

HUMAN DIGNITY AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION: A NORM AND A PLEA FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

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Abstract:

This article is an appeal to religious and socio-political communities to promote mutual recognition of human dignity in order to protect human life at all stages. Many complex situations in the wake of modern medical science and technological advancements call us forth to reflect on the foundation that demands protection, preservation and promotion of human life against discrimination, violence and destruction of human life. There are bioethical issues from the womb to the tomb: abortion, human embryonic stem cell research, gender selection, female foeticide, infanticide, in vitro fertilization, cloning, human experimentation, preimplantation and prenatal diagnoses, genetic engineering and genetic design of babies, gene therapy and enhancement, gene alteration and insertion of artificial chips in the brain for intelligence, research freedom and human nature, organ transplantation and prolongation of human life, suicide, euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, health and illness, and palliative care and death. In this article, the author discusses the principle of inviolable human dignity and the need for its recognition in order to protect human life at all stages and oppose medical technologies which destroy human life.

Article Written in Honour of

Professor Dr. Jacob Parappally MSFS who has fully dedicated his life and ministry to the establishment of the sanctity and the dignity of every human being inspired by his deep conviction on the salvific act of Jesus Christ. It is very inspiring to recall the day when he continued to take his class on Christology and Trinity in Pune even after hearing the demise of his mother saying that death is only a door to the risen life. Fr. Jacob is a man of conviction and commitment.

Part I: Philosophical Considerations

1. Human life is possible only through the medium of a body. It is self-evident. Human bodily life is considered the most fundamental good of humans, since it is only in and through the body that a human can exist and act. However, a mere bodily existence of

a human life need not make humans valuable or inviolable, because it is not just only humans but all animals exist only through their bodies.

2. Can we recognize a value in humans based on mere existence? In other words, can we move from mere existence to ethics, ontology to morality or from the descriptive to the normative? If the right to life is the starting point, then we end up in a naturalistic fallacy of transferring an ontological (Sein) status to the moral (Sollen) status (is-ought problem). Mere existence does not automatically transfer a moral value to humans. `Something exists` does not mean that it has an inviolable moral value.

3. To avoid this problem (I exist, therefore I am valuable), we need to recognise a value in humans in order to respect and protect them against any harm (for example, killing). The question of whether “the mere existence demands a value” or “it is a certain value that grounds or renders human rights” is answered in saying that it is a moral value that makes them valuable or inviolable or claim for protection.

4. The moral value of humans makes them special and worthy of protection. That moral value is called dignity. That is the normative starting point. While all animals may have certain values, only humans have an absolute value of inviolable dignity on account of their inherent capacity for rationality and autonomous action. It is the capacity that counts. The intrinsic capacity, that makes humans special and valuable, is the source and foundation of absolute (complete, full and non-graded) dignity present equally in all humans. This species-specific-unique capacity is intrinsic to humans. The fact is that every member of species homo sapiens have the capacity for rationality, autonomous action and human consciousness by virtue of their affiliation. However, philosophers like John Locke, Michael Tooley, Peter Singer and Tristram Engelhardt would falsely make distinction of thinking and conscious human persons from non-thinking and unconscious humans. No one attributes these capacities to humans. It simply exists from the moment of conception when the individual human existence beings. Non- or not yet flourishing of such capacity makes some humans vulnerable and not less in dignity. In fact, there is no human life empty of absolute dignity. The principles of identity and continuity further establish human

dignity at every stage of human life. This dignity is the source of all human rights and the right to life is the most fundamental of all rights.

5. Without life, there is no dignity and life precedes dignity (descriptive), but it is the dignity that makes human life valuable and worthy of protection (normative). Dignity makes the right to life inviolable, because dignity is inviolable. The right to life has its origin in the absolute and inviolable dignity of humans and exists until the end of life. Dignity demands respect for the right to life. Therefore, we should not destroy any human life under normal circumstances. However, human life is not absolute, since natural death is inevitable. Further, in conflict situations, the right to life can be restricted by the reality of life-situations under the principle of double effect. In cases of self-defense and endangered pregnancy, an unintended harm against an aggressor can be ethically justified as a last resort to save lives. However, exceptions and emotions do not make norms.

6. Since human dignity is normative, it can be a norm for bioethics to evaluate issues concerning human life from conception to death. In contexts of pluralities of cults, cultures and creeds, human dignity could be a common minimum principle to assess bioethical-legal issues (for example, if human dignity and life are inviolable, can we abort a foetus? Or can we use embryos for research, can we permit suicide or euthanasia, etc.). The concept of human dignity in philosophical-theological and ethical-legal traditions with a minimum consensus can offer ethical-legal implications for practical applications in bioethics and biolaw.

7. However, Ruth Macklin critiques the ambiguity of the concept of human dignity and equated dignity with ‘respect for autonomy’ of patients and research subjects. She concluded that dignity is a useless concept and can be simply abandoned without any loss.¹ The inference of Macklin may not be justified by a simple fact that *moral concepts*, such as, freedom, justice and love *cannot be fully expressed* in unambiguous terms and nobody

¹ Ruth Macklin, “Dignity is a useless concept,” *British Medical Journal* 327 (2003) 1419-1420.

therefore abandons these fundamental concepts.² Ambiguity and vagueness cannot be a valid reason to abandon a concept altogether.

8. The notion of human dignity is widely used in religions and cultures, in national constitutions and international declarations. Experts and laymen continue to use the term every day. However, people understand it differently. For example, while some argue that suicide and euthanasia are contrary to human dignity, others argue exactly the opposite way for a self-willed death with dignity (meaning autonomy). The latter is wrong not only due to ethical reason but it has a philosophical contradiction, since autonomy is brought to a complete closure in a self-willed death. Absolute value of human dignity should not be violated by human wish in order to bring an end to the unbearable pain and suffering considering erroneously that life in persistent pain is not worth living. Every human life has worth even at the edge of life. Palliative care respecting life and dignity is a better alternative at the end of life care.

9. Dignity is not attributed to individuals but inalienable, since humans are created that way. It is simply there in humans, even if others fail to recognize it. Thus, dignity is not at the disposal of any authority either. Nobody can take it away. Dignity is the non-negotiable absolute value of humans. An object can be bought and sold, but the value of humans is beyond any price. That priceless value, as Kant calls, is dignity and is present in humans from the moment of conception when the capacity for rationality and autonomy begins simultaneously.

10. Dignity is inseparable from humanity, since it is an ontological, existential and intrinsic value-property of humans. Humanity is unthinkable without dignity. Any discrimination of humans will therefore affect their dignity causing pain and humiliation while treating them with graded values or as if they were not humans. Human dignity opposes such disrespect. Human dignity demands mutual respect. The idea of human dignity can thus provide the necessary conceptual background to respond to issues in clinical and research settings and claim respect for humanity as a whole.³ Dignity can be

² Roberto Andorno, "Human Dignity and Human Rights," in ten Have, H., Jean, M. *The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights: Backgrounds, Principles and Application* (Paris: 2009) 91-98, 93.

³ Roberto Andorno, "Human Dignity and Human Rights," 96.

the cornerstone of a framework of lens through which one makes sense of the moral landscape.⁴

11. The UNESCO along with its Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights made many attempts to forge a worldwide bioethical consensus in the context of ‘cultural diversity and pluralism’ (Art. 12), while it categorically states that diversities cannot be ‘invoked to infringe upon human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms.’ The United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 similarly wanted “to design a new world order for the safety of humanity, the more equitable sharing of its wealth and the defence of fundamental rights,”⁵ through a non-negotiable legal framework to fight against the denial of human dignity which is common and equal to all human beings, though they could not define human dignity philosophically. Avoiding thus a discussion on the origin and the source of human dignity (whether by nature itself), Article 1 of the UDHR plainly states that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,’ while its preamble opens with the statement that ‘recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.’ These statements have been incorporated in many human right treaties and constitutions of nation-states.

12. The political discourses decree agreements and frameworks mostly prohibitory in nature. For example, killing, torture, slavery and discrimination, which are a direct attack on dignity, are prohibited. The positive aspect of human dignity and legitimacy of its moral content are to be fathomed. The normative content of dignity is that it is a right in itself and is a foundation for other rights which (i) recognize humans as subjects, (ii) claim respect and (iii) protect from acts of infringements. In fact, human rights are concrete guidelines and practical norms of (springing forth from) human dignity. Without (recognition of) human dignity, we cannot (authentically) speak of human rights. Brownsword says

⁴ Clair Morrissey, “The value of dignity in and for bioethics: rethinking the terms of the debate,” *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 22 (2016) 173–192, 186.

⁵ Michael Kirby, “Health Care and Global Justice,” *Singapore Academy of Law Journal* 22 (2010) 785-800, 789.

that each and every human being has inherent *dignity*; that it is this *inherent* dignity that grounds (or accounts for) the possession of human rights; that these are *inalienable* rights; and that, because all humans have dignity, they hold these rights *equally*. So understood, human dignity is the foundation on which the superstructure of human rights is built. Given this relationship between human dignity and human rights, the primary *practical* and *political* discourse becomes that of human rights; and, while those who seek a deeper justification for human rights might need to revisit the idea of human dignity...⁶

13. The idea of human dignity entered the human history of literature in the Greco-Roman antiquity via the Latin *dignitas*⁷ which means something like “worthiness for honour and esteem.” The idea of universal human dignity entered history through the ancient Stoicism with Zeno⁸ of Citium in about 300 BC. For Stoics, dignity is a genuine possibility for all humans regardless of social standing or accomplishments. Humans have dignity because they possess reason, and the best life, the life according to nature, is available to anyone who chooses to live in a reflective way. This concept was universal but not inalienable, since such dignity can be lost if one does not live according to the rational nature. Around 60 BC, Cicero introduced the concept of dignity as a status of universal nobility inherent in human beings due to the distinctive gift of reason.⁹ He identified *excellentia* and *praestantia* (‘pre-eminence, superiority) with *dignitas*.¹⁰

14. In line with the Kantian tradition, the German Federal Constitutional Court tries to define the meaning of dignity in terms of a special capacity intrinsic to humans. It is a capacity for autonomous action and those have this capacity ‘have the right to be recognized as such’. This capacity encompasses a specific value called dignity and ‘respect

⁶ Roger Brownsword, “Human Dignity from a Legal Perspective,” in Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword and Dietmar Mieth (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 1-22, 3.

⁷ Achilles, *Illiad*, Book 1; Caesar, Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 33.

⁸ Zeno, born in Cyprus in the 4th century B.C.E., traveled to Athens while a young man and studied with the important philosophers of the day. He eventually arrived at his own philosophy and began teaching at a public hall called the *Stoa Poikile*. Zeno's philosophy, Stoicism, took its name from the hall where he taught

⁹ M. Tullius Cicero, *De officiis*, ed. and trans. W. Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913) I.30: 105-6.

¹⁰ Cicero 1913: 97: I.28: magna cum excellentia praestantiaque animantium reliquarum: to us Nature herself has assigned a character of surpassing excellence, far superior to that of all other living creatures.

for dignity demands that those who have such a capacity are treated as beings with autonomous personalities,¹¹ as free subjects and never as objects. Even when offenders are deprived of their liberty after commission of a crime, they do not lose their autonomy and inherent dignity. Notwithstanding their commission of an offence, offenders are not to be treated as mere means, objects, or things, but always as ends in their own right by virtue of their capacity to take responsibility for autonomous actions.¹²

15. In fact, it is not merely the capacity for autonomous action, but the capacity for morality that counts and distinguishes humans from animals. As Immanuel Kant puts it: morality is the only condition under which a rational being can be an end in himself and possessor of dignity. Kant says that “morality, and humanity so far as it is capable of morality, is the only thing which has dignity,”¹³ and “humanity itself is a dignity, for a human being cannot be used merely as a means by any human being... but must always be used at the same as an end.” It is precisely in this (respecting and treating humans as subjects existing for their own sake) that his dignity consists.¹⁴

Part II: Religious Understandings

16. The understanding of dignity in catholic, orthodox and protestant churches is not contrary but complementary. The interpretation of the human as ‘the image of God’ expressed in Genesis 1:26¹⁵ and Wisdom 2:23¹⁶ is the key to human dignity. Jesus Christ

¹¹ Deryck Beyleveld and Roger Brownsword, *Human Dignity in Bioethics and Biolaw* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2001) 14. BVerfGE 45 (1977) 227-8.

¹² Beyleveld and Brownsword, *Human Dignity in Bioethics and Biolaw*, 14.

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), trans. and ed. Mary Gregor with an introduction by Christine M. Korsgaard, First published 1998, 18th printing 2011 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 42. GMS IV: 434, 435. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), trans. with intr. H. J. Paton (London: Hutchinson, 1948) 96-7.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 209.

¹⁵ Genesis 1:26: God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” NSRV Edition.

¹⁶ Wisdom 2:23: God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity. NSRV Edition.

has always upheld the sacredness of human life and promoted the fullness of life (*I have come so that you may live in abundance*. John 10:10). He protected the weak, the vulnerable and the needy. The love of neighbor is the other side of the coin of the love of God. The Catholic Church continues to do the command left by Jesus. Martin Luther's notion of human dignity is identical with the notion of human beings as the image of God (Gen. 1.26). Luther's most prominent document *Disputatio de homine* (1536), particularly its thesis 20, defines human beings with the gift of reason, with senses and with corporeality.¹⁷ According to Luther, dignity is not a quality that inheres in humans but exists only by virtue of their creator who confers it.

17. In Judaism, 'kavod ha-beriyat' means the intrinsic value (dignity) of every human being, though at times 'kavod' may also refer to an acquired social-political status (honour). The notion of 'sanctity of human life,' with inviolable and unending value is upheld in Judaism,¹⁸ on which the British Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits says that, "the value of human life is infinite and beyond measure, so that any part of life – even if only an hour or a second – is of precisely the same worth as seventy years of it, just as any fraction of infinity, being indivisible, remains infinite. Accordingly, to kill a decrepit patient approaching death constitutes exactly the same crime of murder as to kill a young, healthy [human] who may still have many decades to live."¹⁹ The Talmud which is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism expresses the idea that the image of God immanent in humans makes them sacred with inviolable and unending value. Such a theological anthropology which renders humans an inviolable value has normative and legal implications for bioethics.

18. In Islam, humans have a privileged position (*karamat*). Allah, the only source of *karam* (dignity), bestows *karam* on human beings. Therefore, *karamat* is not an inherent quality, it is a special gift of Allah. The elevated position (*maqam karim*) implies free will and those who obey the commandments of Allah are elevated to the rank of his

¹⁷ Oswald Bayer, „Martin Luther's Conception of Human Dignity,“ in: Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword and Dietmar Mieth (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 101-107. Bayer refers to the Weimer edition of his collected works. See Weimer 39 I: 175.3f.

¹⁸ Yair Lorberbaum, "Human dignity in the Jewish tradition," 135-144.

¹⁹ Immanuel Jakobovits, "Medical Experimentation on Humans in Jewish Law," in: J. David Bleich and Fred Rosner (eds.), *Jewish Bioethics* (Jersey City, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Ktav Pub Inc. Augmented Edition edition, 1999), 379

representatives (*khulafa*) on earth. The Quran declares that “we have bestowed dignity on the progeny of Adam [...] and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our creation (al-Isra 17:70). Thus according to al-Alusi, “everyone and all members of the human race, including the pious and the sinner, are endowed with dignity, nobility and honour.”²⁰ The Islamic Law (Sharia) emphasises that “all human beings form one family whose members are united by their subordination to Allah and descend from Adam. All men are equal in terms of basic human dignity and basic obligations and responsibilities, without any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, language, belief, sex, religion, political affiliation, social status or other considerations. The true religion is the guarantee for enhancing such dignity along the path to human dignity.”²¹

19. According to Zoroastrianism, humans are born completely pure and spotless with perfect freedom of will. After making a comparative study of all the major religions of the world, Tiwari concludes: “of all the religions, however, Zoroastrianism seems to give the greatest dignity to man . . .”²² Humans are free to choose between good and evil.

20. In Hinduism, the idea of the human (atman) is an extension of God (Brahman) grants sanctity and dignity to all living beings, however it is only through a human life that a soul is liberated. “Every individual soul is potentially divine”, says Swami Vivekananda. In the classical Hinduism, anyone who is able to get freed of the past karma and the rebirth, and attains unification (jivanmukti/videhamukti) with the Universal Self has dignity. However, Manusmrti refers to a graded class-dependent social dignity, while the acclaimed Hindu scripture Bhagavadgita grants moral dignity to all individuals regardless of the social class.

21. Sikhism and Jainism are reform religions from Hinduism. The fundamental Sikh belief is that “the formless Creator, the Supreme Soul, resides in every individual. Entire mankind is the manifestation of the Absolute One. There is no non-believer; each human

²⁰ Cited in: Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: The Islamic Texts Society, Reprint 2011) 1.

²¹ Quoted from: Miklos Maroth, “Human Dignity in the Islamic World,” *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity*, 155-162, 161.

²² Kedar Nath Tiwari, *Comparative Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2009) 249. See H. Jimsy Asha, “Zoroastrianism and Perfect Freedom of Will: A Humanistic Vision,” *IJELLH*. Vol 4, Issue 2 (Feb 2016) 287-293.

being is entitled to equal respect and equal dignity no matter what the person's religion, faith, belief or station in life may be."²³

22. Jainism treats all persons equal and respects their dignity. Through the preaching of ahimsa, the Jain scriptures emphasize the basic belief that every living being has sanctity and a dignity of its own, and therefore one must respect the dignity of everyone, as one expects own dignity to be respected by others. Its basic philosophy is: 'live and let live.'²⁴

23. In Mahayana Buddhism, dignity is an egalitarian moral notion and is ascribed to all humans and leads to an altruistic duty in others, whereas in the classical Buddhism only enlightened 'arhats' who are able to reach nirvana (liberation/salvation) through meditation have dignity. It is attainable only for monastic elites.²⁵ The laity should strive.

24. The Confucian concept of dignity is based on human actions of righteousness, benevolence and integrity. One can lose dignity by acting like an animal. For Confucians, a life without dignity is not a life worth living. Thus, dignity is not inalienable. The Daoist tradition believes that Dao (literally: path to destination) is the source of dignity and ground of all that exists; therefore, everything possesses dignity.²⁶

25. Religions play a primarily role to instruct the followers for a rightful living. They offer moral norms. The universality of moral norms of religions is debatable and are subject to critique. However, one of the foundational criteria to find whether there is moral truth in religious practices and norms is to check whether the inviolable right to life, which is the most fundamental of all rights, is respected on the basis of the inviolable human dignity, which is no doubt upheld and promoted by almost all religions. About 85% of world population belongs to one or the other religion. Since human dignity is common to all humans, every human life must be respected, protected and prevented from

²³ Fathi Osman, "Sikh Scriptures highlight Human Rights & Human Dignity," Available at <http://www.hrusa.org/advocacy/community-faith/sikh1.shtm>.

²⁴ Asha Bhandari, "Jainism as philosophical backbone of human rights: A perspective in Indian jurisprudence," *International of Academic Research*, vol 2. Issue 1/3 (Jan-Mar 2015) 35-39.

²⁵ See Jens Braarvig, "Hinduism: the Universal Self in a class society," 163-169; and "Buddhism: inner dignity and absolute altruism," 170-176.

²⁶ Luo An'xian, "Human dignity in traditional Chinese Confucianism," 177-181; Qiao Qing-Ju, "Dignity in traditional Chinese Daoism," 182-187, in: *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity*.

infringements. Despite differences in understanding and interpretation of the concept, the common human dignity can have a universal appeal with moral-ethical credentials and normative-legal implications.

26. Certainly, we are looking not for a uniform code, but a commonality in humanity to deal with human issues irrespective of the differences of cultures, religions, cults, age and social status. Notwithstanding dissensus regarding the meaning and use of the concept, there is consensus that dignity pertains to humanity and humanity has/is dignity. The intrinsic and inviolable human dignity is not a dignity of an office or a socio-political status or any rank, but a priceless value inherent in all humans by virtue of being human. Only a universal (umbrella) principle, such as, human dignity, common to all humans can help to decide for the whole humanity and uphold universal human rights. Human dignity can be thus used as a universal or at least as a common minimum measuring code to respect and protect human life and to voice against the violation of the fundamental right to life. This principle has relevance for normative-legal frameworks in bioethics and biolaw especially for biopolitical lobbying for legislations in order to address and respond to the bioethical issues from the womb to the tomb.

Part III: The Christological Significance

27. The idea of humans created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1, 26) exalts the idea of human intelligence and freedom enabling humans to be in communion with God and fellow humans. The idea of being created in the image and likeness of God does not only mean the original identity but also the end of humans. It determines the historical identity and calling of humans in history constantly striving to attain divine likeness, which was lost through original sin. This is where, Christ gives a new beginning by restoring the divine likeness through conversion of life. In this Christological vision, “human dignity is not, therefore, just that which belongs to man by birth (being made in the image)` but is also what man has to restore and to fulfill (the `likeness`) in the re-birth made possible by

the grace of Christ and by the adhesion to his own liberty.”²⁷ Francesco Botturi thus speaks of three structural dimensions of human dignity: “the dignity of birth to human life, the dignity of conversion and re-regeneration, the dignity of obedience of faith and the dignity of love of charity; three dimensions that ideally refer to one another in a circular line and come to delineate the unitary physiognomy of Christian dignity.”²⁸

28. The dignified human image is static and remains intact, since “human identity always exceeds every exterior circumstance of its existence and is superior to its own acting.”²⁹ A Christmas homily of Pope Leo the Great summarizes it clearly: “Recognise, Christian, your dignity [now that you are] made to share in the divine nature [...]. Remember who your Head is and of which Body you are a member.”³⁰ However, the divine likeness to God can be affected by human conduct. In the Christian sense, the original sin has ruptured the divine likeness due to misuse of freedom through an act of misconduct. According to Karol Wojtyła, “there is a relationship between a person and his actions which is always both immanent and transcendent at the same time: the person is always shown in his actions only, but at the time his personal being is always before and beyond all his actions.”³¹ Thus we can say that while human dignity is transcendental and insuperable, a human action can affect the immanent person. Therefore, Christ has enabled humans to restore the lost dignity of divine likeness.

29. The concrete understanding of a dignity thus entered human history with the incarnation of the Word of God in the person of Jesus Christ who became the bridge between God and humans uniting them (*Gaudium et Spes* n. 22). From the story of the incarnation of the Son of God Jesus Christ, Francesco Botturi draws a conclusion that “it is Christ Himself who fully “meets with”, “becomes” man, imparting His own worth; in other words, *Christ Himself is the dignity of the human being*, its foundation and its term of

²⁷ Francesco Botturi, “Human dignity and mutual respect,” *Pro Dialogo*, Bulletin 133: 2010/1 (Civitate Vaticana: Pontifical Consilium pro Dialogo inter Religiones, January-April 2010) 92-101, 93.

²⁸ Francesco Botturi, “Human dignity and mutual respect,” *Pro Dialogo*, 93.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁰ Cited in: Francesco Botturi, “Human dignity and mutual respect,” *Pro Dialogo*, 93-4. See Pope Leo the Great, Sermon for Christmas, 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 96. See K. Wojtyła, “Persona e atto,” in: G. Reale and T. Styczen (eds.), *Metafisica della persona. Tutte le opera filosofiche e saggi integrative* (Milano: Bompiani, 2003).

reference.”³² Christian dignity consists not only in being created in the image and likeness, but much greater in being regenerated as sons and daughters of God (Rom 5, 15b and 17b) through means of personal conversion and social charity.

Concluding Remarks:

30. The universal sense of human dignity based on individual human “freedom which pretends that there is no longer any need for God or even it is even perceived as an objection to God” is abstract and a wholly autonomy of freedom against “the ties of tradition, authority, community and, more deeply, against the tie of divine dependence,” is dangerous. Hence, the philosophical ground for human dignity purely based on human reason, intelligence and autonomy is insufficient, as Francesco Botturi remarks, “If human dignity is totally enclosed within the freedom of individual choice, it is clear that the relations between men will become fragile, that the lives of the weakest will be put at risk, that the education of the youngest will become more difficult, that living together will generally become more precarious, that the universal human rights themselves, so long proclaimed, will be justified, life in its fundamental forms is under unprecedented attack (conception, birth, marriage, family, death).”³³

31. The philosophical understanding of rationality, freedom and dignity is necessary to protect individual rights, but it requires community action and religious backing to restore, regain and recognise human dignity for the larger vulnerable human community. To recognise human dignity means to recognise the immanent as well as transcendental nature of humans and give the due respect to them. It means that the human subject needs to be recognised by others as well in order to be part of human society, but social recognition does not render humans dignity. Every human is a subject, but no one can live as an island. Therefore, recognition is required for the confirmation of individual existence and dignity, which is a permanent condition of social consistency and intersubjectivity and interdependence.

³² Francesco Botturi, “Human dignity and mutual respect,” *Pro Dialogo*, 92.

³³ Francesco Botturi, “Human dignity and mutual respect,” *Pro Dialogo*, 95.

32. While philosophy may inform us the uniqueness of humans, religions tell us why they are unique and why they should be protected. Religions make efforts to care for the vulnerable and the sick. Mercy and compassion do not arise from mere humanism, but from the feeling of togetherness taught by religions. Philosophy may establish human freedom and love, but religions teach how they should be properly used.

33. Not only the modern culture of Enlightenment, but also Christianity had exalted freedom as the active synthesis of the human dignity. However, “the idea that human freedom, besides being a gift from God, also requires redemption, is not stressed adequately; that is, his divine likeness is not a gift of nature, but it must be regained through the grace which comes from God Himself.”³⁴ Freedom is unable to correct its wrong doings. Humans have the tragic power to do evil, but are helpless to take it away. Freedom is not able to take away the guilt committed by it. Freedom requires religions for its proper use through education of right conscience and teaching of right actions.

34. Human desire and freedom which animate the human actions are not able to attain fulfillment by themselves. Hence, in restoring human dignity and protecting human rights, we need not only human effort but God’s grace. The fulfilment of human life lies in the religious sphere. In Christian world, the aim of human life is the resurrection of the body with an eternal life, and while on earth following Christ demands recognizing and respecting mutual dignity which safeguard the right to life from conception to death of everyone and oppose abortion to euthanasia and foeticide to suicide that destroy the gift of human life.

35. A medico-technological intervention which is not therapeutic but destructive of human life is against human dignity and ethically unjustifiable, and should therefore be globally opposed and legally restricted. Instrumentalization of human life can never be tolerated to save another life. Destruction of any innocent human life is never justifiable even for a noble cause. Scientific freedom has limits when it injures human dignity. The principle of dignity with its twigs of rights is applicable to all humans from the moment of conception to the natural death. Humans grow always as humans and never unto humans, and therefore all humans have the equal dignity and demand equal mutual respect.

³⁴ Francesco Botturi, “Human dignity and mutual respect,” *Pro Dialogo*, 95.