

DIPTYCH OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND TOLERATION

Dragan M. Mitrovic

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law

Summary: Human dignity and toleration are two extremely important social and legal values. Their existence is evidence of the civilisation and cultural development of human societies. For this reason, they should be carefully fostered in them because it has to do with fragile values, subject to changes and destruction. It seems that barbarism is stronger than civilisation, destruction than creation, primitivism than culture. Perhaps, it is for a simple economic reason: it is easier to yield to the forces of entropy and apply less energy than to apply more energy to maintain law and order. Civilisation and culture are very expensive whereas barbarism is almost free. Despite their relatedness and numerous common points, it has to do with different values though. Human dignity emanates from the human nature itself, while toleration stems from civilisation and culture. The former is the generic human characteristic, and the latter is the acquired social characteristic. When existing together, they supplement harmoniously one another. However, it does not have to do with the relationship of equality, for dignity can exist even in the absence of toleration, but toleration cannot exist without dignity. Despite numerous international and national documents in which human dignity and toleration are emphasised as the first-class values, which indeed they are, almost alongside with the leading justice, not much has been done even up to date to strengthen and develop those values. In fact, one gets the impression that all is done to destroy them, though not by the use of force, but covertly, for instance, by the unjustifiable narrowing of the civil freedoms and rights on account of the undue expansion of the human freedoms and rights. As a result, there is an increasing number of offences committed against human dignity and toleration in the world, while the lifestyle of the citizens worldwide becomes growingly painful. With the history being overabundant with violence and values always peaceful, today it is even more important to keep in mind a famous Voltaire's sentence from his equally renowned "Treatise on Toleration", which sentence suggests that though we don't have to agree with what is said, we have to defend the right that it be said at all costs. All that may ensue from this famous Voltaire's sentence should have an extremely cautious and balanced treatment, so as not to be misused.

Keywords: Natural, social and human dignity, What human dignity is not, What toleration is, Toleration and human rights, What toleration is not.