

SOME NOTIONS ON THE HUMAN DIGNITY WITHIN THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY SPACE

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ABSTRACT: *Some Notions on the Human Dignity within the Eastern Christian Missionary Space.*

Any general perspective on the concept of human dignity today comes down to the presentation of this notion from the perspective of the legal values it carries as a reason and foundation of the rights of the person and of the human being. From this perspective, human dignity is presented both as a value and as a right which, in both versions, is equally difficult to define. However, postmodernity admits that the notion of human dignity can be defined ontologically because human beings possess an equal inherent human dignity that cannot be waived and that cannot be diminished. Being inherent to the human being, human dignity must be recognized, respected and protected universally, and its development, permanently encouraged. Because of his dignity, man should never be used as a means to an end, but each undertaken action should aim at the perfection of the human being.

Keywords: *human dignity, values, concepts, missionary reasons*

The history of the notion of human dignity is rooted in the dawn of human civilization. A fundamental role in the formation of this concept is played by the religious values that underlie the philosophical, ethical, social, anthropological, psychological, political, etc. arguments that deal with this vast universe of the human dignity. Using a synthetic and descriptive exploration, in this study we will first etymologically analyze the syntagm human dignity, after which we will present the main arguments that, in our view, contributed to the formulation of a useful definition of the notion of human dignity. Through our approach, we intend to shed light on the

complexity and conceptual richness of human dignity in order to use it in carrying out the missionary work within the Eastern Orthodox Christian space. The work highlights the need to initiate more open debate processes that bring to light the deep values of the human dignity highlighted by those who focus on researching this concept for the benefit of the Orthodox Christian missionary environment.

Dignity and humanism – etymological dimensions

The syntagm "human dignity" is made up of the adjective human and the noun dignity. The adjective that qualifies the noun determines the human gender of the concept of dignity and has a function similar to that found in the expression "human being". The same adjective here also highlights the human gender of the noun "being". In Romanian, the word "human" is etymologically related to the Latin term *humus*, which means "earth". Therefore, to be "human" refers to what is "earthly" (as an adjective) or "earth" (as a noun). In general, it describes what is proper to the human race understood as "us", presented as a rational species, characterized especially by goodness as humanity and its all-too-human fallibility.

The word "dignity" has its origin in the Latin noun *decus*, which means "ornament", distinction, honor, glory. *Decet* is the impersonal verb form and is related to the Greek *δοkein*, translated as "to seem/to look like" or „to show". The form of the Latin participle *decens*, -tis, survived in the Romanian language in the form of the adjective "decent". However, dignity, generally speaking, refers to one who has the right to be respected, i.e. is recognized as a personal being who inspires or should inspire respect through his excellent or incomparable behaviour.

Paradoxically, *dignitas* was translated from the Greek *αξιομα*, at times when Latin thought turned its interest towards logic¹. Thus, the notion of dignity acquired the dimension of a prime principle. *Dignitas* is henceforth used in the sense of "self-imposing," of what is important by its own virtue, even when based on what it has received from someone else. Something that guarantees it the status by which he imposes himself as a given authority. Since, in this context, dignity cannot be reduced to what

1 Mette Lebech, „On the Problem of Human Dignity. A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation", *Danish Yearbook of Philosophy*, 55, (2022), pp. 78-79, p. 78.

grounds it, but it is indeed comparable to an axiom, which must be accepted by itself. Dignitas therefore remains a *δοξα αχιωματικη*, something commonly understood as the first, as the highest value².

On the other hand, what we call "Humanism" today is, like any other major historical phenomenon, a difficult concept to define. In fact, there is no philosophically, practically, and terminologically defined system that could be called humanism. The concept itself is of late origin³. It should be emphasized that the proper approach to the humanist cultural movement involves the use of its plural form, i.e. "humanisms", because it refers to a multitude of intellectual or cultural forms and interests, scientific and academic models, etc., which could be designated as being humanist.⁴

However, the use of the concept in the singular form is certainly legitimate, given the way humanists elaborate their work in relation to the sources of classical and late antiquity, as well as those of early Christianity.⁵ They developed a critical-philological approach to identify in ancient texts the information with which they believed it would revive and renew the moral system.⁶ Their scholarly concern had the practical aim of achieving an improved human coexistence, which would provide happiness from either a Christian-theological or a philosophical-ethical perspective⁷. Understood in this way, as a common moral program based on education (*educatio*) and knowledge of the past (*eruditio*), which brought together different

2 *Ibidem*.

3 Mihai-D. Grigore, „Humanism and its Humanitas”, Fabian Klose and Mirjam Thulin, (eds.), *Humanity. A History of European Concepts in Practice From the Sixteenth Century to the Present*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen, 2016, pp. 73-90, p. 73.

4 Herfried Münkler, „Die politischen Ideen des Humanismus”, Iring Fetscher (ed.), *Pipers Handbuch der politischen Ideen*, vol. 5 (Munich 1993), pp. 553–613, pp. 553–556 *apud* Mihai-D. Grigore, „Humanism and its Humanitas”, Fabian Klose and Mirjam Thulin, (eds.), *Humanity. A History of European Concepts in Practice From the Sixteenth Century to the Present*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen, 2016, pp. 73-90, p. 76.

5 Erika Rummel, *Erasmus*, Continuum, New York, 2004, p. 17.

6 Erika Rummel, „Scholasticism and Biblical Humanism in Early Modern Europe”, Erika Rummel, (ed.), *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, Brill, Leiden, 2008, pp. 1–14, pp. 1 ș.u.

7 Robert Evans, „European Humanism: East and West”, Mihai I. Spariosu / Jörn Rüsen, (ed.), *Exploring Humanity – Intercultural Perspectives on Humanism*, V&R Unipress, Göttingen, 2012, pp. 145–151, pp. 145 ș.u.

intellectual circles throughout Europe⁸, one can speak of humanism in the singular.

Synthesizing these aspects, we consider the definition of humanism given by The Willey Blackwell Handbook of Humanism: "Humanism is a democratic and ethical position on life, which asserts that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and form to their own lives. It represents building a more humane society through ethics based on human and other natural values, in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic and does not accept supernatural views of reality".⁹

The fact that the end of this definition speaks of a humanism devoid of religiosity can be characterized, at best, as a limited approach¹⁰, because while it may seem quite appealing from a philosophical point of view, it is false when humanism is considered from a historical and secular perspective. The all-encompassing dynamism of humanism reveals that it cannot be synchronic and diachronic at the same time. Furthermore, Byzantine, late medieval European humanism as well as early European humanism at the dawn of the modern era were undoubtedly profoundly religious.

Etymologically, "humanism" is related to the term *humaniora* that Cicero used to define what the European Renaissance would later call *artes liberales* or - to remain within the structure of the humanist language - *studia humanitatis*.¹¹ The word "humanist", *humanista*, in 15th-century Italy mainly referred to a dignity held by a teacher or preceptor, and generally referred to anyone who had been educated to the high standards of Greek or Roman antiquity.¹²

8 Constance M. Furey, *Erasmus, Contarini, and the Religious Republic of Letters*, Cambridge, 2006, p. 166.

9 Andrew Copson, "What is Humanism?", Andrew Copson, and A. C. Grayling, (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., London, 2015, pp. 1-33, p. 6.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 4.

11 Susan Meld Shell, "'More [Than] Human'. Kant on Liberal Education and the Public Use of Reason", Andrea Radasanu, (ed.), *In Search for Humanity. Essays in Honor of Clifford Orwin*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2015, pp. 449-464, p. 452.

12 Herfried Münkler, "Die politischen Ideen des Humanismus", Herfried Münkler/Iring Fetscher, (ed.), *Pipers Handbuch der politischen Ideen*, vol. 5, Munich, 1993, pp. 553-613, p. 554 *apud* Mihai-D. Grigore, "Humanism and its Humanitas", Fabian Klose and Mirjam Thulin,

However, the aim of the humanitatis program was not limited to the education and studies of contemporaries. The main objective involved ethical and therefore political community dimensions. It is no coincidence that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* were central to the curriculum of the humanist circles in the late Middle Ages and early modern period. Kenan Malik, in a study of ethics, argues that humanists "established a new model of intellectual excellence that emphasized literature, philology, oratory, poetry, ethics, and politics", but also that they were less enthusiastic about the study of Aristotle's treatises than of the "styled dialogues of Plato", which were preferred.¹³

However, Aristotle's works on poetics, ethics, and politics remained a primary source of inspiration - more important than Plato's works - for the humanities program and were consequently taught more intensively.¹⁴ Coluccio Salutati highlighted the fact that *humanitas* meant both erudition and education, but also goodness as a political idea of human coexistence, interaction and interdependence: "For not only the virtue usually called "goodness" is included in this concept of *humanitas*, but also experience and erudition."¹⁵

Together, the concepts of human and dignity form the expression "human dignity", which refers to the status of human beings from whom they claim their right to respect. A status that primarily is and must be accepted as self-evident. It is a succinct definition that derives from the association between what constitutes the first and the highest value that can be defined and admitted by the human thought and the experience which is complementary to erudition. Therefore, "human dignity" refers to the highest human value, or to the fact that man presupposes *sine die* his own value, because he is the only one for whom value has a meaning.

(eds.), *Humanity. A History of European Concepts in Practice From the Sixteenth Century to the Present*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen, 2016, pp. 73-90, p. 78.

13 Kenan Malik, *The Quest for a Moral Compass. A Global History of Ethics*, Melville House, London, 2014, p. 164.

14 Mihai-D. Grigore, *Neagoe Basarab – Princeps Christianus. Christianitas-Semantik im Vergleich mit Erasmus, Luther und Machiavelli (1513–1523)*, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt, 2015, pp. 193–231, p. 200 ș.u.

15 Eckhard Kessler, *Das Problem des frühen Humanismus. Seine philosophische Bedeutung bei Coluccio Salutati*, W. Fink, Munich, 1968, p. 44.

Value is revealed through feelings and thus affects the human environment in a very personal way. The highest values affect the human dimension in the most profound way possible. By the way I recognize the other, his value is experienced as equivalent to mine, because my level of evaluation represents his attitude towards me. Love, kinship and friendship are the human relationships through which man explores the depths between himself and the other in relation to his highest values. Thus the human relationship is constitutive of personal identity, simultaneously in me and in the other.

The idea of human dignity conceptualizes or embraces this experience of recognition, and the principle of human dignity constitutes the claim that experience is possible in relation to all human beings. When formulated, the principle affirms the fundamental value of each human being or of human beings as such. This principle is universally accepted as a basic ethical and legal principle because it is built on the universal experience of the dynamics of recognition. Human dignity reveals everyone's interest in the idea of respect understood as human dignity, where dignity represents the highest value due to its inalienable humanity. In this context, the dignity of the human person refers to the concrete value of the human being. By the phrase "the dignity of the human person", it is implied that human beings have value in themselves or a value qualitatively different from everything else. It also refers to the fact that the human person is inalienable, i.e. has a dignity that cannot be lost, used or abused for a purpose or to achieve a purpose.¹⁶

Arguments of the conceptual dimension of human dignity

From early antiquity, in European history the concept of "human dignity" can be traced throughout the Middle Ages to the present day. The idea that man was created in the image of God becomes very visible starting from the time of the Early Church. Later, during the Renaissance and Humanism, the focus shifted to the idea that man is defined by free will and can therefore make his own decisions about the modalities through which he acquires dignity.

16 John C. Dwyer, "Person, Dignity of", Judith A. Dwyer (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1994, pp. 724-737, p. 724.

In Europe, the concept of human dignity is traditionally rooted in both the idea of natural law¹⁷ as well as in the Christian anthropology.¹⁸

As such, the idea of natural law is closely associated with the anthropological axioms. Thus, natural law always includes an interpretation of man's natural human condition.¹⁹ Human nature is not just the things we encounter around us. Bruno Schüller describes the *lex naturae* as "the embodiment of those moral precepts which, in their validity and content, have their origin in the human condition of man"²⁰. According to natural law, everything that can be interpreted as an indispensable part of human existence is considered natural.

In Christian anthropology, the attention is very much on the man created in the image of God, because this emphasizes the uniqueness of man and the dignity that is specific to him. The roots of Christian anthropology are found in the biblical story of the Creation: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them" (Genesis 1, 27).²¹ Appealing to the Christian anthropology, which has as its starting point the idea that man is created in the image of God, Robert

17 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, *Drept bisericesc (Church Law)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2014, p.210.

18 Marx Reinhard, „Barmherzigkeit und Gerechtigkeit: Grundprinzipien des christlichen Glaubens“, *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, No. 125 (2016) 1, (pp. 5–9), p. 6 *apud* Klaus Krämer, and Klaus Vellguth, (eds.), *One World Theology. Discourses on Universality and Inalienability*, (One World Theology, Volume 8), Editura Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., Philippines, 2017, pp. 95-113, p. 96.

19 Goertz Stephan, „Naturrecht und Menschenrecht“, *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 68, (2014), pp. 509–514, p. 510 *apud* Klaus Krämer, and Klaus Vellguth, (Eds.), *One World Theology. Discourses on Universality and Inalienability*, (One World Theology, Volume 8), Editura Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., Philippines, 2017, pp. 95-113, p. 97.

20 Schüller, Bruno, „Wieweit kann die Moraltheologie das Naturrecht entbehren?“, *Lebendiges Zeugnis*, No. 1–2 (1965), pp. 41–65, p. 42 *apud* Klaus Krämer, and Klaus Vellguth, (Eds.), *One World Theology. Discourses on Universality and Inalienability*, (One World Theology, Volume 8), Editura Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., Philippines, 2017, pp. 95-113, p. 97.

21 Westermann, Claus, „Das Alte Testament und die Menschenrechte“, Jörg Baur, (ed.), *Zum Thema Menschenrechte: Theologische Versuche und Entwürfe*, Stuttgart 1977, pp. 5–18 *apud* Klaus Krämer, and Klaus Vellguth, (Eds.), *One World Theology. Discourses on Universality and Inalienability*, (One World Theology, Volume 8), Editura Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., Philippines, 2017, pp. 95-113, p. 97.

Spaemann concludes that the concept of human dignity can find justification only in a philosophy of the absolute.²²

The concept of human dignity is built on several closely related arguments. Generally, they derive from each other and find their justification in distinct visions of the human horizon. Therefore, just as there are distinct uses of the concept of human dignity, so there are many divergent views on the source of dignity. The most elaborate sources of the debate related to the theme of human dignity are considered to be:

a. Human nature. Conceptually, human nature denotes the fundamental dispositions and characteristics that define the human being, thereby outlining the human essence and differentiating it from that of other beings. The anthropological foundation – Man is something other than his own body: he is the one who commands the body – identified by Socrates, will serve as a direct or indirect benchmark for many advanced ideas about human nature²³.

The definitions constructed to define the fundamentals of human nature – such as *homo sapiens* which refers to the being endowed with thought, *homo faber* which presents the being capable of building his own tools, *zoon politikon*, as a social being perfecting itself within the public space, *zoon logon eichon*, as a being capable of communicating, thinking and becoming aware that it exists only in relation to the other – reveal the diversity of manifestations of the human nature, and sheds light on the human right to have rights. In this regard, Hannah Arendt observes that: "it is not important how or what human nature should be, but with whom many human beings live and dwell on Earth. (...) this plurality is not a quality of his nature, but the authentic quintessence of his earthly condition"²⁴. Therefore, human nature is characterized by the way in which man,

22 Robert Spaemann, „Über den Begriff der Menschenwürde“, Robert Spaemann, *Grenzen: Zur ethischen Dimension des Handelns*, Stuttgart, 2002, p. 122 *apud* Klaus Krämer, and Klaus Vellguth, (Eds.), *One World Theology. Discourses on Universality and Inalienability*, (One World Theology, Volume 8), Editura Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., Philippines, 2017, pp. 95-113, p. 97.

23 Anca Ursache Tcaciuc, „Ecce, homo! Între a înțelege natura umană și a lupta pentru drepturile omului“, *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință*, Vol. 9, Nr. 3, 2021, pp. 142-158, p. 143.

24 Sánchez Cristina Munoz, *Arendt. Faptul de a fi (politic) în lume*, Editura Litera, București, 2021, p. 68.

as a being endowed with reason and conscience, behaves in the spirit of brotherhood towards other people. In everything he undertakes, the human being lives in a community with others, where he must think, communicate and act responsibly, with respect for the freedom of the others, which is the fundamental characteristic of the human nature. "Humanity is never reached in solitude, not even through one's own work. It can only be achieved by those who have exposed their own life and person to the risk of the public sphere (...). Thus, this exposing oneself to the public sphere that allows us to become human turns into a gift for all of humanity"²⁵.

Dignity is understood as specific to the human species. It is inherent in our nature and activity as human beings, a nature that emerges from the creative capacity and activity of man understood as the life of a creature situated somewhere between beasts and God.²⁶ The activities that give dignity to human nature are those excellences of the human being that distinguish it from other species, including the way it relates to birth, death, and the quality of the human relationships.²⁷ Highlighting the fact that the destiny of all human creatures is ineffably linked to the diversity of representations of human nature, constitutes in this context the essential characteristic of the dignity of human nature. As such, the dignity of human nature means that: "to grow old, to wear ourselves out and even to die - and to know and recognize this as part of life's trajectory - befits a creature who is neither beast nor god and whose dignity consists in being human."²⁸

b. The embodiment - understood as a direct expression through which someone or something acquires concrete form - is realized and constitutes another argument for the definition of the human dignity. Immanuel Kant, while universalizing the concept of dignity by relating it to the personality and the personality to the rational and moral life, ignored the

25 Hannah Arendt, *Laudatio an Karl Jasper*, apud Anca Ursache Tcaciuc, „Ecce, homo! Între a înțelege natura umană și a lupta pentru drepturile omului”, *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință*, Vol. 9, Nr. 3, 2021, pp. 142-158, p. 157.

26 Peter Lawler, „Commentary on Meilaender and Dennett”, *Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President's Council on Bioethics*, President's Council on Bioethics, Washington DC, 2008, p. 275, apud Susan M. Haack, „Christian Explorations in the Concept of Human Dignity”, *Dignitas* 19, no. 3/2012, pp. 4-7, 10-13, p. 7.

27 Gilbert Meilaender, *Neither Beast Nor God: The Dignity of the Human Person*, New Atlantis Books, New York, 2009, p. 5.

28 *Ibidem*, p. 73.

embodied existence. To be able to talk about human dignity, it is necessary to overcome the concept of rational personality in order for concretely embodied human life to be perceived as a real form²⁹, because the body is the place of personal presence.³⁰

Human dignity is not only the expression of the rational person. In its human nature it includes the form of the body as the embodiment of the person. Human dignity³¹ reveals the dimensions of the human life not only from the perspective of the elements that make it up, but also the limitations and weaknesses associated with bodily existence. Human dignity must honor and uphold what is special and specific to the character of intermediary that defines the human being.³² "The same Body which serves me as the medium of all my perception hinders me in the perception of the self, and is a thing remarkably imperfectly interpreted."³³ In this famous quote, Husserl succinctly summarizes the dual structure of embodiment. The body is what enables us to perceive and is, in this sense, the subject of perception, while the body is at the same time a perceived object, although it can only be perceived imperfectly by the self.

Thus, anthropologically, this split within the human embodiment gives us a past and a future - as well as a past and a future body - that not only shape or motivate us, but to which we can and must relate as such. For these reasons, having a body as corporeality and explicit temporality is not only an implicit mode of embodiment, but this aspect of decentering and fragmentation necessarily belongs to it. While it can certainly be alienating, it also involves the ability to take a distance from immediate actions and feelings and thus gain a sense of distance and control, making

29 Leon Kass, „Human Dignity: Concepts and Experiences”, *Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President’s Council on Bioethics*, President’s Council on Bioethics, Washington DC, 2008, p. 299, *apud* Susan M. Haack, „Christian Explorations in the Concept of Human Dignity”, in *Dignitas* 19, no. 3/2012, pp. 4–7, 10–13, p. 7.

30 Gilbert Meilaender, *Neither Beast Nor God*, p. 23.

31 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, “Plea for Human Dignity”. *Scientia Moralitas. Human Dignity - A Contemporary Perspectives* 1 (2016), pp.29-43.

32 Gilbert Meilaender, *Neither Beast Nor God*, p. 5.

33 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy, second book. Studies in the phenomenology of constitution*, In collected works of Edmund Husserl, vol. 3. Trans. R. Rojcewicz & a. Schuwer, Springer, Dordrecht, 1989, p. 167.

it possible to reflect on and evaluate the bodily behavior. Thus, the body as an object does not necessarily have to be a burden, but can also be a blessing (depending on the respective circumstances). Paradoxically, this split functions as a reaction of the embodied subject to preserve its wholeness and dignity.

c. The creature or human being is a notion closely related to what the concept of embodiment represents; it constitutes a criterion that gives recognition to the fact that human dignity is the possession of beings that exist in an intermediate, average state. It is a middle natural state in which human beings cannot be identified with animals, but neither with God, as Aristotle or Augustine³⁴ showed, lower than angels, as the psalmist sings, living in the realm where they can become better or worse.³⁵

According to the medieval interpretations of Aristotle, rationality is an essential property of the human being, but sociability, in its various forms, is not an essential property. Thus, when Aristotle writes that human beings are political animals by nature, medieval authors understood that he was not referring to the human essence, but to the fact that humans normally live as members of communities that can be considered as political. That is, humans are not defined as social or political animals; Aristotle provides a description of the human way of life. Sociability is not even a particular property (*proprium*) of human beings – as it is the ability to laugh, for example, and therefore, no human is incapable of laughter. This means that, in principle, it should be possible for the human beings and rational animals - who are not social or political and who do not live as members of a human community - to exist.³⁶

In this context, Aristotle's final argument for the naturalness of the political community may seem surprising. He famously argues that the political community is prior in nature to individual human beings because people are related to the community as parts of a whole. Furthermore, he illustrates this part / whole relationship by comparing humans to limbs and organs that can only exist as parts of a living body. It is tempting to

34 Charles Rubin, „Human Dignity and the Future of Man”, *Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President's Council on Bioethics*, Washington DC, 2008, pp. 155-173, p. 168.

35 *Ibidem*.

36 David J. Depew, „Humans and Other Political Animals in Aristotle's „History of Animals””, *Phronesis*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (1995), pp. 156-181 pp. 162–163.

read this analogy (a human individual is to the community as an organ is to the body) in terms of another well-known argument he makes in *De anima*, namely, that an eye is an eye because of its capacity to see.

Extrapolating this to the case of a human being and a political community, the conclusion seems to be that solitary individuals are not really human beings. Even if political life is not essential for humans, it is a necessary condition for the exercise of the rational functions that make them humans (practical and theoretical reasoning); and those who cannot exercise these functions are people only by name. From this perspective, it makes sense that Aristotle's part/whole argument culminates in the famous statement: "anyone who lacks the capacity to share in community, or has not the need to because of his (own) self-sufficiency, is no part of the city and as a result is either a beast or a god."³⁷ Since human beings are by nature political animals, those who live alone are either beasts - if the deficiency of their nature renders them incapable of living with others, or gods - if they are self-sufficient without other people.³⁸

This literal interpretation of the analogy between humans and body parts focuses on the connection between a definition of a thing and the possibility of exercising its corresponding function. A wounded hand ceases to be a hand, not because it is broken, but because it cannot perform its function as part of a living human being - it would not be a real hand even if it were kept alive by advanced medical means. Likewise, while it is not essential for an eye to be part of a living body, being part of a living body is necessary for the ability to see, which in turn is essential for the eye. Understood in this way, the point of the analogy is not that humans cannot survive on their own. Rather, the point is that they cannot fully actualize their human nature in solitude. Having a rational soul is not enough without the ability to use it, and becoming a fully fledged human agent who is capable of a virtuous life devoted to intellectual pursuits of a practical or theoretical type requires education and moral education. Once a person has grown up, he can remain alive without human connection, but it does not live a human life and does not actualize the

37 Aristotle, *Politica*, Redactor Nicolae Năstase, Editura Cultura Națională, Imprimeria de Vest R.A., Oradea, 1996, p. 6.

38 Cary J. Nederman, *Community and Consent: The Secular Political Theory of Marsiglio of Padua's Defensor Pacis: Secular Political Theory of Marsiglio Padua's „Defensor Pacis”*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham and London, 1994, pp. x-163, p. 31.

human essence in his activity. If this person succeeds in doing it, it is not a man, but a god.³⁹

The community of people, the highest level of sociality, foresees a transcendence not only of the self as the object of the community, but of the community and others as objects of the self. In this case, the community that disappears as a separate existence at the level of society is reformed and transformed. In a sense, accepting the personality and inherent dignity of others, eliminates the subject-object relationship between self and others. In another sense, however, personal individuality is most profoundly affirmed in the acceptance of one's self in the eyes of others and in the embracement of the community⁴⁰. It is a kind of intersubjectivity that respects each person from the fact that he is a being in action and cannot be treated as an object. Since other individuals cannot be treated as objects, the only way to know them is to enter into their free acts in a kind of co-experience through emphatic love: "By co-action or co-experiencing, therefore, one acquires knowledge of the other through which the person perceives his own character and social origin. Through this knowledge, in perceiving the immeasurable dignity of the other as a person, the person is able to responsibly and purposefully join and accept the highest sociality of the person's community"⁴¹.

Conclusions

Each human life, therefore, in its inviolable dignity, must be protected from the beginning to the end. This respect for the dignity of life of every human being and his fundamental rights, especially for the weakest, are signs of the progress and prosperity of a society and such respect cannot be considered a step backwards or contrary to freedom⁴². We totally understand the complex situations, of apparent conflicts of rights, which are difficult to resolve;

39 Juhana Toivanen, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-282.

40 Stephen Frederick Schneck, *Person and polis: Max Scheler's personalism as political theory*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1987, p. 59.

41 *Ibidem*, p. 60.

42 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Freedom of Religion, Always a Hot Issue", *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință*, vol.5, 2017, nr.1, pp. 545-550; Idem, "Religious Freedom and the Spirit in Which it Should Be Defended", în *Liberty Today – Trends & Attitudes*, Bern, Switzerland, 1-2 (2014-2015), pp. 61-63.

but we also understand that "deep ethical and moral dilemmas cannot be solved generically by sacrificing one of the fundamental rights affected (in this case, the right to life) making the other prevail"⁴³. This paper tries to reveal the difficulties of interpretation of the concept of human dignity in the etymological perspective: human dignity cannot be based on purely immanent considerations, as well as its human character cannot be denied either. It is a transcendental concept and must be recognized as such.

The Christian understanding of human dignity differs from the classical-liberal view in that it sees dignity as a gift shared with all people, to be realized in accordance with the creational structure of man. Christianity understands human dignity from the perspective of the organic unity of all the dimensions of the human life. In accordance with this premise, we consider - by presenting the diversity of arguments that substantiate the concept of human dignity - that it is an indispensable component of human life, reason for which the Orthodox missionary must understand it as well as possible, in order to be as useful in carrying out the missionary act in the Christian ecclesiological space.

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