



EUROPEAN FEDERATION FOR LIFE AND HUMAN DIGNITY
“ONE OF US”

Human Life Protection in Europe: ethical perspectives

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European Federation for Life and Human Dignity

What do these concepts that define the new Federation exactly mean?

1. “human life”: since when one can refer to “human life”?
2. “dignity”: how is it objectively defined?
3. which are the major risks “human life” and “dignity” are facing?
4. how can we proceed to weaken and to eliminate these risks?

We have to restore a culture of life to fight against the current spreading of a culture of death.



Where there's life there's hope

For believers life is sacred and therefore demands protection.

For non-believers life could and should also be protect as the horizon of all possibilities.

Non-believers should celebrate life even more then those who have faith: for believers there is eternal life, after the present physical life; for those without faith, life on earth runs out all possibilities.



Where there's life there's hope

Suggestion:

It is always possible to translate reasons of faith into secular reasons, and that is what we ought to do:

adopt permanently a lay discourse in order to address all European citizens without exception (and not only believers).



Since when one can refer to “human life”?

The zygote:

1. single cell resulting from the fusion of the gametes (sperm and oocyte), **is** a new **life**, qualitatively different from the gametes that were at its origin;
2. resulting from the fusion of human gametes, cannot be any other kind of life, but **human life**;
3. biologically, the statement of a **human being** can only take place on the 14th day of gestation (implantation); before there is undoubtedly a biological entity, but not necessarily “one” being;
4. the statement on personhood is philosophical and depends on the definition of “person”: **synonym of “human being”** (biology; there is also a juridical view) **or ethical category** (philosophy).



*Since when one can refer to
“human life”?*

Suggestion:

In any case, the decisive question is not whether a human being in (a biologically continuous) gestation is a person or not, but if human life is worth more or less according to its level of development, in a gradualist position (do not engage on quarrels one cannot win: the concept of “being” is defined by ontology, and the one of “person”, by ethics. They are not of an objective nature).

Moral claims can be grounded into objective facts, scientific facts.



how is “dignity” objectively defined?

Each person is singular, unique; without equivalent, cannot be substituted by another person. “Human dignity” relies on the uniqueness of each person, and the intrinsic equal value of each uniqueness, of all persons.

Historically speaking, human dignity is:

- for Cynics and Stoics, a quality inherent to all human beings, equivalent to recognize the equal, and unconditional worth of all human beings;
- for Christians, the sign of the creation of mankind by God, at His image and resemblance;
- for Kant the opposite of price; therefore, persons cannot be quantified, objectified or functionalized.



how is “dignity” objectively defined?

Suggestion:

Refer to the historical and philosophical foundations of human dignity which means:

- the absolute, unconditional, and equal worth of all human beings;
- regardless of the level of development (quantity) or any physical or psychological features (quality);
- being a subject of rights (non objectifiable or reduced to an object of someone);
- valuing in itself as an end (and not a mean for someone, functionalized);

and uncover the contradictions that spread in public opinion.



Major risks “human life” and “dignity” are facing

The major threats are at the beginning and end of human life, and there are many examples.

At the dawn of human life:

- abortive devices
- abortion
- heterologous assisted reproduction
- surrogate motherhood
- surplus embryos
- embryo selection
- “wrongful life”
- embryo production for biomedical research





Major risks “human life” and “dignity” are facing

At the setting of human life:

- therapeutic obstinacy
- lack of palliative care
- euthanasia
- assisted suicide





Major risks “human life” and “dignity” are facing

The major threats are at the most vulnerable stages of human life, when the power of the stronger makes weight, contradicting what society defends and pursues:

- solidarity towards the most vulnerable (who, on the contrary, appear to be disposable and are frequently abandoned). Therefore, human life is not protected, cherished and respected;
- equality among all human beings grounded on their unconditional dignity (which, on the contrary, seems to be subordinated to certain features). Therefore, dignity is not complied, what gives rise to further injustices in the world.



Addressing the risks

How can we proceed to fight the risks of a culture of death and help to restore a culture of life?

I would suggest to:

- keep the discourse at the secular level, addressing all citizens;
- ground moral claims on scientific knowledge (spreading it) and argue within a historically and philosophically well established framework;
- draw logical and unavoidable conclusions for action from the shared values and principles theoretically stated;



Addressing the risks

- identify and stress the contradictions between common morality correctness and its application to concrete situations;
- awake to the need of coherence within principles advocated, and between principles and actions followed;
- help solving peoples' problems (do not “close a door without opening a window”).



Thanks