

**HUMAN DIGNITY**  
contemporary perspectives

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# HUMAN DIGNITY

contemporary perspectives



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## Foreword

The Scientia Moralitas scientific magazine is an academic research project that represents the efforts and the interest of the founders to promote values that are considered fundamental values, such as morality, freedom, human dignity, ethics, peace and so on.

In this scientific research initiative are invited professors and researchers from various geographical regions and different disciplinary areas such as theology, juridical, political and communication sciences, and so on, to write articles on the proposed topics.

The annual scientific magazine will be available in print and online. The online version will be available for free. The scientific magazine will be sent to many universities and research institutions.

We appreciate the valuable scientific contributions of the authors that wrote in the first edition of the Scientia Moralitas scientific magazine.

The Editor



# **Digital Humanities Culture: Enabler or Obstacle for the Development of Human Dignity?**

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**ABSTRACT:** The turn imposed by new digital technologies of information and communication to humanities and social sciences is not limited to a mutation in the sphere of superficial uses. The phenomenon of digital humanities is before all but after all, an expression of the profound changes taking place in scientific thinking, a change whose major effect is the blurring of the border between substance and function. Therefore, the question that arises is that of the consequences of the penetration of technique into epistemic order. **KEY WORDS:** digitalization, épistémè and techné, Humanities and Social Sciences, percolation, technique.

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## **Introduction**

This text has the objective to relate the growing presence of digitalization in our daily life with the idea of more and more prevalent digitizing of the humanities and social sciences.

To highlight this movement, I will consider here the original distinction between *technè* and *épistémè*.

I understand this distinction in my symbolic framework where the historical foundations of European science are situated in the field of Myth (Bratosin, 2007; Bratosin & Tudor, 2009, Bratosin, 2014) in the field of pure *theoria*, as emphasized Alexandre Kojève in his introduction to the phenomenology of mind: “Everything seems to indicate that science was born in the form of the Myth. The Myth is a theory, ie a discursive revelation of the reality. [...] The stage of the Myth is a stage of the monologue, and at this stage it does not prove anything because it does not “discuss” anything.”

In this context, the epistemic construction, starting from the pure contemplation, which is the *theoria*, relies on dialogue. This dialogue has as the first consequence to introduce the idea of objectification of the Truth, because “There is no truth itself, ie scientific or philosophical or dialectical or synthetic, that where there was a discussion or dialogue, ie an antithesis denying a thesis.” (*idem*)

However, this truth not yet reached the real and can remain suspended in a sterile verbiage, as was often the case in Aristotelian scholasticism. This access to real discourse requires experience, experimented by the scientist and directed to the object of knowledge. But, as G. W. Hegel highlights, this object is not set there, detached from the subject; “Hegel’s experience relates neither to the Real, or to the speech considered isolated, but in their indissoluble unity.” But this tendential rapprochement between the Discourse and the Real through the Experience progressively moves away the knowledge from its theoretical origin to a *praxis*. Starting from this movement I will try to open here a reflection on the construction of knowledge, which in this convergence, is also in charge of *technè*. In this regards, the

digitalization as the most advanced form of percolation of the technics within the epistemic environment will be the thesis of my presentation organized into three parts:

- ♦ digitalization of the logos;
- ♦ digitalization of the reality;
- ♦ digitalization of the experience.

## 1. The digitalization of the logos

The discourses are marked with both *épistémè* and *techné*. They generated epistemological figures, and the disciplinary scholasticism was often its receptacle. The construction of knowledge, the history of science, is actually based mainly on the objectification of the ideas and their sedimentation; the language and the writing represent for these phenomena the condition of both objectification and transmission. The conceptualization and the sedimentation being articulated in order to form construction rules, a necessary condition for the historicization. The construction of knowledge is thus interpreted primarily as the history of discourses and discursive formations around a “scientific object”.

The object of discourse in science dissolves into the discourse itself. This proposal may appear as a repetition, aimed at highlighting the obliteration of the object behind the speaking subject; perhaps, but not only. If there were that the objects in question history do would be meaningless; they are by definition unchanging. That which defines the construction of knowledge on the movements of the planets in the solar system, for example, does not reside in the solar system, but in the discourses that are built around its various epistemic constructions. From Aristotelian cosmology to modern astrophysics, we (except for some details)

always have the same starry sky above us, our manner of looking at it, to perceive and know it is radically different.

Our remarks must not, however, be assimilated here a solipsism or radical constructivism which would claim that the discourse on the moon gives it its shine. The moon such as crystal are objects and remain objects, neutral as long as we do not designate them as objects of knowledge (in the broadest sense).

As long as they are not a target in the consciousness of mankind in search of knowledge; as long as they are not the object of discourse, as long as they are not present in the lockers labeled by cosmology, astronomy or crystallography, they remain in this anonymity of the objects without history that makes them expressionless because without interrogation. As the stone by the roadside, it deserves no attention, a stone among others, it represents a point and nothing else; that we could distinguish a fossilized dinosaur egg or the result of a distant volcano eruption, and it's not the same anonymous stone, it becomes the subject of a discourse and this discourse transforms it in the eyes of the observer. The object has no history, it is the look that is placed on it which places it in a history: Foucault said: "The purpose [of discourse] does not wait in the limbo the order that will release it and allow it to incarnate in a visible and talkative objectivity; it does not pre-exist itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light. It exists in the positive conditions of a complex set of reports. These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, forms of behavior, norm systems, techniques, types of classification, characterization methods; and these relations are not present in the object; there are not they that are deployed when the analysis is made; they do not draw the frame, the immanent rationality, that ideal rib that reappears totally or partially when it is thought in the truth of its concept."<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the language is the starting point of the movement of objectivation; but the language does not always refer to the discourse. The discourse is already part of a completed process of objectivation, and the language constitutes only the beginnings. The discourse is like a culmination in which words lose their autonomy to represent, through the discourse, the object; but not the object in its neutrality, the object itself that becomes part of another discourse: «Certes, les discours sont fait de signes—observait Foucault—mais ce qu'ils font, c'est plus que d'utiliser ces signes pour désigner des choses. C'est ce *plus*, qui les rend irréductibles à la langue et à la parole. C'est « ce plus » qu'il faut faire apparaître et qu'il faut décrire. »<sup>2</sup>

So we come to a form of primacy of discourse on the object, a form of construction of the object by the discourse that articulates another discourse, broader one. This process reveals the technical role of the symbolic system as a first condition in the historicization of knowledge, that is to say, it is indicative of the effective participation of *techné* to the intellectual effort to carry the discourse at objectivity. The second condition—always of a technical nature—is the transmission, the overcoming of the ephemeral word to the permanence of discourse. Written expression that participates in the objectification also becomes the vector of the transmission, in time and space. Individual memory is transformed into collective memory and texts that can be stored could be at any time reactivated. Thus even before conceiving a history of knowledge the technics penetrate the epistemic environment because through writing it permeates the very conditions of constitution of knowledge. But the idea of percolation of the technics in the epistemic environment is not yet at this level. This movement already joins a discourse belonging to the history.

Thus, behind the idea of percolation certainly transpires the idea of penetration but especially the simultaneous idea of transformation of the environment in which it operates. *Techné*, by percolating the *épistémè*, fundamentally transforms it and this transformation is accomplished in a digitalization of the discourse following two channels: one formed by the knowledge construction method, the other by the mediation increasingly pregnant of the instrument as a means of access to knowledge. Both movements, far from being independent, support each other in the current development of humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, the percolation movement of *techné* into the *épistémè* increases in humanities and social sciences the idea of scientific progress (with all that implies in terms of advantages or disadvantages for the condition of human beings from scientific advances in e.g. information technology). In its reports with the technics, the digitalized *logos* carries the imprint of the language with all that belongs to its systemic and ideological structuration. It is also open to analysis by the grid imposed by the writing that programs it in terms of knowledge. But in addition, algorithmizing the knowledge, it imposes us models in a discursive order. The digitalization of texts, the digitalization of images, the digitalization of voices are algorithms of the discourses whose results have a horrible name that became a noble title of the restriction of freedom even in the strongest democracies : databases. For example, to access the academic position of professors and researchers, commissions, committees and juries have counted the achievements of the applicants and check the databases in bearing their publications. But I do not know how the numbers may reflect knowledge. However, I know I have some difficulties in accepting to trade my name for a number. When the *logos* becomes number, the humanity may become also a number. The role of humanities and social sciences is now to

ensure that our world does not become a prison or a universal concentration camp.

## **2. The digitalization of the reality**

The technical phenomenon in its historical sense attaches to human communities, and from this meeting is born the conceptual unity of the societal. If we consider that the epistemic environment is completely immersed in the indoor environment, the construction of this societal unity necessarily includes the interpenetration of the technique by epistemic and of the epistemic by the technique. Only under the conditions of this ontological interpenetration, all knowledge, that is, any representation of the truth to which it invites us, is “true” knowledge and it is what we call “*épistémè*”. The implied issue here is not only that of what we (human beings) are also, and perhaps above all, through us, what the world we live in is. It seems clear, as much as necessary (because it seems difficult to understand one without the other), not only to ask ourselves about ourselves but also to question the world, the universe in which we live. We can not isolate the background of human endeavor, of the being of human, of what human being is in an environment that he generates and which generates him. We are faced the inner exigency to know and learn as a *épistémè* and under the form of the outside world, the former being included in the last, the first proceeding of the second, being immanent. Finally, this supposes, of the subject’s point of view, a fairly good representation of the world of objects with which we have a relationship as necessary as constant. Science, of Greek thought (mainly Plato) to nowadays, identifies with the truth and it is nothing other than the unveiling, the revelation of being. This supposes and implies that possessing

science is possessing the truth that it is give meaning to things, put order in what surrounds us.<sup>3</sup>

However, we are situated here in an issue in which our conception of epistemè can not appear *in abstracto*, released from any contingency, that is, independently of the societal world of which it is the product and that it tends itself if not to produce, at least to influence. It takes its meaning, its significance, because of its specific nature, which it is shown as immersed in the scientific communities. This environment is made itself of sociality, religiosity, cultural and ideological predominance, characteristics of a moment in history, similar to the principle of inclusion, such as composite moment (or constituent) of a given that it exceeds, as subsumed, thought as a unit within a larger whole. But this idea of épistémè, as I developed here in relation to the problem of knowledge and science does not end with a vision that we call “socio-human”. Indeed, the épistémè certainly refers to the science (from an etymological point of view), ie the construction of an ideal world. But the world is also the product of accurate knowledge, *real* truths that ensure compliance of thought with the sensitive, and as such also covers the world of hard sciences, as we usually call sciences such as physics or mathematics. This extension is to work in a transdisciplinary epistemic construction, which the consequences of solving problems by calculation (by algorithms) in the empirical field of humanities and social sciences could surprise. The illustration provided by the technocracy is not only eloquent but also fruitful. Indeed, the digitalization of reality legitimizes *technocracy*, substituting, for example, *democracy* as an expression of power of people, ie the express word of the masses becomes power because it *is said*. Technocracy can not then help democracy (or perfect the instruments permitting the popular expression), it can only weaken or even destroy it. This conclusion is not moral, it can only be the result of the percolation

of technique within the epistemic environment. The pervasive role of digitalization in the relations between humans tendentially replaces the language, and technique, through the computer, inexorably replaces the *vox populi*. The digitalization of the reality can only stifle or alienate the *vox populi* to generate another mediation between humans and therefore restructure social relations. This percolation of technique, within a pre-established social order based on the spoken language and therefore on the “state power” fundamentally transforms the human relations and this all the more so that the computer and its environment tend to become almost universal mediator in our societies. As such we observe the very idea of democracy, the expression of a people of a political choice through a vote, a set of *voices*, or the growing role of surveys in order to identify these choices, even guide them. Do we not will be asked one day why, given the effectiveness (at least that the media intends to give it) of survey techniques, keep a poll which only corroborates the results of the surveys? Political power would then gradually be the expression of computers and statistical models they contain.

You may be noticed, the place I attach to “to know” exceeds the framework of a closed universe as accurate, precise and abstract it could be. The idea of science refers undoubtedly to the principle of truth, *true knowledge*, but it seems to me that it reveals a limited sense in which it is necessary to go beyond the rigid frames. So I give the term *épistémè* a more open meaning: more than a method, more than a state of knowledge at a given time, *épistémè* seems to express a process, a continuous movement in which knowledge, itself made of recognized idealities, questions not only about itself, about the ways that produce it but also about the world and society in which it emerges about the social, economic religious, etc. environment in which it is born and develops in a historical period and not in another. The idea of *épistémè*,

therefore, includes all the knowledge and science in their self-constitution and in the interactions that articulate and forge them during its development in history. These interactions refer to the technical components to be defined in the terms and contents.

Continue by a strict causal relationship that science is an extension of the society that produces it tends to remove from the *épistémè* its claim to universality, its quest for *the* truth. In fact, the identification of an epistemic environment immediately bases on the exclusion of two caricatured positions on the status of science. My remarks will deliberately lie halfway between absolute relativism and naive positivism that is between a perfect dilution of scientific inquiry in the concerns of a scientific community whatsoever and a total impermeability of the epistemic field with respect to the context in which it develops. In both cases, we end up with an outright denial of the history of science, because it is fully merged with the history of a scientific community or it is completely extracted from a historical process.

The scientific «development», what we call in a more nuanced way the epistemic construct, does not participate from a “spontaneous generation” born in some exceptional brains. IT must have wanted (or denied) by a community that desires it (or ignore it) and has the means (or not) of its emergence: the cultural, religious, social and economic environment is a determinant factor in this process.

Just as “Syracuse does not explain Archimedes”, there is no causal relationship could explain the emergence of a science; we can just identify a “bath”, an environment where knowledge springs.

In the relative relations that the “epistemic environment” and “technical environment” have woven into their respective constructed, scientific and cultural communities through which they emerged to play a leading role. So while the digitalization of reality covers and contains the truth, scientific communities and academic society open themselves. The embodiment of this vital

need of opening, the “open” phenomenon comes in many different forms: *OpenOffice*, *OpenDocument*, *Open Journal Systems*, *Open Monograph Press*, *Open Conference Systems* (a complete Web presence for scholarly conferences), *Open Harvester Systems* (an indexing system for OJS, OCS and other online resources), *Open Research Center*, *Open Classroom*, etc.

In short, the digitalization of reality has not in line of sight humanities and social sciences, but the shapes of our institutions (church, State, etc.), which means before we were enslaved to another way of thinking reality.

### **3. The digitalization of the scientific experience**

The digitalization of scientific experience (which includes experimentation, of course, but is not limited solely and strictly to what is called “experimental methods”) marks in the humanities and social sciences the postmodern moment of their historic transition from a dual conception (at least) of human activity which put back to back *techné* and *épistémè*, towards a unity derived from the organic fusion of science and technique through the applied sciences and technology. This means in particular that the movement that led to modern and postmodern experimental science tends, on the way to *praxis*, to melt *épistémè* and *technè*. Only explicit references and attentive reminders behind this process (hence behind the history of science) would be likely to clarify the conditions of this fusion; but these references tend to fade more and more to the considerable success of digitalization of the experience as a way of knowledge. The fusion becomes even confusion on the consequences, or some of them, of a *techno-epistemic* science, a science which tends to deny its origins.

For now, I would give you the measure of the heuristic of my presentation starting from an illustration may be less vague and general than the only notion of science induced. The stars in the sky have represented since the dawn of time an enigma, placing human beings facing the inaccessible, the immeasurable, confronting him to an interrogation able to stimulate his desires of knowledge. Thus, the idea of astrology is conceived as a technicised form of the sky contemplation. The contemplation of a starry sky is a theoretical posture of mankind facing the universe, it ends on its interrogation about the influence of the position of the stars on his destiny. Astrology as technique becomes a means to decipher the message of the stars; the latter being located as an intermediary between mankind and design inaccessible powers. *The starry sky is assimilated to a page of handwriting.* In contrast, cosmology as epistemic construct considers the study of the stars and its movements as an object of knowledge that encompasses astrological stories: “The cosmological conceptions, even those we consider as scientific, were only very rarely—almost never and even— independent of the notions which are not considered as scientific one, that philosophical magical and religious notions. Even for a Ptolemy, Copernicus, and even Newton, theory of the cosmos was not independent of these other (*considered as non scientific*) notions.”<sup>4</sup>

But what I want to emphasize by this example is the clear historical trend of *techné* to percolate *épistémè*, especially in this case in which the astrology plays the role of Trojan horse allowing *techné* penetrating cosmology: “[The Babylonians ] have formed catalogs, noting day by day the positions of the planets; if you do it carefully for a few centuries, you’ll end up, ultimately, to have catalogs that will reveal the frequency of planetary movements that it will give you the opportunity to provide, for each day of the year, the position of stars and planets which you’ll find when

you look at the Sky. Which is very important for the Babylonians because of the forecast positions of these planets depends, through astrology, the forecast the events that will happen on earth. “<sup>5</sup> The divination Art, in fact, is issued from an *a priori* theoretical conception of the mankind in the world that uses the stars to open to the future; this will to control the destiny relies on a number of *techniques* allowing observe<sup>6</sup> and memorize the various configurations of the sky.

In a symmetrical manner, starting from *theoria* in the contemplative sense, the interrogation about the place of human being on earth and the interrogation about the earth in the universe, has produced many epistemic constructs. Thus, for the Greeks, the idea of Cosmos explicitly refers to a metaphysical joining an *épistémè*, as a construction giving access to knowledge, to a contemplative form (*theoria*) which connects the human being and the world. The epistemic character of cosmology leads to both a human detachment from the object of his questioning and a research of an order, a harmony that is hiding behind the movement of the stars<sup>7</sup>. At this moment in history the *techné* and *épistémè* validating the role of the place of passage of *theoria* on the border separated them, paving the way for their fusion will lead to epistemic constructions eminently based on the assumption of a natural order represented by a particular geometric movement. The observed motion of the planets (the solar system) must be in accordance (from Plato) with regular movements (non-violent) and circular movements (thus natural by nature). Then, regularity and circularity refer to the perpetual and eternal movement that seems to describe the Cosmos, or at least, the apparent movement of its stars. Leaving the strictly contemplative aspect, so pure *theoria*, the Greeks gradually revealed differences or even contradictions of trajectory in the circular reading of planetary movement. This is a process where the gradual abandonment

of pure *theoria* made a place increasingly important to the methodical observation (where the work of the ancient Babylonians are reintegrated) in searching of an hidden order that only the geometry is able to reveal.

The digitalization of scientific experience in humanities and social sciences is based on this principle. Mathematics acquired today by digitalization a highly privileged status within humanities and social sciences, since they are considered part of the order of nature and “Let *no one* unversed in geometry *enter here*” was written above the tympanum of the Plato’s Academy. So the convergence of the movements issued by algorithms and observations is realized in the digitalized epistemic construct of humanities and social sciences.

Thus, the digitalization of the experience now enables humanities and social sciences researchers to go beyond mere sense-perception and observe aspects that natural intelligence of the researcher without the artificial intelligence of the computer could not reach. But digitalization also represents for the researcher the instrument to get out of his contemplative state of mind, and desacralize the nature and master it. This entry in the *praxis*, through digitalization, will mark now durably the orientation of humanities and social sciences that will consider disinterested knowledge not as a goal (in which *theoria* and *épistémè* will be satisfied in their dialogue, bringing metaphysics to its highest degree of knowledge) but as a mean of action, or even domination over nature.

As an example I will take here the practices of processing, analysis, transmission and sharing of data. The illustrations are numerous. I will present here one of them which appeared to me significant: the Sphinx software. Certainly there are many examples. But to illustrate, here is how appears the percolation of the technique within the epistemic environment in terms of

digitalizing humanities and social sciences considering only the Sphinx software: managing responsive design (Smartphone, tablet or PC, Sphinx automatically adapts its questionnaires and their content to the size of the users' screens), multi-channel deployment (send-outs by e-mails with management of follow-up contacts, responses via panelist relays, website embedding or face-to-face data input on offline tablets), managing panels (set up a consumer or client panel to streamline the decision-making processes or test new products or concepts), quanti-quali analysis (because the real gems of a survey often lie deep in responders' spontaneous verbatims, Sphinx provides text analytics functions to extract the essence of data and fully mine the contents of the open-ended questions), shared reporting platforms (the studies field is continually progressing and more and more targeted at real-time data management. For this reason Sphinx enables implementation of sharing-based applications and conveying of condensed or detailed indicators, completely secure and directly online), statistics and decision-making assistance, etc (see more details at [http://www.lesphinx-developpement.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/PLAQUETTE\\_LOGICIELS.pdf](http://www.lesphinx-developpement.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/PLAQUETTE_LOGICIELS.pdf))

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, I would like simply note that we do not have to fear the disappearance of the humanities and social sciences and with it the loss of human dignity (ie scholar dignity) against the development of technology. Percolation of technology within the epistemic environment has reconfigured the research experience so much that soon the technology will necessarily be human and social in order to progress. Research centers as:

- ✦ Centre for Digital Philosophy located in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Western Ontario ;
- ✦ Digital History Research Centre (DHRC) at the University of Hertfordshire is the UK's first centre devoted exclusively to digital history. (<http://www.herts.ac.uk/digital-history>);
- ✦ Digital Literacy Centre dans le Department of Language and Literacy Education at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, (<http://dlc.lled.educ.ubc.ca/>);
- ✦ Research Centre for Digital Theology, St John's College, Durham University (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/codec/>) Exploring interfaces between the Bible, digital & contemporary culture.

are eloquent illustrations.

The digitalization as a mean of observation firstly and of measurement secondly marks a historical moment in the percolation of the technique within the epistemic environment: this is the historical moment of the discursive and practical *confusion* between technical and epistemic. We are far from the days of dialogue between *techné* and *épistémè*. We also exceeded the time of the *fusion* between *techné* and *épistémè*. We live the moment when by the digitalization of humanities and social sciences we validate truths through the experimentation of the confusion between *techné* and *episteme* (Bratosin, 2016). In other words, the digitalization as a mean of advancing knowledge in humanities and social sciences, marks fundamentally and decisively the gradual abandonment of the contemplative attitude in favor of the attitude of domination of being. It is therefore not surprising to see the digitalization occupy an increasingly important role in the in the humanities and social

sciences domains through the representations of the myth of the programmed death of the social sciences and became one of most current policy management tools of the research and a very popular instrument of the management in academic administrations.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Foucault, M., *L'archéologie du savoir*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 61–62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>3</sup> Koyré, A., *Introduction à la lecture de Platon*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1991) – Col. Essais, 78 : «This being, this reality [...] is not the messy heap of sensitive objects as the vulgar being (and the sophist) calls with this name. The vulgar being, mobile, unstable and passenger, is not – or barely—of the order of being; it is, and it is not, at once, and this is precisely why it is not, and can not be the object of science, but at most of the opinion. No, the being we have in mind, it is the being with stable and unchanging essence, which our soul has contemplated once, or more accurately, of which he is the idea, vision which it have in its souvenirs [...] now.»

<sup>4</sup> Koyré A., *Etudes d'histoire de la pensée scientifique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1973),—collection Tel—Les étapes de la cosmologie scientifique (communication presented May 31, 1948 at « Quatorzième Semaine de Synthèse. »), 87.

<sup>5</sup> Koyré A., *op. cit.*, 88–89.

<sup>6</sup> This term take a special place in the author's text, and we fully support his remark when he precise: «I underline the word 'observable', for it is certain that the first meaning of the famous formule, *swzein ta jainomena*, means precisely: explain the phenomena, save them, ie reveal the underlying reality, reveal, under the apparent disorder of the immediately given, a real unity, orderly and intelligible. It is not only, as a positivistic misinterpretation teach us, a question of connecting them by means of a calculation, in order to achieve the forecast: it is

truly to discover a deeper reality who provide the explanation», in Koyré, A. *op. cit.*, 89.

<sup>7</sup> Koyré, A. *op. cit.*, (1973), 88.

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## Plea for Human Dignity

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**ABSTRACT:** Dignity highlights value, honesty, moral merits, the degree of appreciation as well as a person's rank in society. In Christian teaching, human dignity is regarded as a divine gift that whatever the circumstances in which the person lives, takes God's given Model as an example of life and attitude. Term form of dignity in a society can also be understood as the autonomy and freedom of thought as well as the behavior of an individual. Human dignity is very much linked to the sense of honor because a worthy man always inspires respect both to himself and to those around him, to his values and the values of others.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the term dignity means the quality to be worthy, prestige, moral authority, dignified attitude, greatness and self–esteem. When talking about the esteem granted to a person we must understand the respect and consideration for human worth and dignity of each person in itself. Dignity cannot be represented without honesty, responsibility, fairness, courage, duty, honesty, etc., values which it integrates. The disregard of the human being, regardless of the reasons from which it springs, brings damages to human dignity, and as such must be regarded as inhuman and reprehensible acts. Human dignity requires the credit or trust that should be given to each person.

**KEY WORDS:** worth, dignity, human condition, humanistic conceptions, virtue, honesty, respect, responsibility, moral authority.

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## Getting started

Dignity is a quality that exclusively claims the human condition, being par excellence a human value, but also a *sui generis* revealing of the humane, which naturally will have a cultural specification and through which its, de facto, defined both history and its own manners of being.<sup>2</sup> “Human dignity is both a source and foundation”<sup>3</sup> Dignity, therefore, is the fundamental criterion of man and that because “not being a simple *homo faber* (the maker being), but a *homo sapiens* (the thoughtful being), man thinks his future and define his existence by a project. As a participant in social relations he is creator of history and bears full responsibility for his acts.”<sup>4</sup>

Being an immanent quality in the human being, “dignity manifests itself both morally and from a legal perspective, the last meaning at the same time the fullness of rights, freedoms and fundamental duties inherent to man. So freedom belongs to people as superior beings and they can not be alienated without affecting its essence, namely dignity.”<sup>5</sup>

A page of real literary beauty, written by Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola<sup>6</sup>, is found in the vast literature of the Renaissance period, written in the introduction titled *Oratio de dignitate hominis*<sup>7</sup>, to his famous work, the 900 theses on all possible philosophical and theological themes at the time, theses gathered under the title *Conclusiones philosophicae, cabalisticae et theologicae*.<sup>8</sup> This introduction of Pico Della Mirandola, *Oratio de dignitate hominis*, would later become one of the most famous philosophical texts of Italian humanism.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in this introduction there are his basic concepts about man and his purpose on earth, expressed in the following words: “We have given you, Oh Adam; no visage proper to yourself, nor any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with

premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.”<sup>10</sup>

These humanist concepts are actually “an ambitious summary of the Scholastic–Aristotelian tradition with the new themes of humanism. Pico della Mirandola sees this synthesis in the neoplatonician philosophy, establishing a hierarchy of existence, from the dead bodies, climbing several steps to the Supreme Being, God. God created man and put him in the center of the world, therefore, man is neither mortal nor immortal, nor earthly or celestial. It is entirely in his power to choose in which direction of the existence to develop. Man differs from other creatures by not being tied to a particular destiny or a particular law; on the contrary, he has the ability to freely determine his manner and form of existence, to stoop to an animal stage, or to approach the divinity, which lies at his own origin.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, according to the author, the path leading towards this end is to release man from his own human instincts and senses and his purification through continuous meditation and contemplation of the existing reality as well as the divinity, where the origin of humanity occurs.

According to the text presented by the Florentine humanist, man has acquired his human dignity by the very fact that he is free to choose between good and evil, between what is worthy or unworthy of him. Thus man's own choices will demean him or raise him, they will decrease his prestige or will enhance his dignity.<sup>12</sup>

## Getting terminology

The term "dignity" is derived from the word "dignified" which means that a person is worthy, virtuous, upstanding or capable. Thus, the term dignity means the quality of being worthy, prestige, moral authority, dignified attitude, greatness and self-esteem. When talking about the esteem granted to a person we must understand the respect and consideration for human worth and dignity of each person in itself.<sup>13</sup>

The origin of the term "dignity", according to Corssen, is the term "dec" in ancient Sanskrit, which has the meaning of to show, to indicate. The term came into the circulation of Indo-European languages, with a number of derivatives, such as: in the late Sanskrit "dacas" (meaning renown, fame); in Latin "dignus" "decere" "decus-oris" (meaning brightness, distinction) in Greek "deiknumi" "dakein", "doxa", with clear reference to the high quality that states man; in French "digne" in English "werth", in German "wurde", in Russian "dostoinstvo".<sup>14</sup>

In various languages, the notion of "dignity" in order to take a moral aspect, it is necessary that it be conjugated with other linguistic expressions or moral qualities. In Latin, for example "dignitas", "dignitatis" has the meaning of dignity, but it also means value, price. The expression *Laudare aliquem pro dignitate* not always has the sense to praise, to highlight the merits or achievements of someone because he is worthy in general and ethical sense, but primarily because the person is a man of good standing a great dignitary, a

personality that enjoys, thanks to its achievements and merits, a high reputation, a high prestige and recognized fame. Also in Latin there is the superlative of the word dignus, namely “dignissimus”, meaning to be most worthy.<sup>15</sup>

## **Defining issues of dignity**

Dignity sums up the characteristics of all positive virtues put together, without being able to reach it, just acquired exclusively and separated from the moral virtues. Dignity can not be achieved without a cover in virtues. Dignity, by itself, is not a moral quality, if it doesn't over ordonates a number of other qualities and attributes, able to accredit and to reveal its existence. Dignity can not be represented without honesty, responsibility, fairness, courage, duty, honesty, etc., values that it integrates structuring the configuration of their novelty equilibrium. Dignity can not be confused or dissolved in moral qualities, which on an axiological scale is below its value due to the fact that these do not subsume to them, but conversely, that they it. To exemplify this axiologically aspect with the fact that the worthy man is always courteous, while that which is courteous is not always amiable and worthy. Dignity sums up the characteristics of all positive virtues together, but every virtue in order to maintain valid and not alter in its process of manifestation, has need of dignity's guardianship to guarantee its purity. Thus, all the moral virtues need dignity as a referential, which over ordonates them in their unbreakable unity, purity and high value. Dignity is the only one that avoids moral gap that is allowed by the so-called mental reserve from the well known Machiavellian adage<sup>16</sup> “the end justifies the means.” So without this tutelary central organ which activates, coordinates, correlates and maintains the virtues, man can not reach self-consciousness

or moral conscience, the only one that allows him to deliberately enable his attitude in various circumstances of life.<sup>17</sup>

Human dignity is not something static, but something dynamic, something in action, something that manifests imperatively and objectively, because dignity is attitude, and when there is no attitude this is just expectative and means nothing. Man, as a broadcaster of virtue, needs at least one person or society to be able to exteriorize his courtesy, honor, honesty and other such moral virtues, which cannot effectively prove their existence if they don't meet someone to receive them when they are released. The man truly worthy is not a *homo per se* as Erasmus was saying, a man only for himself but also for others because no one can be good, kind, honest, generous, magnanimous, generous, only with himself without relating to his peers. As light needs something to be reflected in, so it becomes light, so these moral traits they also need someone, like a final address, where to stop to showcase and to accredit their objective validity. According to Durkheim and Albert Bayet dignity belongs to the so called "faite sociaux" or "faite moraux". Thus, dignity is a concrete moral fact that remains even after the action taken in order to achieve it was consumed. Just the thought materialized into a concrete fact, as aim of moral intent, determines the ethical level of the doer and the man only through this "fact" demonstrates his moral personality, because this "fact" gives man the possibility for him to stay in others, and only this "deed" prolongs the existence of its doer, in all those where it remains alive even after his disappearance.<sup>18</sup>

### **Dignity means to relate value to value**

Human dignity requires a conscious and sustained concern for potentiating human values and the conscious distancing of human from inhuman as well as social values of everything that is antisocial, non-value and mediocrity. For a man to be worthy

means to live up to what the values of 'to be' require, morally realized, and to which he will be supported by his moral (spiritual) and physical powers. To be worthy means having the knowledge and power to avoid everything that would degrade or compromise the value of a man. To be worthy means to build and maintain good relationships and relations with others, which is not to be achieved by duplicity or by exploiting the weakness of others. To be worthy means to persuade others that you cannot be respected unless you do it first, meaning to respect others. Dignity means to relate value to value, being resistant to the anti-value temptations, devaluating any anti-value authority. Dignity always requires to be yourself putting into practice the best intentions and deeds. Thus dignity in all these meanings and significances, requested the fulfillment of the moral quality to the highest possible levels of elevation.<sup>19</sup>

### **Dignity—relating to the community**

Dignity also receives functionality through its reporting to other spheres of incidence, much wider than the individual. Thus, in its correlation with the affirmation moral imperatives of family, school, village, town, etc. dignity becomes the dignity of the family, the school dignity, the dignity of the city, etc. Each socio-human subsystem forms part of the global system and a specific manifestation of its character. Society specifically makes its exchange with the individual, maintaining the daily dialogue from its global assembly to the social and individual micro-assembly. Dignity shaped in the social profile mold manifests according to the specific social group within which it asserts itself, including class categories. In the relationships between nations, dignity expresses the confidence in the ability of each people to build its live as it wants after its own vocations and without external

constraints.<sup>20</sup> Therefore each individual is responsible for his own dignity and through it the dignity of his family, the nation and the entire humanity.<sup>21</sup> In these conditions “national dignity is the supreme value of any people. It is related to the historical past, the truth and, of course, it motivates and determines the continuance of a people in history.”<sup>22</sup>

“Dignity is a necessary means to make our personality.”<sup>23</sup> Dignity is not an aggressive attitude towards oneself, on the contrary is an ethical condition to defend our own convictions. Dignity is neither an exaggeration of self-consciousness, but a natural consequence of it, when it operates in satisfactory spiritual condition. Each manifestation of dignity in society is a social lesson.<sup>24</sup>

Every man carries dignity in himself because each of his acts include a moment of freedom as a necessary component, which is a social and objective report, and the main terms of this report, man and society are also equally determined. Man lives in a society that has a certain legal, political, administrative, economic, religious, etc., structure along with a certain level of knowledge and social practice, so consequently establishing certain relationships between all these social actors. Freedom is essentially the particular way in which man relates to reality or the extent of his power over that reality, and freedom in relation to dignity is the *sine qua non* condition for the affirmation of human dignity. Responsibility stems from man’s condition of freedom, forcing man to give or to give himself account of his participation in the various social reports of the social process. Thus the responsibility towards dignity serves a middle-value role and dignity in relation to responsibility serves an end-value role. This report is however not unequivocal, as dignity in turn becomes middle-value to dignity, because while dignity integrates its responsibility and generates it at the same time, responsibility in turn is a subjective condition of maintaining human dignity.<sup>25</sup>

A first condition of personality is dignity, which “is a feeling, or rather, a certain consciousness of the individual to acknowledge his own value, regardless of the social group to which he belongs, the situation he is in, available wealth, the family from which he comes, a value that he recognizes to himself as a man, as a creature endowed with intelligence and reason. Spiritually, dignity is a complex attitude in which take part all conscious faculties of the individual. It does not happen at once, but through a long, complicated, process, in which the emotional inclinations must find the means to harmonize with the elaborations of reason.”<sup>26</sup>

According to academician Dimitrie Gusti<sup>27</sup>, the worthy man has a sense of self worth, which gives him a certain security, almost heroic. He will want to be useful to the community, but he can not give it up. He clearly and critically appreciates all eventualities that his attitude may lead him to, whether these are positive or negative. The worthy man is not fascinated by the sure victory, but he is also not disoriented by the hardships consciousness. The life goals which he pursues and serves them will determine on him a moral authority.<sup>28</sup>

The opposite of dignity is the cult of incompetence. Thus from the concept of dignity emerges great ethical requirement, namely that no personality is to be used in the social and cultural life for certain purposes that would be foreign to it. Any man, who does not realize to give his whole dignity to all his actions, is an inferior man from a morality point of view. Alongside these ideas, presented above, D.Gusti also extends the sphere of the concept of dignity over the social groups in which the individual may belong, saying that personalities can be not only individuals, but everything that has a will and is inspired by the need of a creative action. Given this observation, personalities can become social units (social groups, social communities, institutions), the nation and even humanity.<sup>29</sup>

Racial discrimination should be firmly condemned, because it is an act of humiliation and disregard for the human being. Before

God and before the law all people are equal. Treating someone in a discriminatory manner on account of race, language, nationality or religious beliefs, are acts that violate human dignity, and as such must be regarded as inhuman and reprehensible acts. Also chauvinism of all kinds falls under the same category of antisocial and inhumane behaviours. The disregard of the human being, regardless of the reasons, brings damage to human dignity. Such attitudes and acts happens when some people take advantage of the superiority of their material, intellectual or positional (occupation, rank, service) status in society. An attitude that causes someone to put a lower price on human beings, attitude manifested by indifference to the needs, sufferings or even human rights<sup>30</sup>, is a false and wrong attitude, no matter who it is and what status the one exhibiting the contemptuous attitude has.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusions

Human dignity also reclaims the credit or trust that should be given to each person. Every man has the right to be granted trust until proven otherwise. It is an unjust and humiliating process for someone to always be suspicious and always inclined to believe that the discussion partner deceives him, or live with the suspicion that the one you are talking to simply lies to you. Dignity says it's even wiser to err in granting trust to someone unworthy of it, rather than suspecting everyone else around us. The respect that we owe to human dignity requires this attitude, to be as open to good faith<sup>32</sup> and as narrow in bad faith towards our fellow men. If we pursue steadfastly the respecting of each person's dignity, we ourselves will prove to be worthy of the name we claim, favoring around us a gentle, respectful and peaceful climate, which will reverberate like light or sound waves in the society in which we

live and operate in, contributing to some extent to the good and happiness of those around us.<sup>33</sup>

In our view, therefore, we try to find that human dignity is that quality of the human being which is endowed by the Creator, quality signifying the moral authority of man to be of himself as the owner of the rights, freedoms and fundamental duties legally sanctioned and legally protected both domestically and internationally.<sup>34</sup>

Human dignity currently acquires new meanings as a result of the social framework in which every man operates. It can be seen, in these conditions, in the evolution of building of the human society as an upward progression, the effort of many people to achieve a high class ideal in an imperfect world, enrolled in a historical ongoing, in which the very imperfection of this world is a serious invitation for man to put into value the abilities given by the Creator and the endeavor to live and act with dignity of the created being, but aspiring to restoring the relationship between Creator and creature. Thus it is very important the awareness of each person over the place and the role it has to play in human society. Advocacy for human dignity, pursuing the same goal, ends leaving room for personal reflection, with the hope that the reader has acquired or has reminded a more clear meaning of his dignity, along with a much deeper motivation on how live needs to be lived.<sup>35</sup>

It would not be worthy to end a plea for dignity without resorting to the words of Him who is Flawless in dignity and a Model in everything that is good for us as human beings: "I therefore...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."<sup>36</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demnitate>; <https://www.tpu.ro/adolescenti/ce-este-demnitatea/>, acc. 14.12.2016.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Popescu, *Demnitatea umană. Contribuții filosofice la cunoașterea de sine (Human dignity. Philosophical contributions to self-knowledge)*, (Târgoviște: Editura Macarie, 1998), 9.

<sup>3</sup> A. Potângă, Gh. Costachi, *Asigurarea drepturilor omului în lume (Ensuring human rights worldwide)*, (Chișinău: Editura "Epigraf", 2003), 16.

<sup>4</sup> N. Popa, *Teoria generală a dreptului (General theory of law)*, (București, 1992), 184, in Alexandru Arseni, „Demnitatea—calitate imanentă a ființei umane” (Dignity—immanent quality of the human being), in Ion Mereuță, *Demnitatea—valoare supremă a omului și națiunii. Materialele Conferinței științifice “Demnitatea Umană și Națională în contextual integrării europene a Republicii Moldova”* (Dignity—the supreme value of man and nation. Scientific Conference materials „Human and National Dignity in the context of Moldova’s European integration”), (Chișinău: Elan–Poligraf, 2004), 123.

<sup>5</sup> Alexandru Arseni, „Demnitatea—calitate imanentă a ființei umane” (Dignity—immanent quality of the human being), in Ion Mereuță, *Demnitatea—valoare supremă a omului și națiunii. Materialele Conferinței științifice “Demnitatea Umană și Națională în contextual integrării europene a Republicii Moldova”* (Dignity—the supreme value of man and nation. Scientific Conference materials „Human and National Dignity in the context of Moldova’s European integration”), (Chișinău: Elan–Poligraf, 2004), 124.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, (b. 24 februarie 1463, Mirandola -d. 17 noiembrie 1494, Florența), Italian philosopher and humanist scholar from the Renaissance period.

<sup>7</sup> *Speech about human dignity.*

<sup>8</sup> *Philosophical, theological and cabalistic conclusions.*

<sup>9</sup> [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni\\_Pico\\_della\\_Mirandola](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Pico_della_Mirandola), accesed 13.12.2016.

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, a gateway edition, transl. by A. Robert Caponigri, (Chicago, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1956), 7–8.

<sup>11</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Opera filozofico-teologică. [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni\\_Pico\\_della\\_Mirandola](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Pico_della_Mirandola), accessed 12.13.2016.

<sup>12</sup> Wilhelm Moldovan, “Pastorul și demnitatea umană” (The pastor and human dignity), *Curierul Adventist (Adventist Courier)*, (București: 1976, LIV), 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Victor Popescu, *Demnitatea umană. Contribuții filosofice la cunoașterea de sine (Human dignity. Philosophical contributions to self-knowledge)*, (Târgoviște: Editura Macarie, 1998), 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 9–10.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Singer (ed.), *Tratat de etică (A Companion to Ethics)*, Vasile Boari, Raluca Mărincean (trad.), (București: Polirom, 2006), 404–406.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Popescu, *Demnitatea umană. Contribuții filosofice la cunoașterea de sine (Human dignity. Philosophical contributions to self-knowledge)*, (Târgoviște: Editura Macarie, 1998), 14–16.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 16–17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>21</sup> Alexandru Arseni, “Demnitatea—calitate imanentă a ființei umane” (Dignity—immanent quality of the human being), in Ion Mereuță, *Demnitatea—valoare supremă a omului și națiunii. Materialele Conferinței științifice “Demnitatea Umană și Națională în contextual integrării europene a Republicii Moldova” (Dignity—the supreme value of man and nation. Scientific Conference materials „Human and National Dignity in the context of Moldova’s European integration”)*, (Chișinău: Elan–Poligraf, 2004), 124.

<sup>22</sup> Ludmila Ețco, Ștefan Gațcan, “Demnitatea umană” (Human dignity), in Ion Mereuță, *Demnitatea—valoare supremă a omului și națiunii. Materialele Conferinței științifice “Demnitatea Umană și Națională în contextual integrării europene a Republicii Moldova” (Dignity—the supreme value of man and nation. Scientific Conference materials „Human and National Dignity in the context of Moldova’s European integration”)*, (Chișinău: Elan–Poligraf, 2004), 128.

<sup>23</sup> Dimitrie Gusti, *Spre o etică vie a națiunii noastre (Towards a living ethic of our nation)*, Op. vol. II, (București: Editura Academiei RSR, 1969), 296.

<sup>24</sup> Victor Popescu, *Demnitatea umană. Contribuții filosofice la cunoașterea de sine (Human dignity. Philosophical contributions to self-knowledge)*, (Târgoviște: Editura Macarie, 1998), 92.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–24.

<sup>26</sup> Dimitrie Gusti, *Spre o etică vie a națiunii noastre (Towards a living ethic of our nation)*, Op. vol. II, (București: Editura Academiei RSR, 1969), 295.

<sup>27</sup> Dimitrie Gusti (b. February 13, 1880, Iasi–d. October 30, 1955, Bucharest) was a Romanian philosopher, sociologist and esthetician. Member of the Romanian Academy in 1919, president of the Romanian Academy (1944–1946), Minister of Public Instruction, Cults and Arts between 1932 and 1933, professor at the Universities of Bucharest and Iasi. Dimitrie Gusti is considered to be the creator of Romanian sociology. [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dimitrie\\_Gusti](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dimitrie_Gusti); <http://sociologie.dreamstyler.ro/gusti.htm> accessed 12.14.2016.

<sup>28</sup> Victor Popescu, *Demnitatea umană. Contribuții filosofice la cunoașterea de sine (Human dignity. Philosophical contributions to self-knowledge)*, (Târgoviște: Editura Macarie, 1998), 92.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> For more details see: John Warwick Montgomery, *Drepturile omului & demnitatea umană (Human Rights and Human Dignity)*, (Oradea: Editura Cartea Creștină, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Wilhelm Moldovan, „Pastorul și demnitatea umană” (The pastor and human dignity), *Curierul Adventist (Adventist Courier)*, (București: 1976, LIV), 10–11.

<sup>32</sup> About good faith and bad faith see: André Comte–Sponville, *Mic tratat al marilor virtuți (Petit traité des grandes vertus)*, Dan Radu Stănescu, Bogdan Udrea, Corin Hădăreanu (trad.), (București: Editura Univers, 2006), 214–216.

<sup>33</sup> Wilhelm Moldovan, „Pastorul și demnitatea umană” (The pastor and human dignity), *Curierul Adventist (Adventist Courier)*, (București: 1976, LIV), 11.

<sup>34</sup> Alexandru Arseni, “Demnitatea—calitate imanentă a ființei umane” (Dignity—immanent quality of the human being), in Ion Mereuță, *Demnitatea—valoare supremă a omului și națiunii. Materialele Conferinței științifice “Demnitatea Umană și Națională în contextual integrării europene a Republicii Moldova”* (Dignity—the supreme value of man and nation. Scientific Conference materials „Human and National Dignity in the context of Moldova’s European integration”), (Chișinău: Elan–Poligraf, 2004), 125.

<sup>35</sup> Victor Popescu, *Demnitatea umană. Contribuții filosofice la cunoașterea de sine* (Human dignity. Philosophical contributions to self-knowledge), (Târgoviște: Editura Macarie, 1998), 96–97.

<sup>36</sup> King James Bible, Ephesians 4:1–3.

# Human Dignity—An Economic Approach

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**ABSTRACT:** Attention to human dignity is reflected in the economic life of the individual. This paper explores the interplay of human dignity and basic socio-economic rights of human beings. Access to basic economic and social services is crucial, not only to people's physical basic needs, but also to enable the development of their potential to shape their own lives and to be active agents in the shaping of a "dignified society". Human dignity as a relational concept requires society to respect the equal worth of all the people regardless of gender and social or economic status.

**KEY WORDS:** human dignity, human rights, economic rights, value, duties (moral), respect, human being and principles.

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## Introduction and concept

Centuries ago<sup>1</sup>, the most precious metal was the pure gold of Ophir<sup>2</sup>. To compare a human being with the fine gold of Ophir is to bring the highest tribute to the man and also recognition of human dignity and value.

What is man? Understanding what man is, we will be able to treat him as man deserves, in other words, treat man with dignity. The answer to this question can be quite varied, depending on the design from which the question is made, the cultural field and even the personal beliefs of each individual. It is clear that the man has a different nature from that of animals, able of governing himself and also having the ability to understand himself as an individual and, at the same time, as part of a society that interacts with others.

A discourse about the human dignity and its value present a complex problem, and the interlocutor finds himself or herself in a delicate dilemma: to talk about human dignity is difficult, not to talk about it is inhuman. In particular we can highlight an inevitable aspect to be recognized and is very clear: yes, human life has immeasurable value, human dignity is an element that goes into the package called life and should be respected as a right of every human being.

In the beginning we will reflect on the idea of human dignity. That allows us to target its conceptualization and helps its conceptual use as an element that serves to clarify the conflicts and dilemmas that are occurring in various areas of economic and social life. Only with a clear concept of dignity is it possible to construct the means for its defense and development in economic and social life.

The English word 'dignity' is derived from the Latin word *dignitas*, which in turn is derived from *dignus*, whose sense implies a position of prestige or honor, "deserving" and corresponds in its Greek sense to *axios* or worthy, valuable, appreciated, precious.

In the XV century, Pico de la Mirandola developed the concept of human dignity that would later be followed and enriched by many<sup>3</sup> writing his *Discourse about human dignity*, in which he speaks of the special and distinct nature of human beings as God's creation. The human being is different from other living things,

it has the capacity to act autonomously, to guide their future and to make decisions<sup>4</sup>.

In one of his work, Ronald Dworkin offers a theory of dignity that comes from mating of two principles: self-respect and authenticity; which lead a person to obtain respect and recognition based on their own actions.<sup>5</sup> However, we are aware that in the time in which we live, this is not always the case as we will see throughout this article.

## **Human dignity from an economic perspective**

In its historical development, the idea of human dignity has referred to various aspects of the human condition or has been understood from different perspectives or dimensions. Francisco Garcia Moreno, for example, identifies what he calls the four dimensions of dignity: a) political and social; b) religious or theological; c) ontological and d) ethical, personal and social in the sense of autonomy<sup>6</sup>, which corresponds in some way to its evolution or development throughout history.

To talk about human dignity without taking into account the economic perspective would be equal to denying the reality in which we live. In a society where the focus is on the human condition and meeting the needs of the people, the economy plays a central role in human dignity. I am aware of how sensitive this subject (human dignity from an economic perspective) is, because, as Wiliam R. Waters said "The major concern of social economics is explaining the economy in its broadest aspect, that is showing how man deals with the ordinary business on using human and physical resources to achieve a level of material comfort"<sup>7</sup> a certain level to human dignity I can say.

We ignore how the world will be in the next 30 or 40 years, but we do know it will be very different from what it is now. In some way or another we will be faced with some of the most formidable challenges that the humanity has ever encountered: the consequences of climate change, depletion of the primary source of energy (oil) and the necessity to accommodate 2 billion more people (from the current 7,4 billion<sup>8</sup> to 9,4 billion, the population projected by mid-century).

These challenges may be at the gates of a potential economic crisis, which may be triggered by multiple causes (the unsustainability of the deficit in the trade balance in certain areas of the world, the explosion of new financial and / or property bubbles, the refugee crisis, just to name a few). In the same context we have the threat of permanent global war and growing social inequality, triggering large migratory flows, as well as poverty and exclusion.

There are many that consider that society has reached the limits<sup>9</sup> in which humanity finds itself. The way in which we produce and distribute the goods that satisfy our needs has put world economies on the brink of collapse. The liberal utopia of self-regulating market has proved that is a crude chimera.

Different economic systems have not been able to meet the most basic material needs of the population (more than 1 billion people survive on less than one dollar a day; 1 billion do not have clean water...), nor is a sign that they will get it soon. Data from 2003 shows 54 countries were even poorer that year than in 1990<sup>10</sup> so this seems to indicate that a lot of persons in some parts of the world, day by day lose human rights therefore, lose the right to have dignified life.

## Economic rights in the name of human dignity

Human rights have to be based on principles of dignity and freedom. Unfortunately today, “both are severely compromised”<sup>11</sup> because a lot of human beings cannot meet their basic needs of food, peace, freedom, and education.

In the name of human dignity, every person should be able to enjoy the main economic and social rights such as the right to work in a safe environment, the right to social security, the right to own property, the right to education, the right to food, and the right to health. These rights do not guarantee that every citizen will have all of these, but they do guarantee that every citizen will be given the opportunity to have all of these basic rights. Some organization, as NESRI<sup>12</sup>, highlights the importance and the necessity that every person be afforded conditions under which they are able to meet their needs. They highlight the big importance of the basic rights as: education, housing, work, etc.

Contrary to civil and political rights, which are immediately applicable and essentially based on the prohibition of States from doing something, the economic rights tend to be considered as requiring States to take action, usually in the form of specific legislation, policies or programs, so those rights can be realized. The realization of those rights is seen as progressive: full economic, social, and cultural rights can be achieved only gradually<sup>13</sup>. Resources and time may be required, though international legislation clearly states that full rights should be reached over time, and that States have a legal obligation to take immediate and continued action to do so.

The right to education must ensure access to quality schools and to an education that is directed towards the full development of the human personality. Every child must have equal access to quality education adapted to meet his or her needs. The

aims of education must be directed toward the development of each child's personality and full potential, preparing children to participate in society and to do work that is rewarding and reasonably remunerative.

Yet time and again, children from poor and marginalized communities are denied an education or experience discrimination. Education prepares a child to become a dignified adult. According to the New Internationalizes—*State of the World*, Feb 1997—, just one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child in school by the year 2000 and yet it did not happen. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their name<sup>14</sup>. There must be equitable distribution of resources in education across communities according to need.

Schools must also respect the inherent dignity of every child creating an environment of respect and tolerance in the classroom, preventing practices and disciplinary policies that cause harm or humiliation, and instead promote a spirit of self-confidence and self-expression.

The right to food guarantees freedom from hunger and access to safe and nutritious food. Food should be available in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture.

It is estimated that 8.500 children die each day due to severe malnutrition and 160 million children suffer rickets. On the other side of the coin, 42 million children are overweight<sup>15</sup>.

The spectrum of nutrition can be seen in two forms: by excess and by deficiency, both forms severely affect human dignity. First form has to do with self-respect, human dignity as a product of a persons' own actions, and the other form has to do with a

right which partially depends of others. The excess is represented by obesity, and the deficiency is represented by malnutrition. Malnutrition affects one in every three people in the world with a further 794 million who have nutritional deficiencies; contrasting with 1,9 billion overweight adults <sup>16</sup>.

At least 80% of the human population lives on less than \$10 a day. The poorest 40 percent of the world's population accounts for 5 percent of global income. The richest 20 percent accounts for three-quarters of world income<sup>17</sup>. This figure is based on purchasing power parity, which basically suggests that prices of goods in countries tend to equate under floating exchange rates and therefore people would be able to purchase the same quantity of goods in any country for a given sum of money. That is the notion that a dollar should buy the same amount in all countries. Hence if a poor person in a poor country living on a dollar a day moved to the U.S. with no changes to their income, they would still be living on a dollar a day.

The human right to health means that everyone has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, which includes access to all medical services, sanitation, adequate food, decent housing, healthy working conditions, and a clean environment.

Everyone has the right to the health care they need, but not everyone can receive it. Approximately 660 million people without sanitation live on less than \$2 a day, and some 385 million live on less than \$1 a day. Close to half of all people in developing countries suffer from health problems caused by polluted water and sanitation deficits. The costs associated with health spending, productivity losses and labor diversions are greatest in some of the poorest countries. Sub-Saharan Africa loses about 5% of GDP, or some \$28,4 billion annually, a figure that exceeded total aid flows and debt relief to the region in 2003.<sup>18</sup>

The right to housing is part of the guarantee for human dignity. Everyone has a fundamental human right to housing, which ensures access to a safe, secure, habitable, and affordable home with freedom from forced eviction. The access to this right must be provided to all persons irrespective of income or access to economic resources.

We all have the right to housing, yet over 10%<sup>19</sup> of people worldwide live in a slum or informal settlement. Living conditions are often dire with overcrowding, little or no access to clean water, toilets or healthcare. Many people living in slums or informal settlements are not protected from harassment such as forced evictions because their right to live there is not legally recognized.

I do not think that human rights are just an abstract concept, but I am sure that for many, it is. Rights only have meaning if it is possible to enforce them. But there has to be some mechanism for that enforcement. I will readily concede that the enforcement of certain civil and political rights has economic ramifications. To respect these rights or not, having access to them or not, will decide the level of human dignity.

At this very moment, billions of people around the world are trying to solve their material needs for a dignified life; we are wondering if they will ever attain these needs.

### **A reality with many suitors**

Through the development of modernism and post-modernism, dignity assumed a wider dimension by becoming understood not as a fact, but as a duty of respect.<sup>20</sup> Economic and social importance was attributed to<sup>21</sup> the authority of the state.<sup>22</sup> The respect of human dignity should be stated in legal standards of the highest level, such as constitutional texts<sup>23</sup>.

Many times people generally seem too busy in the day-to-day projects to worry about what they are doing complies with the basic principles of human dignity, which is a mistake in my opinion. Meanwhile, neither researchers nor the government can agree on how to label the phenomenon.

In the chase for money, looking to increase their wealth, people have become more aggressive and more isolated. Politeness and care for fellow man has disappeared. Rarely the rich help the poor or a neighbor in their neighborhood. A teenager no longer offers a seat to an old lady and more often than not human relations break down resulting in intolerance, debauchery, envy, selfishness, indifference, betrayal, dissatisfaction, and hatred.

As often as a person encounters situations to defend their own dignity and the dignity of others, I urge you esteemed reader to be a person who promotes and “remembers” how to act with dignity in every situation. This is the duty of every human being.

On an individual level, these obligations encompass the requirement that we treat others with care and respect (Edel, 1969; Pritchard, 1972). For organizations, communities, or nations, they imply a need for forms of social order that promote fairness, equality, and equitable access to the basic resources that ensure “dignified living” (Arnason, 1998; Edel, 1969; Johnson, 1971; Liebenberg, 2005; Oyaya & Kaseje, 2001; Sacks, 2002; Schachter, 1983; Tinder, 2003). Such meaningful attention to dignity at the societal level “requires a theory of justice that magnifies dignity as one of its guiding principles” (Horton, 2004 Horton, p. 1084)<sup>24</sup>.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even man than the golden wedge of Ophir”. Bible, Isaiah 13:12

<sup>2</sup> For centuries, Ofir’s location has been a mystery for those who study the Bible. Some thought it would have been located somewhere in India, others believed it was in any point on the south coast of Arabia and there were some who believed that it was founded on the coast of Somalia. But more recent archaeological discoveries, indicate that this location was legendary emporium in Dilmun, an ancient town on an island in the Persian Gulf near Kuwait, where was developed the Gulf War.

<sup>3</sup> Peces Barba, Gregorio, “Derechos fundamentales”, en [http://e-archivo.uc3m.es/bitstream/10016/10462/1/derechos\\_Feces\\_RJCM\\_1987.pdf](http://e-archivo.uc3m.es/bitstream/10016/10462/1/derechos_Feces_RJCM_1987.pdf), versión castellana de la voz “*Diritti e doverifundamental?*” destinada al *Novísimo Digesto Italiano* en la parte referente a los derechos, 7.

<sup>4</sup> See Pico De la Mirandola, Giovanni, *De la dignidad del hombre* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1984), 105.

<sup>5</sup> Roland Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 204.

<sup>6</sup> García Moreno Francisco, “El concepto de dignidad como categoría existencial. Un recorrido del concepto a lo largo de la historia de la filosofía,” el *Búho*, *Revista Electrónica de la Sociedad Andaluza de Filosofía*, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> William R Waters, Review of Social Economy, *Social Economics: a solidarist perspective*, vol. XLVI, nº 2, 1998, 1

<sup>8</sup> According to World meters in 2016, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population>

<sup>9</sup> C Gretchen C. Daily and Paul R. Ehrlich, Population, Sustainability, and Earth’s Carrying Capacity: A framework for estimating population sizes and lifestyles that could be sustained without undermining future generations.

<sup>10</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 2003, *Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty*

<sup>11</sup> NESRI, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, *Economic and Social Rights*, C. Albisa Executive Director 2015.

<sup>12</sup> NESRI (National Economic and Social Rights Initiative) advocates for public policies that guarantee the universal and equitable fulfillment of the basic human rights in the United States.

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children*, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Are the data collected by the *World Nutrition Report 2015*, Fazle Hasan Abed Founder and President.

<sup>16</sup> World Bank, *Key Development Data & Statistics*, World Bank, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravallion, The developing world is poorer than we thought, but no less successful in the fight against poverty, World Bank, August 2008.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations *Human Development Report 2006*, 6 & 35.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank, *Key Development Data & Statistics*, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Pelè, Antonio, “Una aproximación...”, cit., 3.

<sup>21</sup> García Moreno, Francisco, “El concepto.”, cit., 7.

<sup>22</sup> see Gómez Sánchez, Yolanda, “Dignidad y ordenamiento comunitario”, *Revista de Derecho Constitucional Europeo*, España, Universidad de Granada, año 2, no. 4, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> The first Constitution that established the State's obligation to respect human dignity was the Irish Constitution of 1937, which expressly stated in its article 1 .: “The dignity of man is untouchable. Respect and protect it is the duty of all state power.” From then gradually the different constitutions in the world, have been incorporating human dignity in its various aspects in their articulated. For example, Article 10.1 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, etc.

<sup>24</sup> Nelson Jacobson, paper *Dignity and Health: A Review*, 2007.

# Ethics and Economics—The Context of an Ambivalent Relationship

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**ABSTRACT:** Early mankind was concerned about the relationship between ethics and economics—subject, which has often been a source of political and social tension. In the context of current society in which we talk more about an economic imperialism and its negative consequences, it becomes increasingly difficult to establish a balanced relationship between ethics and economics. Even more it is required an acute necessity to analyze more deeply the degree of interference of these two disciplines in order to establish a common denominator and highlight the specific chances of each. For a balanced report, characterized by cooperation, is essential in a positive development of society.

**KEY WORDS:** ethics, morals, economics, essential—complementary premises monistic—dualist concept.

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The relationship between the moral and the economic domain and between ethics and economics concerns human thinking since ancient times.<sup>1</sup> Expanding the market economy—starting

with 17 centuries and 18 and involving personal property and the competition—further emphasized this topic.<sup>2</sup> The countless economic scandals between the years 1960–1980 contributed to the establishment of “economic ethics” as an academic discipline.<sup>3</sup> The renowned association of economy researchers with 130 years of tradition, “Association for Social Policy”, inaugurated in 1986 the “Economics and ethics” Committee.”<sup>4</sup>

It is apparent that today the communication regarding the relationship between ethics and economy is still needed. In this sense there are no definitive answers, universally valid, but a regular update of the speeches is required. And this article is intended as a discussion about locating the issue in the context of “economic ethics” such as the importance of essential and complementary premises.

### **Theoretical framing of the subject**

To specifically locate the theoretical framing of this issue in the economic ethics it is first needed to distinguish from a phenomenological point of view between two concepts of fundamental research: one “monistic” and another “dualist”<sup>5</sup>. The monistic concept starts from the premise that ethics and economics are just two different forms of analysis of inter–human problems, while the dualist concept regards them as two different, independent, principles of potential conflict with one another.

So the suspicion regarding reductionism is valid only in the context of the monistic concept, but not in the dualist one, which from the start is based on two different principles,<sup>6</sup> and has a higher plausibility due to real experiences of many managers who are often forced to choose between moral and economic values.<sup>7</sup> Despite this fact a large international research line is based on

the monistic concept. This implies that the unsolved problems of the dualist concept will be presented further.<sup>8</sup>

It is generally considered as a weakness of the dualist concept that the two principles—economic and moral—are seen as contradictory, which makes their cooperation impossible and implausible.<sup>9</sup> Different variants of the dualist concept reveal this problem from the perspective of different difficulty levels.

1. Where there is a primacy without compromise of ethics against the economy,<sup>10</sup> implementation becomes almost impossible: for economic actors are not obliged to risk—in the context of competition—an “interruption”<sup>11</sup> of economic logic. In addition the politico–social consequence of this concept is that organizations formed for profit will be seen as opponents of ethics and morals, which must be “stopped”<sup>12</sup>, and which, for conception reasons, will be excluded from start from the position of partners in the fight “for a better world”. (K. R. Popper)

2. The mediation alternative between ethics and economics,<sup>13</sup> really promotes economy as an independent field, but it does not specifically regulate the relationship of cooperation between it and morals. Therefore the decisions will be made ad hoc.

3. This objection is also valid in the case of the variant that is based on distinct communication logics (N. Luhmann). But the question arises here too: how is this realized exactly?

4. The variant that starts from the premise of the existence of “action spaces”—such as the specific ethics of the entrepreneur<sup>14</sup>—offers ethics only action space in favorable circumstances, which become fewer and fewer in the context of globalization.

So the dualist concept—in spite of its obvious plausibility—contains a lot of unresolved issues from a theoretical point of view. Therefore it is not surprising that many researchers, especially in the economic field operate on a monistic concept.

This line of research is called the “economic ethics”<sup>15</sup>, to which the reductionism objection is raised. The economic approach to moral accepts and legitimizes at the same time—in the constructivist scientific context—other scientific approaches. But the question arises: to what extent these have a significance or influence on the “economic ethics”, issue which will be debated in the final reflections.

### **Other approaches to morality**

The fundamental assumption of the rebuilding critics from an economic point of view of morality is the idea that human behavior is not determined by explicit economic calculation—a very conclusive fact. Individuals behave properly or their socialization, according to what they were transmitted, or what they learned from parents, friends or other role models. Individuals also behave according to the gathered experiences as well as expectations of a certain institutions, and too little to ideals, utopias or their own philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding human behavior a lot of scientific theories have been made so far within the following disciplines: anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, experimental economic research and philosophical and theological ethics. It is indeed a key topic to ask the question regarding the limits of human capacity for processing information or explain what exactly constitutes a “mature self–interest”<sup>17</sup> and how individuals can be educated in this regard.

According to a constructivist methodology it is to be remembered that these academic disciplines tackle, from a systematical point of view, more questions than economic science, which in the context of this article shall not be further deepened. Yet two differences

will be mentioned, intending to highlight the potential of simple differences to develop different theories altogether.

1. Economy investigates how people react to different situations. It elaborates a *fixed pattern*, eg. “Homo economicus” after which it varies the framework conditions. For example: introduce a measure to prevent corruption or tax waiver of VAT, and consequently analyzing reaction changes according to variations in situational conditions. In the discipline of psychology these experiments are conducted contrary: a *fix situation* is developed (in laboratory experiments) that varies by different types of individuals. So psychology assigns a different behavior to several human variables: socialization, own philosophy of life, age, gender, character, etc.

2. Philosophy and theology are traditionally concerned with the entire human existence and “the essence of matter.” This topic is not emphasized by any other subjects, so that one can see a clear difference between the sciences. Indeed the social sciences use—due to concern for human interaction—a preconception about “man”, but in their specific focus on the topic of selective interest they only use the term cautiously, giving up a detailed explanation. It is believed that the economy needs in its work only the determination of the terms “rational animal” and “social animal”.

An economist doesn’t challenge—or should not challenge—that individuals have the so-called “moral motivations”<sup>18</sup>; or also that philosophical ethics, education, psychology and other subjects already mentioned can develop different scientific theories on these issues. Also an economist does not dispute that these theories give valuable insights into the business due to specifying the existing essential restrictions in the economic model of *preferences-restrictions*. What is questionable though is that it is a falsification of “homo economicus” (based on constructivist

methodology), and on the other hand it is not obvious at all that on this basis can a plausible theory of economic ethics be build. Where there are such attempts, it is explicitly stated in part, and on the other hand it implies that high altruistic reasons or “mature self-interest” are able to produce the strongest moral imperatives against the materials pressures of the economy.<sup>19</sup>

## **The essential premises of morality**

The concept that morality is able to dominate the economic logic actually evades the basic question of A. Smith, K. Marx and M. Weber, namely: how long are altruistic and moral motives as well as the “mature self-interest” able to withstand the pressure and competition conditions in the economy.<sup>20</sup> In this context it is about implementing an ethical concept in terms of competition of a real economic market. It is about the ability to capitalize morality through a few moral competitors and at the same time about moral stability in these conditions.<sup>21</sup>

It is necessary that every ethics to systematically analyze economy’s answer: moral can have stability in society only if it is compatible with the incentives, or whether is made compatible<sup>22</sup> through political order. Because in the case of dilemmatic structures the dominant strategy is a miscalculation, it is recommended only a morality which can be rebuild as Nash equilibrium.<sup>23</sup>

This argumentation of this report model between morality and economics can be exemplified through an image: Morality is like a glacier—whose 7th part is on the surface, while 6/7 are invisible under water. Those dealing with ethics are attracted to the shine of morality, values, the attractiveness of a mature personality but lose sight of the economic foundation, almost imperceptible from a phenomenological–introspective point of view.<sup>24</sup>

This escape is not harmful as long as morality is compatible with the incentives—which are usually seen in civilized societies. Social conventions, traditions, cultural and legal system—so the entire complex of formal and informal institutions—contribute here that morality be applied practically without the fear of exploitation.<sup>25</sup> Children are socialized in these societies precisely for these reasons in the moral context, these taking over and then internalizing the extract of collective experiences throughout the cultural history under the form of some moral rules.<sup>26</sup>

Experimental economic research<sup>27</sup> analyzes the behavior of individuals modeled from a cultural point of view,<sup>28</sup> and discover the preferences of fairness and justice, an aversion to lack of equality as well as selflessness (conditional and unconditional).<sup>29</sup> These results cannot be denied as such. It however remains an open question: who will these attributes belong to—the individual or cultural conditions? If from a strategic—theoretical point of view an assignment for the individual occurs—as it tendentially happens in economic—experimental research—then the whole theory falls apart in a lot of results or partial theories.<sup>30</sup> But if there is an assignment for the cultural conditions—traditionally classic—then the methodical unity of theory remains unaffected by all the necessary differentiations, winning additional new possibilities.<sup>31</sup>

However it is not always necessary to take into account the preferences of fairness in their economic foundation—sometimes this can be, eg. in personal management, even very counterproductive.<sup>32</sup> Problems arise, however, usually unconsciously, when the economic base changes. Then moral rules come into conflict with economic experiences. The subject of “economic ethics” is precisely the way to treat these situations. If ethics, pedagogy or other idealistic theories propose that morality to stand up **against** the economic logic of incentives,

if they talk about the destruction of economic logic and try to stop the economizing of all aspects of life, then they operate unaware, precisely against its own foundation. The result will be the morals of calling, postulation and blaming one another. From a socio–political point of view this attitude leads to the more fundamentalist visible opposition towards economy and its synonyms “neoliberalism”, “capitalism”, “utilitarianism” and to all sorts of theories of decadence and conspiracy—that are as old as the universal history.

If individual aspiration for personal advantage or whether economic theory really needs a correction, then it cannot come through morality in terms of competition of the market economy, but only through an improvement in the advantage calculation, through an improvement in the economy.

This idea has very old roots: “Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land given to you by the Lord your God.” (Exodus 20: 12) The long version based on economy of the fourth commandment summarizes itself in the small catechism thusly: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” It further addresses children, not knowing the full meaning. But systematically it means: moral rules should be seen as practical forms, abbreviated, in which are condensed the experiences and deep reflections.

Usually people can deal with such forms. But if the economic base changes—eg. deficits or conversely by an explosion of new technical, social, political or economic possibilities—then it is needed for the moral to be again redesigned/redefined in the long version. Without an implementation based on moral incentives a valid normative cannot be obtained. Even if morality is based on the desires, interests and preferences of the individual, it embodies them in the “advantage” field (self–interest)—objective filling of the traditional economy—and expands it in two dimensions

(although this expansion has to do with emphasizing and not reducing the advantage).

First short-term calculation is replaced by a long-term one—the dimension of time—and then the individualist calculation is replaced with an interactive one—social dimension. From its own point of view the last dimension is more important than the first, because the individual only interactive—i.e. using other qualities—can achieve its optimum individual.

An economic ethics accompanied by an economic method can thus “see” more than those theories which approach morality from a phenomenological, introspective or verbal-analytic point of view, because it “sees” the invisible economic condition of morality as well as the points where moral development acts, both in appearance and in moments of erosion. This is of particular importance in the current time because people—due to globalization—have lost their orientation. Economic reconstruction of ethics leads us into the situation to explain the essential properties of morality. But “a morality that ... thinks it can overcome the knowledge of economy rules is not a morality but moralism, so opposite of morality.” These are the words of the representative of an institution who has passed through bitter experience, trying to impose moral or faith positions against the rules of scientific basis: Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger<sup>33</sup>.

### **Complementary premises of morality**

The essential prerequisites require their expansion through additional premises. There are questions or issues which the economy does not face, to which it does not have an answer, but there are essential questions in the orientation of human behavior and to which ethics or theology can provide an answer.

Here I “see” other sciences deeper than economics, just because they are closer to human nature. Such questions are for example: what makes sense today to understand by a “good life” by happiness or “eudaimonia”? What models offer tradition? What moral standards have formed different cultures? What is the relationship between different moral values? Can there be a coherent system of values? How does a moral education look? It is oriented to Kohlberg’s scheme or not? What factors influence the formation of preferences—the parents’ home, church, school, groups of friends? From a theoretical point of view and generally formulated, an “economic ethics” based on an economic method needs ethics especially in three contexts.

First it needs to show to what extent and in what way the basic terms of economy contain basic principles of ethics. This is the concern of H. Albach, who in management science, considers as ethical principles of economic nature the following: the principle of administration, the principle of earning, the principles of equality and brotherhood in the context of reciprocity of production factors, financial balance principle and the principle of autonomy.

Secondly economy ethics needs an ethical input in its work in the form of moral ideals, utopias and visions of a successful life or about a social order where all people can live in freedom, dignity, justice, without fear and shortages. This input traditionally comes from ethics, theology, literature and art. Yet these ideas are not regarded as concrete behavioral instructions, but as heuristic instructions, of searching “in foro interno”—according to T. Hobbes. They lead the search toward institutions compatible with incentives that make possible the implementation of these ideas in real life conditions. Ethics as a heuristic is the key word: through ethics we get a type of guidance, which acts as a compass and not like a navigation system.

Finally modern societies are organized through rules-based systems. But they cannot make all decisions based on rules. Thus all rule-based systems are incomplete, just because they raise the level of flexibility in adapting to new situations.

Ethics comes into play precisely in the concretization of some incomplete rules, especially the entrepreneur's ethics: it takes over the company in detail, based on legal rules and formal organization. Thus much space remains for traditional ethics. As a heuristic form it can achieve higher efficiency than as a system of concrete instructions, because heuristics penetrates all economic reflections.

### **Final thoughts**

This debate has tried to show that the economism, accompanied by reductionism and imperialism—if properly understood—are not only harmless, contrary to popular belief criticism, but may also represent a gain in ethics. On the other hand, economy without ethics only has a functional character, being detached from the reality of human existence. However not only the critics, but the economists themselves do not clearly see the methodological status of the economy, which leads to mutual misunderstandings. Here it is about a methodological theoretical concept, meaning selective or specific, which from a systematic point of view cannot claim exclusivity, but only awareness of a very high degree of abstraction. Economy does not prevent interdisciplinarity, on the contrary it depends on it. Yet, throughout history the relationship between ethics and economics is an ambivalent, unclear one.

But both sciences—ethics and economy—have their specific role in human existence, providing answers and solutions to various questions and topics. It is therefore necessary to achieve

a balance between their interests and between materialism and idealism, between solidarity and progress, between globalism and regionalism, between society and the individual. And a balance—which is not a fixed position—always involves a high degree of tension, practically manifested in the opening and disposal of repeated renewal of the political and social discourse.

My wish is that those who get involved because of the moral cause in the areas of ethics, theology or pedagogy, and who feel marginalized in a defensive position by economic successes or their actors, can be restored to cooperate in a common cause, for ethics gives economy the human dimension.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Scherer, (2003) S.39–60.

<sup>2</sup> Herms, (1991) S.178–197.

<sup>3</sup> Steinmann, (1989/1991) S.3–32; Suchanek, (2001) S. 86.

<sup>4</sup> Here it is about a first superficial characterization. Later it will become clear that in the basic structure of constructivist methodology can not exist a monism.

<sup>5</sup> Albach (2005) S. 809–833.

<sup>6</sup> Ulrich, (1996), 137–171.

<sup>7</sup> Küpper, (2005) S. 835

<sup>8</sup> Comp. Homann (2002) S. 45ff.

<sup>9</sup> Steinmann (1995) S. 143–174.

<sup>10</sup> Klassisch Ulrich (1997); limited to entrepreneurs Steinmann ethics, Löhr (1989/1991) and (1995).

<sup>11</sup> Ulrich (1996) S. 156.

<sup>12</sup> Scherer (2003) S. 95.

<sup>13</sup> Klassisch Koslowski (1988).

<sup>14</sup> This argument is used by classical writers of different origin, such as: Steinmann, Koslowski, but not Küpper (1988) and (2005), special S. 839f.

<sup>15</sup> Suchanek (2001).

<sup>16</sup> Kant (1785/1786) A B S. 126. comp. Jonas (1979/1985) S. 262.

<sup>17</sup> Herms (2001/2004) S. 196.

<sup>18</sup> Vgl. Homann (2004).

<sup>19</sup> Wieland, (2001) S. 8–21.

<sup>20</sup> Frank, (1993) S. 159–171.

<sup>21</sup> Ulrich, (1996) S. 137–171.

<sup>22</sup> The meaning of formal and informal institutions is to reward the desired interactions and penalize the undesirable ones.

<sup>23</sup> Suchanek (2001).

<sup>24</sup> Wieland, (2001 si 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Frey & Bohnet (1996) S.292–307 Comp. Habermas 1991; Hermes (2002/2004) S.178–197.

<sup>26</sup> Hermes (2002/2004); Buchanan (1985) S. 35–47.

<sup>27</sup> As to the economic experimental see Schoefer (2005).

<sup>28</sup> Suchanek (2001).

<sup>29</sup> Frank (1996) S. 187–192.

<sup>30</sup> Herms (2001/2004).

<sup>31</sup> Herms (2001/2004) S.178–197.

<sup>32</sup> It is possible that his collaborators do not feel taken seriously in personal identity, which has a strong moral dimension. So in the process of producing the moral it is needed to appear as moral. Wieland (1999; 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Ratzinger (1986) S. 58.

# Human Dignity: A Religious Appraisal

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper represents a sketchy appraisal of human dignity from the perspective of religion, through the lenses of poverty, education, health and conflict. The author reflects on current data and on the general trends and attitudes that define what honors or dishonors a human being in the contemporary world.

**KEY WORDS:** dignity, religion, poverty, literacy, health, conflict.

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## The question of definition

The logic proximity between the noun “dignity” and the auxiliary verb “to be” escorts one’s thinking to the contrast between an individual’s perception of the self, and the perception of the others. Accordingly, the simple parlance implies that “dignity” represents the opposite of “lowliness”, carrying multiple propositions related to what defines and determines the structure of a society. Synonymous with virtue of “excellence” and with the status of “nobility”, dignity recreates the persona by contrasting one’s self-perception in line with the social expectations imposed by what a group defines as

good or bad, desirable or undesirable, beautiful or ugly—in other words, *values*.

The implicit reverberations of the blending between *excellence* and *nobility*, point to a wide array of meanings encapsulated by terms such as: “address”, “cachet”, “character”, “consequence”, “courtliness”, “culture”, “decency”, “decorum”, “distinction”, “elevation”, “eminence”, “ethics”, “etiquette”, “glory”, “grace”, “grandeur”, “gravity”, “greatness”, “hauteur”, “honor”, “importance”, “loftiness”, “majesty”, “merit”, “morality”, “nobleness”, “perfection”, “poise”, “prestige”, “propriety”, “quality”, “rank”, “regard”, “renown”, “respectability”, “seemliness”, “self-respect”, “significance”, “solemnity”, “splendor”, “standing”, “state”, “stateliness”, “station”, “stature”, “status”, “sublimity”, “virtue”, “worth”, and “worthiness.”<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the ensemble of meanings proposed by this multitude of synonyms, highlight a tight relationship between material and symbolic values. As such, the concept of dignity cannot be reasonably analyzed, except also within the multifarious encounter between the auxiliary verbs “to have” and “to be.” In fact, evolutionary biology itself demonstrates that personality is shaped by the outcome of the competition between the two auxiliary verbs.<sup>2</sup>

As it is obvious, in the general acceptance of the contemporary society, dignity is representative of the aspirations for recognition sought by the individual, and by the society; with the material values serving as a point of reference and quantification.

## **An Anthropologic Appraisal**

In shaping up the concept of dignity, religion plays a crucial role in the sense that it defines the ultimate human purpose, and the meaning of life. It also offers emotional reassurance, it generates solidarity, it establishes rules for the daily life, and it works as an element of

social control. It also fosters adaptation to new conditions of life imposed by social change.<sup>3</sup> One can credibly argue that organized religion is the predominant institution that assigns meaning and value to human life, while also reshaping cultural beliefs.

In general, from the perspective of organized religions, dignity is recognized as being an inherent right of each individual. The human being is an avatar of a deity in Hinduism; is created in God's image in Judaism; and even coexists with the divine through hypostatic union in Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> While Judaism and Christianity bestow upon the individual a superlative sense of dignity—that of being created in the image of God (B-Tselem Elohim, Imago Dei)—Islam considers that God's attributes are his alone;<sup>5</sup> yet recognizing the pre-eminence of human being above other creatures.<sup>6</sup>

## Contemporary Sociologic Realities

In its essence, religion is faith understood as trust and devotion to a community that shares a narrative about the meaning of life. While personal attributes such as education, wealth, poverty, and health reshape one's sense of dignity, religious interpretation had often been an arena where the idealized status of dignity and the struggle for survival, imposed by the harshness of life, had been negotiated. Using *theodicy* as a mechanism to maintain social control, organized religions have historically promoted ideologies of social stratification based on wealth and entitlement, such as in the Hindu cast system; have promoted social equality since "there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female" (Gal 3:28); or, on the contrary, have promised better chances in heaven because, "if our earthly house . . . were dissolved, we have a building of God . . . in the heavens." (1 Cor 5:1.)

## Education and Literacy

The progress of civilization owes to education and literacy. Since the dawn of humanity down to civilization, education had redefined human dignity, and it will continue to do so for as long as humanity itself will exist. The ancient Greek philosophers claimed that education gives rise to freedom, and freedom generates and maintains the dignity of the individual. “For in these matters we must not believe the many, who say that free persons only ought to be educated, but we should rather believe the philosophers, who say that the educated only are free,” said Epictetus.<sup>7</sup>

Education improves the moral values of a community by reshaping its laws, customs, and the public opinion. It develops the mind, it organizes the daily life, it gives structure to labor and rest, it creates social structure. It empowers the talented to develop new skills, to expand vocation, and to create new professions. Education also defines and develops the responsibilities towards one’s family and state.

Following claims of divine revelation—claims understood as privileged moments in time when God acts as a teacher and (re)educates humanity—the human being receives educational responsibilities. If to an inheritor of the Abrahamic faith system, the refusal of education may bring shame and poverty (Prv 13:18), excessive education may drive someone insane (Acts 26:24). Education can also prompt the Divine to hold the sage accountable for not hindering the ignorant from committing a sin (Sayid Sultan).<sup>8</sup>

With the sociologic progress of religion, the idea of religious education and literacy led to the creation of structure. Through education, structured religions enforced cohesiveness within groups, as well as the leader’s superiority in relation to the rest of the group. With God as a teacher, the human being became a learner. Even though all learners had equal status, the messenger between the teacher and the pupil was granted a privileged status.

In time, organized religions began mimicking the divine-human paradigm by creating new structures of authority. From its outset, the new structures of authority granted a more dignified status to those fulfilling the teaching function, such as clergy and prophets.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the conflict between the superior status of a teacher (be this purely religious or both secular-religious), and the equal status of each human being before the divinity, led to a loss of dignity, when such “divinely” ordained leaders abused their status and begun humiliating, rejecting and alienating the other human beings. In reaction to this reality, the move was to shatter the paradigm of divinely-ordained<sup>10</sup> status of superiority, and return all authority to the *saeculum*; that is to the living generation.

This return of dignity back to the living generation led to various forms of social reorganization polarized between the particularity of nationalism and transnational cosmopolitanism. Chauvinist nationalist education excluded the ethnic “other” and argued that it protected the dignity of the group, seeing it as “an imagined political community, which is inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>11</sup> Calvinist universalism, on the other hand, considered any human being as a “neighbor” — “the meaning of ‘neighbor’ being that *all* persons, near and distant, are to be loved”<sup>12</sup>—and called for the protection of human dignity through human rights advocacies.

The twentieth century valued education not only as a human right, but more so as a national resource, and as a matter of national security. Therefore, the states began investing resources to massively educate its citizens and created universities, laboratories, and so on.

Today, at the global level, the Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio (CGER)—that is the index that compares actual school enrolment from kindergarten through university against the ‘school-age’ population—reveals that religious attitudes toward education can be highly correlated with school enrollment.<sup>13</sup>

Combined gross enrolment ratio (CGER)					
high country value	COUNTRY	CGER (%)	low country values	COUNTRY	CGER (%)
1	Australia	113	191	Mali	37
2	New Zealand	109	192	Eritrea	35
3	Denmark	103	193	Congo	34
4	Finland	102	194	Central African Rep	30
5	Taiwan	100	195	Burkina Faso	29
6	Ireland	100	196	Angola	26
7	Canada	100	197	Djibouti	26
8	Norway	99	197	Niger	23
9	Greece	99	199	Somaliland	10
10	Netherlands	99	200	Somalia	10

In the United States, according to the data collected by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, education and literacy reveals significant differences based on religious traditions.

#### Educational Levels of Religious Groups in the U.S.<sup>14</sup>

	Less than High School	High School Graduate	Some College	College Graduate	Post Graduate	
	%	%	%	%	%	
TOTAL POPULATION	14	36	23	16	11	=100
Protestant	14	38	24	15	9	=100
Evangelical churches	16	40	24	13	7	=100
Mainline churches	8	34	24	20	14	=100
Historically black churches	19	40	25	11	5	=100
Catholic	17	36	21	16	10	=100
Mormon	10	30	32	18	10	=100

Jehovah's Witness	19	50	22	6	3	=100
Orthodox	6	26	22	28	18	=100
Jewish	3	19	19	24	35	=100
Muslim	21	32	23	14	10	=100
Buddhist	3	23	26	22	26	=100
Hindu	4	12	10	26	48	=100
Unaffiliated	13	34	24	16	13	=100
Atheist	7	28	23	21	21	=100
Agnostic	5	22	30	23	20	=100
Secular unaffiliated	10	35	25	17	13	=100
Religious unaffiliated	21	40	22	11	6	=100

## Wealth and Poverty

In a predominantly materialistic society, there is nothing more humiliating than poverty. In the contemporary world, there is no doubt that the status of wealth and poverty deeply affects one's sense dignity, particularly during periods of economic downturn. While the status of wealth tends to give someone an attitude of superiority, poverty does the opposite. It entrenches the individual into deprivation and meaninglessness—particularly in a consumerist global culture—where cultural particularity is generally trivialized, devalued, and underrated in monetary terms.

Strongly correlated with literacy, the wealth/poverty variable represents another indicator that helps one understand how religion (re)shapes dignity. For example, in the United States the variable of income distribution by religious affiliation mirrors the variable of education.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the better educated the better off economically. The income distribution data collected by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life displays strong differentiation between religious groups,<sup>16</sup> indicating that the Hindus are the richest religious minority (65%), and the black Protestants are the poorest (73%).

	<b>RICH</b> more than \$75,000/year/ individual	<b>STRUG-</b> <b>GLING</b> \$50,000 to \$74,999/year/ individual	<b>POOR</b> less than \$49,999/ year/indi- vidual
Hindu	65%	22%	19%
Jewish	58%	12%	25%
Orthodox Christians	41%	16%	44%
Buddhist	39%	17%	44%
Mainline Protestant	36%	18%	46%
Mormon	32%	22%	47%
Unaffiliated	32%	16%	52%
Catholic	33%	16%	51%
Evangelical Protestant	24%	18%	58%
Muslim	26%	15%	59%
Jehovah's Witness	18%	17%	65%
Black Protestants	15%	12%	73%

Compared by Abrahamic faiths, the individuals whose earning start at \$100,000 a year per individual, 46% are Jews, 17.8% Christians, and 16% Muslims.

<b>EXTREMELY RICH</b> at least \$100,000/year/individual	
Jewish	46%
Hindu	43%
Orthodox Christians	28%
Buddhist	22%
Mainline Protestant	21%
Catholic	19%
Unaffiliated	19%
Muslim	16%
Mormon	16%
Evangelical Protestant	13%
Jehovah's Witness	9%
Black Protestants	8%

At the opposite spectrum, the Muslims rank first with 35% individuals earning less than \$30,000 a year per individual, followed by the Christians with an average of 31.4%, and Jewish with only 14%.

<b>EXTREMELY POOR</b> at most \$30,000/year/individual	
Black Protestants	47%
Jehovah's Witness	42%
Muslim	35%
Evangelical Protestant	34%
Catholic	31%
Unaffiliated	29%
Mormon	26%
Mainline Protestant	25%
Buddhist	25%
Orthodox Christians	20%
Jewish	14%
Hindu	9%

At the level of economic identity, religious performance offers not only a meaning to wealth and poverty, but also the glue necessary to solidify the community as far as sharing resources within the group is concerned. While some religious narratives offer various safety leverages to increase wealth within the group, others celebrate scarcity and offer consolation to those deprived and living in poverty. Religious institutions may also appeal to various theodicy strategies to suppress any sense of revolt against the polarization of resources, while promising a dignified afterlife.

## **Health and Religion**

Disease humiliates everyone. It disfigures the beautiful; it accelerates aging; it weakens the strong; it throws the rich into poverty. Disease leads to death.

Concerned with death and dying, one of the most primitive forms of religious activity, such as shamanism, attempted to retain (or to attain if lost) one's health of mind, body, and spirit. Beyond shamanism, the concern with health and healing had been a basic feature of all forms of religious life and activity.

Organized religions offered a spiritual logic and physical diagnosis (and remedies) to diseases through a holistic use of medicine (Sikhism), through faith mobilization in prayer (Shamanism), and through meditation on the divine (Hinduism). The aetiology of disease as well as its cure was sought either *internally* in one's sin or ignorance ("The one who sins is the one who will die"—Ezekiel 18:20), or *externally*, in one's *karma* (Hinduism), or demonic possession (Luke 4:33-37). Attempting to cure the disease, the Muslims built the *maristan* (hospital) next to holy places,<sup>17</sup> and the Orthodox built their *bolnița* (hospital) inside the monastery, in the proximity of the church and the cemetery.

Today, in a world highly engaged in competition over resources and longevity, the concerns with human health have been at the forefront of public discourse. The contrast between the Global North and the Global South is stark. For instance, compared with countries in the Global North, sub-Saharan African countries have the least access to clean water, lowest health care, lowest life expectancy, and the highest rates of malaria, HIV, and infant mortality.<sup>18</sup>

Human dignity in relation to health had been analyzed predominantly from the perspective of human integrity (in bioethics), and from the perspective of human compassion (in health care policy.)

From a bioethical perspective, cloning to produce children—for instance—raises concerns not only about physical safety, but also about dignity and moral integrity. Cloning to produce children raises questions of liberty in manufacture, eugenics, family relations, individuality and identity, and its effects on society.

From the perspective of public policy, the current discourse highlights a tension between human compassion and the ‘robber-baron’ capitalism. The relation between the need for healthcare and the resource availability is increasingly undertaken from the perspective of social justice; demanding equity of supply for each individual, and equal access to quality healthcare. In the United States, additional tensions are being raised by the interposition of healthcare industry between the doctor and the patient which not only eliminated the Hippocratic culture, but also regards the doctor and the patient as resources to be exploited. While there is no coherent framework that would monitor and reprimand violations of human dignity in the field of healthcare, the ongoing trend is to approach it from the perspective of human rights. In fact, the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights held during 14-25 June 1993, strongly emphasized human dignity and healthcare as human rights.<sup>19</sup>

## Religion and Conflict

Each human being wishes to be recognized and honored. Everyone wishes to live a meaningful and a purposeful life. As Karen Armstrong writes, “we are meaning-seeking creatures and, unlike other animals, fall very easily into despair if we fail to make sense of our lives.”<sup>20</sup> When life’s meaning is lost a human being falls prey either to masochism, by inflicting self-punishment, or to sadism by inflicting pain upon others. The human being becomes violent. Dignity (and its loss) affects not only individual behavior but also group behavior, and as such it becomes a source of collective power. Handling dignity with care prevents conflicts from erupting. This is because the human dimension of conflict rests on the fundamental assumption that when one’s dignity is threatened, the individual as well as the group will, if necessary, react violently to restore it.

And—as Donna Hicks put it—“the main point here is to recognize another source of power. Power that is defined not by the strength of armies, sophistication of weapons, or the control of resources, but by the capacity of human spirit to overcome even the most primal of human instincts—the instinct of self-preservation—in the service of the restoration of human dignity.”<sup>21</sup>

Humiliation is the opposite of dignity, and it can transcend borders and generations, and have unexpected consequences. Dignity and its absence can, on the long term, create cultures of peace or cultures of violence.<sup>22</sup>

At a religious level, organized religions behave ambivalently.<sup>23</sup> They endorse peace and violence,<sup>24</sup> and in doing so, they offer spiritual narratives that give meaning to human actions, they impose various ethical standards, and solidify these attitudes in the public consciousness through the power of ritual.<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, at a sociological level, religion has multiple effects on human dignity. While it may be true that under conditions of scarcity and threat, religion becomes protective of its own membership, and discriminates those who believe differently, such conduct of religion is only episodic. What it is constant is its benefic impact on human dignity. From this sketchy appraisal, one is able to conclude that the religious espousal for human dignity has been as consistent through human history, as it is crucial today in offering meaning to human actions meant to alleviate poverty, to expand education, to provide responsible healthcare, and to prevent violence. The existing data along with the general trends and attitudes point to new opportunities to understand that dignity matters, and that one cannot build a better future, unless one understands what honors or dishonors a human being.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. <http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/dignity?s=t> (Last accessed on December 24, 2016.)

<sup>2</sup> Marian Gh. Simion, *Religion in political conflict: A constructivist theoretical model for public policy analysis, design, and implementation* PhD Dissertation. (Boston: Northeastern University, 2012), 138.

<sup>3</sup> James M. Henslin, *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* Eighth Edition. (Boston, New York: Pearson, 2007), 515-516.

<sup>4</sup> Emil Bartoş, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology*, foreword by Kalistos Ware (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 168-177, 229.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. <http://www.iqrasense.com/allah/islamic-viewpoint-on-god-made-man-in-his-own-image.html> (Last accessed on December 24, 2016.)

<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective (Fundamental Rights and Liberties in Islam)* 2nd edition. (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2002), 10-12.

<sup>7</sup> Epictetus, *Discourses: Book II, Chapter 1*, in Robert Maynard Hutchins, ed., *Great Books of the Western World* vol. 12 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 139.

<sup>8</sup> Gerald Tomlinson *Treasury of Religious Quotations* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1991), 66.

<sup>9</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, William Gorman, eds. "Education" pp.376-399, in *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 1, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 397.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised Edition ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, 5-7.

<sup>12</sup> Gene Outka, "On Reformed Christianity and Natural Human Rights," in Sumner B. Twiss, Marian Gh. Simion, Rodney L. Petersen (eds.) *Religion and Public Policy: Human Rights, Conflict and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 26.

<sup>13</sup> Todd M. Johnson & Kenneth R. Ross eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Luis Lugo, et al. *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008), 56.

<sup>15</sup> Lugo, et al., 58.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/income-distribution-within-us-religious-groups/> (Last accessed on December 26, 2016.)

<sup>17</sup> John Bowker, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* "Healing" entry. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 416.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, Ross, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Vienna.aspx> (Last accessed on December 29, 2016.)

<sup>20</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York: Anchor Books, 2015), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Rodney L. Petersen "Dignity Matters' Interview with Donna Hicks" pp. 245-248 in Rodney L. Petersen, *Overcoming Violence: Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*, (Newton Centre: Boston Theological Institute, 2010), 245-246.

<sup>22</sup> David D. Laitin, "National Revivals and Violence." in *European Journal of Sociology* (1995/36), 3-43.

<sup>23</sup> R. Scott Appleby, 1999. *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers, Inc. 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Marc Gopin *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Simion, 217.

# Communication of Human Dignity

## —An approach on human rights

Nelu Burcea, PhD

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article, I intend to study the subject of human dignity which could be seen through the human rights point of view. When we look at the map of the world we could see that the topic of human dignity and religious freedom is really a current issue which must be on the agenda of the most powerful nations. There have been a lot of questions that we need to ask before we will take a deeply view at this matter. The questions which I am going to ask here is trying to put this topic in the context of contemporary as a remarkable requirement for the whole world. Could it be a real relationship between human dignity and religious freedom in matter of meaning and practice? Which is currently the truth regarding the presence of human dignity in the world? How could human dignity be more real in the countries where there is no religious freedom for all citizens? Could one country be considered as a civilized one without a deep understanding and real implementation of religious liberty principles for all people? How the discrimination on a different group of people could affect all the nation and then all the world? Could human dignity become a concept made possible in the world through the education of people? How the economics could contribute to a country in the process of establishing human dignity? Could this kind of education

be managed by a government or by some administrative regions or by United Nations?

KEY WORDS: human dignity, religious freedom, human rights, discrimination, management, communication, United Nations.

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## **Human dignity in the religious and economic context**

The topic of human dignity has been considered a very significant issue when we analyze it in different contexts as political, religious or social approaches. If we start studying the concept of human dignity from the political point of view, the process of the development of the concept can be seen starting with its early approaches. During 1990 the concept of human dignity, very approached as a human rights philosophy, appeared as an indispensable element in the contexts of “the problems of economic inequality, failed development programs, transitional labor migration challenges and gender vulnerabilities”<sup>1</sup>.

If we approach the concept of human dignity in the religious context it could be surprising, but it can be seen very much as a common concept even to define it are used other expressions. If we verify the concept of human rights and dignity in different religions, we could find terms as “love your neighbors as yourself” or “human body as the Temple of God” in the Christianity understanding<sup>2</sup> but the concept is wider. We could find the concept in the Buddhism<sup>3</sup>, Judaism<sup>4</sup>, Islam<sup>5</sup>, Hinduism<sup>6</sup>. These are really broad approaches of human dignity, expressions which include a deep understanding of humans and a high-level responsibility in their favor. The word dignity, from the Latin *dignus*, “worthy,” means to have intrinsic worth, or excellence, or to be esteemed by others<sup>7</sup>. This meaning could be very useful seen in the religious context.

It is easier to take a look carefully in the world to see the differences between nations, seen by economics' differences. There are poor countries as well as wealthy countries. There are people living in dignity and other living with no high level of human dignity. The economics aspect is one very important in the context of human dignity. The natural resources should be considered more than a simple gift. They should be considered through the responsibility of the ethic administration.

### **The right of dignity**

The knowing of the human being is a complex process which requires a holistic understanding starting from social manifestation, religious or not, political or non-political profile, culminating at the needs and hopes, and talking with a negative term, even at the deceptions and the many elements of the human behavior that can be considered disparate in some situations or different life's stages. It is extraordinary to observe the process of maturation of the human being in its aspects of life such as physical, emotional, spiritual, referring to the emotional elements like love, fear, happiness and sadness.

The idea of the human dignity's study comprises these elements and tries to accentuate their importance in the process of personal fulfillment, in a process that we can name success, happiness, the feeling of achievement of the individual, no matter where he lives, his age, his religion, his political views or his gender so on. Taking a short evaluation of human being, religious speaking, we can consider the humans as a creation of God, created to be happy and offering him unlimited sources to achieve the goal of happiness. Unfortunately, our study starts from different current situations of the economic, political and religious world. We are talking today about the inequality of opportunities in people's

social, economic and religious lives. We are talking about third world countries, and through this it is transpiring the inequality in education or the limitation of necessary resources for a modest live. In the same time, we can talk about multiple programs of the different economic and political entities to eradicate the poverty. For example, programs that are created and expanded in such a matter that is much bigger than in the previous years and however, the human dignity remains an element of ambiguity<sup>8</sup>.

Nevertheless, the positive elements can be seen in the fight for stooping the rapidly increasing poverty as we can see in the report offered by the World Hunger Education Service<sup>9</sup> which started to reduce poverty since 1975. In their studies a positive aspect of eradicating poverty among children can be observed thanks to the statistics that they provide us with. "Globally 161 million under-five years olds were estimated to be stunted in 2013. Between 2000 and 2013 stunting prevalence declined from 33% to 25% and numbers declined from 199 million to 161 million."<sup>10</sup>

Also, the eradication poverty idea could be seen on the World Bank Report 2015, where we could be observed the global poverty rate which is declined considerably from 37.1% in 1990 to 9.6% in 2015. The extreme poverty is considered less than half its 1990.<sup>11</sup>

Although the statistics are positive, the necessity of promoting human dignity remains the same or is amplified. But more importantly than poverty, human dignity also refers to many other aspects. Taking in consideration the element of peace and war we can conclude that human dignity isn't fulfilled in a time of political incertitude. Without freedom, we can't talk about dignity. To fully achieve his purpose, the man needs his rights to a decent life and respect, rights that he should have but also, the rights that he should give to others.

## **Human Dignity and Human rights in a political and administrative organizations' point of view**

The need of rights and human dignity is the concern of many organizations that create legislations, promote or defend human dignity through protecting the individual's rights. In this context, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>12</sup> has been a milestone for the protection of human rights, human dignity and fundamental freedoms. Through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been promoted peace, justice, equal rights of men and women, freedom, despite the differences in the context of political, ideology, religious and cultural background views or national or social background.

If we make a brief study about ONU's implication, we can observe this organization's preoccupation for human rights and dignity. We can talk about UN local rapporteurs and UN special rapporteurs that visit countries where there are religious liberty issues or any other human right violations<sup>13</sup>. They try to negotiate and solve the issues that exist because of the political situations that are created by politicians, religious leaders and others who do not respect people's human rights. With all these major interventions from ONU the issue of the rights and human dignity's absence continue to be on the first page of the world powerful nations agenda.

According to the of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Report<sup>14</sup> there are a numerous number of countries (see the tabel below) where the population doesn't enjoy a real human dignity because the lack of religious freedom. In many countries there isn't enough food, there isn't freedom, there is no security. If we look at the human dignity through the perspective of poverty, then we can conclude that the absence of natural resources is a real problem in many poor countries.

In situations like that the population doesn't have the access to sufficient food and water, they don't have the possibility to create a decent living space and don't have access a workplace. There the possibility of accessing an education system doesn't exist and through these limitations their right to access education is restricted or non-existent.

USCIRF TIER 1 & TIER 2 COUNTRIES		
Tier 1 CPC Countries Designated by State Department & Recommended by USCIRF	Tier 1 CPC Countries Recommended by USCIRF	Tier 2 Countries
Burma China Eritrea Iran North Korea Saudi Arabia Sudan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	Central African Rep. Egypt Iraq Nigeria Pakistan Syria Tajikistan* Vietnam	Afghanistan Azerbaijan Cuba India Indonesia Kazakhstan Laos Malaysia Russia Turkey

*Table 1, conform 2016 Annual Report  
of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom*

In other areas of the world human dignity is fenced through the fact that some minorities do not have equal rights like the rest of the countries. In those countries the religious freedom is restricted. Even though the integrity of these minorities isn't challenged these people do not have equal rights and they are discriminated just because they are different than the majority of the population.

The world where we are living in is not a fair one, focused only on the material things, political and religious interests. And also a developing trend towards the better exists in the world, a non-violent fight to promote the good, the beautiful, happiness and human dignity through the people education process<sup>15</sup>. Could our world be truly better?

## Conclusion

The human dignity seen through the human rights is an inexhaustible topic. It could be developed in various sciences as communication sciences, political sciences, juridical sciences, theology and so on. This studies can be very interesting, and can bring our world closer to compassion or to a solution of eradicating elements that could fence the fulfillment of dignity in a person's life. It is imperative to develop the people's level of education to understand the values of human dignity and to change the discriminatory mentalities. We need to influence the future generation for them to wish for a better world.

Unfortunately, all these seem like a utopia faced with the reality of politics and current conflicts. Therefore, we need a new generation of politicians that think different, to create a different world. We need religious people who live a truly spiritual life. We need acceptance between religions and no discrimination. These few ideas plus many others are necessary for the fulfillment of human dignity.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jean H. Quataert, *Advocating Dignity: Human Rights Mobilizations in Global Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Conform: Mark 12:34 and 1 Corinthians 3:16. Many commentators consider the human dignity concept as a Catholic one.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of human dignity could be found in Nirvana Sutra.

<sup>4</sup> It has been considering the relations between the Creator and the creation as the connection that ask more for human being created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:27)

<sup>5</sup> In the Islamic understandings the person has been honored as the descendant of Adam. (Qur'an 17:70)

<sup>6</sup> The concept of human dignity could be found in the ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns: The Rigveda.

<sup>7</sup> E. Rae Harcum, *A Psychology of Freedom and Dignity: The Last Train to Survival*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 101

<sup>8</sup> Alicia Ely Yamin, *Suffering, and the Struggle for Dignity: Human Rights Frameworks for Health and Why They Matter*. Contributors: - Author. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 30.

<sup>9</sup> According to [www.worldhunger.org](http://www.worldhunger.org)

<sup>10</sup> Conform statistics offered by the World Hunger Education Service on [www.worldhunger.org](http://www.worldhunger.org)

<sup>11</sup> Conform the 2015 World Report [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

<sup>12</sup> Conform to [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

<sup>13</sup> Jean H. Quataert, *Advocating Dignity: Human Rights Mobilizations in Global Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FreedomReligionIndex.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Betty A. Reardon, *Educating for Human Dignity: Learning about Rights and Responsibilities*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 4.





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