

## Summary

### **Dignity as the basis for moral standards in bioethics.**

#### **An analysis of selected problems and viewpoints in Polish bioethics**

The idea of human dignity has its roots in Ancient Greek philosophy and Judeo-Christian thought. The sense of this term is accurately reflected in the Stoic maxim of *homo homini res sacra* ("Man is a sacred thing for Man"). In the laws of many countries, human dignity is a fundamental value which constitutes the foundation of human rights and the condition for treating all people as free, equal, and worthy of respect and care. The notion of dignity is employed and analysed in various disciplines: it is most frequently applied in philosophy, theology, psychology, legal science, and social science, as well as in bioethics. Bioethics is a new field of study which emerged in the early 1970s in the United States and was shortly adopted in many European countries, including Poland.

The author of this dissertation has examined the subject in question to learn to what extent Polish bioethicists use the notion of dignity to justify moral obligations in the field of medicine. The author's inspiration is Maria Ossowska and her work. The Polish philosopher identified the moral norms which were considered fundamental in European culture and which stood for core values such as dignity and autonomy.

The objective of this dissertation is to characterise and compare selected works by Polish bioethicists and to thoroughly analyse the key problems in bioethics related to birth, death, and therapeutic relations, as well as to present the normative verdicts grounded on the notion of dignity.

The analysis is focused on the views of Polish bioethicists. In particular, the thoughts of the following bioethicists have been analysed: Zbigniew Szawarski, Kazimierz Szewczyk, Jan Hartman, Danuta Ślęczek-Czakon, Alicja Przyłuska-Fischer, Weronika Chańska, Barbara Chyrowicz, Grzegorz Hołub, Helena Eilstein, Jacek Hołowka, Lesław Niebrój, Wojciech Bołoz, Tadeusz Ślipko, and other scholars who consider dignity as a source of moral standards that define the limits of acceptable interference in human life processes.

The dissertation consists of four chapters. The first chapter – *Dignity from the perspective of Polish bioethicists* – contains a review of four concepts: ontological dignity, dignity of personality, personal dignity, and social dignity. The second chapter – *Dignity as the basis for an appropriate doctor–patient relationship* – is a study of this relationship in the context of the notion of social dignity and the doctor’s authority as well as the ontological and personal dignity of the patient. The changes in the understanding of the doctor–patient interaction are positioned within the framework of the paternalistic and anti-paternalistic models of medical practice. The following chapters – *Dignity in the arguments concerning the beginning of human life* and *Dignity in end-of-life debates* – are focused on the issues related to birth and dying. The various concepts of dignity are examined in the context of cultural bioethics, personalism, and the liberal-consequentialist approach.

Every chapter concludes with a summary of the comparative analyses of particular standpoints and concepts of dignity that emerge from the arguments put forward by Polish bioethicists. The dissertation ends with a comprehensive synthesis of the conclusions from all the analytical chapters.

As a result of the analysis, the author proposes that the dominant approach among Polish bioethicists is Christian personalism, based on deontological reasoning, in which ontological dignity is the foundation of inexorable and absolute moral norms. A secular line of thought is also visible, which does not invoke any religious principles. Instead, in this approach, moral standards are based on teleological (consequentialist) reasoning. Secular bioethicists refer to the concepts of dignity of personality as well as personal and social dignity. Due to the divergence of these philosophical theories, the debate concerning the justification of moral standards remains unsolvable. Some representatives of both approaches state that dignity is a concept that can and should be applied to reach a common ground as regards morality. However, the differences in understanding dignity and its relevance in setting moral standards make it impossible for these declarations to be met.

Keywords: dignity, bioethics, Polish bioethics, moral standards