Janusz Mariański, *Godność ludzka w narracji społecznej. Studium socjopedagogiczne*, KUL Publishing House, Lublin

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Father Professor Janusz Mariański, awarded the title of doctor *honoris causa* at the University of Silesia, the highest academic dignity granted only to outstanding personalities of the world of science, is the author of a new publication: *Human Dignity in the Social Narrative. A Socio-Pedagogical Study*. As a sociologist of religion, a sociologist of morality and an expert in Catholic social teaching, he deals with relevant issues in an interdisciplinary dimension. Before I go on to discuss this monograph, I will first focus on some issues related to the dignity of the human person that are currently being undertaken among various scientific bodies.

Human dignity is firmly rooted in the Basic Laws of various countries. In Poland's Constitution, Art. 30 mentions **human dignity**: *The inherent and inalienable dignity of the person shall constitute*

a source of freedoms and rights of persons and citizens. It shall be inviolable. The respect and protection thereof shall be the obligation of public authorities. Despite being rooted in the Constitution, human dignity is very often the subject of controversy in public discourse. Questions are raised as to whether it is really an inviolable value and should limiting it in some extreme cases be allowed in favor of other central values?

The history of human dignity as an ethical concept begins with the Roman politician and philosopher Cicero. In the first century BC, he was the first thinker to give man a special place solely due to his ability to use reason. However, Cicero believed that dignity should first be won through a moral lifestyle. In the Middle Ages, a new criterion was added, the Christian aspect: what ennobles man is his being created in the image of God. Along with self-determination, the Age of Enlightenment later introduced another criterion: freedom. Immanuel Kant goes a step further and defines dignity as a value that

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every human being possesses, something timeless, inalienable and unconditional. He believed that man is valuable thanks to one's morality. The framework in which everyone can live in physical and mental integrity is next created in the 20th century according to human rights. At the same time, these formulate the indispensable duty of mutual respect, the guarantee of the inviolable dignity of another human being.

The historical episodes of systematic human rights violations during the German National Socialist period have led to the obligation to respect human dignity as a fundamental principle of human rights. It has become the supreme legal norm of the Basic Law: "Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority" (Art. 1 (1) GG). Also, in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human dignity is the starting point for establishing human rights. Therefore, legal systems and politics should be based on human dignity as the imperative principle that unites morality and law.

In the biomedical-ethical debate, there are still voices questioning this generally binding effect. Questions are asked about the exact nature of human dignity, its foundations and conclusions. Some believe that human dignity is based on controversial theological or metaphysical assumptions that cannot be generally accepted in a pluralistic society and an ideologically

neutral state. Another allegation concerns the inflationary and imprecise use of "human dignity," which leads to trivializing the idea of human rights.

Fr. Prof. Mariański in his earlier book *Godność ludzka – wartość doceniona czy puste słowo? Studium socjopedagogiczne* [Human Dignity. An Appreciated Value or Empty Word? A Socio-Pedagogical Study] described the category of human dignity in various contexts of interdisciplinary research. It is fortunate that the author has once again reflected on such a pertinent issue as the inviolable value of human dignity. In his monograph's initial chapters, he refers to considerations on human dignity in the thoughts of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and Pope John Paul II. There is no doubt that their social teaching plays a significant role in pro-dignity upbringing.

This aspect is extremely important in relation to the complexity and breadth of human dignity issues in empirical considerations. Here, Fr. Mariański focuses on selected aspects of the attitudes of Polish youth towards values concerning dignity. He tries to answer several important questions: What do the respondents mean when proclaiming that a person has dignity? What is the meaning of the concept of dignity? Who is entitled to it? How do the surveyed Poles understand it and how do they justify it? Is it something variable, gradual, can it be increased or lost? How can it be lost? Do external con-

ditions (political, social, economic) play a role in shaping someone's personality and personal dignity? Do the respondents see the relationship between being responsible for their dignity and responsibility for others' dignity? How do outstanding individuals with a high level of acquired dignity judge this? Under what conditions do people lose their dignity, becoming to some extent unworthy? How are children and adolescents educated to accept and recognize dignity?

Chapter four, *Human dignity as a value and ways of justifying it in the opinion of young people*, can be considered one of the most important, especially in the context of the above questions constructively posed by the author. When analyzing the answers given by young people, Fr. Mariański notes that the majority of respondents think positively about dignity, but there are no in-depth justifications. Young people associate various contents with the category of dignity. From the viewpoint of the surveyed youth, there is no (or only sporadically) relationship between dignity and religion (theological justifications). According to the author, in sociological theories and empirical research, a discourse on social determinants and justifications on dignity are rarely undertaken, and these are also scattered and rather marginal.

According to contemporary opinion, human dignity is, on the one hand, a value equally ascribed to all people regardless

of their distinguishing features, such as origin, gender, age, sexual orientation or status; on the other hand, it is a value that man as a species places himself above all other living creatures and things.

Human dignity, rooted in Christian tradition and ancient philosophy, is a fundamental value; it is timeless as a fundamental ethical principle.

Analyzing the substantive contents of Fr. Prof. Mariański's monograph, it should be stated that his reflections on the issue of human dignity inspire further considerations, especially in the face of the contemporary threats that John Paul II very often pointed out. Namely, these include that modern civilization imposes on man several apparent imperatives in the name of the ideologies of progress and modernity, and the modern world is marked by the danger of relativism and great confusion in the field of values.

The author's contribution through the reviewed monograph can be described as exceptional, because the issue of human dignity is of interest to various scientific disciplines. Unfortunately, it does not yet occupy its proper place in sociological literature.

In conclusion, I recommend reading Fr. Prof. Mariański's publication in its entirety, not only by sociologists, but also educators, philosophers and theologians. It describes the category of a human person's dignity as a value that constitutes the foundation of personalistic upbringing.