

“Religious Impact on the Right to Life in empirical Perspective”

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Abstracts

Opening lecture

Human dignity, religious ethics or hedonism? What predicts youth’s attitudes towards the right to life in case of euthanasia and abortion?

Hans-Georg Ziebertz (University of Würzburg)

This paper argues that human life must be protected and any attacks on life must be negated: there exists a right to life and a right to live. But does there also exist a right to terminate life, specifically in the cases of euthanasia and abortion? These two topics inevitably lead to heated discussions, as has been observed in a number of societies. The question this paper asks is: how do young people in Germany evaluate the contradicting arguments surrounding the termination of life (i.e. whether the termination of life should be prohibited or permitted) and what motives determine their attitudes towards these topics? Given that it is a core value, human dignity is taken into consideration, as are respondents’ religious convictions and the value orientation of hedonism. The research that forms the basis of this paper also asks whether young people with different religious background and religiously non-affiliated youth differ in their attitudes concerning the right to life. The empirical analysis was undertaken with German youth (N=1862) as the respondents. The findings show that young Germans legitimize the possibility of terminating life by euthanasia and, to a less extent, by abortion. The less student respondents are religious, the more they agree with these exceptions (i.e. euthanasia and abortion) from the rule that the right to life has to be protected. The value orientation of hedonism is the strongest predictor for a respondent having a permissive attitude towards euthanasia and abortion. The value of human dignity is found to be significant in only a few cases.

Keynotes

Religion and the right to (dispose of) human life. A study of the attitude of Christian, Muslim and Hindu students with regard to death penalty, euthanasia and abortion

Francis-Vincent Anthony (Univ. Pontificia Salesiana/IT) and Carl Sterkens (Radboud Univ. Nijmegen/NL)

The debate over death penalty, euthanasia and abortion reached a climax during the second half of the twentieth century. It brings into focus the underlying contrasting currents of right to life and right to dispose of life. The pluralistic Indian context in its turn can add to the ambivalent relationship between religion and the right to (dispose of) life. The question that we address in this paper concerns the role religions play in soliciting and legitimizing the right to (dispose of) life. We focus on the factors of personal religious attitude, contextual religious attitude, and the understanding of human dignity, and analyse their impact on the perception of right to life in the face of death penalty, euthanasia, and abortion. We also take into account the background variables of personal profile, religious socialization, and psychological and socio-political traits. The paper presents the significant findings emerging from the data collected from 1215 respondents in Tamil Nadu, among Christian, Muslim and Hindu college students

Religion and Attitudes towards abortion and euthanasia in Norway and Poland

Pål Ketil Botvar (Centre for Church Research, Oslo/NO) and Marcin Zwierdzynski (Ignatianum, Krakow/PL)

In this paper we will compare attitudes towards abortion and euthanasia in two countries with different religious traditions. Norway is a highly secularized country with a dominating Lutheran majority Church. Poland is less secularized with a strong Catholic tradition. The two countries also have different legal frameworks regarding rights to abortion. Norway adopted a liberal law on abortion in the 1970s. Poland is one of the few countries in the world to outlaw abortion after decades of complete legalization (during Communist rule).

During later years new technical development in the field of genetics has caused public debates in many European countries. Some, not least on the political left, have expressed fears that permissive diagnostic procedures could send out signals that the disabled are less worth than the able-bodied. Many active Christians regard abortion as against the principle of a human being's right to life. On the other hand, women's activists stress women's right to self-determination, life and health as justification for the right to abortion. Therefore, the issue causes hot discussions and tends to polarize the public opinion.

Like abortion also euthanasia is stirring public discussion. Euthanasia used to be seen as a question of public moral, but has now turned into a question of the rights of the individual. The overall method in this paper is the so-called Most Different Systems Design. Even if the countries differ with regard to the legal right situation one might find a similar pattern when it comes to the role of religion vis-a-vis attitudes towards ethical and political issues like abortion and euthanasia.

Religion and the right to life: A comparison between Lutheran and Orthodox Countries

Olga Breskaya (Univ. of Padova/IT), Pål Ketil Botvar (Centre for Church Research, Oslo/NO), Silviu Rogobete (West Timosoara Univ./RO) and Anders Sjöborg (Univ. of Uppsala/SE)

In this paper we compare attitudes towards human rights in countries with different religious traditions, namely Lutheran dominated Scandinavian countries and Orthodox countries in the eastern part of Europe. The four countries involved in this study are Belarus, Norway, Romania and Sweden. The dependent variable is student's attitudes towards civil rights and political rights, including the right to life and religious rights. The method is a combination of Most Similar Systems Design and Most Different Systems Design (Anckar 2008). If one finds similar patterns in very different countries there is good reason to believe that the findings will apply also to other countries.

The effect that religious variables (affiliation, attendance, prayer, belief) have on attitudes towards human rights is a central part of the analyses. In addition, we will look at the relationship between trust in institutions and support for human rights. Devos, Spini and Schwartz (2002) have studied attitudes towards human rights among students in Switzerland. They found that trust in institutions is positively correlated with values that stress stability, protection, and preservation of traditional practices. They also found that religious individuals expressed more trust in institutions than non-religious individuals. In another article Staerkle, Clemence and Doise (1998) found that populations living in democratic countries differed in their views on human rights from those living in authoritarian countries. On this basis we hypothesize that trust in governmental institutions will have the opposite effect on human rights in democratic and authoritarian countries

Collegial Papers

Outdated conflict or more relevant than ever? Attitudes toward rights to life and religion among upper secondary students in secular Sweden

Anders Sjöborg (Univ. of Uppsala/SE)

Sociological surveys have traditionally monitored the role of different social institutions for human interaction and attitudes. During the 20th century many sociologists of religion found that traditional organized religion would decrease in social and political importance but still remain relevant in personal matters (Wilson 1966, Pettersson 2006). From the distinction between a private and public sphere, scholars have been able to show how the relationship between religion and values differ between the domains of private and public (i.e. Botvar & Sjöborg 2012). Contemporary Sweden can be characterized by low levels of organized personal religiosity, high but decreasing numbers of nominal membership, and a rather recent cultural and religious diversity. For decades Swedish society has been at the forefront of gender equality and individualized values. Human Rights discourse can be said to be central in many public arenas such as school and mass media. The human rights to life have however caused only marginal debates in Sweden in recent years. Since 1975 abortion is legal and the woman's decision and to a

large extent this is unquestionable. As for euthanasia the issue has been raised only in recent years, partly inspired by discussion in other European countries. Capital punishment was abolished in the year 1921 (in peacetime, and the year 1973 in wartime). Against this background this paper aims to describe what the attitudes are toward the rights to life in a sample of Swedish upper secondary students. The research questions are 1. What are the attitudes in the RHR 2.0 Swedish sample? 2. Are there any differences between Christian, Muslim and nonreligious youth in the sample? 3. What role does religion play for these attitudes, controlled for socioeconomic and background variables?

Attitudes toward Right to Life and Religiosity of Young People in Lithuania

Milda Alisauskiene (Vytautas-Magnus-Univ., Kaunas/LT)

Since the Independence of Lithuania was declared the public debates continue about the role of Roman Catholic Church in the politics of the country. In 1996 the Church has taken a strategy of becoming a moral authority rather than continuing its political activities that were necessary during the Soviet times. One of the tools that Church uses to become a moral authority is religious education in public schools. However, confessional religious education in the public schools encounters secular social reality and particularly issues of human rights. How are these encounters reflected among young people regarding their attitudes toward right to life? The aim of this paper is to discuss and show the relationship between religiosity of young people in Lithuania and their attitudes toward right to life. The paper is based on the analyses of the empirical data gathered among 16-18 years old students in rural and urban Lithuania (N=422).

Attitudes toward the death penalty in Pakistan

Sahar Hamid and Mandy Robbins (both: Glyndŵr Univ., Wrexham/UK)

Pakistan has always had the death penalty. From 2009 a presidential pardon was granted to all who had been given the death penalty and the sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Following the Abbottabad Public School massacre in 2013 military courts were initiated and the death penalty was once again implemented. This paper will draw on a number of areas to explore the attitudes of young people in Pakistan towards the death penalty, including, religion, psychological factors, and attitude toward democracy

Right to Life (death penalty) in Tanzania and Nigeria: a comparative study

Clement Fumbo (Univ. of Tanzania) and Modestus Adimekwe (Univ. of Würzburg; Nigeria/NG)

This study is a comparative research on the attitudes of youth in Tanzania and Nigeria. The main concentration in this area is right of life in case of crimes against humanity (death penalty). The data were collected in 2014 and 2015 among selected students in secondary and high schools, and universities in Tanzania (N=1286) and Nigeria

(N=1191). The expectation is that the young generation in both Tanzania and Nigeria may have some similarities on appreciating a human rights culture and within this context; they will show a high support of right to life. Previous researches indicate that human rights attitudes are contextual-biased. Capitalizing on the context of these two countries then the study takes two areas into account, which may influence youth's attitudes towards the right to life. One is the place of religion in moulding individuals' attitudes in Tanzania and Nigeria as well as the global quest for human rights culture across Africa. Second is a socio-cultural background of each country and individuals in particular. The assumption is that the perception of the role of religions in society has impact on youths' attitudes towards human rights and right to life in particular. Personality is an additional characteristic. The general research questions are: what are the attitudes of youth regarding right to life in Tanzania and Nigeria? How are they related? Are youth attitudes in Tanzania and Nigeria predicted by the factors mentioned above?

Person in the centre of human Ethos. Attitudes of young Croats towards abortion

Marijana Kompes (Croatian Catholic Univ., Zagreb/CRO)

Based on the Croatian results of the empirical research "Religion and Human Rights" general data regarding attitudes of young Croats towards abortion will be presented in the first part and reflected considering the social and religious situation in the country. The fact that this year the national "walk for life" took place for the first time in Zagreb/Croatia on May 21th and gathered about 15.000 people will be lightened as well. In the second part religion will be included in the research as well as population characteristics. Special attention will be given to the analysis of differences between attitudes of religious and non-religious respondents. The third part will present the conflict points with regard to abortion based on empirical research and will provide a discussion in a broader theoretical frame: personalism of John Paul II (*Evangelium vitae*, understanding of person as *suppositum humanum*), liberal bioethics and argumentation of contemporary Croatian theologian with regard to abortion (Tonči Matulić).

Assisted Suicide: the Argument of Neutrality

Milan Podunavac (Univ. of Montenegro/MNO)

The paper would discuss great contestation in moral and political philosophy following the United Supreme Court companion related assisted suicide cases of *Washington v. Glucksberg* and *Vacco v. Quill*. In the process of making decision Supreme Court posing question whether dying patients have rights have the a right to choose death rather than continued pain and suffering. Leading moral and political philosophers Ronald Dworkin, Thomas Nagel et others provides the arguments backed on very general moral and constitutional principle that every competent person has right to make momentous personal decision which invoke fundamental religious or philosophical convictions about life's value for himself, and, recognizes that people may make such momentous decisions impulsively or out of emotional depression.

Within such normative frame recent research finding done by Montenegrin research team would be discussed.

Connections between Religiosity and Attitude to Right to Life among three different Muslim age Cohorts

Üzeyir Ok (Ankara Sosyal Bilimler University, Ankara/TR) and Sema Yilmaz (Cumhuriyet University, Sivas/TR)

The aim of the study is to investigate the connections between religiosity and attitude to right to life among 3 different age cohorts. A survey study which will cover the the scales of religious attitude, attitude to right to life (including abortion, euthanasia and death penalty) and big five personality inventory will be conducted with adolescents, young adults and middle aged people, each with 100 sample groups. After presenting the results of correlations, the author intends to check the extent religiosity predicts the attitude to right to life after controlling the effects of sex, age cohort and personality traits. The implications of the study for the spiritual care and counselling in the hospital practice will be discussed.

Life attitudes of young Palestinian Muslims

Ray Webb (Univ. of St Mary of the Lake, Mundelein/US)

Muslim religious perspectives do not condone euthanasia, do permit capital punishment, and do forbid abortion before 100 days unless there is a serious reason. Bethlehem area young Muslim students (ages 14-24) live in a Muslim oriented context with significant Christian and secular influences. This research investigates their attitudes toward euthanasia, capital punishment, and abortion. Do Muslim religious tenets and personal religious perspectives and practice affect their attitudes about life issues more than personal qualities (e.g empathy, authoritarianism), and demographic variables such as age, education, and gender? What factors distinguish differences in attitude toward unborn life, life near its natural end, and lives deserving capital punishment? Does adherence to religious beliefs and practices protect life more than empathy? Is there a relationship between euthanasia and attitudes supporting freedom? Is there a relationship between authoritarianism and capital punishment? Does religion protect life?

The Rights to Life in Chile: a strong association with religiosity and values

Jorge Manzi, Joaquín Silva Soler and Roberto González (all: Pontifical Univ. Santiago de Chile)

The rights to life have been at the center of public debates in most countries in recent years. In Chile the death penalty was abolished after a heated debate in the 90s. The possibility of performing abortions under three extreme conditions, has become one of the most important political issues in the country once the current government sent a bill to the congress. In spite of its public and political nature, the debates around the protection of the rights to life have been a regular concern of the Catholic and Pentecostal

churches (the Catholic church is by far the most influential religious institution in Chile). Therefore, our analyses attempted to clarify the role of religion, as well as that of social and political attitudes in the support of the rights to life. Our results, based on the database collected in 2014, shows a strong connection of those rights with religious affiliation and religiosity. Political affiliation is also relevant, but weaker than religion, and it is only correlated with euthanasia and abortion. The study also confirmed that values and empathy are correlated with the support for those rights, whereas political attitudes (RWA and SDO) are not. Interestingly, males and females show equal support for all rights to life. The paper concludes addressing the potential consequences of the association between the rights to life and religiosity in a country that is experiencing a clear secularization process.

The impact of religion on attitudes about abortion and euthanasia. An empirical study among Italian students

Francesco Zaccaria (Apulian Theological Faculty, Bari/IT), Francis-Vincent Anthony (Univ. Pontificia Salesiana, Rome/IT) and Carl Sterkens (Radboud Univ. Nijmegen/NL)

The question whether - and under which circumstances - law can allow doctors to terminate life is an ongoing issue in the public debate. After the decriminalisation of abortion in 1978 in Italy, today's public discussion on the ethical and legal boundaries of the protection of life focuses on how this law is implemented and whether euthanasia should be legally regulated. People's religious views can play an important role in the way they participate in this discussion, since it involves fundamental ethical dilemmas. In Italy especially the moral stance of the Catholic Church carries a role in this public debate. On these issues the church's teachings firmly hold the value of life as a fundamental value to protect at all costs, that means the church evaluates negatively all attempts to extend the possibilities to terminate life. The aim of our study is to empirically detect the role of religion in the evaluation of these issues expressed by young Italians. More specifically we explore the impact of personal and contextual religious attitudes of a sample of secondary school students (N = 1,087) on their attitudes about abortion and euthanasia, while taking into account also their background characteristics (age, gender, religious socialization, psychological and socio-political traits). This will give a picture of how religious attitudes might shape the future of the debate about the protection of life in Italy.