. Thus, Locke embraces this concept in a very broad sense. On the other hand, with his concept of *consciousness*, Locke seems to mean something that we would nowadays probably call 'self-consciousness': the capacity to recognise particular sensations and perceptions to be ours, i.e. a capacity which exclusively refers to one's own contents of consciousness. This capacity does not function with regard to the sensations and perceptions belonging to other persons.

When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will any thing, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions: and by this every one is to himself that which he calls self . . . . For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes every one to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things . . .<sup>17</sup>

On this concept of *consciousness*, Locke now bases his reflections on personal identity through time. He defines personal identity as:

. . .the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.<sup>18</sup>

Locke takes the view that we are able to ascertain the identity of any person solely with the help of the concept of *consciousness*. The identity of substance, for example, is not a necessary condition for personal identity.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the concept of man and that of the person are not identical, for, corresponding to Locke's definition of personal identity, when man is no longer conscious of a certain past action, he is not the same person as the one who committed the action, although he has remained the same man.

Locke's criterion of personal identity is absolutely independent of any somehow disposed Cartesian or anti-Cartesian theories concerning the ontological foundation of the person or the self. Therefore, it can be used without paying any heed to the outcome of the metaphysical discussions thereon. In this way, Locke considers that he has reached his aim of firmly founding some central Christian dogmas on a concept of the person and a corresponding criterion of personal identity which are philosophically independent of the metaphysical uncertainties named above.

## THREE LOCKIAN INFLUENCES

Locke's ideas on the person and personal identity have been enormously influential in contemporary bioethics. At least three Lockian traits can be determined as contributing factors to the confusion and controversy within the present bioethical debates centering around the person.

Firstly, Locke's concept of the person is a concept with no clear ontological foundation. As we have seen, Locke views the concept of the person in isolation from any ontological qualification; he lifts the concept into the said 'metaphysical vacuum'. No-one since Locke has ever adequately cleared the concept from this vacuity. Though a few dissidents have tried to turn back the clock by defining the person as an immaterial entity in a quasi-Cartesian way, most authors in the present debate on the person and personal identity deal with the concept of the person in a quasi-Lockian way: they ignore many important questions pertaining to the ontological structure of the person and simply view it as a somehow disposed entity defined by possessing certain attributes.<sup>20</sup>

Due to the fact that most authors neglect the carrier and focus the discussion on the attributes exclusively, differing implicit assumptions pertaining to the first are no longer being made explicit. These silent assumptions with regard to the metaphysical structure of the person can confuse the discussion in an uncontrolled way. They could, for example, unconsciously influence the choice of the properties that are regarded as necessary and sufficient conditions for personhood.

The second influence from Lockian thinking comes from his handling of the concept of man and that of the person. According to his theory, these two are not identical. What makes a being a person is not its biological humanity, but its consciousness. As a consequence, not only members of the human species but also members of a non-human one could be regarded as persons, that is to say, if they showed consciousness. Conversely, in conformity with Locke's definition of the person it is conceptually possible to conceive of human beings that are not persons. A human being who has lost his consciousness is no longer a person, though he can evidently still be the same man.

Consequently, according to Locke's theory it is conceptually possible to conceive of human beings that are not persons and vice versa. This Lockian trait of theorising on the person causes the following curious difficulty in today's debates: On the one hand, the majority of authors do not identify the concept of the person with the concept of a human being. In their opinion, it is possible that there are human beings who cannot be regarded as persons.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, many authors accept the conceptual possibility that non-human persons exist.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, however, these authors

often consider what most of us regard as typically human characteristics to be necessary conditions for personhood. Frankfurt describes this strange handling of the concept of the person:

Our concept of ourselves as persons is not to be understood, therefore, as a concept of attributes that are necessarily species-specific. It is conceptually possible that members of a novel or even familiar non-human species should be persons; and it is also conceptually possible that some members of the human species are not persons. We do in fact assume, on the other hand, that no member of another species is a person. Accordingly, there is a presumption that what is essential to persons is a set of characteristics that we generally suppose – whether rightly or wrongly – to be uniquely human.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, a third Lockian trait in today's debates can be discerned. With Locke, most present authors regard consciousness as a *sine qua non* for personhood.<sup>24</sup> Locke's concept of consciousness, however, was not very clear. What is more, Locke fails to clarify whether he views consciousness only as a necessary condition for personhood among others or also as a sufficient one. Consequently, many different interpretations and modifications of Locke's idea of consciousness as a condition for personhood have been developed. Today, many authors concur in viewing the person as an entity capable of at least some rudimentary form of consciousness. However, most of them vary in developing this idea beyond the mere possession of consciousness and specifying further properties or characteristics that go to make up a person. Tooley sums up some of the more important properties that have been proposed – solely or in combination with others – as being necessary conditions for personhood beyond the mere possession of consciousness:<sup>25</sup>

- The capacity to experience pleasure and/or pain;
- The capacity to have desires;
- The capacity to remember past events;
- The capacity to have expectations with respect to future events;
- An awareness of the passage of time;
- The property of being a continuous, conscious self, or subject of mental states, construed in a minimal way, as nothing more than a construct of appropriately related mental states;
- The property of being a continuous conscious self, construed as a pure ego, that is, as an entity that is distinct from the experiences and other mental states that it has;
- The capacity for self-consciousness, that is to be aware of the fact that one is a continuing, conscious subject of mental states;
- The property of having mental states that involve propositional attitudes, such as beliefs and desires;

- The capacity to have thought episodes, that is, states of consciousness involving intentionality;
- The capacity to reason;
- The capacity to solve problems;
- The property of being autonomous, that is of having the capacity to make decisions based upon an evaluation of relevant considerations;
- The capacity to use language;
- The ability to interact socially with others
- The resulting enormous variety of concepts of the person can be seen as a Lockian heritage.

In Cartesian philosophy, things were still simple and clear. The self or the person was identical to the soul, an immaterial, indivisible and eternal substance. Each human being (but no animal) possessed a soul. Consequently, each human being possessed a self or was a person. Locke, however, by leaving out the metaphysical or ontological perspective on the person as a bearer of certain qualities and by focusing the discussion on the attributes exclusively, has opened the door to today's many different views on the person and hence contributed to the present perplexity in bioethical debates.

#### REASONS FOR RELINQUISHING THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

The following four reasons call for the relinquishing of the concept of the person in bioethical debates:

First, there seems to be a consensus pertaining to viewing personhood simply as a matter of having certain qualities. In this way, being a person, and thereby the moral status that comes along with this, can be reduced to having certain properties. However, if a certain moral status arises with having certain properties (namely the properties that are the necessary and sufficient conditions for personhood), and if this status can be explained totally as being a consequence of the possession of these properties, the use of the concept of the person becomes unnecessary. Here, Occam's razor of economical thinking can be applied: *praeter necessitatem essentia non ponenda sunt*. Consequently, the concept of the person in bioethical debates seems to be superfluous.

Secondly, a purely pragmatic use of the concept of the person as gathering the different qualities that transform an entity into a moral agent cannot be defended, since using the concept of the person only leads to confusion within the debate. This is, as I have already indicated, because the variety



of lists of necessary conditions for personhood that the participants have in mind is so great, that the concept of the person is far from unambiguous. Therefore, using the concept does not contribute to mutual understanding and thus has no pragmatic use at all.

Thirdly, the use of the concept of the person tempts many participants in bioethical debates to construct all too simple black and white dichotomies like *person/non-person* or *moral status/no moral status*: Either a being possesses the personhood-constituting properties, thus provoking us to regard it as a person and thereby as having moral status, or the said characteristics are absent, thus making it a non-person without moral status. These dichotomies suggest a simplicity and clarity that do not exist within the moral sphere. Morality is too heterogeneous and varied to be fully grasped with the help of these simple dichotomies.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the concept of the person can easily be used as a cover-up concept: Since there is no independent external criterion of demarcation of qualities that are and those that are not necessary conditions for personhood, a participant in an bioethical debate can simply choose a specific set of properties as being necessary for personhood in order to corroborate his own moral views. As it happens, his particular choice of certain qualities as being necessary conditions for personhood cannot be decisively criticised by his opponents, since there is no consensus on any ontology or metaphysics of the person that could deliver the necessary tools for such criticism. Through this circumstance, participants in bioethical debates can use the concept of the person as a tactical instrument, for by fixing a broader or a narrower concept of the person they can enlarge or diminish the group of human beings that can be looked upon as possessing moral status. In this way, they can morally justify their own acts with respect to certain groups of human beings as well as condemn certain other practices of which they, for some reason or another, do not approve. In this way, arguments using the concept of the person are a form of begging the question.

#### DOING WITHOUT THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

As we have seen, there are good reasons for relinquishing the problematic concept of the person in bioethical debates. However, is it possible to analyse bioethical problems without a concept of the person, and if so, do we have to use another concept instead? In my opinion, we do not have to put anything at all in place of the concept of the person. It is perfectly possible to analyse bioethical problems concerning moral status without using the concept of the person or a somehow disposed substitute. What is more,

bioethical problems can be analysed even better and more clearly in this way because we need not bother any more about the said disadvantages of using the concept.

We all agree that certain beings can possess capacities or properties that have moral meanings or implications. Instead of focusing on the person in the bioethical debate it is necessary to think systematically about the question of which properties and capacities within a being are a sufficient or necessary condition for which kind of moral status. This question is already very difficult as it is. Let us not complicate the matter any further by the disturbing and bewildering introduction and mediation of such a vague and vexed concept as that of the person.

In the debate on the moral status of the foetus, for instance, the following questions could be discussed without using the concept of the person: What is the moral significance of conception and nidation? How does the commencement of the nervous system influence the moral status of the foetus? Does the completion of the embryogenesis or the ability to survive independently of the body of the mother change the set of moral attributes of the unborn? What is the moral meaning of birth? What, if any, are the moral implications of being a human foetus instead of, for example, a chimpanzee foetus? Can a difference in moral status of the foetus be justified on the basis of a distinction of species alone? All these questions can be perfectly analysed without the concept of the person. Moreover, the notion of personhood would only obscure the said bioethical questions.

## CONCLUSION

The origin of much of the confusion surrounding the concept of the person can be traced back to John Locke's ideas on the person and personal identity. The present conceptual problems concerning the notion of the person provide us with important reasons for withholding the use of the concept of the person in bioethical debates: it is superfluous, confusing and without pragmatic use, it leads to simplifications and can be easily used as a cover-up concept. Therefore, the concept of the person is unsuited to be a central idea in bioethical debate, and it seems rather advisable to stop using the concept. Neither should we cherish the assumption any longer that the concept of the person is necessary to describe moral status, nor do we have to put anything new in place of this concept.

By directly discussing the question of which properties and capacities within a being are a sufficient or necessary condition for which kind of

moral status without using the concept of the person, bioethical problems concerning moral status can be analysed better and more clearly. Therefore, the focus should shift to the morally relevant attributes of beings and their role as conditions for certain kinds of moral status, without the intervention of the troublesome concept of the person.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Cf. Warren: "Whatever else we are, we are persons; and it seems likely that this fact will prove fundamental to the justification of the strong moral status that most of us want for ourselves and those we care about" (Warren MA. *Moral Status. Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things*. Oxford, 1997: 90).
2. Cf. Engelhardt: "That an entity belongs to a particular species is not important in general secular moral terms unless that membership results in that entity's being in fact a competent moral agent" (Engelhardt HT Jr. *The Foundations of Ethics*. 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996: 138).
3. Cf. Robertson JA. What we may do with preembryos: A response to Richard A. McCormick. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 1991; 1(4): 293–302: 295.
4. Singer P. *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979 and Tooley M. Abortion and infanticide. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1972; 2: 37–65.
5. Kreeft P. Human personhood begins at conception. *Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine* 1990; 4: 8–11.
6. Sapontzis holds that there are at least two sorts of concepts which are lumped under the label of "person". There are descriptive and evaluative concepts of person. Furthermore, Sapontzis states that the relation between the two is misunderstood (Sapontzis SF. A Critique of Personhood. *Ethics* 1981; 91: 607–618). Cf. also Wiggins: "On occasion, almost everyone feels difficulties in holding in a single focus three different ideas: (a) the idea of a person as object of biological, anatomical, and neurophysiological inquiry; (b) the idea of the person as subject of consciousness; and (c) the idea of the person as locus of all sorts of moral attributes and the source or conceptual origin of all value" (Wiggins D. The Person as Object of Science, as Subject of Experience, and as Locus of Value. In: Peacocke A, Gillet G eds. *Persons and Personality: A Contemporary Inquiry*. Oxford, 1987: 56). Cf. with respect to further concrete different definitions and opinions about the person within the debates of today Dennet DC. Conditions of Personhood. In: Rorty A, ed. *The Identities of Persons*. Los Angeles and London: Berkeley, 1976: 175–196; Doran K. *What is a Person. The Concept and the Implications for Ethics*. Lewiston, NY, Queenston: Ontario, 1989, Teichman J. The Definition of Person. *Philosophy* 1985; 60: 175–185 and Vincent A. Can Groups be Persons? *The Review of Metaphysics* 1989; 42: 687–715.
7. See the *Meditationes*: "*Sed quid igitur sum? Res cogitans. Quid est hoc? Nempe dubitans, intelligens, affirmans, negans, volens, nolens, imaginans, quoque, & sentiens*" (Adam & Tannery, vol. 7: 28).
8. Adam & Tannery, vol. 6: 33.
9. Adam & Tannery, vol. 7: 85–86.
10. Cf.: "'Tis past controversy, that we have in us something that thinks, our very doubts about what it is, confirm the certainty of its being, though we must contend our selves

- in the Ignorance of what kind of Being it is . . . ? (Nidditch PH, ed. *John Locke. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975: 543). See also Nidditch: 542 & Locke J. *The Works of John Locke*. A New Edition, corrected. 10 vols., vol. 2. London 1823, reprinted by Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963: 70.
11. Nidditch: 540–541.
  12. Nidditch: 542.
  13. Locke is the first one to deal with the problem of personal identity (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, chapter 27 “Of Identity and Diversity”). Up to the present day his corresponding theory exerts great influence.
  14. Locke: 62 (my italics).
  15. Locke: 55.
  16. Teichman J. The definition of person. *Philosophy* 1985; 60: 180.
  17. Locke: 55.
  18. Locke: 55.
  19. Cf. Locke: “This may show us wherein personal identity consists; not in the identity of substance, but, as I have said, in the identity of consciousness . . .” (Locke: 63).
  20. Cf. Parfit: “Most of us think that to be a person, as opposed to being mere animal, is just to have certain more specific properties, such as rationality” (Parfit D. Later selves and moral principles. In: Montefiore A, ed. *Philosophy and Personal Relations*. Montreal, 1973: 137). Cf. also Carter: “Since personhood is a matter of having certain capacities . . .” (Carter WR. Once and future persons. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1980; 17: 64).
  21. Cf. for example Engelhardt: “. . . not all humans are persons. Not all humans are self-conscious, rational, and able to conceive of the possibility of blaming and praising” (Engelhardt: 138). Cf. also Lizza: “. . . since the neurophysiological basis of any of the cognitive functions that typical persons manifest is destroyed in the case of PVS patients . . . and non-existent in the case of anencephalics . . . there is a consensus among philosophers that they are not persons” (Lizza JP. Persons and death: What’s metaphysically wrong with our current statutory definition of death? *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 1993; 18: 351–374: 355–356).
  22. Cf. Engelhardt: “. . . angels, not to mention science-fictional speculation regarding rational, self-conscious entities on other planets, indicate, not all persons need be humans” (Engelhardt: 138). Often, authors who want to defend moral status for certain types of animals maintain that these animals are persons. Cf. Singer and Kuhse: “Some human beings, for instance fetuses and newborn infants, are not rational and self-conscious, and therefore not persons, while some nonhuman animals, for instance chimpanzees, are rational and self-conscious and should be considered persons” (Singer P, Kuhse H. Ethics and the limits of tolerance. *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 1994; 19: 129–145: 133). Cf. also Patterson F and Gordon W. The case for the personhood of gorillas. In Cavalieri P, Singer P eds. *The Great Ape Project: Beyond Human Equality*. New York 1993: 58–79: 58–79.
  23. Frankfurt HG. Freedom of the will and the concept of a person. *The Journal of Philosophy* 1971; 68: 6.
  24. Cf. Lizza: 355 and Warren: 94.
  25. See Tooley M. *Abortion and Infanticide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983: 90–91.

26. Sapontzis: 617–618. Some philosophers, however, hold that since the properties that go to make up a person are had to fuller or lesser degrees, personhood itself must be also a matter of different degrees. Cf. Parfit: “So we might say that the fact of personhood is just the fact of having certain other properties, which are had to different degrees” (Parfit: 137). This theory is consistent with the thesis that the moral status of a person is also a matter of degrees. When moral status comes with personhood and the latter is had to different degrees, than the first is also no all-or-nothing phenomenon.

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