Abstract
The value of the concept of person in bioethics has been questioned in recent years by authors like Singer, Engelhardt, Harris and others, who water down its ontological consistency by reducing it to mere qualities «in acto» like rationality and self-consciousness. Consequently, they limit enormously the subjects to which it can be applied. Embryos, foetuses, children, people in coma, the elderly in terminal phases, among others, could not be considered persons since they are not completely self-conscious beings. In this article, the author analyses the main argumentative scheme used by these authors to support their assertions, discuss its validity, points out the ethical problems that arise, reaffirms the centrality of the concept of person and suggests ways of research which can provide suitable answers to this kind of reasoning.

Keywords
Person, human being, Singer, Engelhardt.