



Films to study human ethics

A FILM festival on human ethics is to begin in the Capital today.

The Biomedical Ethics Film Festival explores the issue of personal dignity and its role in society through a range of movies.

It will include showings of the 1980 film the Elephant Man and Iris – a study on Alzheimer’s disease, a condition often raised when it comes to patient dignity.

It will take place at the city’s Filmhouse and lasts until Sunday.

Elusive concept of human dignity

SO often in medical ethics debates, such as on assisted suicide, the concept of human dignity is used without any clarifications.

But this can cause problems when commentators talk past each other because they have different understandings of human dignity. For example, it is possible to characterise the

concept as representing something human persons can lose if they behave or are treated in an undignified manner.

Alternatively, it is possible to consider human dignity as something that is bestowed equally amongst all human beings and can never be measured nor diminished. This understanding is, for instance, embodied in the preamble of the UN’s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which affirms “the inherent dignity and ~~half~~ the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” as “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”.

Defining human dignity is not an easy task. But even though it is a difficult concept to characterise, this does not mean that it is not extremely important. Indeed, the whole of civilised society depends on this concept as the basis of democracy and responsibility.

The seventh Edinburgh International Film Festival on Medical Ethics, which takes place at the Edinburgh Filmhouse from November 25-27, will be used to bring some clarifications to this concept while also emphasising the reasons why it is vital for Scottish society to continue to protect and uphold inherent human dignity.

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