

What is bioethics and why is it useful for those who study health care subjects?

We have tried to show today that bioethics is an important part of a young doctor's training.

Our starting point was an intuition that Van Rensselaer Potter II, the founder of bioethics, had which highlighted the enormous gap between the scientific training, technological abilities, the ability to modify nature and the environment, and the ethical awareness of contemporary man.

While scientists have always undergone professional development and advanced training, they remain constrained by the ethical convictions learned, so to speak, in childhood. They are not, therefore, able to or even called upon to substantiate these convictions, to flesh them out, to determine whether the convictions arising from the environment in which they live are valid.

If we want in some way to direct progress and scientific research, we must have a solid background in clinical medicine but also in ethical issues.

What is the relationship between bioethics and technological advancement?

Bioethics can make a tremendous contribution, despite public opinion that it is something that limits science and research; I think that the fundamental task of bioethical reflection is to set priorities, and thus to decide what research should focus on and what should in some way be set aside for the future.

Above all, bioethics can lead us to thinking about medicine as a sort of branch of knowledge on the tree of humanity. The fact that this university's name is Humanitas is no coincidence. I think that bioethics can help us avoid a purely commercial model in which medicine creates

its own needs, thereby creating elements of production, in a vicious circle whose core is not the individual and his or her health but production.

How does bioethics combine with ethical and religious multiculturalism?

The basic idea is that ethical and religious pluralism should be seen as a resource, not as something negative or dangerous. Using an orchestra as an analogy, while each musician plays his or her own instrument, all together they create harmony.

We are living in a period of conflict, of misunderstanding; our work should establish shared rules, a common language.

Philosophy provides us with this language; bioethics is an endeavor that anyone can undertake – doctors, biologists, scientists, physicists; it is a philosophical endeavor in which the truth can be the fertile ground for an encounter between diverse cultures, peoples, and languages.

A message for students

One of the most important things that students today must do is to validate their beliefs, meaning, according to Descartes, that before they try to change the world and its habits and costumes, students must reflect on their own thoughts and opinions. A place to reflect, an ability to order one's opinions and beliefs, and thus an ability to communicate with others, is decisive.

Doctors have before them not an object, but a subject.