Respecting human dignity as an essential mission for humanity

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Abstract

If we treat history as a process of discovering values, and each epoch as defined by a certain way of valuing, then the twentieth century, not without reason, could be characterized as an age in which individuality, subjectivity, independence and dignity are valued above all else, and humility, obedience and harmony are disregarded. Dignity is a value - a reason, a value - a slogan, a superior, festive, façade value, and at the same time, thanks to the emotional element it contains, it is an intimate value, universal, because it refers to the "feeling" of each of us. The concept of "dignity" is not set in stone. It has changed historically, as has the sense of freedom or the sense of responsibility. In our transitional, dynamic era, these changes are particularly rapid. It is the moral duty of our generation to shape this concept in such a way that it is adequate to the requirements of civilization industrial. It would be a grave mistake to ignore this obligation. Recognizing the dignity of man in the aspect of his superiority over everything that comes from him in the visible world, it is also necessary to "cry out" for his dignity. The "cry" for the dignity of the human person is becoming the most important voice of our time. It is a matter of human activity being at the service of man, of his integral development, of individuals, of communities, of the whole of humanity, and not directed against man, against his dignity, nor at destroying or humiliating it.

Key words: personal dignity; the cry for dignity; value; threats to dignity; respect for dignity

1. Introduction

If we treat history as a process of discovering values, and each epoch as defined by a certain way of valuing, then the twentieth century, not without reason, could be characterized as an age in which individuality, subjectivity, independence and dignity are valued above all else, and humility, obedience and harmony are disregarded. The popularity of dignity slogans is one of the consequences of the crisis of scientific and technological civilization, or rather the crisis of values of this civilization. They raised anew the question of the place and rights of the human individual, as well as of human destiny. The clearest expression of this experience is the proclamation of the in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It initiates a "revolution of dignity", the essence of which boils down to a universal and unlimited vindication of human and civil rights: a vindication for which human dignity is a sufficient and definitive reason.

The fact that it is a Christian, universal, communal value, and at the same time not burdened with the sin of violence, like the flagship values of every revolution carried out
in the name of freedom, independence or justice, was of considerable importance for the popularity of dignity slogans in Poland. On the other hand, it is a value that applies to all of them in some fundamental way.

Despite its popularity, or perhaps because of it, "dignity" is an ambiguous and vague concept. The term carries a huge emotional charge that allows it to be used in many contexts, giving it different, often contradictory, meanings.

Dignity is a value – a reason, a value – a slogan, a superior, festive, façade value, and at the same time, thanks to the emotional element it contains, an intimate, universal value, because it refers to the "feeling" of each of us (Środa 1993, pp.5-6).

2. From the history of the concept of "dignity"

The term "dignity" was first used by Cicero in writing "De inuentione" ("dignitas [est] alicuius honesta et cultu et vercundia digna auctoritas"). Later, the term dignitas humanae is found in the Christmas prayer in the Sacramentatium Leonianum, written around the fifth century, as well as in the in the eleventh-century "Legend of St. Alexius". Over this period or so, together with the with the spread of the term, the question of dignity emerges as a separate and a permanent subject of philosophical and theological considerations.

Despite the fact that the genesis of the "dignity problem" is primarily theological, the etymology of the concept itself and its ambiguity, which cannot be removed, are related to spheres far removed from theology. Thus, in a very complex set of meanings of the concept of dignity, we can find not only philosophical and theological elements, but also elements of clearly ethical, socio-political and aesthetic provenance.

As dictionaries prove, the Latin etymology dignitas leads to the realm of both ethical and aesthetic concepts. Decus, décor means first of all "handsomeness", "beauty", "grace", only later "spiritual beauty", "boast" or "honour".

Dignity is defined, in a broad sense, a high position occupied in the social hierarchy. This is one of the oldest uses of the term. State "dignities" and ecclesiastical were first established in the twelfth century in France by a royal act. This is also the origin of the word "dignitary" and the term "dignary" as a surname, which was coined in the 17th century (in questions like: "Your dignity?"). With dignity understood in this way (not elective, and inherited birth) certain behavioral traits are associated: solemnity, slowness, dignity, grandeur, magnificence, seriousness, haughtiness, possession of good manners. French dictionaries include among the antinmys of dignity understood in this way: vulgarity, lowliness, lack of education, uncouthness, vulgarity. It is worth noting that the aesthetic element of the concept of dignity, inextricably linked to it, historically derives from aristocratic circles and is primarily related to court customs.

The Polish "dignity" etymologically derived from "god" means "that which is in time" that is, that which is appropriate, and at the same time "that which is noble" or "substantial," as well as that which is generally valuable ("unworthy" means "unworthy"). The Polish "god" is related here with the Russian "godnost", which means - "fitness"; "unworthy" means both "unfit" and "unfit" and "wicked". "Dignity" thus meant first of all "suitability",

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"usefulness", the ability to perform a function, talent, skill, proficiency. Hence the importance of dignity as a formal and relative trait, dependent on a hierarchy of values, or as a relational trait (to be worthy of something: "a trustworthy person" or "a work worthy of a master").

Among the philosophers, only T. Hobbes built the concept of dignity on the basis of the understanding of dignity as fitness. In "Leviathan" he wrote: "Dignity is a different thing on the value of man and also on his merits; it consists in a special power or ability for what a person is supposed to be worthy of; It is, therefore, a special ability, usually called aptitude or opportunity." A clearly positive element of dignity (worthy as noble) is associated in Polish with the influence of the German "gut", i.e. a concept belonging to the dictionary of morality (meaning "good"). The positive meaning of "dignity" has a heterogeneous structure and is most often relativized to the type of behavior or attitude.

But to say that a person is worthy does not mean to judge him positively in a moral sense. Bad people also behave with dignity; one can speak of a behaving with dignity of a criminal or of a thief with dignity. In the most explicit terms, 'worthiness' refers to an assessment of the nature or type of conduct, specifying formally, the "strength" of this character (it is said that a "worthy man" is "a man with character", "without dignity" is often "without character") or consistency of behavior (faithfulness to oneself, perseverance in one's own principles, etc.) This form of assessing the meaning of dignity is most often found in the form of "personal dignity."

It is a value which, on the one hand, refers to a psychological fact, namely a "sense of dignity" or "self-respect", and on the other hand, to a social fact, since it is "a value that inspires respect". Dignity here has a demanding character and its existence is implied by the conformity of one's conduct with the existing social or environmental standards of dignified behavior. These two components may be independent or mutually exclusive condition. In both cases, however, dignity transcends the strictly ethical sphere in its scope of meaning, combining moral judgments with aesthetic and moral (style, beauty of behaviour, dignity in the way of being).

Finally, one of the most common meanings of dignity is that of the philosophical and theological tradition, the "dignity of the human person". "Dignity" is then the name of the value. The synonym here is: "human dignity", "dignity of man" or simply "the value of man". The Stoics referred to this value as "honestum", contrasting it with "pretium", that which is valuable in a measurable way, "... that which has no equivalent counterpart and is therefore above all price, has dignity. "Only persons possess dignity or value, things possess only price.""

So we can treat "dignity" as a position, as a privilege, as a fitness to something. It can be a description of a subjective mental state ("to have a sense of dignity"), an objectified assessment of a certain type of behavior or attitude ("behaved with dignity"), a feature of interpersonal relationships ("respect for someone's dignity"), and finally - philosophical-moral value ("human dignity as animal rationale") or theological-ontic ("Human dignity as imago Dei"). Thus, it occurs as a feature of socio-political, as a relative subjective (psychological) value, a relative objective (social) value, as an absolute (ethical, philosophical) value, and in the meta-ethical sense as a principle of evaluation. It is dignity, an aesthetic quality, a moral virtue (virtue), a reason for duty, the basis of rights,
and finally it is the determination of the human condition or of the human vocation (Środa 1993, pp.8-10).

"Human dignity", which is one of the most important categories in the vocabulary of European culture, is founded by two traditions. One of them, undoubtedly the most important, is the Christian tradition that presents man as imago Dei. The second, no less important - the Renaissance tradition with its Promethean non seruiam, which autonomizes man both in terms of the kind of reasons granting him dignity and the fulfilment of his earthly vocation with rich content (Środa 1993, p.71).

3. Definition of dignity

The basic question of what dignity is answered by psychologists, sociologists, ethicists and pedagogues. It is impossible not to appreciate the unanimity of ethicists, ideologues and politicians in the proclamation of the "dignity of man". The motto, persona est affirmanda, which is of Christian origin, is agreed upon by all those who bind their personal and historical identity of European culture. As can be seen, philosophers as ideologically divergent as M. Buber, N. Hartman, E. Mounier, T. Kotarbiński, K. Marx, T. Czeżowski or K. Wojtyla unanimously proclaims the dignity of the person and respect for him as a principle determining the humanistic character of both morality and worldview. And it is not important whether the act of affirmation with human dignity is defined as a postulate of "submissive care", as a "personalistic norm", as a principle of "universal kindness", as "the commandment to love one's neighbour" or finally as a slogan: "man is the highest value for man". Each from these general principles, it is supposed to express the obviousness of the axiological rank of humanity. The notion of obviousness plays here not only a methodological role, leading us to believe that the rule persona est affirmanda is intuitive, but also persuasive: it is supposed to dismiss the desire to search for some reasons or proofs of human dignity and the resulting command of respect. Human dignity and the imperative of respect are to be the axiomatic basis for all evaluative reflection. (Środa 1993, p.114).

The category of dignity is an anthropological, psychological and moral concept. It is easier to see and feel it than to define and talk about it. It also focuses such concepts as: honor, good fame, good name, respect, esteem, honor, human value (Ossowska 1972, p.61).

Although this concept is to some extent indeterminate, like the sense of beauty, although each person builds up his own definition of dignity, nevertheless in this variety of definitions one can find certain common and characteristic features (Kozelecki 1977, p.10).

Common language places the concept of "dignity" in the context of such terms as "personal", "human", "person", "person", "employee", "nation", etc. Most often, however, we speak of "personal dignity" - for which a close expression is the somewhat anachronistic "honor" or "sense of dignity". This phrase clearly points to the psychological sources of the problem of dignity. Its awareness and importance reach us primarily "from the inside", most often in dangerous situations: in the face of violence, fear, incapacitation, reification; when someone is beaten, insulted, humiliated, when someone is treated as an object, as a means, as an element of a controlled mass.
"Dignity" in inner experience is associated with a certain universal, though of varying degrees, sensitivity to situations that are perceived as violating the private, social or moral status of man. The range of sensitivity to situations that violate human dignity may vary. It is an individual or cultural matter, it depends on the moral maturity of the individual, on his moral and psychological sensitivity, on his system of values; It also depends on the historical development of social awareness expressed by the need to respect and protect human rights. It can also be related to with a type of morality (the value of dignity is more emphasized by the so-called chivalric ethics than by bourgeois morality) or with a national character. For example, we can talk about the Polish love of dignity. The essence of this attitude was aptly expressed by J. Tischner when he wrote: "Is it better to crawl with a pushed belly or to live standing with an empty one? Everyone has the right to choose what they prefer. We choose to live standing up, because it seems to us a more appropriate position to take the march. The obviousness of dignity is expressed briefly, we can be starved, but we must not be insulted." (Środa 1993, pp.6-7).

The concept of "dignity" is not set in stone. It has changed historically, as has the sense of freedom or the sense of responsibility. In our transitional, dynamic era, these changes are particularly rapid. It is the moral duty of our generation to shape this concept in such a way that it is adequate to the requirements of civilization Industrial. It would be a grave mistake to ignore this obligation (Kozielecki 1977, p.11).

The shortest definition of dignity can be found in the Dictionary of Catholic Social Teaching, in which it is written: "Human dignity, the specific value of the human person" (Piwowarski 1993, p.54).

Dignity is the solid conviction of the individual of his or her authentic value as a human being who is indivisible and whole. It is a moral component of the personality of each one of us. A sense of dignity is an important dimension of humanity. Beyond it, there is only compulsive consumption, neurotic anxiety, and moral emptiness (Kozielecki 1977, p.10).

Man as a person is the supreme value in creation. Hence, dignity defines the great value of the human person, incomparable to anything else. The point is that a person should be aware of this value and feel it.

According to J. Szlaga, these two elements: the awareness of value and the sense of it, determine human dignity. The author believes that "dignity is the sense and awareness of one’s own worth, hence it also means self-respect." (Szlaga 1996, p.150).

To be human is, first of all, to act in the name of the highest values recognized as specifically human (Cichoń 1996, p.164).

The definition in the Catholic Encyclopedia emphasizes the special value of man as a person, interpersonal relations and their evaluation, as well as the role of evaluation in building one’s own image and motivating to behave morally valuable.

"Dignity (Latin: dignitas), the special value of man as a person who remains in interpersonal relations, justifying and making sense of personal life, as well as positively valuing relations to one’s own person and group (e.g. professional, class, national), with which the individual identifies. The constitutive component of this attitude is self-esteem,
which consists in experiencing one's own value and a positive self-image, which motivates morally valuable behaviors, immunizes against all forms of manipulation and enslavement, and influences coping in difficult situations. Dignity implies a sense of inner freedom, self-determination (subjectivity) and responsibility." (Chlewiński, Zalewski 1989, p.1231).

The above definition refers to many goals of upbringing, such as: respecting one's own value, building a positive self-image, creating one's own freedom, subjectivity, attitude of responsibility, ability to solve problems, building positive interpersonal relationships.

The dignity of every human being can be considered in two aspects: the natural and the supernatural. In its natural aspect, dignity expresses man's ability to be free and conscious action, to intellectual and moral development. On the supernatural level, dignity reveals human participation in the transcendent reality, in the life of the Divine Persons (Piwowarski 1993, p.55).

These two aspects of dignity are developed by K. Wojtyla.

The great dignity of man is evidenced by his superior position in relation to the whole of nature and by anthropology. Man and the whole of humanity test and confirm their superiority in experience: history, culture, technology, creativity, production. The individual effects of man's actions, of social collectives, of humanity as a whole, testify to him, to his superiority over the visible world. The constant confrontation of one's being with nature brings man to the threshold of understanding the person and his dignity. Recognizing the dignity of man means placing himself above everything that comes from him in the visible world. The second basis of dignity is the essence of man, that is, what man is in himself. The essence of man is determined by rationality, freedom, and his inner life. The above elements constitute the basic cause and source of man's external activity. Intellect and freedom are essential and indispensable qualities of the person. Here, too, lies the whole natural basis of her dignity (Wojtyła 2000, p.418).

To the question concerning the reason for humanity, that is, to the question of what humanizes man, we can obtain four answers. The first will deal with the concept of "nature", the second with theology, the third with metaphysics, and the fourth with on the so-called practical reasons.

The first two types of reasons associated with the descriptive model concern the ontological measure of human dignity, the other two (the axiological model) - the value criterion.

The reasons and at the same time the four conceptions of humanity are:

1. Naturalistic reasons - dignity is one of the empirical features or is founded on empirical features (anthropocentric humanism);
2. Theological reasons: dignity is a supernatural quality (theocentric humanism).
3. In both versions, dignity belongs to man.
4. Metaphysical reasons and:
5. Ethical reasons.

The last two types of reasons correspond to the arguments of axiocentric humanism - dignity belongs to humanity here (Środa 1993, pp.76-77).
With regard to the two above-mentioned grounds of dignity: supernatural and natural, there are two basic approaches to dignity.

The first approach is personal dignity, the second is personal dignity.

Innate dignity is defined as personal dignity. On the other hand, dignity acquired in a morally valuable activity, in the process of education and self-education, in the influence of the environment, is defined as personal dignity.

4. Integrity of personal and personal dignity

Personal dignity is integrally linked to personal dignity. The link that unites them are the intentions and activity expressed in the human act.

Personality dignity presupposes personal dignity and is expressed in actions consistent with human nature, which bring him certain personality effects. They depend solely on the subject of the action, so even intentions or actions that in a way directly attack the personal dignity of another person do not deprive him of it (although they may hinder his proper development), but they strike both at the personal dignity of their perpetrator and inevitably cause a decrease in his personal dignity (Szostek 1998, p.48).

The relationship between the two meanings of dignity seems to be as follows: the nature of man distinguishes him from other beings not only in a purely descriptive sense, but also in an axiological sense;

By virtue of who he is, man is more valuable than any other being on earth. This preciousness, which stems from the fact of being a person, is called personal dignity. This dignity imposes on him the obligation to respect it, i.e. to live "according to the measure" of who man is (Szostek 2007, p.18).

Personal development cannot be separated from the subject of the human person. Man contains fixed and changeable elements. He is a being with the potential to constantly update himself, open to development and improvement in all spheres: physical, mental, spiritual. The development of the human person takes place through conscious, purposeful, motivated and free internal and external activity in relation to oneself, people, God, the world; through the deliberate influence of other persons and institutions. Personal development is the inner culture of man. Personal dignity is the basis and requirement for the acquisition of personal dignity. Although they are an integral whole, they cannot be identified with each other (Mazurek 2001, pp.76-77).

A multifaceted approach to the integration of personal dignity and personality dignity is presented by A. Krapiecz. According to the author, dignity is constituted by human self-awareness, personality development - especially cognitive and affective, the highest value congenital. The question of human dignity is linked to the very structure of man's being and his human action. For man as a personal being is the highest being in the hierarchy of beings (known to man from experience), constituting a kind of summit of existence. For it is a conscious being in itself, which is expressed in the fact that it speaks of itself as "I." As such, he is an immortal being in his personal structure, by virtue of his soul existing in himself as a subject. In his acts of knowledge and love, he transcends the whole of nature,
which he embraces with his acts of willing, of love. A being with such features of its existence is in itself someone worthy, moreover, someone of the highest degree of dignity. This dignity is manifested especially in human action: in fact, man in his humanity (as a person) can never be treated as a means to any other end. For it is the end of all human activities. From the very beginning, the dignity of the human person has been manifested in the Christian religion (Krąpiec 1996, pp. 309-310).

In the literature, there are also other types of dignity: self-dignity, personal dignity, professional dignity.

The self-dignity of the individual is expressed in his respect for and protection of his own moral identity, which is indicated by the moral values he prefers and realizes. By embodying our preferred values in a situation of choice, we preserve our personal and moral dignity at the same time. Self-dignity becomes the regulator of man’s responsibility to himself, to himself. Improper conduct, which is expressed in an axiological discrepancy, results in the loss of moral identity, as well as the loss of recognition and respect, both one’s own and as well as others (Wawrzak-Chodaczek 2000, pp.422-423).

Personal dignity is related to the sense of dignity and self-worth. This aspect of the concept of dignity stems from the nature of humanity and appeals to self-esteem as a person guided by a system of values and ideals in life, able to defend their own rights, regardless of the consequences, but also to maintain a dose of criticism in relation to oneself and others, and openness to what is new and worthy of appreciation. It is often attributed to social functions performed, occupying high offices. The higher the function, the greater the dignity. On one condition, however, that the testimony of professed social and moral norms will find its significant place in the function performed, the high format of humanity will be shown. Otherwise, the dignity of the is formal. This formal splendour of dignity is often extinguished when the person’s behaviour is confronted with commonly accepted social and moral norms. Then dignity appears with all its sharpness as an essential element of attitude, as a character trait of every human being – regardless of age and education, position held, professional role, rank in social life (Gajda 2000, pp.51-52).

Thus, personal dignity can be diminished or lost by its axiological orientation "downwards", by the discrepancy between preferred and realized values. It can also be built through faithfulness to one’s personal value, making moral choices, serving another human being in accordance with the personalistic norm. Professional dignity is related to social dignity, often identified with it, because it is related to the social role played by the individual. This role is determined by duties treated as models of behavior, which are often indicated by ethical norms (Wawrzak-Chodaczek 2000, p.53).

The dignity of the person is a great value, a value of value, i.e. the value of the highest value on earth, which is man. It determines the normative function, permanent, objective, universal values (Mazurek 2001, p.18).

It is the fundamental gift of individual and collective life. It elevates man to transcendence. Hence, the knowledge of its essence builds man anew, helps him to build a project of life in the aspect of moral and ultimate values.
Dignity in the development of personality and human functioning fulfils an integrative, orienting, motivational, defensive, and crystallizing function of identity. It is an important component of the personality, determining its qualitative dimensions (Mazurek 2001, pp.49-53).

In today's world, we observe phenomena that threaten human dignity. The dynamic development of technology results in a re-evaluation of the value system in the direction of material values. Moral values are put in the background. This phenomenon implies the emergence of various disorders and deformations, the blurring of a clear boundary between "what is necessary" and "what is possible", between good and evil. The value of a person is decreasing.

Man acts against man, destroys and kills. What is most worrying is the fact that these phenomena have their place among those who should be close to each other - in the family, school, circle of friends, professional work. This proves that the sense of human dignity has been lost, and a man without a sense of dignity – as J. Kozielecki emphasizes – resembles a puppet in an institutional network, is unable to effectively defend his individuality and identity, is unable to face hostile circumstances (Kozielecki 1977, pp.7-9).

5. The role of dignity in personality development

As it has been mentioned, dignity in the development of personality fulfills an integrative, orientation, motivational, defensive, and crystallizing function.

Dignity integrates the personality regardless of positive or negative experiences, helps to direct and affirm life regardless of conditions, and is a component of the sense of meaning and duty of life.

The awareness of the dignity given to man transcends him as a person and his actions. It makes the meaning of his life clear, precisely defined, not subject to discussion and doubt, despite the changing circumstances and conditions. This dignity becomes the source of the project of life and its signposts. In it we find the answer to who we are, where we are going, how we should live in order to achieve the goal set for every human being. We find our anthropology.

The dignity given to man "obliges" him to develop, to set immediate and distant goals, to look for ways to achieve them, to evaluate himself and to achieve results. When it finds its source in the dignity given to man, while remaining with it integration, it then becomes a factor in the integral development of the individual.

Human dignity finds its reference to values. Values are the plane on which it is built, strengthened and affirmed. In value orientation, the right image of the value is built by being rooted in the conditions. Dignity fulfills motivational functions, directing one's conduct in accordance with a recognized system of values, defending one's image against the distortion resulting from acting contrary to one's own beliefs and conscience, as well as to social norms.
Dignity fulfils the function of crystallizing human identity, strengthening faithfulness to ideals and values as well as competence to solve difficult life problems, especially in extreme situations, connected with a threat to life, loss of social and professional position. In this way, "a sense of dignity helps to remain faithful to one's convictions and one's own conscience in the face of the pressures of totalitarian systems, it immunizes behavioural engineering and the impact of brainwashing techniques.

In his life, man encounters many difficulties, adversities, problems that require competence to solve them. These competences determine a person's identity. A sense of dignity makes a person able to find himself in difficult situations, solve problems to the extent of his own dignity, with respect for himself and other people. A person with a sense of dignity is able to skillfully survive frustrating, difficult situations, sufferings and failures, accept them without despair, accepting the adversities of life.

One of the elements of a person's identity is their location in the community, which is related to their role. A sense of dignity "elevates" to the community, places the community in a strong position, makes the dignity of the human being strengthened by the optics of social perceptions. Thus, a sense of dignity reinforces and crystallizes identity. This is due to the fact that a person with a sense of dignity, when he occupies a high position, is able to respect the dignity of others - both subordinates and superiors, he is resistant to flattery, servility and ingratiatory actions (Chlewinski 1989, p.1232).

6. Sources of dignity

According to J. Koziellecki (Koziellecki 1977, pp.14-20), dignity is not a gift that man receives from nature or from society, nor is it a commodity that can be purchased at the market price. It is true that dignity can be renounced, but it cannot be bought, as one buys industrial products.

Dignity is inseparable from human activity; man shapes programmed or spontaneous action. By defending one's self, creating new ideas and things, or engaging in altruistic acts, the individual asserts himself in the belief of personal worth. To be worthy, one must first be active.

One of the factors that suppresses human actions is the fatalistic belief that a man's achievements do not depend so much on his conscious effort and abilities as on external circumstances over which he has no control and which, as a rule, he does not understand. People who think they are controlled externally, like pieces on a chessboard, avoid hardship, instead of acting, they withdraw, instead of creating, they choose inaction, instead of resolving conflicts, they remove them from consciousness.

People who see the world in this way, whose activity is stifled by a fatalistic conviction about the futility of human effort, cannot achieve much.

And in any case, they can strengthen their dignity. Most people actively shape their social environment and their personality. They are convinced that the individual is not only a grain of sand tossed by the waves of the sea, but also that, by acting wisely, it determines its own fate to a large extent. Such a sense of inner control makes it easier for people to
take great risky actions, strengthens their faith, that there is little. Beyond our strength, when we are well prepared for it.

Acting in the modern world, man also develops his dignity, which is a moral component of his personality. Dignity understood in this way depends primarily on three types of activity. Each of them is a source from which the individual derives a conviction of his or her worth as a human being.

It could be said that human dignity is three-dimensional (Kozielecki 1987, p.10).

The first source is the defense of one's own identity and belief system.

In order to "live with dignity", it is necessary first of all to "be oneself" and to be faithful to oneself in all circumstances, including in situations of danger.

The second source of human dignity is activity directed towards other people. Solidarity and sacrifice, help and fight against suffering, altruistic acts and participation, emotional bonding and friendship are links in the same chain - a chain that perpetuates the conviction of the authentic value of the individual. By undertaking non-personal tasks, we can raise our profile as a human being.

Finally, the third source of dignity is creativity.

In times of significant democratization of creative and innovative activity, in times when new scientific ideas, artistic works or design ideas are no longer the domain of the "chosen gods", creativity creates greater opportunities for development than it results from common observations.

An activity through which an individual shapes and strengthens his or her dignity is not an amusement park game. It often requires strong motivation and competence and resistance to stress. A person who wants to "be himself" in a modern school, in a factory or in an office, must face adversity, must be prepared to setbacks and shocks. A dignified behaviour is, above all, a manifestation of a strong and a healthy personality.

However, a life without failures is also a life without success. People who do not undertake new activities cannot attain the material and moral values that are necessary for modern man. Nor can they maintain their dignity. Sooner or later, they become sad puppets controlled by external forces that they no longer comprehend. So their lives are not interesting. Active participation in the whirlwind of everyday affairs is the only opposition to passivity and escape from the present. Admittedly, by taking bold actions we always expose ourselves to unpleasant consequences, but it is only through activity that we can achieve a sense of personal dignity. Besides, we must remember that there is always the possibility of minimizing negative effects and maximizing the probability of success.

The ultimate effects of human activity depend primarily on the ability to combine what is valuable with what is possible, on the art of choosing goals that are both useful and realistic. These skills reduce the likelihood of failure, increase the chance, develop a sense of dignity.
7. A sense of dignity as a need

Treating dignity as a kind of need that can be met and reinforcement is a function of the human psyche we find in the theories of humanistic psychology and psychoanalysis.

The creators and proponents of the so-called psychodynamic conceptions of the human being (Maslow 1986) speak of the existence of certain fundamental needs, the satisfaction of which is necessary to maintain mental homeostasis. These include, in addition to primary (natural) needs, the so-called secondary needs related not only to the functioning of the human body, but also to the human psyche. These include, but are not limited to: the need for security, the need for identification and belonging, the need for love and the need for self-esteem, so you need prestige, recognition, respect, acceptance.

In almost every situation, the individual tries to meet these needs. The need to satisfy one’s sense of dignity becomes particularly visible in extreme situations: in situations of enslavement, restriction of freedom, humiliation, etc. A prisoner who has little opportunity to take actions that would satisfy his need for self-esteem, as in freedom, succumbs to the situation or finds, if not another kind of action, at least a form of action that resembles the behavior presented in the on the loose. If a person can only sleep, eat, and walk, his self-esteem will derive from the way he performs these activities. Theorists of rehabilitation call this way of proceeding – ritualization (Kosewski 1986, p.95). More broadly, we can say that these types of actions are compensatory actions. They are aimed at restoring mental balance in a situation where there is no normal possibility of satisfying the need for self-esteem.

We believe that the prisoner’s situation can be generalized. Any prolonged state of humiliation causes compensatory reactions. There are such communities and such periods in history, in which compensatory reactions are particularly abundant. As a rule, they take the form of symbolic, ritualistic behaviours, sometimes striking in their irrationality, stubbornness and anti-social character. However, it should be noted that the dignity attitude so often criticized - as expressing an inappropriate, from a social point of view, the type of behavior - is sometimes an attitude ingrained in the needs of the psyche and external conditions that not only do not make it possible to satisfy these needs, but also derogate them; it is therefore difficult to judge it in moral terms.

Its norm, so to speak, is mental health, not well-being. The motives for compensatory behavior can be described as egotistical: they disappear as soon as the psychological balance is restored. This may be due to a change in humiliating conditions external.

"There is a certain degree of affluence which is beneficial to the development of a finer humanity in us, and which can be described more or less as a security against hunger and the certainty of tomorrow. Poverty is not conducive to humanity, it is only when someone who digs himself out of poverty that he begins to be sensitive to something other than his own immediate interest." (Elzenberg 1963, p.45).

It may be not only about material conditions - disharmonious situations with an individual sense of dignity can rarely be reduced to the material level - but about social conditions, in a very broad sense, for example, about respecting the elementary rights of the individual, if the awareness and importance of these rights is an important element co-
shaping the sense of dignity. If it is not possible to change the external conditions, the sense of dignity can be restored by valorizing the activities themselves to change them or to demonstrate their willingness to change. A political prisoner may derive a sense of dignity from systematic hunger strikes, although they usually do not lead to the desired results. Their value - from a psychological point of view - may sometimes turn out to be more than the desired way out of prison.

Behaviors aimed at restoring or maintaining a sense of dignity at the level characteristic of an individual or a group, they very often take on a symbolic form.

Another way to restore a sense of self-dignity is to reevaluate a situation that was originally disharmonious with it and to change the demands placed on oneself. The so-called "compromise" is very often associated with the activation of many justification mechanisms, which conceal a lowering of the ceiling of self-esteem.

The dependence of the sense of dignity on external conditions, especially in the extreme situations described above, it is the most characteristic way of experiencing dignity. It is then a certain category of experience that allows us to judge certain situations as worthy or unworthy. We learn about the existence of this feeling when we find ourselves in a situation of humiliation, in derogatory conditions.

It is as with natural needs or the instinct of self-preservation; they manifest themselves in situations where there is no or imminent threat. With the serious difference that here we are dealing with a physical threat, and in the case of dignity with a threat to one’s own psyche, its identity, importance and value, which is sometimes much more important than health or satisfaction of elementary needs. The sense of dignity thus has a defensive function, it is one of the motives of our behavior whose purpose is to defend the psychological integrity of the subject (Środa 1993, pp.130-132).

A sense of dignity consists primarily of a subjective sense of identity, which is associated with self-respect and trust and self-acceptance. The psychological sources of human dignity depend on the psychophysical state of individuals and on the social roles played by them. It is extremely important to render love to another human being, which deepens the sense of dignity (Płużek 1989).

8. Threats and a semblance of dignity

Recognizing the dignity of man in the aspect of his superiority over everything that comes from him in the visible world, it is also necessary to "cry out" for his dignity. The "cry" for the dignity of the human person is becoming the most important voice of our time. It is a matter of human activity serving man, his integral development – individuals, communities, the whole of humanity, and not directed against man, against his dignity, not destroying or humiliating it. This problem is raised by K. Wojtyła and emphasizes that the issue of the dignity of the human person is still much more of a call and postulate than a fact already accomplished, or rather worked out by people in the sense of both collective and as well as on a case-by-case basis (Wojtyła 2000, p.419).
The struggle for the personal dignity of the individual is also a struggle for the dignity of others. This struggle is an additional source of conviction in the value of man (Kozielecki 1977, p.55).

What can be described as a struggle for dignity has many things in common with the struggle for freedom (Skinner 1978, p.74).

"Dignity" is fought for, "dignity" is sought, "dignity" is used to justify social unrest (Środa 1993, p.115).

At the basis of human activity, in its individual and collective aspects, there must be the principle: the person and his great dignity, in the opposite case man himself and for the other he will have a tragic fate in store.

The threats to man's dignity lie in himself and in the creations of his mind and hands. Two categories of threats can be distinguished: intrinsic and external.

Lack of self-respect, lack of self-esteem, irresponsible use of freedom, in which "acting" prevails over "being", "having" over "being", treating oneself objectively, and as a result, building an axiological emptiness are threats of an internal nature. The spectrum of human goals is of great importance their evaluation in terms of effects. The effects of these ends can be a means against man in an indirect way through submission to them. Then man is at the service of work, technology, etc. or directly, when the effects of human activity pose a threat to oneself, becoming means of self-destruction.

Internal factors that threaten dignity include various deformations of the sense of personal dignity. One of the causes is the overvaluation of personality traits - abilities, interests, intelligence or professional, social, economic, cultural situation. This implies self-centeredness on an individual level or group, chauvinism.

Deformation of the sense of dignity can also be caused by a decrease in self-esteem. It can be caused by complexes, a tendency to denial, excessive self-criticism or unjustified criticism of others, "downward" pressure from the social environment, attacks from people to whom the individual is subject.

A separate group of causes of a lowered sense of dignity are deviations in the moral life. They cause disturbances in the experience of dignity and affect the loss of the ontological value of oneself (Chlewiński, Zalewski 1989, p.1232).

Closely related to the sense of dignity is the notion of fidelity to oneself and the defense of one's own self.

Often a person cannot withstand the pressure of circumstances and renounces himself.

It is difficult for modern man to defend his own "I". The individual develops a sense of personal dignity in the course of resolving internal conflicts. One of them is the conflict between the pursuit of achievement and success, and faithfulness to oneself.
A person who does not know how to save face in the institutional network, who renounces himself in order to achieve comfort, often experiences fear and guilt. This is the price paid for disregarding moral values and rules of conduct.

Defensive reactions, such as denial or rationalization, are only temporary measures and in the short term they allow us to maintain our belief in our own dignity. However, they cannot be relied upon. They resemble the Maginot Line, which - contrary to appearances - can be broken quite easily with a stronger assault. When neither repression nor rationalization is enough for a person, when they do not allow him to maintain even a semblance of dignity, the individual often experiences a strong sense of fear and guilt. He loses his self-respect and he ceases to accept his own actions and sometimes enters the path of madness. If we renounce ourselves, we have to suffer some consequences. Often for a lifetime. I think Oscar Wilde was right when he wrote: Everyone lives their own life and pays a price for it. It's just a pity that you still have to pay for a mistake made once. Pay and pay endlessly. In its relations with man, fate never closes its accounts.

The slogan of faithfulness to oneself, open-mindedness and flexibility of thinking are human virtues that are not so much contradictory as complementary. Thanks to them, the individual can defend "I" without exposing oneself to the charge of dogmatic thinking (Kozielecki 1977, pp.21-31).

As has already been emphasized, human dignity can be threatened by external factors. These include: totalitarian political systems, derogatory working conditions, and massive indoctrination. Various forms of violence are particularly dangerous in this regard: ideological, economic, political, technocratic, media, legal (laws depriving people of the right to life full-time rights, the right to a roof over one’s head, the right to work, the right to start a family responsible parenthood, to participate in public and political life, to participate in the life of the freedom of conscience and the profession of religious faith) (Jan Paweł II 1996, p.334).

Any data that makes it possible to attribute someone's behavior to external circumstances seems to threaten the dignity or worth of a person (Skinner 1978, s.65). Human dignity can be degraded in various ways.

F. J. Mazurek, while analysing the literature, points to the following: torture, forced confessions, poverty, mindless and monotonous work, treating another human being as a tool of production, labour force and source of profit, racial discrimination, genocide, terrorism, perverse reversal of the order of values, illiteracy, human trafficking, trafficking in human organs, abduction and hostage-taking, backbiting, slander, deprivation of good name, conducting medical experiments on people, manipulation of mentality and human needs in the mass media, alienation, use of chemical and psychotechnical means in order to force confessions in criminal cases, depriving a person of being a subject of socio-political life violation of human rights of all generations - treating man only as an object and a means, and not as an end in itself. It is contrary to human dignity to inflict unnecessary suffering on animals or to kill them. These practices hinder the development of personal dignity and even lead to its disappearance. but they do not cause the loss of personal dignity itself, since dignity as an innate value is indelosible and inalienable (Mazurek 2001, pp.82-83).
The violation of human dignity is directly unattainable for others. Man can only be degraded to the end with the help of himself (Szostek 1988, p.36).

The sanctity of a person – emphasizes John Paul II – cannot be annihilated, no matter how often he or she is despised and raped (Jan Paweł II 1996, p.335).

A person’s sense of dignity is a moral component of his personality. Faithfulness to oneself, taking up non-personal goals, creative activity are the three main sources that shape an individual’s belief in his or her value as a human being. In order to achieve and strengthen his dignity, the individual must accept a certain way of life. It is a style of an active person who knows how to efficiently achieve his goals, who has learned to solve moral conflicts and who is particularly close to the creative attitude. This is quite a demanding catalogue of virtues and virtues - but we can cross out not a single item from it. Such an understanding of the concept of dignity and such a way of life do not evoke a widespread enthusiasm (Kozielecki 1977, p.49).

Of particular concern is the style of existence that has gained great popularity in America, and which could be called a style of authentic living. According to him, it is not so much the final elect of his actions that is important for the contemporary man, but the activity itself, the very process of experiencing.

The second way of life, which also gives the appearance of dignity, is total passivity and an escape from modernity. But how can a man who does not take action in the world be convinced of his worth? More often than not, he lives in the past. His biography gives him the illusion of dignity. Past achievements and deeds - usually deformed by a not-so-faithful memory, they become the meaning of life and the object of endless contemplation. Such a neurotic style of existence creates only illusions and appearances. Dignity requires constant affirmation. A man who has settled in the past, who lives in a surrogate world, does not take new actions. Loses contact quickly with the present and sooner or later he exposes himself to bitter experiences and ridicule. You can’t just live off your biography any more than you can breathe the air that we put into your lungs yesterday. Being aware of this fact can be very painful.

This style of existence also has a second version that has received quite a lot of publicity in our time. It is about looking to the future. Passive people sometimes live in the hope that the future will be different, better, that it will open new horizons for them. Only then will they be able to be active in the world, and only then will they develop their true creative capacities and their moral values. Faith in the future can give a person a semblance of dignity and can temporarily protect him from guilt.

As a rule, the future turns out to be less colorful than it appears from futurological visions or in any case, it requires active action. Gradually, therefore, hope is extinguished to make these dreams come true. The life of a man who does not know how to settle in the present often ends miserably.

Both versions of passive, contemplative life, both neurotic escape into the past, as well as the anticipation of golden mountains in the future, cause anxiety because that they make it difficult for the individual to achieve a true sense of dignity (Kozielecki 1977, pp.50-54).
9. Conclusion

It should be emphasized that in the contemporary world we observe phenomena that threaten the dignity of the person, but also actions taken by various humanistic currents to strengthen the sense of dignity.

When dignity becomes a "voice of calling" in situations of danger or violence, humanitarian actions are undertaken by individuals, associations and foundations, and youth groups. They are an indicator of sensitivity to situations that violate a person's private, social and moral status.

Respect for the dignity of the human person is a priority task for humanity. Without its realization, there is no real progress of civilization in which man retains a great value and through which this value is constantly raised. There is no progress with a "human face". Respect for the dignity of the human person must be realized in individual and collective life (Chłas 2003, p.132).

Dignity becomes a cry in the inner experience when a person finds himself in situations of danger: in the face of violence, fear, incapacitation, beatings. It is associated with sensitivity to situations that are felt to violate a person's private, social and moral status (Gajda 2000, p.55).

There are situations when dignity needs to be restored, especially to people affected by alcoholism, drug addiction and poverty. What is needed then is to bend down to man, love one's neighbour, an altruistic attitude, a gift of oneself, guided by the principle of help for self-help. Only then can dignity be defended and restored (Chałas 2003, p.136).

Values, even though they exist as a result of specific human activity and only within the human world, they are not psychic (imaginary) in nature. Culture is a universe of values that are in the world, but outside of nature and beyond the psyche. It can be said that the world – precisely as a result of the culture-forming activity of man – reveals its "third dimension" and that, in this case, the very concept of the human world is based on a relation that is not two-part, but three-part, whose third term (values) appears within the other two members. Dignity belongs to this third dimension. Its raison d'être is culture, just as the raison d'être of culture is human dignity.

The value of humanity makes culture-forming activity an object of moral obligation. The category of dignity is thus entangled in its own axiology. It is the reason for the fact that man can, through participation in culture, transcend himself; at the same time, it is the norm, the evaluative goal of this activity. Dignity is both the axiological basis of human existence and the vocation of man. By describing the axiological content of the human subject, dignity is at the same time a reference to the ideal that this subject organizes and reinforces (Środa 1993, p.100).
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