THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN DIGNITY

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ABSTRAK:

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk meneliti makna dari harkat dan martabat manusia dari perspectif teologi dan filsafat. Sampai sekarang dasar dan definisi persisnya masih banyak diperdebatkan. Ada banyak buku dan bahkan dokumen resmi negara yang berbicara mengenai harkat dan martabat manusia, bahkan menjadi argumen dasarnya tetapi hanya menyebutkan saja tanpa memberikan definisi dan keterangan lebih lanjut. Oleh karena kekurang jelasan definisi itu, maka seringkali diskusi tidak menemukan titik temu bahkan sampai pada jalan buntu.

Keywords:

Human Dignity, human being, image and likeness of God, human value, philosophical bases, theological bases.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Theme

Human dignity is a very important issue, especially after the Second World War. It plays important role in many area of sciences such as philosophy, ethics, law, politics, biomedicine, etc. In the philosophical area, human dignity is very important because[1]:

  a. It is the main philosophical foundation of human rights.
  b. It is a mean to distinguish human being from other creatures
  c. It underlines the uniqueness of human beings among all creatures.
  d. It is the main basis for the equality of human beings.

Although it is very important and used frequently in many important issues such as in banning slavery, independence (freedom), sex exploitation, cloning, and so on, there is lack of adequate philosophical[2] and theological reflections so that its uses is frequently irritating and inflationary. There are many books and even official goverment documents and also official church document whics use the term human dignity but do not give precise meaning. This fact is not without its reasons. It is difficult to make clear definitions about human dignity; the reality is much more easily grasped when there is a lack or violation of human dignity.[3] In other words, the violation of human dignity is much more readily understood than the attempt to define the dignity of the human being itself.[4]

1.2 *Status Questionis*

It is important to have a clear definition on human dignity in order to arrive at a sound conclusion. One of the reasons why the clear definition is difficult to achieve is that its basis is not yet explored thoroughly. There is a huge debate on which it should be based. Many people believe that it should be based on religion but the other refuse it. If human dignity is based on religion, it means that there is no universal human dignity since the belief of each religion is different and even there are many people who don't profess religion. It has to be a common ground on which we place human dignity. I believe that philosophical basis (ethical basis) would be an inspiring common ground. Certainly, if there is no common ground it will difficult to arrive at a common consensus. Without any clear definition and agreement on its basis, the discussion on human dignity will easily arrive at

confusion or even a dead end. This research tries to clarify the meaning of human dignity from theological and philosophical perspective.

2. PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF HUMAN DIGNITY

2.1 Lexical meaning

The English word "dignity" comes from the Latin word *dignitas* which means worth, worthiness, merit.[5] There are two different basic meaning of dignity. The first, the original usages of the word *dignitas* referred especially to that aspect of virtue or excellence that made one worthy of honor. So, it is a social concept that describe particular/special social role of a person in society. Dignity, then, referred both to a kind of deserving and to something deserved. The word dignity was closely related to an undemocratic idea because it was closely related to noble or aristocratic persons in a society. So it was not applied to all people because only a number of persons - nobles and aristocrat – had this dignity.[6] The second meaning is related to German word "Würde" as opposed to price. This idea was developed extensively by German Philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804). If the first meaning of dignity insinuates undemocratic meaning, the second meaning is opposite. It stresses the equality among human being so that the value of human being is equal for everybody and its value doesn't depend on human achievement, genealogy or other thing.

Our reflection will start on some dictionary. Among the many meanings of the word 'dignity', the American Heritage Dictionary[7] gives the definition as follows: 1. *the quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect. 2. Inherent nobility and worth 3. Poise and self-respect. 4. The respect and honor associated with an important position. 5. A high office or rank.* The Random House Webster's Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus[8] gives the definition as follows: *1. bearing, conduct, or speech indicative of self-respect or appreciation of the formality or gravity of an occasion or situation. 2. nobility or elevation of character; worthiness: dignity of sentiments. 3. elevated rank, office, station, etc. 4. relative standing; rank. 5. a sign or token of respect: an impertinent question unworthy of the dignity of an answer.*

In the Indonesian language, dignity is usually translated into the word 'harkat'. The

official meaning of this word appears in Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia from Pusat Bahasa (4th Ed.). The entry "harkat" has two meanings: 1. derajat (kemuliaan dsb); taraf; mutu; nilai; harga. 2. Harga diri. tenaga; kekuatan; gerak(an). The first meaning, "derajad" is closely related to the word "drajat" (Javanese) which means "pangkat keluhuran"[9] (the nobility level of...). For example: "*drajating manungsa*" (Javanese) means the nobility of human beings; in this case, human being has certain (high) level of nobility which is equal for all human beings but it is not equal with animals. Briefly, the Javanese meaning of *drajating manungsa* is being human has certain level of dignity which is equal for all human beings but it is not equal with other creatures. Human beings have such nobility because he or she is human being.

From above explanation, the lexical meaning of dignity can be summarized into two groups: intrinsic and extrinsic meanings. The extrinsic meaning flows from the Latin word *dignitas;* and the intrinsic meaning flows from German word *Würde* or Javanese *drajat (keluhuran)* which is appeared in the second definition of the American Heritage Dictionary: the inherent nobility and worth of the life or inherent value-property of the life of human beings.[10] It is the sublime value of human life that does not depend on like or dislike or any subjectivity, but it exists universally in all human beings as long as a human being is a human being. This is what we mean by human dignity.

2.2 Brief History of Its Usage

To arrive at the modern meaning, the concept of the word dignity underwent an evolution of meaning. Cicero, (106 - 43 B.C.) a Roman statesman, orator, and writer, coined the term dignity of human beings and gave a special meaning that was different from the common Greek virtues.[11] According to Cicero, the dignity of a human being lies in the act that conforms to the duty (obligation).[12] In ancient Rome, the word *dignitas* meant the things that were obligations for a dignitary in relation with others in propriety of conduct, manners, or appearance. A dignitary had to respect his rank and maintain his appearances. As the recompense for his deeds, he had the right to a particular respect.[13] For many centuries, the word dignity was used only in this meaning in which, human beings are

not equal but certain human beings have higher dignity than the others.

The revolution of human dignity was done by Giovanni Pico della Mirandolla[14] (1463 – 1494). He was one of the most brilliant thinkers of the great Renaissance families. In his famous book "Oration on the Dignity of man", Pico said that a human being was the most fortunate of living things and deserving of all admiration which surpasses even all the astral and very intelligent beings which dwell beyond the confines of the world.[15] This highest dignity was shown in the creation of human beings. When the Creator created the universe, he created all wonderful things in the world and gave some of the creatures an intelligent and immortal soul but he did not find the creature which might be moved with love at its beauty and smitten with awe at its grandeur. The Creator wanted to create such a being and He bethought himself to bring forth man and gave the man everything He had created.[16] Unlike the other creatures which were defined and restricted within laws, the Creator gave the human being free will to shape his own being and fashion his own life in the form that he would prefer. This freedom was ultimately guided by theoretical knowledge without which that freedom would be worthless. The important point of freedom according to Mirandola was that man himself could choose what he willed to be.[17]

Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) gave a different meaning to the word dignity. The dignity of human beings was related to power and dominion. According to Hobbes, dignity is the public value that the state gives to a person. So, according to Hobbes' opinion, those who did not have the power lacked appreciation and dignity. This opinion has to be understood in the Hobbes' framework of his famous philosophy of the natural state of people which is a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. In this chaotic situation, one person will become the wolf for the others (*homo homini lupus*) so that the survival of the person lies in the power and dominion of that person over the others. In such a natural state of people, those powers of the person have to be taken away and given to the state to guarantee the peace. In turn, the state gives it back to some people to govern the people. In Hobbes point of view, this is the dignity of the people.[18]

Many modern thinkers formulated the dignity of human life in the following elements: reason, freedom, and autonomy.[19] Unlike in ancient times when the dignity was applied to a limited number of persons or a particular people (dignitary people), the modern understanding of the dignity of human beings is applied to all human beings. This formulation is based on the thoughts of the following philosophers:

Some philosophers such as Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626), René Descartes (1596 – 1650), Blaise Pascal (1623 – 1662), and John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) stressed the ability to think and consciousness as the basis for human dignity. They affirmed that the reason (mind) is the most characteristic feature of human race which separates human beings from others creatures. In this case, the reason was no longer connected closely to the possession of knowledge of the goal and purpose of human existence but it was connected to the capacity to understand, decode, and dominate the nature.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) put a different accent on human dignity. His famous words are that a human being has "the faculty of improvement".[20] With these words, he wanted to explain that this is the faculty which distinguished human beings from animal. Unlike other living creatures which have a fixed (certain) way of life, nature (and God) does not provide a human being a fixed way of life that has to be followed. In front of human beings, there are many choices that can be chosen freely. The free choices that a human being makes have the capacity to change, to improve, and to search for a new way of life. In this way, human beings experience an unending progress toward perfection.

In his many famous books[21], Peter Singer (with his closed friend Helga Kushe) used the dignity of human being in a different direction. Singer minimized the difference between animal and humans and claimed that higher type of animals with sentience were worthy of more respect than humans with deficient brains or other handicaps. His opinions were based of the notion on what makes a being merit respect. For Singer, the membership in the species human being (*homo sapiens*) is not relevant to the wrongness of killing human beings but rather rationality, autonomy, and self consciousness that make a different. Since the infants and the disabled lack of these characteristics so that killing them can not be equated with killing normal human being or any other self-conscious beings.[22] His extreme opinion made him (and Helga Kushe) under intense informal ban in some

countries like Germany and Austria. Many angry people protested Helga Kushe's (who is closely associated with Peter singer) participation on the conference on human dignity and sanctity of life which was held in Bielefeld, Germany, on October 1 – 3, 1992. The protest was so strong and violent that made some physical injuries of the participants that lead to the cancellation of the meeting.[23]

2.3 Immanuel Kant on Human Dignity

The highest-minded attempt to explore the universality of human dignity was made by Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804).[24] This approach was new because before Kant, dignity was not applied to all human beings.[25] Kant made extensive discourses about human dignity whose central doctrine is the respect of a human being as a person who is the subject of morally practical reason.[26] The human being is exalted neither by nature nor by God but by autonomy, or subjection to self-made law, as announced and certified by conscience. So all persons are deserving of respect not because of their achievements that they had made (like in the Middle ages), but because of a universally shared participation in morality and the ability to live under the moral law.[27] Kant insisted that the dignity of a human person is not an external or additional element in human life but it is the absolute inner worth of a human being because a human being is regarded as a person and is exalted above any price.[28] Kant made a distinction between external value and intrinsic value. The external value is the worth of something in relation to something else. It is roughly the same as price or value in exchange. All things have value only in the relation to the other. A human being, on the contrary, has value in himself (intrinsic value) and an end in himself. All living beings have price but only human beings have dignity.[29] That is the reason why the one who possesses dignity (human being) *"is not to be valued merely as a means to the ends of others or even to his own ends, but as an end in himself."*[30]

Like other philosophers, Kant agreed that a human being is a rational being who exists as an end in himself[31]. As a rational being, a human being has the ability to examine the various beliefs, goals, intentions, acts, etc. That a human being holds and to see whether it is worth holding or to change them. In order to exercise this ability, a human being has to have standards by which to evaluate them. What Kant meant about rationality, went beyond mere intelligence. Intelligence is the ability to produce beliefs and actions that are appropriate with circumstances. In this case, animals have these capacities because if animals are hungry, they have the capacity to produce the acts that move them to look for something to eat. But a human being as a rational being, goes further than this. A human being has the ability to evaluate, to compare, to re-examine his beliefs and acts so that he can be accepted or rejected in order to be suitable to the new considerations. This capacity even goes further than that because a human being as a rational being has the capacity to evaluate and re-examine the basis itself so that it can be changed or re-accepted according to the new considerations.[32] For Kant, rationality is a fundamental element of human dignity because without rationality, a being is unable to be an end in itself, cannot be conscious of its existence, and can not self-reflect.

Regarding freedom, Kant held that freedom is the independence from being constrained by another's choice and it is the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity.[33] For Kant, freedom is the ground or reason without which there would not be a moral law, while the awareness of moral law (conscience) is the ground or reason to recognize that a human being is free.[34] So "by default" a human being is a free being who can use his rationality to refuse or to accept the incoming impulses. Only the acts which are done with free will can be classified as the moral acts. Precisely this is one element of the dignity of human beings because only human beings are moral agents. It is human freedom which indicates and guarantees the prominent and elevated status of human beings. This freedom ought to be used in the best way possible by following the moral law.

Kant discussed extensively human autonomy in relation to the autonomy of the will. The autonomy of the will is the property of the will which is not solely subject to the law, but subject in such a way that it must be regarded as legislating to itself.[35] According to Kant, autonomy of the will is the property of the will itself so that it becomes the law for itself[36] and the unique (sole) and supreme principle of morality.[37] Only by virtue of autonomy can the practical necessity – that characterizes the moral law's categorical command – be reconciled with freedom to obey to which the moral law also immediately testifies.

The principle of autonomy is to make the choice whose maxims conform to the universal law.[38] Certainly, in order to choose correctly, one needs rationality and freedom without which one can not act autonomously. Kant said that autonomy is the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature.[39]

Briefly, Kant asserted that the elements of rationality, freedom and autonomy of human beings are closely interrelated to each other and that together they all together form the dignity of human beings. All of them are regarded as element of the basic human dignity that cannot be taken away from human beings because they exist intrinsically in human beings as long as human beings are human beings.

2.4 Dignity of Human Life in the Secular Context

There were many changes in social structures in the modern age: uniformity of values and hierarchical social structures had been replaced by a functional and complex society which nurtured great possibilities for the role of individuals and groups. The traditional concept of honor in which some people were honored based on their "blue blood" or position in the society, or master – slave relationship, was now being replaced by the concept of the dignity of human beings which is attributable to all human beings because all human beings have equal intrinsic values. Strictly speaking, the dignity of human life is closely related to the intrinsic value of a human being. No wonder that the growing awareness of the value of human life in the last centuries help society to make even greater progress in the awareness of human dignity.

In the last century, the notion of human dignity has played an important role in many international and national declarations, especially after the Second World War. There are some international institutions which have declared that human beings have an inherent dignity which become the basis of freedom, justice and peace. See for example: The Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was approved by the General Meeting of the United Nations on 10th December 1948; The United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which was approved in 1966; The European Convention on Human Rights which was adopted by the Council of Europe on 1950.[40]

In the post war constitutions of some countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and others, the theme of human dignity was invoked firstly to limit the intervention of the state toward individuals and to guarantee that human beings would be treated as subject and not objects so that the violation of human dignity would never be repeated in the future.[41] The practices of slavery in the last century and the horrors of the concentration camps during the Second World War were direct violations of human dignity. In these cases, the main goal of guaranteeing human dignity was not the protection of human beings as a whole - which carries the implication that individuals can be sacrificed for the sake of the whole – but on the contrary, its aim is to prevent individuals from being sacrificed for the sake of the whole.[42]

In this frame of reference, it is understandable that since the 19th century, the dignity of human beings became a political tool for the European workers to ameliorate their social conditions. They strove for better salaries and for better working conditions in the name of the dignity of human beings which was manifested as the struggle for justice and the rights of the workers. In this way, the workers avoided being used as mere tools for production.

In these modern times of a pluralistic society in which there are so many value systems, religions and moral criteria, there is a growing awareness that human dignity could be the framework or platform on which could be built the common ground of ethical and juridical views because human dignity as a concept belongs to a pre-ethical or pre juridical or pre-political realm. The dignity of a human being – as we have seen before – is the value of the values from which emanates some others human values.[43]

3. THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF HUMAN DIGNITY

3.1. The Theological Bases of Human Dignity

Although secular contexts use human dignity extensively, but its philosophical bases is still debatable. Most of the experts use theological bases which is the creation of human being as the image of God. It is true that in the secular context, the concept of human dignity is one of the fundamental philosophical innovations of the Renaissance, but it was not a completely new idea. It had roots in ancient philosophy and

Christian theology. It was reformulated with the new vision of human self-understanding which was to become fundamental to the modern age.[44]

The ancient philosophy which contributed significantly to the understanding of human dignity was Stoic philosophy.[45] According to this philosophy, the whole cosmos is penetrated by the *logos* which is the reason and the rationality of God. Everything is interconnected with all the rest and it is guided and interpreted by the *logos*. Because of this interconnectivity, wise men have to live in accordance with nature *(physis)*.[46] According to Stoic philosophy, human dignity and the laws of nature have the same source and must be respected in the same way. We must respect human dignity because each one of us is penetrated by the same *logos* and is interconnected with the same logos. So this Stoic philosophy was the first philosophical school in antiquity which favored a general notion of humanity and humanism. Even Seneca (circa 4 B.C. - A.D. 65), a roman Stoic philosopher and dramatist, affirmed that *homo est sacra res homini,* which led to demand the abolition of slavery.[47]

The Renaissance changes were logical developments of the new idea about human self-understanding which is fundamental for the modern age. The new idea about human self-understanding sprang up because of a new understanding of earthly life. For centuries – especially in the mediaeval ideology – the earth and earthly life were only a trial run for eternal life. Earth was seen as a miserable place in preparation for the hope of entering joyful place, namely heaven. So the value of human earthly life was only a transitional value. The Renaissance rebelled at this idea and stressed that a human being has an important value in this earthly life. During the Renaissance period, they emphasized that human earthly life had a dignity that could not be abolished and mistreated. Human life on earth had a value independent of the value which is derived from a God-human relationship. The concept of dignity was designed to give a new self-awareness and self-confidence to human beings in order to improve the condition of the world and to assume the control of human fate.[48]

3.2. Biblical Basis

Although the bioethical discussion on human dignity is relatively new, the Church's teaching on human dignity is not a new one. It is rooted deeply in biblical passages, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Among the many teachings on human dignity available in the world, the Christian teaching is the loftiest. We will see that the Christian teaching is revolutionary because there is no such teaching in the time of Jesus and even after Jesus.

The environment where Jesus grew up was Hellenistic and Judaic. Aristotle said, *"man is not the best thing in the world"*[49] because the heavenly body is more perfect. Judaism – as the predecessor of Christianity – has the same roots with Christian teaching on human dignity. For Judaism, the human being is exalted above any other creatures because the human being is the peak of creation of the universe and, above all, he was created in the image and likeness of God. There are three passages of the Hebrew Bible that explain this status: *"Then God said, Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them."*[50] The second passage draws a parallel between God's creation and Adam's procreation, *"When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth."*[51] The third passage is the covenant between God and Noah after the flood. *"Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind."*[52]

Without negating the Jewish teaching on human dignity, the Christian teaching on human dignity goes further. The human being is not only the peak of creation and the image and likeness of God but also is exalted with the incarnation and redemption of Christ. Christ who is the Son of God and the perfect image of God[53] lowered his divine nature and took the form of a human body[54] but in so doing raised human nature by offering the hope of salvation to human beings. By the merit of Christ's redemption the human being becomes the God's adopted son.[55] Human beings are the son of God.

This high level of teaching on human dignity was a revolutionary because such a doctrine had never been taught before.[56] Christ reveals that the dignity of human being is connected not only to the origin of human life which is from God and is created in the image and likeness of God but also its destiny of fellowship with God in knowledge and love of him (redemption).

3.3. Human Dignity in Modern Magisterium's Teachings

One of the prominent modern teachings of the Church regarding human dignity is the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life) which is also called the Gospel of the dignity of the person. *"The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel."*[57] The core of the Gospel itself is eternal life[58] which was expressed right in the first sentence of this encyclical, *"The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message."*[59] In other words, since the gospel of life and the Gospel of the dignity of the person are an indivisible Gospel, and the core of Jesus' message is the Gospel of life, so the core of Jesus' message is also the Gospel of the dignity of the human person.

The Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* summarized the Catholic teaching on the dignity of the human being by saying: *"Man has been given a sublime dignity, based on the intimate bond which unites him to his Creator: in man there shines forth a reflection of God himself."*[60]

The encyclical goes further and says, *"The dignity of this life is linked not only to its beginning, to the fact that it comes from God, but also to its final end, to its destiny of fellowship with God in knowledge and love of him."*[61]

The above statements are the summary of the Catholic teaching on the dignity of the human person. Its roots are found right in the creation of the world in the book of Genesis. According to the book of Genesis, the whole universe was created step by step and arrived at its culmination in the creation of human beings. The culmination of the creation of human beings is demonstrated by a special phrase in the words of God *'let us make'* which do not exist in the other acts of God in creation. According to Claus Westermann – one of the leading exegetes from Heidelberg – the phrase *'let us make'* indicate a solemn act and a deliberate decision of God.[62] God said, *"Let us make human kind in our image, according to our likeness*[63]*; ... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."*[64] After the creation of human beings *"God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."*[65]

Evangelium Vitae emphasized that the deliberate decision of God to create human beings is a clear sign that human beings are different from the rest of the creatures.[66] These differences are in some intrinsic qualities (dignity) of human beings. First of all, the life of human beings comes from God and is created by God in the image and likeness of God and surpasses above all other creatures. The life of a human being *"is the manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his Glory."*[67] *Evangelium Vitae* summarized these facts by saying, *"Life is always a good."*[68]

It is important to note that the human status as being made in the image and likeness of God was not only when the human being was created but also for the rest of his life. The whole of the life of a human being bears permanently the internal imprint of this image and likeness. This image and likeness arrives at its fullness in Jesus because only Jesus is the true image of the invisible God.[69] *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."*[70] The incarnation of Jesus – who is the Word become flesh (John 1, 14) – is the reaffirmation of the dignity of human life. Life in the world received a new perspective and meaning because God manifested himself in the form of flesh. He experienced the life of a human being with all of its joys and its hopes, grief and anxiety so that the glory of God would be manifested in the life of a human being.[71]

With the phrase the image and likeness. of God, the book of Genesis wants to underline that a human being has an intimate bond which unites him to his Creator so that in a human being there shines forth a reflection of God himself.[72] The human being also has the intrinsic quality to make relationship with God and God can dialog (to speak to and listen to) with him, *"For Sacred Scripture teaches that man was created "to the image of God," is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and was appointed by Him as master of all earthly creatures that he might subdue them and use them to God's glory."*[73] Since his creation, human being entered immediately to the relation with God. God gives him the dignity of dialogue partner with God and makes him a human person.[74] It means that the particularity of human being as the image of God has to be found in this special relationship to God.

The faculties for making relationship with God are *"those spiritual faculties which are dis-*

tinctively human such as reason, discernment between good and evil, and free will."[75] A human being has reason to understand good and evil in order to do good actions and take personal responsibility for his actions. The Second Vatican Council's declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, underlined this element of human dignity "*It is in accordance with their dignity as persons—that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility.*"[76]

The faculty that a person has to make relationship with God is an indispensable aspect of human life which enable him to arrive at its the final destiny of his life because human life is destined for the loving union with God and not the destruction or the evil[77]. Christ's redemption of the world carried out this loving union with God and made it possible that a human person could have a true union with God. With Christ's redemption, the human being is elevated even higher to the status of a redeemed person which underlines the incomparable value of the human being. "*This saving event reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who 'so loved the world that he gave his only Son' (Jn 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person.*"[78]

The common final destination of human beings is the basis for the equal dignity of human beings.[79] The equal dignity of human life leaves no room for any kind of human exploitation in any of the stages of life whether a human being is at the beginning of his life or at the end of his life.[80] Human life must be absolutely respected and protected from the moment of conception until its natural end because the life which parents transmit to their children has its origins in God and is part of God's plan. Therefore, there is no single moment of this marvelous process of the unfolding of life which can be separated from the wise and loving work of the Creator, and left prey to human caprice.[81]

The dignity of human being is inherent (intrinsic) to the nature of human beings. It is not added by any institution or people. It has nothing to do with the person's achievements or works. It is united inseparably with human existence. So as long as a human being is a human being, he has this incomparable dignity. In his previous encyclicals *Centesimus Annus*, in which Pope John Paul II discussed human being as workers, he said, "*God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man (cf. Gen 1:26), conferring upon*

him an incomparable dignity, as the encyclical frequently insists. In effect, beyond the rights which man acquires by his own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work he performs, but which flow from his essential dignity as a person."[82]

Since the dignity of a human being is an intrinsic dignity which last as long as the life of the human being, therefore respect for the dignity of the human being applies during the life time of the human being. It means that the exploitation of human being such as slavery and manipulation of life is against human dignity. "*Freedom from slavery meant the gift of an identity, the recognition of an indestructible dignity and the beginning of a new history in which the discovery of God and discovery of self go hand in hand.*"[83]

3.4. Crimes Against Human Dignity

In the long history of human beings, there is always violation against human dignity. In the modern world, this violation is even more intense. The II Vatican council warned us, "*Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator.*"[84] (GS 27).

Unfortunately, the crimes against human dignity such as killing and suicide occur often and everywhere. These crimes are against human dignity which unites all people in one great family because of the equality of dignity among people. "*Like the first fratricide, every murder is a violation of the 'spiritual' kinship uniting mankind in one great family, in which all share the same fundamental good: equal personal dignity.*"[85] But it is interesting to note that those criminals (the murderers) do not lose their dignity. "*Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this.*"[86] Although God punishes them, He is always merciful to them by offering them pardon and reconciliation so that there is no reason to take the life of the criminals (death penalty). The Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2267 states, "*Today, in fact,*

as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity "are very rare, if not practically non-existent."

There are also unnoticed cases of crime against human dignity in our technological world. Our technological world is characterized by efficiency, productivity (utilities) and convenience. Technological products are measured by those criteria so that the suitably of products depends on them. As long as those criteria are applied to a product, there is no serious ethical problem. Unfortunately, those criteria are applied not only to a product but also to human being so that a human being is worth to live or not, depends on their quality of life. In other words, those who have poor quality of life are regarded less valuable. Certainly, it reduces human value and contrary to the dignity of human beings. A poor quality of life, people may ask seriously about the meaning of their life because they don't see the purpose of such life. Some people even say: they are condemned to live! In some cases, old people are treated inhuman because of lack productivity.

In such situation, stressed that advanced age with the diminishment of human abilities does not diminish human dignity. Old age is characterized by dignity and is meant to be surrounded with reverence[87] so that there is no reason for an elderly person to give up his life until the day of God's call to his loving eternity. *"Man is not the master of life, nor is he the master of death. In life and in death, he has to entrust himself completely to the 'good pleasure of the Most High,' to his loving plan."*[88]

Another important element of human dignity is the duty toward the universe. God gives human beings the task of dominating the universe. According to Claus Westermann, the word "dominion" in Genesis 1, 28 has no meaning of exploitation at all but – according to the ancient understanding - it was used to indicate the dominion of the king in which the king took responsibility personally for the prosperity and welfare of his people. So the king's dominion has to serve for the common good and the well being of those over whom the king has dominion. So in this case, when human beings exercise dominion over the universe – which is represented by fish, birds, and the living things that move upon the earth – it means that they take responsibility personally for the well-being of the universe[89]. Human beings have the obligation to preserve universe (environment).

4. CONCLUSION

Human dignity which has firm based in the theological (biblical) perspectives on the fact that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God and their elevation as the son of God, has important role in modern life. Human dignity is the sources of many modern important themes such as human rights, equality among human beings, nobility of being humans etc. It needs further reflection on its philosophical bases. This philosophical base is very important because human dignity is a universal human value which surpasses any religions, races, nations etc.

If the base of human dignity is only theological, we will have difficulties in discussion with the atheist or unbelievers. They may say that the dignity of human life is not relevant and not universal issue since it is only for the believers. In fact, human dignity is valid for all human beings. It is our further task to reflect on it. Finding the common ground on which we can sit together for the better world and better human value is essential, otherwise human beings will be exploited and degraded into lower level. Most of the degradations are in the form of instrumentalisation of human being in which human beings is regarded merely as a tool to achieve something. Nobody will be available to be treated as an instrument.

Many modern visions are conflicting each others. In one hand, our awareness of human value and human dignity is rocketing highly but in another hand, the crimes against human dignity also very high. We need to sit together to resolve this conflict. We believe that only if we have deep conviction on human dignity, disseminate it and practice it, we will resolve this conflict in dignified way.

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ENDNOTES

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2 Dieter Birnbacher, "Ambiguities in the concept of Menschenwürde" and Thomas Petermann, "Human dignity and Genetic Tests", in Kurt Bayertz (ed.), *Sanctity of Life and Human Dignity*, 107 – 108. 124.

3 Leon R. Kass (chairman), *Human cloning and human dignity: The Report of the President's council on Bioethics*, 15; Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Etica della Vita: Un Compendio Teologico*, 182.

4 Linda Hogan and John D'Arcy May, "Costruire l'Umano: La Dignità nel Dialogo Interreligioso" in *Concilium, Rivista Internazionale di Teologia*, XXXIX, 2 (2003) 299 – 300; Enrique Dussel, "Dignità: Negazione e Riconoscimento in un Contesto Concreto di Liberazione", in *Concilium, Rivista Internazionale di Teologia*, XXXIX, 2 (2003) 257 – 258; Kurt Bayerts, "Introduction", in in Kurt Bayertz (ed.), *Sanctity of Life and Human Dignity*, xix.

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7 *The American Heritage Dictionary* (3rd Edition), (CD ROM edition)

8 *The Random House Webster's Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus*, College Edition, (CD ROM Edition)

9 Tim Balai Bahasa Yogyakarta, *Kamus Bahasa Jawa*, 161.

10 J. Seifert, "The right to Life and the Fourfold root of human dignity", in Pontificia Academia Pro Vita, *The Nature and the Dignity of the Human Person as the Foundation of the Right to Life: The Challenger of the Contemporary Cultural Context*, 194, 197.

11 Oskar Negt, "L'irripetibile: trasformazioni nel concetto culturale di dignità", in *Concilium, Rivista Internazionale di Teologia*, XXXIX, 2 (2003) 230

12 Oskar Negt, "L'irripetibile: trasformazioni nel concetto culturale di dignità", 233.

13 Patrick Verspieren, "La Dignità nei Dibattiti Politici e Bioetica" in *Concilium Rivista Internazionale di Teologia*, 2(2003) 224

14 Pico was a son of the princely house of Mirandola. He studied at Bologna and wondered through the Italian and French universities. He was immensely erudite and proficient in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Arabic. He synthesized and reconciled Hebrew, classical, and Christian tradition. When he was only 24 years old (in 1486) he challenged the doctors of the schools in Rome to dispute with him on nine hundred grave questions. The disputation did not take place because it was suspended by Pope Innocent VIII and the pope appointed a commission to examine the theses and some of the theses were condemned. Among his nine hundred theses which was widely read nowadays is the brief discourse, "The Dignity of Man" which was regarded as the manifesto of humanism. Actually, Pico discussed the human dignity only in the first part of his discourse. See Russell Kirk, "Introduction" in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, vii – xiii.

15 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 4.

16 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 5 – 7.

17 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 7 – 8.

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19 Kurt Bayertz, "Human Dignity: Philosophical Origin and Scientific Erosion of an Idea" in Kurt Bayertz (ed.), *Sanctity of Life and Human Dignity*, 74 – 77.

20 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse of Equality*, as cited by Kurtz Bayertz, "Human Dignity: Philosophical Origin and Scientific Erosion of an Idea", 74.

21 Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation,*; Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*; Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics*; Peter Singer (ed.), *Applied Ethics*.

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26 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 186.

27 Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della Metafisica dei Costumi*, 173, 161.

28 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 186; Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 52; Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della Metafisica dei Costumi*, 173, 159.

29 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 52; Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della Metafisica dei Costumi*, 173, 157 – 159; Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 186.

30 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 186.

31 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 46.

32 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 44 – 45.

33 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 30.

34 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 64.

35 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 49; Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della Metafisica dei Costumi*, 171.

36 Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della Metafisica dei Costumi*, 171; Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 49.

37 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 58; Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della Metafisica dei Costumi*, 173.

38 Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della Metafisica dei Costumi*, 171.

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62 Claus Westermann, *Genesi: Commentario*, 25.

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64 Genesis 1, 26 – 27.

65 Genesis 1, 28

66 *Evangelium Vitae* no. 34

67 *Evangelium Vitae* no. 34

68 *Evangelium Vitae* no. 34

69 Dionigi Tettamanzi, *Nuova Bioetica Cristiana*, 39.

70 Colossians 1.15

71 Regis Duffy and Angelus Gambatese, *Made in God's Immage: The Catholic Vision of Human Dignity* 13 – 14.

72 cf. *Evangelium Vitae* no. 34

73 Gaudium et Spes no. 12

74 Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Natural Law & Human Dignity: Universal Ethics in an Historical World*, 229.

75 *Evangelium Vitae* no. 34

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76 *Dignitatis Humanae* no. *2*

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