The Dignity of Peace and the Peace of Dignity

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Peace and dignity are two closely related concepts. Dignity is a fundamental human right, and peace is essential for realizing human dignity. Both concepts are deeply intertwined and interdependent. The dignity of peace and the peace of dignity are two sides of the same coin. The quest for dignity is collective and formidable. It is a galvanizing force behind all human interaction between families, communities, the business world, and relationships at the local and international levels. When dignity is violated, the response will likely involve violence, vengeance, hatred, and aggression. But when people treat one another with dignity, they become more connected and can create more meaningful relationships. Most people do not understand the concept of dignity and why its violation can harm societies' peaceful co-existence and economic development. By respecting and embracing the dignity of persons as a way of life, we open the way to greater peace within ourselves and a safer and more humane world for all. This essay will explore the concept of the dignity of peace and the peace of dignity, the importance of each concept, their interrelation, and how they are promoted and protected in different contexts.

KEYWORDS:
Dignity, Peace, The dignity of peace, and the peace of dignity.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Human relationships are rapidly changing today. During the past millennia, in most parts of the world, it was commonly acknowledged that some people were born high and others were born low. The relentless ranking of human worthiness characterizes relationships. Systems of domination and submission were the norm. This is called the *dominator model* of society.[1] Global information sharing and the emergence of human rights ideals bring about radical change today. The *dominator model* loses its normative authority, and it also loses its feasibility in practice. Applying domination and exploitation in an interdependent world of finite resources proves counterproductive, at least in the long run, even for the dominators themselves. Humankind is beginning to see the value of respecting all human beings as equal in worthiness rather than as unequal. Our natural environments are also included. All around the world, people attempt to move away from domination toward *non-domination*[2] and partnership[3] among ourselves and with nature.

The term "dignity of peace" refers to the inherent worth and value of human beings that is preserved and enhanced by the absence of conflict, violence, and war. In contrast, the "peace of dignity" emphasizes the role of peace in promoting human dignity, respect, and equality. Both concepts are closely interrelated, as peace and dignity are mutually reinforcing, and the absence of one can undermine the other. Many international organizations, governments, and religious and philosophical traditions recognize the importance of peace and human dignity. The United Nations, for example, has identified the promotion of peace and the protection of human rights as two of its core objectives. Similarly, many religions and ethical systems emphasize the inherent value and dignity of human life and call for the pursuit of peace to protect and enhance this value.

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[1] Riane T. Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade: our History, our Future*, (Cambridge, MA: Harper and Row, 1988), XVII.

[2] Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 11.

[3] Riane T. Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade: our History, our Future*, XVII.

1.1. What is dignity?

Many have a vague idea of dignity: self-worth, inherent value, spiritual or religious, can also be imprecise; I have struggled to find a unified and far-reaching definition. Dignity appears to be a 'one-size-fits-all' concept, used with markedly different connotations in many academic and applied fields. Human dignity can be pinned down to Stoic thought as a philosophical idea, particularly its development by Christian scholar Thomas Aquinas' medieval theory of natural law.[4] Nonetheless, despite the early historical, anthropological, and religious roots of the notion of human dignity, its antiquity as one of the universal values upon which human rights are based is somewhat new.

The foundations of dignity in the once justifiable social systems of aristocracy contrast with today's definition[5]. The primitive notion of dignity came from a classified/hierarchical social structure: 'luminaries,' persons who enjoyed dignity and had higher socioeconomic status than those who did not possess 'dignity.' With dignity from grade emanated benefits: some physical, in the form of land ownership or metaphysical, with a legacy of seriousness. This theoretical background of dignity influenced how the term was applied in philosophy and other social sciences for many years. Immanuel Kant's ideas changed the relationship between dignity and ethical behaviour. It is possible that often, with the right idea and platform, words completely change their meaning within society.

Kant's categorical imperative could be the basis for his idea about human dignity. In his perspective, ethics belongs to the realm of the moral law, under which our will is governed by commands incompatible with reason[6], and such commands are called imperatives, which are either hypothetical or categorical. The Hypothetical imperative is concerned with identifying the actions that are worthy as the means to achieve an end. In contrast, a categorical imperative means that all immoral actions are irrational because they violate them. It is inherently necessary to have a standard of rationality that embodies what is objectively indispensable in a will that makes itself harmonious with reason[7].

In a famous proposition, Kant articulated this categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[8] Another formulation of the categorical imperative presented by Kant is: "act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your person or the person of any other, never simply as a means but constantly at the same time as an end in itself."[9] In formulating the 2nd categorical imperative, Kant had to first distinguish between means and ends. He writes:

> The will is thought of as a faculty of determining itself to action *in accord with the representation of certain laws*. And such a faculty can be there only in rational beings. Now, that which serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is the *end*, and this, if it is given through mere reason, must be equally valid for all rational beings. By contrast, what contains merely the grounds of the possibility of the action whose effect is the end is called *means*[10].

The will that every rational being has allows us to set ends for ourselves. If I were to treat another person as merely means – following the demand for universalization – it would create a contradiction, for such an action would require that the will – the defining faculty of rational creatures – only has instrumental value. This is untrue, for it has categorical (universal) value; it is necessary to set any end. As such, to treat another person as a means, I would suspend my own will with which I set ends.[11]

Following this line of elucidation, Kant claims that human beings as autonomous beings are ends in themselves that possess dignity and value. This moral standing to be an end in itself is the ground of the categorical imperative.[12]

In Kant's opinion, dignity is not a tenuous status enjoyed by the higher class of society. Instead, it is the offshoot of a person's God-given ability to create an ethical code of behaviour and a person's choice to live by the code they created.[13] Dignity is found in all persons because dignity reflects a skill we share: our capacity to both make moral judgments and adhere to the rules we make. This example

[4] Man Yee Karen Lee, "Universal Human Dignity: Some Reflections in the Asian Context," *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, (2008) vol. 3, n.1, 1-33.

[5] John Kleinig and Nicholas G. Evans, "Human flourishing, human dignity, and human rights". *Law and Philosophy*, 32(5), 2013, 539-564.

[6] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Mary Gregor ed & trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-5.

[7] Kant, 16.

[8] Kant, 15.

[9] Kant, 38.

[10] Kant, 45.

[11] Kant, 55-56.

[12] Dieter Schönecker & Elke Elisabath Schmidt, "Kant's Ground-Thesis. On Dignity and Value in the Groundwork", *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 2018, vol. 52, 81–95.

[13] Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics*, 52. Besides, Kant places a stoically inspired notion of dignity at the heart of his ethics, stressing rationality, self-regulation, universality, equality, and the idea that humans must never be treated "as mere means".

shows how dignity experienced quite a stark transformation by going from an attribute only a select few possessed to an inherent potential all persons have.

1.2. Image of God as the basis of Human Dignity

When God created human being on the sixth day of creation, we are informed in the account of creation that she was created in His image and according to His likeness (Gen 1:27). Reading the entire account of creation, one will observe that all things were created through the creative word of God. Human beings were created differently, not only by word but also through the direct intervention of God, who "formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (Gen 2:7).[14]

This differentiation expresses the uniqueness of human beings created by God amid the entire creation. Theological reflection on the concept of *imago Dei* animated the thinking of theologians throughout history. For Karl Barth, humans are "the creature whose relation with God is revealed to us in the Word of God…is the central object of the theological doctrine of creation."[15]

Moreover, theologians were clear in their affirmation that the entire creation has as its reason not God's necessity but God's love, in which human beings, created in the image of God, were designed to participate.[16] Or in the words of Jurgen Moltmann: 'Creation is not a demonstration of his boundless power; it is the communication of his love, which knows neither premises nor preconditions…"[17]

The dignity of human beings is rooted in this uniqueness, given by the divine design of creation. Being in the image of God is what differentiates human beings from all the creation. Jurgen Moltmann says: 'As God's work, creation is not essentially similar to the Creator; it is the expression of his will. But as image, men and women correspond to the Creator in their very essence, because in these created beings God corresponds to himself."[18]

In describing the difference between image and likeness, Stăniloae explains it in the context of the Fall. The image cannot disappear for him, but he is weakened by the fall. He describes the image of God in human beings as being "the tendency towards God," and the likeness as the entire journey

of the development of the image, through human will and the grace of God."[19]

Therefore, the Fall was not destroying the image; it stopped the process of becoming according to God's likeness. The fact gives the dignity of human beings, as Stăniloae argues that the image of God in human beings is that "ontological structure" that tends towards communion with the supreme communion of the divine Persons.[20]

This ontological structure, affected by the Fall, is restored in its full capacity through the incarnation of the Word of God, who, through His salvific ministry, makes possible the restart of the process of the likeness of God for human beings, who becomes in Christ the channel for the restoration of the entire creation through the work of the Spirit.[21] Or, in the words of Moltmann:

> In his creative activity, God employs his inner, divine life. Consequently, he also communicates his love to the creatures of that love. This gives human beings a share, not merely in the productivity of his will, but also in his ‚nature' (II Peter 1.4). The beings who are created to be his image are also ‚of his race'; they are ‚his offspring' (Acts 17.28f.). This suggests a fellowship with God, which really does go beyond mere creatureliness, even if the expression ‚emanation of the divine Being' is an inappropriate way of describing it. To be God's creature and his image means being more than merely a work of his hands. It means being actually, rooted' in the creative ground of the divine life. This becomes especially clear if we understand creation pneumatologically, in the light of the Creator Spirit who dwells in his creation.[22]

The foundation of all the social teachings of the Church is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the *image and likeness of God*. "All human beings," says the Church, "in as much as they are created in the image of God, have a person's dignity." The catechism says, "The right to the exercise of freedom belongs to everyone because it is

[14] Joseph Ratzinger, Despre creație și cădere: La început Dumnezeu a creat. Consecințele credinței în creație. Omilii (About Creation and Fall: In the Beginning God Created. The Consequences of Faith in Creation. Homilies), ârgu-Lăpuș: Galaxia Guntenberg, 2020, 58.

[15] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3: 2, Hendrickson Publishers, 2010, 3

[16] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică* (Dogmatic Teology), vol. 1, București, IBM-BOR, 1996, 226- 233.

[17] Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, SCM Press Ltd, 1985, 76.

[18] Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation…*, 77.

[19] Dumitru Stăniloae,*Teologie Dogmatică…*,1, 272-273.

[20] Dumitru Stăniloae, Teologie Dogmatică...,1, 280.

[21] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică*...,1, 279, 286.

[22] Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation…*, 85.

inseparable from his or her dignity as a human person."[23] The Church's view of human dignity is like Kant's insofar as it springs from human agency and free will,[24] with the further understanding that free will springs from human creation in the image of God.[25]

1.3. What is Peace?

If we are to comprehend the idea of peace, it becomes indispensable for us to know its true meaning. Thus, we should know its true meaning before learning about peace in its various aspects. The phrase 'peace' is used in a wide range. Peace seems to have diverse meanings that are different by the context of usage. 'Peace' is derived from the original Latin word *pax*, which means a pact, a control, or an agreement to end war or any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations, or two antagonistic groups of people[26].

The Vatican Council II in *Gaudium et spes* aptly gave a descriptive definition of peace: "Peace is not merely an absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor does dictatorship bring it about. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice."[27]

In her Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the United Nations recognizes that peace is not just the absence of war but poverty, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. It asserts that the dignity of every individual must be protected and that this can only be achieved by establishing a peaceful and just society. The UDHR thus emphasizes the importance of human dignity as a fundamental value that must be upheld in all societies, regardless of their cultural, political, or religious affiliations[28].

We can thus define peace as harmony or tranquillity, often achieved without conflict or violence. The idea of peace has existed throughout human history, with many individuals and societies striving to achieve it. There are various types of peace, including negative peace, which is the absence of violence, and positive peace, which encompasses justice, equality, and human rights. Positive peace is often considered the ultimate goal of peacebuilding efforts, as it not only addresses the symptoms of conflict but also seeks to address the root causes.

The Culture of peace has a set of values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behaviour, and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups, and nations. It is an integrated approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts and an alternative to the culture of war and violence based on education for peace, the promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, free flow of information and disarmament.[29]

1.4. The Dignity of Peace

The dignity of peace refers to the inherent value and worth of human beings that is preserved and enhanced by the absence of conflict, violence, and war. This concept is closely related to the idea of human rights, which emphasizes the protection of individual dignity and autonomy. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."[30].

Peace is essential for the realization of human rights, as conflict and violence can undermine the protection of these rights. In situations of war and conflict, people are often subjected to various forms of violence, including physical harm, psychological trauma, and displacement from their homes and communities. This can violate fundamental human rights, such as the right to life, freedom from torture and cruel treatment, and freedom of movement.

The dignity of peace is also closely linked to promoting social justice and equality. The risk of conflict and violence is often higher in societies with widespread poverty, inequality, and discrimination. People marginalized and excluded from society may feel they have little to lose by engaging in violent or criminal behaviour. Therefore, promoting social justice and reducing inequality can be essential to promoting the dignity of peace.

Promoting the dignity of peace requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of conflict and violence. This can include efforts to address poverty and inequality, promote human rights, and support conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. It can also involve the creation of a culture of peace, which emphasizes the value of dialogue, understanding, and cooperation and rejects violence and aggression as a means of resolving disputes.

1.5. The Peace of Dignity

The Peace of Dignity emphasizes the role of peace in promoting human dignity, respect, and equality. This concept recognizes peace is not just the absence of conflict and

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[23] www.vatican.va. Retrieved 22 May 2023.

[24] Mark D. White, "Dignity", In Jan Peil (ed.). *Handbook of Economics and Ethics*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009, 85.

[25] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1730.

[26] Bloomsbury, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, 387

[27] *Gaudium et Spes*, 78.

[28] United Nations. (1948). *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

[29] "Never Again Rwanda" https://neveragainrwanda.org/the-significance-of-human-dignity-in-the-culture-of-peace/ (Accessed 27/11/2023)

[30] United Nations. (1948). *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, art. 1. http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ (Accessed 20/11/2023).

violence. It also involves creating a positive and enabling surrounding where people can flourish and reach their full potential.

Peace of dignity is closely linked to development, which aims to improve people's well-being and quality of life. Development involves economic growth and improvements in education, health, and social welfare. Promoting development can contribute to the peace of dignity by reducing poverty and inequality and creating opportunities for people to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

The peace of dignity is also linked to promoting human rights and protecting vulnerable groups. In situations of conflict and violence, women, children, and other marginalized groups are often at greater risk of harm and abuse. Therefore, promoting peace of dignity requires focusing on the protection and empowerment of these groups and attempts to uphold human rights and the dictates of law more broadly.

The interrelatedness of human dignity and culture of peace is incontestable, yet remains hypothetical due to growing inefficiencies of social, economic, and political structures both at the global and national levels, which significantly continues to indent human dignity. The canons of human dignity- compassion, empathy, justice, solidarity, respect for diversity, dialogue, and understanding- are qualities and rights of life an individual deserves in society. It is a belief that all people hold a special value tied solely to their humanity and has nothing to do with their class, race, gender, religion, abilities, or other factors other than being human.

1.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the dignity of peace and the peace of dignity are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Dignity is the foundation of peace, and peace is necessary to preserve dignity. Upholding persons' dignity will flourish in peace because peace flourishes in harmony with dignity. Dignity is irreplaceable and gives value to life. Understanding dignity's moral dimension requires us to avoid harming and actively assist one another in achieving and maintaining a state of "well-being" for all. Only through harmony can the benefit of the Mores of peace be realized. Human dignity is an expression of the divine spark shining and residing in each of us. They are made brighter or diminished by our actions. Preserving dignity is a path to peace, as it focuses on the origin of discord and advances reconciliation and justice.

Similarly, peace is a path to dignity, providing an encouraging environment for persons and groups to maintain their self-respect and self-worth. Addressing poverty, inequality, discrimination, and injustice is important to promote dignity and peace. Doing so can create a more just, peaceful, and harmonious world. We must remember, "A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the human person's transcendent dignity. The person represents the ultimate end of society. The social order

and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person, not vice versa"[31].

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[31] *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 132

21. Dumitru Stăniloae, Teologie Dogmatică...,1, 279, 286.
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