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The protection of human rights, although it has been a cornerstone of the agenda of international cooperation among states for more than 70 years, continues to be one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. However, raising the level of compliance with human rights requires constant reflection on the source of the threats. The spectacular developments we have witnessed in recent decennaries in the areas of economy, science, trade or communication, as well as the progress of the globalisation process, naturally give rise to new challenges to the protection of human dignity, which is at the heart of the entire system for the protection of individual rights. These have become particularly evident during the global SARS-CoV-2 epidemic or Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The latter, in addition to the traditional traumas of war and war crimes, also had "new" consequences. The war between the two states in Europe, due to escalating interdependencies in supply chains over the years, created the spectre of humanitarian catastrophe and famine on several continents.

A reflection responding to this challenges is offered by the authors of the described publication, which is a collection of rather loosely linked chapters by twelve respected academics¹, edited by José María Puyol Montero. Their goal was to "contribute their

¹ The authors of the individual chapters are, in turn: Franciszek Longchamps de Bériar (Jagiellonian University in Kraków), Maria do Ceú Patrão Neves Neves (University of the Azores), Guilermo F. Arquero (University of Piura), José María Puyol Montero (Complutense University of Madrid), Grzegorz J. Blicharz (Jagiellonian University in Kraków), Hugo S. Ramirez-Garcia (Pan-American University), María Luisa Gómez Jiménez (University of Malaga), Luca Valera (Chilean Pontifical Catholic University), Liviu Olteanu,

grain of sand to improve the level of respect of human rights” (p. 15). The monograph followed an international seminar entitled “New Challenges for Law: Genetic Editing, Human Ecology and Human Dignity, in Life and Death”, held in June 2019 organised by the Royal College of Complutense (Real Colegio Complutense) community, i.e. a research group based at Harvard University. The continuation of the seminar, scheduled for June 2020, did not take place due to the pandemic. Therefore, the publication is a selection of papers delivered in 2019 and those submitted for the second session.

Structurally, the monograph is rather uneven. The publication consists of a prologue by Javier Martínez-Torrón, an introduction from the editor, J. M. Puyol Montero, and twelve chapters. While the first seven chapters seem to form an orderly whole, the remaining five give the impression of having been “co-opted” at the end for lack of a better place. However, this does not significantly affect the assessment of the reviewed monograph. Rather, more significant remarks can be made about the individual chapters, whose authors seem to have had a free hand in the editorial organisation of their articles. Indeed, some of them are excessively, in my opinion, shredded with subsections, e.g. Liviu Olteanu’s text, which affects their reception, although, on the other hand, it organises the number of threads and issues addressed in the publication.

The first text (pp. 23–54), by Franciszek Longchamps de Bérier entitled “Persona: bearer of rights and anthropology for law” plays a role of a certain introduction to the entire debate. This is because it poses a fundamental question – what, or rather who, is the subject and starting point of law? He reaches back to the absolute foundations of European culture and law, i.e. Roman law and Christian theology, as well as, to a lesser extent, the Greek tradition. He seeks the answer in the thought attributed to Hermogenian, *hominum causa omne ius constitutum sit*, the continued relevance of which he demonstrates. The article by F. Longchamps de Bérier marks, in a sense, the scope of all the texts collected in the work. He defines key terms and introduces the issue, stressing its universality, for which he uses precisely the concept of *persona*². He points out that the fundamental challenge of protecting and respecting human dignity lies in determining the designees of this concept, which is also a challenge for the future.

Maria do Ceú Patrão Neves, in her article “Contemporary threats to human dignity: its interfaces and erosion”, which is the second chapter of the reviewed monograph (pp. 55–76), presents and explores the nature of threats to human dignity and their dynamics in a general and superficial, but also impressively broad, manner, concluding with a generic listing of the most relevant contemporary threats. Superficiality is not a grievance in the case of this article, as the author defines and diagnoses the issues in question in an interesting and, it seems, appropriate manner. Only the author’s seemingly excessive pessimism regarding the protection of individual rights raises objections.

A further section can be called a historical one. It includes three articles – “The dignity of Native Americans and African slaves in the Spanish Crown from the moralists’ point of view (15th to 18th centuries)” by Guillermo F. Arquero Caballero (pp. 77–100), “Dignified work and dehumanization of work. Some reflections on the prehistory of la-

Carlos Espaliú Berdud (University of Nebrija, Madrid), Federico de Montalvo Jääskeläinen (Pontifical University of Comillas, Madrid), Francesc Torralba (University of Roman Lullia).

² On the birth and development of the concept *persona* itself, an interesting account has also been written by Stagl, “*Persona: maska z ludzką twarzą*”.

bour law” by J.M. Puyol Montero (pp. 101–31) and “Humans as a service: ethics in the sharing economy and the ancient model” authored by Grzegorz Blicharz (pp. 133–61). What these have in common is a comprehensive historical analysis, whereas the purpose of the analysis differs. G.F. Arquero Caballero introduces the reader to the development of philosophical and theological thought concerning Native Americans and African slaves under the Spanish monarchy, limiting the scope of analysis to the thought of the Spanish moralists. He indicates the influence the latter played in improving the condition of initially dehumanised groups, with which he explains the source of the difference between the treatment of these groups in the Spanish and British colonies. For J.M. Puyol Montero and G. Blicharz, historical analysis is the starting point for reflecting on current phenomena. Both are looking at changes within the labour market through the prism of their impact on the *persona*, already defined as an objective of the law.

Particularly noteworthy is the text by J.M. Puyol Montero, who, in an interesting, original and revealing way, describes the changing perception of work by both society and the individual. He treats this change as an element that significantly affects the perception and protection of human rights. He notes that, on the one hand, “the right and duty to work is a requirement of human dignity”, so, on the other hand, the working environment has been one of the main threats to it for centuries (p. 130). Both of them, together with G. Blicharz, also come to similar conclusions regarding future threats to the rights of the worker in the labour market. On one hand, as J.M. Puyol Montero mainly emphasises, in many parts of the world people cannot enjoy the fruits of the social reforms initiated in Europe at the turn of the 20th century (the social question). On the other hand, however, in the “Western” world, the 4.0 revolution, digitisation, servitisation and the shift to a model when, to paraphrase G. Blicharz, the human being is a service, are causing human rights achievements to be annihilated. The result is progressive precarisation and, as G. Blicharz interestingly demonstrates, the emergence of a pattern of individual labour akin to that of the freedman in ancient Rome.

The next six articles are a discussion of selected challenges and threats in terms of human rights. They are not linked by any key.

Hugo Ramírez-García points out the dangers of the climate crisis and emphasises the need to develop a common path for an ecological society rooted in the democratic legacy (pp. 163–74). To this end, he presents the concept of a sustainable, ecological citizenship based on the individual’s sense of dependence and vulnerability to climate change.

María Luisa Gómez Jiménez, presents her thoughts on the impact of public policies created with artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision-making methods on human dignity, which became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic (pp. 175–96). Her text is one of the most innovative in the entire publication and is certainly worth paying attention to. One element of consideration is the so-called nudging or the role of state power in “pushing” individuals to adopt attitudes and take action. The author also drew attention to the “red queen” effect, which assumes that in order to stand still, i.e. maintain one’s position, one must run as much as possible while adapting to the changing reality. Gómez Jiménez refers to this concept in an interesting way, in the context of the IT development forced by the pandemic, which poses a twofold challenge for the protection and respect of human dignity – on one hand, IT integration was a necessity for the satisfaction of basic social and individual needs. On the other hand, it highlighted the problem of digital exclusion, the

unequal distribution of goods and services including public services. Although the author uses a specialised conceptual framework and recognises new problems, she limits herself to a statement about the need to change the way public policy is conducted, which is a significant shortcoming of the article. However, it is worth reading for a broader view of the problems highlighted by the pandemic and to familiarise oneself with the “nudging” theory.

The next three articles form the least attractive part of the publication. Luca Valera conducts an essentially linguistic consideration regarding the externalisation of an intrinsic part of human activity that has been transferred to the virtual space (pp. 197–211). He argues that the Internet is beginning to create a new entity, separate from human activity, which, on top of this, is marked by a potential infinity, and thus poses a pressing ethical problem requiring a different approach to the very concept of dignity, which has to face new challenges. These conclusions, however, seem to be exaggerated. The Internet space is a platform for interpersonal communication and, although it definitely poses new threats to the protection of human dignity, which are crucial as they require, as the author himself points out, a different perspective on the protection of dignity, it is unjustified to assume that man has changed his habitat and therefore a redefinition of dignity is necessary. The habitat is still the society, albeit communicating in a different way than in the “pre-Internet” era. This new means of communication poses a different threat, but to the very same dignity. L. Valera also pays excessive attention to concepts that he understands literally and thus makes a retarded attempt to explain the meaning of intuitively understood metaphors or concepts, and thus in six pages he defines, for example, concepts such as “virtual reality” and “virtual environment”.

Liviu Olteanu presents in his article questions in the field of human dignity versus the impact of the pandemic, violence and abuse of power, which he submitted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the European Commission, together with the answers he received (pp. 213–40). In the documents he quotes, sprinkled with commentary, he enumerates the problems and challenges for the protection of human rights caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the text has a chronicling and debriefing character, whereas each of the topics raised could be the subject of a separate reflection.

Carlos Espaliú Berdud’s summary-descriptive text is similarly presented (pp. 241–68). He presents the course of the EU’s naval operation against human trafficking and smuggling in the Mediterranean, expressing a pessimistic conclusion as to the results of this action. This is because the illegal trafficking of people from North Africa to the European Mediterranean countries continues to pose a significant challenge to protection of human dignity.

Federico de Montalvo Jääskeläinen’s text on law in the age of neurotechnology development is certainly worthwhile (pp. 269–87). He reflects on the important and no longer distant question of the impact of neurotechnology and neuroscience on the protection of human dignity in its various emanations, in particular on freedom of thought. He also identifies the development of neuroscience with the search for a biological (biochemical) justification of the decisions of individuals, with which a certain determinism is sought to be adopted. F. de Montalvo Jääskeläinen thus asks the important question, which he later interestingly answers, whether it is possible to accept a law that does not recognise individual free will. While it is obviously not possible to reflect on neuro-rights in the

course of a short chapter, the author asks pertinent questions and points out interesting directions in the search for answers. The topic of neuro-rights is certainly a topic of the future, and it is rarely discussed in Poland so far, therefore the penultimate chapter of the reviewed monograph certainly deserves attention.

The entire work culminates in Francesco Torralba's reflection on a dignified death (pp. 289–99). The reader thus concludes the book by leaning into the ultimate question. Torralba remains within the technological theme, as he reflects on the impact of technology on the definition of “dignified death” or “persistent therapy”, devoting an important part of the reflection to euthanasia. In the final part of the text, the author presents eight meanings of “dignity” in relation to death, emphasising the role of integral pre-death care including psychological assistance, but also respecting the autonomy of the individual, in which the will plays a key role. The article may not have a clear juridical character, but is rather a philosophical reflection, however it does provide a good point for reflection by the reader, including legal reflection.

Exercising the privilege of the review formula, one can still afford some formal criticism. The reader who is not fluent in Latin may find it difficult to understand the Latin vocabulary used by some authors which is left unexplained. In particular, this remark applies to G. Blicharz, who quotes whole blocks of source text in Latin (e.g. pp. 149–50), without even translating them in a footnote. Of course, this does not bother specialists – Romanists and others with knowledge of Latin – but it may remain incomprehensible to other readers, and the constant reference to a dictionary during reading hinders reflection on the text.

Notwithstanding the individual remarks indicated in the text, one reads these considerations with interest, regardless of whether one is a lawyer / law student interested in the protection of human rights, the philosophy of law or the so-called “law of new technologies”. The authors analyse the question of human dignity through the prism of a very wide range of issues, so it is very likely that every reader will find a chapter that goes directly to his or her interests, for which the authors and especially the editor are to be congratulated. Many of the authors' comments and reflections are universal and timeless. On the other hand, it has to be admitted that there are some cliché formulations and conclusions in selected texts, and some passages are more reporting than reflective. Nevertheless, the monograph discussed is of great scientific and cognitive value. Indeed, the publication is a skilful summary of the significant challenges for the protection of human dignity, providing a contribution to further debate and thus to the development of human-rights doctrine. Minor criticism presented, related to individual texts cannot therefore detract from the overall assessment of the monograph, which should be high. Certainly, the problems have been accurately diagnosed and the vast majority of the proposed solutions are right and brilliant. It is worthwhile for the Polish academy to pay attention to the reviewed monograph, which deserves careful reading.

Bibliography

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