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***Human Dignity:***

***which challenges for 2015?***



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# Human Dignity: peculiarity

The expression “human dignity” is peculiar because

- it is unanimously advocated
- (and, nevertheless,) its use is controversial:

(1) one falls into a homonymy, that is, uses the same expression with different meanings (we ought to define it consensually);

(2) one applies it selectively, that is, uses the expression only to the realities considered worth to be protected but not to all it refers (we ought to follow the opposite path).

# **1. Human Dignity: homonymous use**

**Its meaning is not unequivocal, but plural.**

**Throughout history it was mainly used to value some people in relation to others, establishing inequalities with its particular use (social dimension).**

**There were decisive moments to eliminate the inequality:**

- Christianity, Mankind was created by God at His image and resemblance (ontological dimension);**
- Kant, persons are ends in themselves and should be treated as such (ethical dimension).**

# 1. Human Dignity: homonymous use

Since then, “human dignity” tends to express the **intrinsic** (in itself) and **unconditional** (regardless of time, place and circumstances) **value of humans**.

**We therefore evolved from**

**a particular use of “human dignity”** (performing a social dimension and assuming it under a quantitative dimension)

**to a universal use** (performing an ontological and ethical dimensions and assuming it under a qualitative dimension).

## **2. Human Dignity: selective use**

**While “human dignity” was particular, in its definition, it was also selective, in its application.**

**Regrettably, even when it become universal it remained selective (Nazi death camps, genocide, persecutions, etc.).**

**Therefore, today’s challenge for “human dignity” is to evolve from its current selective use to its absolute use, that is, to become applied to all humans without exceptions (since we agree already that dignity is inherent to all humans, universal).**

## **2. Human Dignity: selective use**

**Today, the major exception is the early stage of our development, that is, the intrauterine life.**

**We acknowledge already (equal) dignity to humans regardless of particular characteristics (gender, race, convictions, etc.); but we failed to recognize dignity to intrauterine human life. Why?**

***- Is it not life? Is it not human life? Is it of a different nature from extrauterine life?***

**The embryo is a new life, belonging to the human species, with the same genome (nature) throughout his/her life, in a continuous development.**

## 2. Human Dignity: selective use

Why?

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*-Intrauterine life is not autonomous and extrauterine life is.*

**Extrauterine life also depends on others to survive. But to depend on others does not mean that these own those who depend on them.**

**Besides, one cannot take “autonomy” and “dignity” as synonymous, as if only autonomous humans would have dignity (reducing dignity again to a characteristic and therefore), denying dignity to senile elderly or to mental disable persons.**

## **2. Human Dignity: selective use**

**In an inclusive society, the one we all work for, we do not classify (and exclude) others for their characteristics (stage of development), but we conceive extra protection for the most vulnerable among us.**

**Human dignity states that all humans (regardless of their stage of development) have dignity, an intrinsic and unconditional value and have to be treated as end in themselves (and not as objects of no matter who).**



# Human Dignity: which challenges for 2015?

Having evolved already from

- a particular to a universal use of “human dignity”,

we ought to

- proceed from a selective to an absolute application of “human dignity”,

what means to finally evolve from

- an exclusive to a more inclusive perspective of human dignity and of society (establishing adequate protection measures to the most vulnerable)!

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