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The Concepts of Dignity: An Analysis

Lennart Nordenfelt 2021

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Preface

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Introduction

In this article I shall provide an analysis of some salient concepts of dignity. The text is a development of a work which was initiated in the year 2000 when I was affiliated to an international research programme that was supported by the European Union. This programme was called Dignity and Older Europeans (DOE) (DG Research, Directorate E, Biotechnology, Nutrition, under FP5, the lifequality programme contract QLG6-CT-2001-00888) and it was conducted from Cardiff, Wales, by the nursing researcher Winifred Tadd. In the programme participated representatives from eight European nations: England, Wales, Ireland, France, Spain, Slovakia, Poland and Sweden. The participants were physicians, nurses, sociologists or philosophers.

The programme was both theoretical and empirical. The empirical part, which was the most comprehensive, consisted of focus-group interviews with health care and social care personnel, elderly persons within health care or social care, and representatives from the general public. The interviews concerned the care of the elderly and attitudes towards the elderly. Some questions concerned how the interviewees conceived the concept of dignity and what they meant by behaviour respectful of dignity in the care of the elderly. Altogether around 1000 focus-group interviews were conducted in seven of the countries involved.

The theoretical part of the programme consisted of an analysis of the concept of dignity based on studies of dictionary entries in six languages (English, French, Spanish, Slovakish, Polish and Swedish) as well as previous philosophical analyses of the concept.

Many of the results from this programme (and to which I refer in this article) are summarized in Nordenfelt (2009).

In the theoretical part of the study there emerged four different concepts of dignity: dignity of merit, dignity of moral standing, dignity of identity and human dignity. Characterizations of these concepts have been presented and developed in several publications, for example Nordenfelt (2004) and (2009).

In the present article this analysis is taken a step further. I take as a starting point some previous studies, including Schroeder (2008), Sulmasy (2013) and my earlier ones, and propose an improvement and clarification of my earlier classification of dignities. At the same

time I enlarge the analysis to concern worths in general and how these are attached to entities in general, not just human beings. The four kinds of dignities which I now propose are called: attributed dignity, dignity of inflorescence, dignity of identity and human dignity.

There is a continuing need for paying attention to the concepts of dignity and to respect a person's dignity in all human intercourse, not least in the care of the elderly. This respect presupposes careful considerations with regard to the persons who are the object of respect and respectful behaviour. Questions of the following kind should be asked. Who are these persons? In what conditions are they? In what circumstances are they placed? And what can be done to change these conditions or circumstances?

But there are other, more theoretical matters to be considered. It is crucial to notice that the term "dignity" is not unequivocal. There are different uses of it which are equally correct from a linguistic point of view but which give rise to paradoxical conclusions. One sometimes talks about dignity as if it were a constant quality of a person. But other times it is said that a person's dignity can be affected, indeed even annihilated, by somebody's actions or by external circumstances. In Section 3 of this article I refer to Herbert Spiegelberg's renowned article where the multiplicity of senses of dignity is illustrated with the help of several examples. The analytical part of my present text is an answer to Spiegelberg's challenging article. I wish to understand how the suggested paradoxes can be eliminated.

My study is not, however, just a theoretical analysis. If my conclusions are correct some misunderstandings can be prevented in health and social care in general but also in the care of the elderly in particular. When, for example, we wish to help persons to die with dignity, we are not talking about preserving these persons' human dignity, but instead of helping them to keep their calmness and peace in the dying process. Likewise it is not a question of general human dignity when hospice workers argue that certain medical conditions (such as loss of continence or facial deformities caused by head cancer) can rob patients of their dignity, or that the social isolation that accompanies such circumstances can have the same effect.

On the evolution of the dignity concepts

Some historical remarks

"Human dignity" as a standing phrase is perhaps not older than three hundred years. There is no common Latin phrase *dignitas humana* (as corresponding to the Hebrew *Gedula* and the Greek *Axia*) before the papal encyclicals of the 19th century. It does not exist in the early Christian scriptures, nor in translations of most of the influential mediaeval theologians. This is not to deny that both the Bible and the Church fathers assigned a high value to human beings and considered them indeed to be created in the image of God. When the term *dignitas* occurs in the Bible, however, it normally refers to general rank or position. This was indeed its normal sense in antiquity. For the Romans *dignitas* mostly meant general worthiness and in a political sense reputation and standing. For example the term was often used when referring to the highest officials, such as the senators, of the Republic or — later — the Empire. In order to possess real *dignitas*, however, the individual also had to fulfil the duties presupposed by the rank or position held.

The abundant classical literature on dignity often draws a sharp distinction between on the one hand human beings, and on the other hand animals and plants. This has a clear historical background. Ever since Aristotle (384–324 BC) most philosophers have claimed that animals, although having some sense perception, lack the faculty of rational thinking and are for this reason below humans in the natural hierarchy. The Christian tradition has reinforced this position in insisting that only humans have been created in God's image. Thus humans are free to use natural resources, including animals, for their own purposes. However, most contemporary philosophers and animal scientists have forcefully argued that animals have moral status. (Cf Nussbaum 2011). Animals are sentient beings and therefore capable of suffering. Many philosophers also argue that animals have intrinsic value, which is to say that they should be valued for what they are and not merely because they are useful for certain practical purposes. Therefore, according to these philosophers sentient animals should be given the same moral status as human beings with regard to the comparable interests of animals and humans.

Let me now consider some classical uses of the term *dignitas* in more detail. This term and its Greek (near-)equivalent *axia* occur in many places in the classical philosophical literature. Not least Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* has a lot to say about dignity. As Mette Lebech (2009) stresses in

her seminal work on the subject of human dignity, Aristotle emphasizes the eminent degree of rationality that is possessed by humans. This is the reason for the supereminence of humans and their independence of the rest of nature. However, Aristotle did not have a general theory of human dignity. This is partly demonstrated by his justification of slavery and of the political exclusion of women. He had obviously no sense for the equality of all humans.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) had perhaps a clearer idea of general human dignity in that he introduced and defined the concept of a *person*. He contended that an individual substance of rational nature, a person, is to be identified with the possession of self-evident, autonomous importance, viz. dignity (Lebech p. 76). He even claims that human dignity is inalienable, intrinsic to the person. Aquinas hereby introduces the idea of inalienability which is so deeply rooted in the modern understanding of human dignity. It can be noted in other passages of his work, however, that a person can lose this intrinsic dignity by committing sinful actions and thereby deviating from the rational order. Aquinas's concept of dignity thus here turns out to be a meritocratic one. We as persons can lose our human dignity by becoming less than human.

Human dignity in a general sense covering all humans appears to be an invention of the Renaissance scholar Pico della Mirandola. He argues in his 1481 *Oration on the Dignity of Man* that the human being is particular and has a special dignity. (It should be noted, though, that he uses the term "dignity" only in the title of his oration.) He underscores the freedom of the human being: God has made man a creature of indeterminate nature, free to decide.

Pico is the first to have argued in defence of the dignity of man. He maintains that man is a great marvel, worthy of the greatest admiration; and his reason for claiming this is that man has a chameleon-like freedom to attain a lower or a higher nature, superhuman or subhuman.

But the phrase "dignity of man" came during the Enlightenment. Spiegelberg (1976) holds that the idea was born with the first declaration of the rights of man as prepared for by John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*. The philosopher who really analyses this idea, however, is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

Freedom is one of the pillars of Kant's analysis. Also for him human dignity is rooted in the capacity of human beings for free moral choice. However, in Kant's interpretation it is crucial that humans are understood as rational beings establishing and obeying their own moral laws. In creating norms and values the person exercises autonomy, which is the most central element of dignity for Kant: "Autonomy is thus the basis of the dignity of both human nature and every other rational nature" (1997, 53).

An essential directive that Kant himself derives from his basic platform is the following: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the

same time as an end and never merely as a means." A person must not, following this principle, be used for any purpose, in particular not a purpose that is not shared by the said person. This principle has been often cited as the foundation of the present-day principle of autonomy saying that a person has a right to hold views, make choices, and perform actions based on personal values and beliefs, without compulsion. But Kant's command amounts to more than the requirement that one respect the beliefs and choices of other people. One also has duties to others, irrespective of their beliefs and choices. In addition one has duties towards oneself, which is to say that one has to treat the humanity in oneself with due respect. An ultimate consequence of this Kantian position is that suicide is an act that must be ruled out.

It may be observed that Kant's ideal picture of rational man implies that not all human beings in the phenomenal or empirical world can possess human dignity. Not all humans set their laws according to the rules of morality. According to Kant, only morality, and mankind as capable of morality, can possess dignity.

A good illustration of the idea that human dignity (in the Kantian sense) contains more than autonomy is the case of French dwarf-throwing. In certain French local clubs, it has been customary to provide the attraction of dwarf-throwing. Some authorities, however, have argued for the banning of such performances, the argument being that the practice of dwarf-throwing violates human dignity. But one of the dwarfs involved in the practice has protested against such a ban, arguing that he has given his consent and participated voluntarily. The purported violation of dignity in this case did not therefore have anything to do with the involved person's autonomy.

The industrial revolution and the appalling conditions of workers provoked an official papal response which also made use of the concept of dignity. Pope Leo XIII (1810–1903) in his social encyclicals of the 1880s repeatedly insisted on human dignity as the norm and standard by which the political, social and economic strutures of society were to be measured. (See Lebech (2009) p. 120.)

The present situation

The most renowned declaration where dignity is a central concept is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1948. The first and often cited article in this declaration says: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a

spirit of brotherhood." Other international bodies such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO have followed suit and created crucial declarations and conventions in the same spirit. Unesco's *Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights*, from 1997, is famous for being the first text treating the question of human dignity as having a bearing on the problems relating to scientific progress. The declaration recognizes in particular that respect for human dignity must take precedence over scientific research on the human genome and its applications. It says in Article 2: "Everyone has a right to respect for their dignity and for their rights regardless of their genetic characteristics." And: "Dignity makes it imperative not to reduce individuals to their genetic characteristics and to respect their uniqueness and diversity."

The concept of human dignity has also entered the constitutions of a great number of countries throughout the world. The Mexican constitution of 1917 would seem to be the first constitution that actually mentions it. However, the earlier Brtitish, French and American constitutions at least partly seek to secure the same values, for instance the basic rights of humankind. The West German constitution from 1949 is particularly explicit about basic human values, and the concept of dignity occupies a central place in it. In an inaugural paragraph the constitution says: "Human dignity is inviolable. To respect and protect it is the duty of all state authority." Chap. 1 Art 1.

In both the West German constitution and the UN Declaration the appeal to dignity may be seen as expressing a moral outrage at Nazism and a quiet assertion of "Never again". Something similar is reflected in World Medical Association's *Declaration of Geneva* (1948) and later *Declaration of Helsinki* (1964). The former is a pledge expressing the doctor's duties towards the patient, which includes the duty to "practice my profession with conscience and dignity".

Dignity has also entered into much national legislation in the area of health care. In Section 2 of the most recent version (1997) of the *Swedish Health and Medical Services Act*, for example, one finds the following: "Care shall be given with respect for the equal value of all human beings and for the dignity of the individual."

In some contexts it has become crucial to underscore the equal status of women with regard to dignity and human rights. The particular attention to women's dignity has concerned themes such as civil rights violation, health problems, job dicrimination and sexual harassment. An international document that addresses these issues is the 1979 United Nations document *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*.

Spiegelberg's problems concerning dignity

Herbert Spiegelberg in his seminal chapter "Human Dignity: a Challenge to Philosophy" (1976) noted that the idea of human dignity plays a decisive role in today's social and political thought. It has a central place, as we have seen, in a great number of official declarations and documents. Our ordinary way of talking about dignity, however, is confused, Spiegelberg says. It is sometimes so confused that it is vulnerable to attack. Certain writers, in particular Ruth Macklin (2003), hold that the concept of dignity completely lacks content and ought to be removed from serious moral debate. If there is a sense of dignity, Macklin contended, it is identical with the sense of autonomy. Hence we should abandon dignity and stick to autonomy, for which there is a resonably clear definition.

One can reveal the confusion surrounding dignity by scrutinizing certain ordinary-language locutions. Spiegelberg does so by reflecting upon the use of the term "dignity" in various contexts, both lay and scholarly ones. He finds there that it is a term with many meanings. First, it applies to all sorts of bearers, human and non-human, and it apparently indicates certain quite different qualities. In some senses dignity is a matter of degree, in other senses it is not. Spiegelberg notes, for instance, the following points:

1. The basis of human dignity can lie in several grounds related to different philosophies. (p. 40)

2. The way to a better philosophy of human dignity requires certain basic distinctions: absolute and relational, intrinsic and extrinsic, dignity in itself and grounds of dignity. (p. 40)

3. Human dignity is described as inherent in every man. But it is also held as a goal to be "achieved" or even "created". (p. 44)

4. Human dignity is proclaimed as "unassailable". Yet "indignities" are denounced as flagrant violations of such dignity. (p. 44)

5. Freedom movements aim at awakening in the oppressed a sense of their dignity. But often the statements made within such movements would seem to suggest that the oppressed are deprived of the very dignity of which they are to develop a sense. (p. 44)

6. Every person is supposed to be incapable of losing human dignity. Yet some seem to be losing it by doing things which are beneath human dignity.(p. 44)

7. We should distinguish dignity itself from the expression of such dignity in inward and outward behaviour and the recognition of both by outsiders. (p. 54)

8. A "sense of dignity" presupposes that there is an inherent dignity of which one can have a sense. But it need not be a realized dignity. (p. 54)

9. "Losing one's dignity" can be a question either of being deprived of it by someone else or of depriving oneself of it through one's own behaviour. (p. 54)

10. "Treating someone with dignity" does not imply that dignity is used as a means. Its primary sense implies respecting the person's dignity, though there may also be an implication of the way in which the agent's own dignity is manifested in the action. (p. 55)

11. Can human dignity be identified with worthiness of respect? Respect seems directed mostly towards human beings. But one must not overlook respect for truth or the law. (p. 58)

12. Human dignity implies the inherent worth of a person, regardless of the person's usefulness for another. A person may also have non-instrumental qualities such as beauty and charm which all add to his or her intrinsic worth but can hardly be identified with human dignity. (p. 59)

13. Human dignity is the kind of intrinsic worth which attaches to a person in his capacity of being a responsible person. (p. 60)

14. Human dignity and its grounds: we may say that dignity is a peculiar characteristic, but based on the fact that its possessor has a personality. (p. 57)

Dignity in dictionaries

It may be useful for the analysis of dignity to consult some notable dictionaries. In the EU project *Dignity of Older Europeans* (*DOE*) 2001–2004, my colleagues and I made such a consultation and studied dictionaries from six European countries. (For a summary see Nordenfelt (2009)).
(All the following definitions were first taken account of in the original language — Spanish, Swedish, French etc. — and thereafter translated into English by members of the DOE project. Thus, both the *definiendum* [dignity] and the *definiens* [the words that explain dignity] were first in the original language.)

Oxford English Dictionary

1. The quality of being worthy
2. Honourable or high estate
3. An honourable office
4. A person holding an office
5. Befitting elevation of aspect, manner or style.

Nouveau Petit Robert, dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française
The French word: *Dignité*

1. Function, title or charge that gives to someone an eminent rank
2. Respect that someone merits
3. Self-respect
4. Appearance and behaviour that translates this feeling

Nationalencyklopedins ordbok
The Swedish word: *Värdighet*

1. Sense of what is a worthy behaviour
2. Being worthy
3. High position and honour

Velky´ sociologicky´ slovni´k
The Czech word: *Dustojnos*

1. Attribute of high social prestige.
2. Awareness of own dignity that may or may not be perceived by those around.

Kra´tky slovn´ik slovenske´ho jazyka
The Slovak word: *Dostojnost*

1. Revered
2. Serious, noble
3. Appropriate, suitable

Real Academia Espanola de la Lengua
The Spanish word: *Dignidad*

1. Quality of a dignified person
2. Excellence, enhancement
3. Seriousness and propriety in behaviour
4. Honourable post or job
5. Any of the prebends which are associated with a prestigious post, deanship
6. Person who receives one of these prebends
7. Archbishop or bishop
8. The post of grandmaster

Comments on the dictionary definitions of dignity

I will here summarize some of the most common connotations of *dignity* according to the cited dictionaries.

1. High office, honourable post or job

This is probably the oldest use of the word "dignity" mentioned in classical texts (the Latin *dignitas*).

2. Person holding a high office

In English also the word "dignitary" exists (in Swedish the old word *dignitär* has the same sense), which perhaps more precisely denotes a person holding a high office, especially in government or Church. It seems that the term *dignidad* in Spanish can have very special connotations in this direction, such as archbishop or bishop and grandmaster of a religious order.

3. The quality of being worthy

There are various similar expressions for this notion. "Worthiness" or "the state or quality of being worthy of honour" as well as "excellence" are common synonyms.

4. Respect

Respect is an important but also difficult notion. It is clear that "respect" is a synonym for dignity in some of the languages. Taken literally this would mean that dignity is interpreted as involving an attitude. But who is then the possessor of dignity? Is it the subject (the person who respects) or the object (the person respected) who has dignity? The Czech explanation indicates that it must be the object. "Dignity is associated with respect and reverence on the part of the surrounding community." "Respect that someone deserves" is also mentioned in some dictionaries.

A similar question arises with

5. Self-respect

Self-respect is given as a synonym of dignity in several of the dictionaries.

In the Polish dictionary self-respect is explained as awareness of one's own value. This is quite similar to the Czech "awareness of own dignity that may or may not be perceived by those around". The English "sense of self-importance" meaning being full of oneself is similar but has distinctly negative connotations.

In this case there seems to be an identification of dignity with an attitude or a cognition. A person has dignity if the person has self-respect. But here, in contradistinction to the case of respect simple, there is of course no trouble in identifying the possessor of dignity — subject and object are identical.

6. Seriousness in behaviour

This is an idea common to many of the languages. The expressions can vary a little: "Befitting elevation of aspect, manner or style" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) "A formal, stately or grave bearing" (*Collins English Dictionary*) and "seriousness and propriety in behaviour" (the Spanish dictionary). In the French dictionary this behaviour is assumed to reflect the subject's self-respect. It says: "appearance and behaviour that translates the feeling [of self-respect]".

It appears, therefore, that there is a great overlap in the senses of the European words that are traditionally translated into the English "dignity". In proceeding to a further analysis and explication of the concept of dignity I will have these different lexical entries in mind. Most of the senses of dignity mentioned in this list will influence my further analysis. An exception will be the sense where dignity stands for a *person* holding an office. The underlying abstract connotation, dignity as a high office or rank, however, is the prototype for what we call the dignity of merit. In

the general analysis I have not limited myself to any specific office or rank. The idea has been generalized to all kinds of ranks, formal as well as informal. I have particularly stressed the *value* of a position rather than the position itself.

Nussbaum's Theory of Dignity

Before focusing on some theories of dignity which underline the multiplicity of concepts of dignity, I will pay attention to a theory which in a sense is more unidimensional. This is the theory designed by Martha Nussbaum (2008, 2011) called the Capability Theory.

Nussbaum's theory is interesting since it deviates from most of the connotations indicated by the ordinary-language locutions above, as well as from the multi-dimensional theories discussed below. Nussbaum starts off by insisting on the evaluative nature of human dignity. "The Capabilities approach [which Nussbaum advocates] is not a theory of what human nature is , and it does not read norms off from human nature. Instead it is evaluative and ethical from the start" (2011, p. 28).

There is one common intuitive idea that Nussbaum adopts, namely that all humans (in principle) have equal dignity. In Nussbaum's account the universal human dignity is not, however, tied to God's creation, nor to the universal human freedom or rationality. Instead Nussbaum focuses on human *agency*, saying that human beings have a worth that is indeed inalienable, because of their capacities for "various forms of activity and striving" (p. 30). "The notion of dignity is closely related to the idea of active striving. It is thus a close relative to the notion of basic capability, something inherent in the person that exerts a claim that it should be developed" (p. 31).

The human dignity is thus tied to what Nussbaum (in principle) considers to be a universal property of humans, viz. the quality of being an agent.

However, there is immediately a problem, similar to the ones confronted by Aristotle and Kant in their explications of human dignity. Aristotle noted that although rationality is typical for humans, not all humans are as a matter of fact rational. Infants and people with dementia do not fulfil the criteria for rationality. Likewise, Kant noted that not all humans fulfil reasonable criteria for rationality, nor for autonomy. As a consequence not all humans have (complete) human dignity.

Also Nussbaum draws such a conclusion herself in adding that such persons as are in a permanent vegetative state or are anencephalic, are without agency of any kind (p. 30). Hence, strictly speaking, not all humans have equal human dignity.

This conclusion, however, is not in line with the following statement: "All, that is, deserve equal respect from laws and institutions. If people are considered as citizens the claims of all citizens are

equal" (p. 31). Nussbaum is clearly not quite consistent. She here adopts the traditional idea of universal human dignity when it comes to politics.

The idea of dignity as a concept intertwined with agency, on the other hand, opens the door to regarding dignity as a quality of non-human animals too. Most animals possess some kind of power that can be called agency. If agency or the capacity for agency is the criterion of dignity, some kind of dignity must be ascribable to animals. Nussbaum explicitly acknowledges this. "I invoke the notion of human dignity and of a life worthy of it, or when we are considering other animal species, the dignity appropriate to the species in question" (p. 29).

However, possessing human dignity is not at all the end of the story for Nussbaum. The crucial matter for her is that humans can fulfil their strivings, that they can execute their capabilities. Nussbaum's issue is basically political. People have very different opportunities and inner abilities (which together constitute combined capabilities). They cannot in practice often perform the actions or achieve the results that they wish or need to perform or achieve. As a result they cannnot often live a life "worthy of dignity". "The basic idea is that some living conditions deliver to people a life that is worthy of the human dignity that they possess, and others do not" (p. 30).

"Social, political, familial and economic conditions may prevent people from choosing to function in accordance with a developed internal capability… Bad conditions can, however cut deeper, stunting the development of internal capabilities or warping their development. In both cases basic human dignity remains: the person is still worthy of equal respect. In the former case, however, dignity has been more deeply violated" (pp. 30-31).

For Nussbaum it is crucial to emphasize the difference between satisfaction and dignity. "The focus on dignity is quite different, for example, from a focus on satisfaction… It certainly seems possible that satisfaction for many such people could be produced without educational development. We do not treat a child with Down's syndrome in a mannner commensurable with that child's dignity if we fail to develop the child's powers of mind through suitable education" (p. 30). The capabilities approach in Nussbaum's version focuses on the protection of areas of freedom so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity.

But what, then, is a life worthy of human dignity? What must an agent realize by her own combined capability to live such a life? This is where Nussbaum introduces her famous list of ten capabilities. (The presentation is here shortened somewhat.)

1. *Life*: being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length.
2. *Bodily health*: being able to enjoy good health.
3. *Bodily integrity*: being able to move freely from place to place, being able to feel secure against violent assault.

4. *Senses, imagination and thought*: being able to use one's senses, to imagine, think and reason, and to do these things in a truly human way.
5. *Emotions*: being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves.
6. *Practical reason*: being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.
7. *Affiliation*: being able to live with and towards others, having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumilation.
8. *Other species*: being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.
9. *Play*: being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. *Control over one's environment*: being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; being able to hold property and having property rights on an equal basis with others.

What, then, does a life worthy of human dignity require? At a bare minimum, Nussbaum says, human dignity requires that citizens be placed above an ample (specified) threshold of capability in *all* ten of those areas. Nussbaum even goes so far as to say that "delivering these ten capabilities to all citizens is a necessary condition of social justice" (p. 40). Such justice may well require more.

The respect for dignity, Nussbaum says, entails having the appropriate institutional support in place to ensure that individuals are able to flourish in a truly human way. Our capacity to flourish requires support from the world. A life worthy of dignity simply is a flourishing human life.

From the assumption of equal dignity, it does not follow, however, that all the centrally important capabilities are to be equalized. Treating people as equals does not entail equalizing the living conditions of all.

Nussbaum notes that the capabilities approach has close links to deontology. "One of its most important historical antecedents is Kant, and it holds that social welfare should never be pursued in a way that violates people's fundamental entitlements. The principle of each person as an end is a version of Kant's idea of the duty to respect humanity as an end, and never to treat it as a mere means" (p. 94).

But in another way the capabilities approach is closer to consequentialism. It is a form of political, nonwelfarist consequentialism. It claims that "the right way to judge whether a given political situation is adequate, from the point of view of justice, is to look at *outcomes*" (p. 95).

Three ways of categorizing dignity

Towards an analysis. Nordenfelt's system

In the following I shall introduce three partly similar systems for the categorization of worths and dignities. Later I shall compare them and try to synthesize them for the purpose of creating a more useful system. Instead of just presenting the end-result I will work my way forward in a stepwise fashion.

Introduction

I have in my own analysis (2004 and 2009) distinguished four concepts of dignity and spelled out their differences. This analysis is inspired partly by the linguistic analysis earlier presented, partly also by observations in the scholarly literature on dignity. The four concepts are: the dignity of merit, the dignity of moral or existential stature, the dignity of identity and the universal human dignity (*Menschenwürde*). The dignity of merit normally depends on social rank and position. There are many species of this kind of dignity and it is very unevenly distributed among human beings. The dignity of moral stature is the result of the moral deeds and thoughts of the subject; it can be reduced or lost through his or her immoral deeds. This kind of dignity is tied to the idea of dignity of character and dignity as a virtue. The dignity of identity is tied to the integrity of the subject's body and mind, and in many instances, although not always, also dependent on the subject's self-image. The human dignity pertains to all human beings to the same extent and cannot be lost as long as the persons exist.

The common core

The four types of dignity have some important properties in common. Consider the following:

1. "Dignity" refers to a special dimension of value. In the case of human dignity there is only one position on this dimension but in the case of the other kinds people can have different positions on the scale, they can possess either more or less dignity.

2. The dignity of a person deserves the respect of others and the person's own respect.
3. The dignity has a ground, normally a set of properties, belonging to the subject.

In many cases the dignity of a person confers a set of rights on him or her. Paying respect to the dignity then means respecting the rights of the subject. In some cases paying respect can also be expressed simply by thinking highly of the person or of the qualities of the person.

The four concepts of dignity

1. Dignity of merit

A person who has a rank or holds an office that entails a set of rights has a special dignity. This is probably the oldest sense of the Latin *dignitas*, which was used to refer to excellence and distinction, properties typically pertaining to senators and other people of high rank in the Roman Republic and the later Empire. This is a sense that is still flourishing in the Romance languages. The Spanish *dignidad* can refer to a person of a high rank, in particular in the clerical hierarchy, such as an archbishop.

We may refer to this dignity as dignity of merit, although in some cases (such as that of hereditary monarchy) a person may be born with such a dignity. Thus, for example, a king, a cabinet minister, a bishop and a doctor have special dignities of merit that come with their positions. These are the *formal dignities of merit*. Typically, as the term implies, these dignities of merit are bestowed upon people through some formal act, for instance an appointment.

The dignity of merit is also related to the notions of rights and respect. The cabinet minister, the bishop and the doctor have rights attached to their positions. These rights are to be respected by those who approach the people in question.

We may also acknowledge some *informal dignities of merit*. It is a question of cases where people have earned general merit through their deeds and deserve respect for this. Prominent artists, scientists and athletes, for example, cannot claim any formal rights but are often treated as if they had such rights.

It is significant that the dignities of merit can come and go. People can be promoted but they can also be demoted. People can for some time have fame and reputation but this can suddenly be gone. Another feature of the dignities of merit is that they admit of degrees. Most positions, professional or otherwise, are ordered in hierarchies. A general is higher on the military scale than a sergeant; a bishop is higher on the clerical scale than a prior.

A special informal dignity of merit may be attributed to elderly people. This is the wisdom of the elderly, deriving from their life-experience.

2. Dignity of moral stature

I shall now turn to a type of dignity that has some features in common with the general dignity of merit. It is, one might say, a dignity of quite a special kind of merit, viz. the dignity of moral stature. This is a dignity that is very much dependent upon the thoughts and deeds of the subject. Here we encounter the idea that *dignified conduct* is action in accordance with the moral law.

Sometimes the idea of dignified conduct is tied to actions of exceptional moral value, for instance in the face of extreme adversity and where the price paid is high. In extreme circumstances the price can be one's own life. Some famous historical persons did actually sacrifice their lives in order to preserve their dignity. One of these was the philosopher Socrates, who was sentenced to death for the alleged crime of having seduced the youth of Athens. In prison Socrates emptied the cup of poison and died in the company of some of his pupils. He thought that he would not have retained his dignity if he had fled from the prison, which in fact was quite possible for him.

To have dignity, then, could mean possessing a certain moral standard. This kind of dignity, it can be observed, is a dignity that can have degrees. One's moral standard can be high or low, or it may not even reach the minimal threshold.

3. Dignity of identity

I will now turn to a kind of dignity that is not dependent on the subject's merits, be they formal or informal or having to do with the person's moral status. This kind of dignity is quite difficult to define but is probably the most important kind in the context of illness and ageing. It is significant of this kind of dignity that it can be taken from us by external events, by the acts of other people as well as by injury, illness and old age.

I tentatively called this *the dignity of identity*. It is the dignity that is attached to ourselves as integrated and autonomous persons, persons with a history and persons with a future, with all our relationships to other human beings. Most of us have a basic respect for our own identity, although it need not be at all remarkable from a moral or other point of view. But this self-respect can easily be shattered, for instance by nature itself, in illness and the disability of illness and old age but also by the cruel acts of other people. (For a more detailed description of dignity of identity, see p. 41).

4. Human dignity

So far I have introduced three notions of dignity, which are quite different but have two important features in common. First, people can have these types of dignity to various extents. Some people have high degrees of dignity, have a high rank in some hierarchy, have a high moral standard and have their identity intact. Others score low along these dimensions, and we can have combinations where a person has a high degree of dignity along one scale and a low one along another. Second, all the three dignities can come and go. A person can move from one position on a scale to another, can for example be promoted at one time and demoted at another. One's moral status can rise and decline. And one's identity can be shattered and restored. In particular with regard to the dignity of merit, one can even be completely removed from the scale and have no merit whatsoever.

In these important respects there is one kind of dignity that is completely different. The German word *Menschenwürde* refers to a kind of dignity that we all as humans have, or are assumed to have, just because we are humans. This is the specifically human value. I will in the following use the term "human dignity". We have this dignity to the same degree, i.e. we are equal with respect to it; and a significant feature of it is that it cannot be taken from us as long as we are alive.

Given our equal human dignity nobody shall be treated with less respect than anybody else with regard to basic human rights. The respect entails at least a fulfilment of the rights that are attached to the dignity in question. It is the duty of all of us to respect all these rights. In particular, an elderly person has the same basic human rights as a young person.

The idea of an equal human value is now common and accepted in the civilized world. It is a cornerstone of most religions and it has a strong place in Western secular ideology. As noted above, the United Nations has sought to capture this notion in its declaration of human rights.

In philosophical discussions about human rights it is common to regard a few of these rights as basic and the others as derived. Birnbacher (1996) gives the following four as the minimal human rights: (1) possession of the necessary means of existence, (2) freedom from strong and continued pain, (3) minimal liberty, and (4) minimal self-respect. The UN declaration, however, provides a more comprehensive list and includes, for instance, the right to a nationality, the right to own property and the right to education.

Ziebertz's empirical application of Nordenfelt's dignity concepts

Hans-Georg Ziebertz, professor of religious education and sociology in Würzburg, Germany, has been the conductor of an international empirical research project called *Religion and Human Rights*.

The intentions of this project were to determine theoretically and socially relevant relations between religion and attitudes towards human rights. The researchers wanted to know to what degree respondents agreed with the idea of human rights. They also wanted to know what norms determined the attitudes of respondents to human rights, i.e. norms such as human dignity, freedom, solidarity and justice? Professor Ziebertz concentrates in his report (2020) on how respondents understand the norm or value of dignity. The basic questions in this project were: How do respondents understand human dignity? Is the concept of dignity relevant for attitudes towards human rights?

Ziebertz declares that human rights discourses comprehend human dignity as inherent dignity. However, Ziebertz notes, it is not appropriate to assume only one understanding of dignity. The historical development of the concept has shown that there are alternative concepts and some of them are still being considered. He refers explicitly to Nordenfelt (2004), who, he says, has distinguished three meanings of dignity: first, human dignity of merit – indicating that dignity depends on someone's social position. Dignity is thus operationalized as being dependent on society's appreciation of the person in question. Second, human dignity of moral stature, implying that dignity depends on a person's individual achievements or moral behaviour. Third, inherent dignity, meaning that dignity is basically connected with humanity as such.

Ziebertz has addressed himself to no less than 15000 students from 15 countries all over the world. The data were collected during 2014-2015. Ziebertz confronted the students with the following specific statements:

1.The value of a person depends on the appreciation given to him by others (human dignity of merit).

2.The honour to be given to a person depends on his moral behaviour (human dignity of moral status)

3.Each human being should be recognized just because he is a human being (inherent human dignity). (Ziebertz 2020, p. 111)

According to Ziebertz 30 % of the population agreed or totally agreed with statement 1. 63,5 % agreed or totally agreed with statement 2. And 55,8 % agreed or totally agreed with statement 3.

A notable result of this investigation thus is that a large part of the young student population considered people's moral behaviour to be more worth considering than their sheer humanity. The students who in particular shared this view came from India, Tanzania and Nigeria. But many came also from, for example, Chile, Lithuania, Italy and Romania. The students who mainly adhered to the idea of inherent human dignity, which was a slightly smaller group, came from, for example,

Nigeria, Italy, Norway and Germany. Ziebertz does not further discuss whether the nationality of the students can have played a role in these results.

It was noted, however, that trust in religion had a positive significant influence on a student's acceptance of the notion of inherent human dignity. Students' specific beliefs and religious affiliations were however not significant.

When it comes to the question whether acceptance of inherent human dignity is a predictor of the assumption of general human rights the answer is not as clear as one would have expected. The investigation shows that those students who had a strong appreciation of cultural diversity were the main supporters of human rights. The acceptance of inherent human dignity came second as a predictor and the ability to feel empathy came third. Ziebertz also observed that the female students had a significantly higher ability than the male students to feel empathy with other people.

Ziebertz concludes by observing that the students do not in general share the common understanding of human dignity that educational, religious and political leaders consider to be desirable according to the values of liberal democracy. He summarizes his report in the following way:

> If the concept of an inherent dignity of man is understood as the core value founding the modern understanding of human rights, the empirical data display a gap between the ideal and reality. This is a challenge for education and ought to provoke a public debate on what constitutes modern societies and what holds them together. (Ziebertz 2020, p. 124)

Comments on Ziebertz's report.

Ziebertz's empirical results are in themselves interesting and challenging. There are, however, theoretical problems to consider, in particular with regard to the conceptual foundation of the whole project.

Ziebertz starts off by declaring that "it is not appropriate to assume only one understanding of dignity". He then refers to my own proposal for a multiplicity of concepts. He talks about my distinction between three senses of the term "dignity", viz. dignity of merit, dignity of moral stature and inherent human dignity. Ziebertz also assumes that these senses can function as alternative interpretations of human dignity. A person's human dignity can, in his interpretation, be either of the merit, the moral or the inherent kind. The third statement presented to the students (above) is explicit about the exclusiveness in underlining that "each human being should be recognized *just* because he is a human being".

I have a few comments on Ziebertz's assumptions. First, my system distinguishes, as presented above, between *four* senses of the word "dignity". In addition to the three mentioned ones I assume what I call dignity of identity, a dignity associated with the individual's specific qualities and relations to the surrounding world. (See below p. 41 for a detailed presentation.) Ziebertz does not acknowledge this fourth sense and this is for his purpose understandably so. The dignity of identity can in no way function as a general human dignity.

It is important to emphasize, though, that I have never intended to view the dignity of merit nor the dignity of moral stature as alternative interpretations of general human dignity. It seems as if Ziebertz does so, first in using the phrases: "human dignity of merit" and "human dignity of morality" but also in juxtaposing the senses as exclusive alternatives.

In my work I have noted four senses of the word "dignity" and thereby identified four different dimensions of identity. Only the basic Kantian inherent dignity can deserve the place of general human dignity. This dignity remains the same for all humans and exists throughout their whole lives. The dignity of merit and the dignity of moral stature are temporary and admit of degrees. One can have higher or lower merits and one can be placed differently on the moral scale. Moreover, there are people who have no merit whatsoever and there are people who have no moral standing (not even on the negative side). They can be morally indifferent.

It is therefore a misunderstanding of my position to regard the three kinds of dignity as alternative interpretations of general human dignity. In my view appreciating a person's merits, for instance his or her position as a general or cabinet minister, is not to evaluate his or her general human dignity. What I am saying is that this person, in addition to his or her general human dignity, has a high place on a scale of merit. Likewise, noting a person's high moral stature is to say something different from appreciating his or her general human dignity.

Having said this it can still be interesting to investigate how members of the young population understand the term "dignity" and what sense of dignity that is of particular importance to them. Here is, I think, the strength of Ziebertz's project. It is interesting to note that many young students (all over the world) consider that the value of people (what the students call "dignity") is mainly dependent on their moral behaviour. There are, according to this investigation, more students that have this opinion than such as base their evaluation exclusively on the humanity of people. It is also noteworthy that there is a substantial minority of young students who consider merit and social position to be the criterion of human value.

Doris Schroeder: Two riddles and four concepts

Doris Schroeder (2008) has proposed a classification of dignities which has some resemblance to my own. Her primary aim in this endeavour is to clarify some riddles in modern bioethical debate. A major such riddle concerns the idea of dying with dignity. This normally means dying without excruciating pain and without the embarrassment of needing help for the most basic human functions. But what idea of dignity do we then have in mind?

The first dignity concept, according to Schroeder, is *Kantian dignity*. According to this idea human beings have dignity because of their rational nature in their capacity to be morally self-legislative. Dignity is then a property of all rational beings, according them the right never to be treated simply as a means but always at the same time as an end. This concept is identical with my own concept of human dignity.

The second concept is called *aristocratic dignity*. This dignity is strongly associated with a high position, such as that of king, bishop or member of the high nobility. This is the old Roman nobility linked in particular to senators in the Republic and Empire. This type of dignity seems to be identical with my own dignity of merit in its formal part. It does not, however, cover informal merit.

Schroeder, however, muddles the waters in offering the following explanation: "Such dignity is the outwardly displayed quality of a human being who acts in accordance with her superior rank and position." (p. 233)

The outwardly displayed quality seems to fit better with the third suggested concept, c*omportment dignity*, by which Schroeder refers to the dignity of appropriate and seemly comportment. According to this idea it is undignified to snooze on a train, tell a rude joke, giggle at an obituary or spit on the street. But there is also an outward display of aristocratic dignity, namely noble comportment. The true aristocrat will continue to display such comportment even in harsh or humiliating circumstances, will continue to behave in a calm and well-mannered way. This concept does not have a direct counterpart in my system.

The fourth concept is called *meritorious dignity*. Schroeder here relates to the Aristotelian idea that one has dignity only when one deserves praise or honour. Dignity is thus linked to the cardinal virtues as described by Aristotle: temperance, courage, justice and wisdom. The ideal person bears the accidents of life with dignity, has temperance and patience, has the wisdom to see that all life ends. This covers my concept of dignity of moral stature but seems to be broader.

Given this analysis, Schroeder has the tool to solve the riddle about dying with dignity. The dignity here is not the inviolable Kantian dignity. Instead, when one is in unbearable pain and anxiety one

can no longer uphold one's comportment dignity. One has then lost one's inner strength to behave in a well-mannered way.

On Sulmasy's varieties of dignity

Let me now introduce Dan Sulmasy's most recent system for categorizing dignities (2013, see also Sulmasy (2006)).. For him, dignity is fundamentally a value term. All uses of the word "dignity" refer to the worth, stature or value of some entity. In ordinary usage the entity in question is a human being.

By *intrinsic* dignity he means the worth, stature or value that human beings have simply because they are human, not by virtue of any set of biological, psychological or socio- economic or political conditions. His definition runs: "Dignity is a value that everyone has simply by virtue of the fact that they are human. We use the word this way, for example when we say that racism is an offence against human dignity" (2013, p.938). Sulmasy calls it the Kantian/Catholic perspective. The intrinsic aspect of human dignity is, he says, given in every human encounter. In this characterization Sulmasy follows in my own and Schroeder's footsteps.

Sulmasy also argues for the idea that intrinsic worth is based on the notion of *natural kinds*. Intrinsic value, he says, is the value that something has solely in virtue of its being the kind of thing it is (2013, p. 939). The claim that all natural kinds have an intrinsic value must, he says, lie at the heart of any serious account of environmental ethics.

By *attributed* dignity he means that worth, stature or value that human beings confer upon other people by acts of attribution. Attributed dignity is, he says, a created value. It constitutes a conventional form of value. This concerns those whom we admire, those who carry themselves in a particular way or those who have certain talents, skills or powers. We can even attribute worth or value to ourselves using the word in this way. Here Sulmasy lies close to my concept of dignity of merit and partly Schroeder's concept of aristocratic dignity.

In speaking of *inflorescent* dignity he refers to the way "people use the word to describe the worth or value of a process that is conducive to human excellence or to describe the worth or value of a state of affairs by which an individual human being expresses human excellence." Inflorescent dignity is possessed by persons who are flourishing as human beings. This concept is similar to, but not quite identical with, Schroeder's meritorious dignity. It does not have a straightforward counterpart in my own system, nevertheless it is partly covered by my concept of dignity of moral stature. See later p. 40.

In addition to this trichotomy Sulmasy contends that "dignity" is sometimes used to refer to states of affairs where people act in ways that express the intrinsic value of the human. We say, for example, that so-and-so faced a particularly trying situation with dignity. "This use of the word is not purely attributive since it depends upon some *objective* conception of human excellence. Nonetheless the value to which this use of the word refers is not intrinsic since it depends both upon actual circumstances and upon an explicit understanding of the intrinsic value of the human" (p. 938). This concept covers Schroeder's comportment dignity but is more comprehensive.

Sulmasy then argues that the intrinsic sense of dignity is logically and linguistically prior to the attributed and inflorescent senses. Sulmasy presents an elaborate argument for this thesis. He further contends that this logical and linguistic priority helps to make sense of apparently contradictory uses of the word.

First, Sulmasy argues that all talk of attributed dignity logically and linguistically presupposes the notion of intrinsic dignity. If I attribute dignity to a human being, he says, it is because I have picked that individual out as a member of the human natural kind and noted some feature of this individual that is good or useful to me or to others and noted that this feature is possessed by a member of a kind that has the intrinsic value we call dignity. The logic and grammar of the attributed use of the word "dignity" thus require an implicit recognition of the intrinsic dignity of the entity.

Sulmasy reasons in a similar way in contending that all talk of inflorescent dignity logically and linguistically presupposes the notion of intrinsic dignity. One cannot know, he says, what it means to be a flourishing example of some kind without knowing to what kind the entity belongs. He argues that this follows from the very meaning of inflorescent dignity. The value of being an excellent member of kind X depends upon the value of kind X. For example the value of being a fast or beautiful horse is greater than the value of being a fast or beautiful amoeba.

One does say, when appropriate, that a particular human being carried himself or herself with dignity, but only because the entity that is flourishing is a member of the human natural kind, a kind that has the special value we call dignity by virtue of its being the distinctive kind that it is, relative to all the other kinds that there are in the universe. Observe that Sulmasy here places the locution "behaving in a dignified way" under the label of inflorescent dignity.

In conclusion Sulmasy claims that he has established that the attributed and inflorescent uses are logically and linguistically dependent on the intrinsic sense of dignity.

So much for the different senses of dignity in Sulmasy's system. In what way, then, can the distinctions he draws advance the bioethical debate about dignity? Sulmasy uses as an example a qualitative empirical study of medical professionals working in hospice and palliative care. Some of

these professionals contend that dignity is innate and cannot be lost by a patient, and that this is an important factor in end-of-life care. In the same study, however, some hospice workers argued that certain medical conditions (such as loss of continence or facial deformities caused by head cancer) can rob patients of their dignity, or that the social isolation that accompanies such circumstances can have this effect.

Sulmasy claims that both parties here can be right. It is only that they use the term "dignity" in two different senses. Those who declare that persons have dignity in equal measure use the word "dignity" in its basic intrinsic sense, he says. Patients cannot be deprived of their dignity by disease or injury, nor by social isolation. Those who declare, on the other hand, that patients *can* be thus deprived of their dignity use the word "dignity" in a different sense, viz. the attributed sense.

Later in this essay I shall be agreeing with Sulmasy that there is in this situation a seeming controversy that is dependent on the use of different senses of the word "dignity". I shall however part company with him when it comes to the identification of the second sense of dignity in this case. I will claim that the second use of dignity refers to what I call "dignity of identity".

Towards a comprehensive theory of dignity

In this section I will attempt to make a synthesis of the three systems and I will scrutinize Sulmasy's reasoning with regard to the relations between on the one hand human dignity and on the other hand the attributed and inflorescent dignities.

On the philosophy of values

There is a profound philosophical issue with regard to values and evaluation which I cannot enter into in any depth. Let me just take a stand that can be sufficient for my purposes.

What is the status of values, be they moral, aesthetic, metaphysical or religious? Do they objectively exist or are they in some sense human constructions? The latter idea has different specifications — for example the values are *decided upon*, or are *relative to human attitudes or feelings*. Two interpretations of the latter alternative are: the sentence "A is good" means that people have a sympathetic attitude to A, or "A is good" uttered by P means that P has a sympathetic attitude to A.

In the present context of the philosophy of dignity I will preliminarily assume that values are objective or semi-objective qualities. Thus I will primarily talk about value-ascriptions concerning which there is a consensus or almost complete consensus within a population. As a partial support of my stand here I note the following. When we talk about the dignity of human beings we almost never qualify this by referring to particular judgments. There is no talk about "dignity for whom" or "dignity according to a person's point of view".

Thus, when I am in this text talking about worths in general, intrinsic or extrinsic, internal or attributed etc., I am assuming that they are objectively there. The intrinsic worths of natural kinds or internal worths of instances of natural kinds are here not considered to be the result of particular human decisions or dependent on particular human attitudes. For instance, the beauty of a flower is in this context considered to be a worth of the flower that is objectively there.

This is not to deny that there are a lot of relativized locutions in ordinary speech, for instance "I like this flower" or "I think this flower's beautiful". And there are many locutions where the relation between a human and an object is crucial, for instance "From this angle that flower looks

beautiful". Likewise, this may hold for locutions containing the word "dignity": "John thought that Peter behaved with dignity, but Paul disagreed."

Edgar (2004) emphasizes the relativity of values by citing the example of an SS-officer who (at least seemingly) embraces as a value the killing of Jewish prisoners — embraces as a value, that is, an act commonly considered the most horrific crime.

I will not deny that there may be genuine disagreement between representatives of different cultures. It is also crucial to note, however, that disagreements concerning value can be highly spurious. Consider our first example. John and Paul may on second thought reach a consensus. One of the two, Paul, may have overlooked an important element of the situation in which Peter performed his behaviour. Paul could say: "I was wrong in my judgment. I now think that Peter did behave with dignity". This observation will remind us that there is a superficial sense of having a positive attitude to something. The positive attitude could be based on a hasty and ill-founded judgment. This is different from ascription of real value.

Similarly, it is in principle possible that we may also convince the SS-officer that he has been in error in his condemnation of Jews. We may convince him that his superficial evaluation is not consistent with his deep-lying values. His attitude to Jews is not in accordance with his "genuine" values.

There is an exception to my "objectivistic" reasoning in the case of *attributed* worths. Here there is an obvious *created* value scale. A colonel has a higher standing than a corporal according to such a scale. A professor has a higher standing than a lecturer. These worths are not objective. However, once the scale is created it is an objective affair to place a person on it. This creation is normally supposed to mirror inflorescent states (see below): the colonel is supposed to be more competent than the corporal (in many but not necessarily all respects).

The concepts

I shall here introduce a number of concepts and distinctions, partly in line with Sulmasy's and my own earlier systems. The conceptual structure, however, is greatly enlarged.

By a *natural kind* I shall mean the kind of such entities as have not been created by a human being or other animal. A natural kind is differentiated from the rest of reality as the kind of thing that it is in terms of a set of lawlike generalizations, certain typical features and a certain natural history of the kind of thing in question. David Wiggins gives the following succinct characterization: "The determination of a natural kind stands and falls with the existence of law-like principles that will

collect together the actual extension of the kind around an arbitrary good specimen of it; and these law-like principles will also determine the characteristic development and typical history of members of this extension" (Wiggins 2001, p. 169).

I shall distinguish between the *worth* of a natural kind and the *grounds* of this worth. The grounds typically include the physical structure of an entity, for instance a stone, in the case of non-living materia, or the biological and psychological structure and function, in the case of a living organism. For the sake of argument I shall assume that there is a *privileged definition* (scientific or otherwise) of all natural kinds. (This is not a self-evident assumption, since most "privileged" definitions are highly controversial and can vary in different discourses.) I assume, for example, that a stone is a hard and largely impenetrable piece of earthly or mineral matter. A human being is a rational and autonomous animal. Such privileged definitions list what I will call the *constitutive* properties of the natural kind in question.

The *intrinsic worth* of a natural kind is grounded in the constitutive properties of the kind. All instances of a natural kind have the same intrinsic worth. The intrinsic worth of an instance of a natural kind is the same as long as the instance exists.

The natural kind of stones has a set of constitutive properties: being a part of the earth, having a certain hardness. These properties have intrinsic worth. But every stone instance also has individual non-constitutive properties: it has a certain colour, a certain shape and a certain relative porosity. Some of these properties are internal to the stone, others may be the result of external circumstances. The latter are typically, but not necessarily, temporary properties. Some of these non-constitutive properties are worthy. (I will discuss the kind of worth below.)

Instances of a natural kind may have an *internal worth,* which is not grounded in the constitutive properties and is hence not intrinsic. The internal worth may be — but need not be — a lasting worth. The beauty of a daffodil is an internal worth. This worth is not everlasting and it need not be common to all instances of the natural kind of daffodils. It is possible that all instances of a natural kind have some internal worth that is not an intrinsic worth. In such a case the property grounding the worth is not a constitutive property.

The *extrinsic* worth of a natural kind is dependent on external circumstances. An instance of a natural kind typically has an extrinsic worth that is not shared by all instances of this natural kind. The obvious reason for this is that the various instances exist in very different circumstances. The extrinsic worth may be lasting or temporary. (Observe here that I have excluded the case where the worth of an entity would be dependent on the particular evaluations of different people.)

There are different kinds of extrinsic worth. *One* kind of extrinsic worth is dependent on the object's being placed in a certain situation. An antilope's being a member of a herd can have a

worth from the point of view of species survival. A stone in a heap of stones can have a worth in the formation of a beautiful hill.

A *second* kind of extrinsic worth exists when an object has a value as a means or an instrument for a purpose. A stone or a piece of wood is worthy because it can be used for building purposes. A person can have an extrinsic worth as a footballer by being a useful member of a team.

Some extrinsic worths are basically *relative* in the following *third* sense: X may be valuable to mankind, or X may be valuable to a specific individual, without being an instrument for a special purpose. Pet animals can as a kind be valuable to humans, but so can specific animals be to specific human beings. Observe that this relative worth is not dependent on any evaluation by specific humans. Something can be valuable to A without A's (or anybody else's) making this evaluation.

A *fourth* important kind of extrinsic worths are the *attributed* worths. A natural kind, as well as its instances, may be attributed a worth by persons or certain qualified social bodies such as governments or other authorities. These attributions may be lasting or temporary. Both inanimate and animate objects can have attributed worths. The Kaba stone in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, has been attributed a holy worth by the followers of Islam. But attributions of worth are especially common with regard to human beings. Examples of attributed worths are, in the human case, ranks and honours. See further p. x about attributed dignities.

The attributions of worths need not be formal. We may also acknowledge some *informal attributed* worths. A child's toy can be designated as her favourite toy. A restaurant can be awarded a star in the Michelin Guide. In the case of humans they can have earned a high informal merit through their deeds and deserve respect for this. The achievements of artists, scientists and athletes are often acknowledged and looked highly upon. Normally, the persons in question cannot claim any formal position but they are often treated as if they had such positions.

It is significant that also informal worths can come and go. People can for some time have an informal fame and reputation, but this can suddenly be gone. Another feature shared by the formal and the informal worths is that they admit of degrees. Most positions, professional or otherwise, are ordered in hierarchies. A general is higher on the military scale than a sergeant; a bishop is higher on the clerical scale than a prior. It is obvious that also the informal reputations and the informal fame admit of degrees.

Also attributed worths normally have a *ground*. Such a ground constitutes the *reason* for attributing the worth. The grounds for appointments of people to high ranks can vary. Typical grounds are the qualifications of the people concerned, their efficiency, their knowledge or their intelligence. But there are exceptions. There may be reasons which are irrelevant to the position in question.

And certainly one can appoint a person for no reason at all. In the extreme case the appointment is a mistake. Still, the result of the appointment, the rank or the high position, may remain valid.

The grounds of attributed worths, which is to say qualifications such as efficiency, knowledge and intelligence, are in themselves what I will call, following Sulmasy, *inflorescent* worths. (In certain cases these are called inflorescent dignities, see below.) An inflorescent worth is a worth of excellence along some scale. To say that a particular flower is beautiful is to say that with regard to the aesthetic dimension this flower has a higher position on the scale than most flowers. But the comparison can also be made with regard to instances of other kinds (cf. Sulmasy on this point). Certain flowers can be more beautiful than certain animals. And to say that a diamond is sharp is to say that with regard to the dimension of sharpness this diamond is more useful than other members of its kind, but possibly also than potential tools of other kinds.

The worth of excellence is, then, as I interpret it, the same as the worth of inflorescence. Thus the inflorescent worth of an entity can be the ground of some attributed worth of this entity. (I am simplifying Sulmasy's characterization of inflorescent worth here. In speaking of *inflorescent dignity* he refers to the way "people use the word to describe the worth or value of a process that is conducive to human excellence or to describe the worth or value of a state of affairs by which an individual human being expresses human excellence." Inflorescent dignity is possessed by persons who are flourishing as human beings.)

Do the inflorescent worths in their turn have grounds? Yes, for instance the particular combinations of colours and shades of a flower can form the ground of the inflorescent worth of the flower's beauty. The education and intelligence of a person may form the ground of the person's inflorescent worth of competence in his or her work. We can now note that inflorescent worths can be both internal to the bearer (for instance beauty and intelligence) and extrinsic (for instance being educated, which is the result of external impact from teachers etc.).

After having introduced the various kinds of worth, I will now turn to a crucial subset of worths, namely dignities.

Human dignity is an intrinsic worth of the natural kind of humans, which is to say a supreme worth which is grounded in the constitutive properties of humans. The subject of intrinsic dignity is typically a human being. But possibly dignity can also be ascribed to other phenomena that share the constitutive properties of humans, such as God, angels or extraterrestrial creatures. Spiegelberg even suggests that certain abstract objects such as truth can have dignity. One can speak of the "dignity of truth."

In my historical introduction to the theory of dignity I have noted the traditional ways of characterizing human dignity: the Aristotelian idea of humans as rational animals, the Christian

idea of humans as being images of God, and the Kantian idea of humans as autonomous agents. I can here also add Martha Nussbaum's (2008, 2011) idea that humans have a specific set of basic capacities which grounds human dignity. For my purposes in this essay I need not settle for any of these positions.

In addition to the intrinsic worths of humans there are internal worths of humans which are not grounded in their constitution. Those worths may pertain to a subset of humans or indeed just to a single human being. These worths are typically inflorescent worths, i.e. they are excellencies of these persons. For examples see below.

Some attributed worths of humans are called *attributed dignities*. The most salient attributed dignities are the ones that are the result of an explicit nomination: "I hereby nominate you bishop, governor etc." The persons with such explicit attributed dignities are often called dignitaries. These appointments can be life-long but they can also be temporary. People can be promoted but they can also be demoted.

Some other attributed dignities are only indirectly the result of nominations. These are the hereditary dignities of kings, members of the nobility etc. The ancestors of these persons have at some stage been nominated.

Some attributed dignities are the result of the awarding of prizes or diplomas. To be a Nobel Prize laureate is also to have a dignity. The same holds for distinguished and officially praised authors and artists as well as the acknowledged sports stars. I shall come back to this.

Some inflorescent worths are called *inflorescent dignities*. To be an excellent person in a certain crucial respect entails having an inflorescent dignity. The excellence grounding an attributed dignity is normally an inflorescent dignity.

There are various kinds of inflorescent dignities. The most striking ones are the moral and intellectual dignities. I here choose to regard the worth of morality as a kind of inflorescence, instead of proposing a specific category. Still, it is crucial to emphasize the dignity of moral standing as a salient subcategory, since it has peculiar characteristics. For instance, morality comes to the fore as a quality of a person's behaviour. The adjectival use of dignity in "dignified behaviour" often refers to moral behaviour. The intellectual dignities, on the other hand, are the grounds of several attributed dignities both formal and informal: high offices as well as awards and prizes. To these inflorescent dignities we may add aesthetic and athletic ones. These constitute the grounds of artistic achievements as well as the achievements in sports.

But there are inflorescent worths of humans that are not inflorescent dignities. Some excellencies in humans are minor or trivial. A human being can be good at computing numbers and at driving cars. These are excellencies but are not generally called dignities.

I have noticed that inflorescent worths in general can be either internal or extrinsic. This also holds for inflorescent dignities. The intelligence of a genius is internal to its bearer. But being the fastest runner in the world is an extrinsic dignity. Here the dignity is based on the runner's position in relation to all other runners.

The dignity of identity

But there are worths of humans which are *not* inflorescent worths. In particular, there is a kind of dignity that is not grounded in an inflorescent dignity. This is what I have proposed calling the *dignity of identity*. The idea of such a dignity is not shared by Schroeder nor by Sulmasy. Since no other system that I know of acknowledges this category, I will now examine it in some detail.

The dignity of identity is the dignity that is attached to us as integrated and autonomous persons, persons with a history and persons with a future, with all our relationships to other human beings. This dignity has components which are both internal and extrinsic. The basic traits of our personality are clearly innate. But such traits as are partly the result of upbringing and education are in one of the senses of the word extrinsic. And our relationships to other persons are obviously extrinsic.

Most of us have a basic respect for our own identity, although it need not be at all remarkable from a social, moral or other point of view. But this self-respect can easily be shattered. It can be shattered for instance by nature itself through the disability of illness and old age, or by other people through acts of cruelty.

Observe that the dignity of identity is not identical with human dignity. We may certainly respect ourselves and others just because we are humans. But this is not the respect I have in mind here. I refer instead to the peculiar respect that we have for ourselves as individuals with our particular characteristics.

Thus, the crucial factors that ground the dignity of identity are the subject's integrity and autonomy, including his or her social relations. These factors are typically associated with a *sense of* integrity and autonomy. And when a person's integrity and autonomy are tampered with this is typically associated with a feeling of humiliation or loss of self-respect. Self-respect is thus an important concept in connection also with the dignity of identity. (Cf. Honneth 1992)

Statman (2000, p. 528) observes that humiliation can be even more profound when it is the result of intentionally cruel acts. He reflects on this phenomenon in the following insightful way:

> That other people can hit me, put me in jail and ridicule me publicly is beyond question. But why should such behaviors be taken as constituting a reason for me to

> respect myself less? How could it ever be rational to consider my *self*-respect injured because of the disrespect other people express toward me?

And he goes on to say (p. 534):

> Though the victim of humiliation often does not value the standards of worthiness and of social success assumed by the humiliator, the humiliator manages to shatter the victim's self-respect, to make her feel unworthy, diminished in stature, devalued.

There is some kind of paradox here. How can humiliation rob me of my dignity? How can I lose my dignity when I am attacked by people whose moral views I despise? The humiliation is not (normally) a case of formal demotion. The perpetrators cannot (normally) do anything about my formal or informal merits. Nor can they by their immoral acts rob me of my moral stature. This can only happen if they succeed in provoking me to react in an immoral way.

So, if there is a case of dignity here it is neither attributed nor inflorescent dignity. It must be a dignity attached to the person's integrity and identity as a human being. (Cf. Kolnai (1976) for similar observations.)

The interesting psychological truth here is that people's feeling of worth is to a great extent tied to how they are looked upon by other people, irrespective of the nature of the values held by these people. The inhuman treatment entails some kind of social exclusion — the SS officer by his brutal acts tells the prisoner: you do not belong to us, we are the elite — and this social exclusion is humiliating even if one does not in the least adhere to the values of (in the given example) the SS officer.

Thus *self-respect* (of the different kinds noted by Axel Honneth, 1992) is often tied to the dignity of identity. One can respect the fact that one's identity is undamaged or even improved, and one can lose one's self-respect when one's identity has been broken down. Again, as in the case of moral stature, this self-respect does not entail the respect of any special rights pertaining to the individual. It is another matter, which may be a source of confusion, that we all also have some basic rights (in relation to our fellow human beings) with regard to integrity and autonomy. These rights are grounded in another dignity, the human dignity, discussed elsewhere in this essay.

But is dignity of identity, then, identical with a *feeling* or *sense* of worthiness? If we are only talking about a psychological fact, i.e. the self-confidence or self-respect of the person, then there is perhaps no need of a special concept of dignity.

I will here argue the case for an objective (or at least inter-subjective) dignity of identity. The cruel person can do more than just humiliate us — he or she can intrude into our private sphere, can physically attack us and can restrict our autonomy in many ways, for instance by putting us in jail. All these changes are extra-psychological. They do not just entail feelings of worthlessness or of

humiliation. Intrusion in the private sphere is a violation of the person's integrity. Hurting a person may entail a change in the person's identity. The person becomes a person with a trauma; he or she has in a salient sense a new physical identity. The person's autonomy can be tampered with, when the person is prevented from doing what he or she wants to do or is entitled to do. Finally, insulting, hurting or hindering somebody entails excluding this person from one's community.

In order to emphasize my contention that the dignity of identity is not wholly dependent on the subject's self-perception, consider the following case. A man with senile dementia is left naked in the ward of his old people's home. He is left so that everybody surrounding him can observe him. He cannot himself identify the character of the situation. He does not feel humiliated. However, his next of kin who finds him in this situation can rightly exclaim: "Oh, they've taken away his dignity."

I have so far only considered the case where a person's self-respect has diminished or been lost as a result of another person's disrespectful act. But the identity-version of dignity is relevant also in the cases where we say that illness, impairment, disability and old age can rob one of one's dignity. What could happen in such cases?

To some extent we already have the answer. When one has had one's face badly damaged in a car accident, one's physical identity has been shattered. When, in the same kind of case, one has lost one's legs, one's physical identity is radically transformed and one's autonomy has been extremely diminished. A disabled person is almost by definition a person with restricted autonomy. And restricted autonomy normally entails the exclusion from some communities.

Elderly people are often stricken with illness and disability. With the elderly there is an extra touch to this. Their disablement is often irreversible. The old person believes or knows that he or she will remain disabled for the rest of life. The identity is for ever drastically changed.

In the case of the aged (and in the case of some sick people) there is also a remarkable change in their looks. For some people this marks an extremely painful change of identity. The beautiful woman, whose identity has literally consisted of her beauty, is through age gradually transformed into a much less attractive person. Likewise, the athlete, whose fame is wholly dependent on achievements on the track, is over time gradually transformed into a weak, disabled person who is left out of the community of the old days.

Disability and restricted autonomy has a further consequence for a person's identity and thereby dignity. The sick and the old who cannot move about and take care of themselves are relegated to other people, the carers. The risk of intrusion into one's private sphere, i.e. of a violation of one's integrity, then becomes high.

A particular kind of handicap is a consequence of the development of society. The drastic technological progress, signified in particular within information technology, leaves the elderly behind. They have not been trained to use such technologies and as a result they encounter difficulties in performing such trivial acts as paying their bills.

We may pursue this line of thought even to the dead. It is possible, I think, to violate the dignity of the dead, by slandering the dead person or by spitting on his or her grave. In this case the violation cannot be understood unless there is an objective ground for the dignity.

In conclusion, although feelings are normally present in forming one's identity, they do not exhaust one's identity. It could be added that feelings need not be present in relation to any of the other types of dignity. We must admit that dignity need not always be tied to the subject's self-image. This is particularly the case with the general human dignity, which *ex hypothesi* is there as long as the human being exists, whether conscious or unconscious. But also an attributed dignity may be there without the subject acknowledging it. A person may just have been promoted to a position without knowing about it, for instance. And, certainly, a person may be dignified in a moral sense without being aware of this or without particularly thinking about it. Of course, also in the cases of these kinds of dignity it is typical that the subject is aware of his or her dignity, but there is no necessary connection.

The relation between attributed dignities and inflorescent dignities

A deep question can now be asked with regard to both the inflorescent dignities and the dignity of identity. Can they have an independent existence or do they ultimately turn out to be attributed dignities? Or, is the distinction between attributed dignities and the other categories spurious?

In answering this I will first make a distinction between dignity as *acquired* through an achievement (moral or otherwise) and dignity as *attributed* through some kind of act, decision or, for that matter, attitude. As has already been noted, a person may have an inflorescent dignity, for instance a dignity of moral stature, without anybody, even the subject, believing or acknowledging this. It would be misleading to say that a person has through moral deeds *attributed* to himself or herself the dignity of moral stature, or that an athlete has through training *attributed* to himself or herself the dignity of excellence. Instead, the subject has achieved or acquired the dignity.

So even if, in the cases of moral dignity and other inflorescent dignities, some action on the part of the subject is presupposed for the existence of dignity, this is not an act of attribution but instead

an act of achievement. We should therefore distinguish between *acquired* inflorescent dignities and *attributed* dignities.

But could one not say that there must be some *recognition* of the subject's inflorescent dignity for it to exist? (It seems as if Sulmasy requires this, p. 940.) And is not this recognition a kind of attribution of the dignity? No, it would be wrong to say, for instance, that a person's moral status is dependent on other people's acknowledgement of it. The ground of the dignity, I contend, is the moral status itself, not the recognition of it by other people. It would in general be impossible to uphold the idea that recognition is necessary for dignity (apart from the cases of honour and esteem where this is true by definition). In the basic case of human dignity it is crucial that this dignity exists even if nobody around the subject would acknowledge the fact.

Thus I think that the distinction can be quite clearly expressed. Attribution requires an explicit (normally formal) public acknowledgement in a specific context. Recognition only requires observation and understanding of the inflorescent dignity or the dignity of identity in question.

Thus I wish to argue in the following way. We start by observing and recognizing the *ground* of an inflorescent dignity. This need not entail ascribing the worth of dignity to the person. It is of course possible to simply recognize the ground of a person's excellence in sports. We observe, for instance, that a man runs faster than other men in various competitions. As a result of this observation we *recognize* the person's inflorescent excellence as a runner. And, as a result of this we may *attribute* a dignity to him in a more formal way. We may for instance afford him a prize or a diploma.

We thus have three steps: (1) observation of objective facts, (2) recognition of inflorescent dignities, (3) attribution of dignities normally based on the inflorescent dignities. An analogous reasoning can be performed with regard to the dignity of identity (see below).

Can attributed dignities be identical to inflorescent dignities or dignities of identity?

There is a further question to be answered. Take the case of a girl who has an inflorescent dignity in that she is an excellent high-jumper. On the basis of this we may attribute a dignity to her. In the most clearcut case we may award a prize or a diploma. Our high jumper may have won a competition and thereby acquired a gold medal.

But what about the informal case where we don't give any formal credit whatsoever? We may just declare to our friends that the girl is excellent at the high jump. Have we then attributed a dignity to her? And in this case is this exactly the same dignity as the inflorescent dignity itself? No, it

would lead to complications if we were to say that an attributed dignity is identical to the inflorescent dignity that is the ground for the attribution. The attributed dignity must be clearly separable from the inflorescent one.

Moreover, we must be careful in the identification of attribution of dignities. We must clearly distinguish between recognition and simple declaration, on the one hand, and official attribution, on the other hand. I think that we may talk about an attributed dignity first in the case where the official declaration in a sense *creates a new social status* for the bearer. By officially declaring that the girl is an excellent high-jumper we ensure that she will be looked upon in a new way in her society.

What about the dignity of identity in this respect? Is it necessarily attributed by somebody? It is initially plausible to contend that one attributes this dignity to oneself. One has a picture of oneself, which one normally likes and respects. And typically, one is the first to recognize when this picture is shattered. Is the dignity of identity not one's own attribution, then?

My answer to this difficult question is that one has contributed substantially to the *formation* of oneself. (This reasoning is analogous to my arguments concerning inflorescent dignities above.) So have significant people in one's environment. Through exercise and training, one has acquired a set of capacities and skills. One has with the help of others reached a level of autonomy. And one has entered and been included in one or more communities. Thus, the self, that is the ground for the dignity of identity, has in a sense been partly *created* by the subject. But fundamental parts of the self are given by nature. One's basic physical and mental dispositions are given, although they may indeed be modified.

Could one not say, however, that one attributes dignity to oneself through one's evaluation of the self? To this my answer is: evaluation cannot by itself count as attribution of dignity. (See my analysis of worths as independent of evaluations.) Much evaluation, for instance in the case of inflorescent dignity, presupposes that the dignity of inflorescence is there.

Having dignity and expression of dignity are not the same kind of thing

All kinds of dignity can be expressed. But can one have a dignity without expressing it?

Expression is ambiguous. One can express that one has the dignity in question. And one can express oneself, and in general act, in such a way that it can be seen that one has the dignity.

One can express one's human dignity by claiming one's human rights, for instance, and one can express one's attributed dignity by following the rules and conventions that follow from the

attribution. A bishop may express his dignity by performing his duties in a clerical service, by preaching and giving his blessing, according to the statutes of the Church.

But is dignity always expressed? It is typical, as in the examples above, that dignity is expressed in the sense that it "reveals" itself. However, in many cases this is not so. There is, first, no action by which one expresses one's human dignity. The human dignity is there irrespective of one's actions. It is much the same with the other types. Neither the attributed dignity nor the inflorescent dignity has to be expressed. Neither the person with a high rank nor the talented person express their dignities at every moment, nor in everything they do.

It has been observed by Spiegelberg and others that we sometimes talk about *acting with dignity*. A plausible suggestion is that this means that people express their dignities in action. A typical case is moral action. In acting in a moral way one is expressing one's morality and one is acting with dignity. But acting with dignity is not always of a moral nature. There is a different case of acting with dignity that has an *aesthetic* overtone. When the Queen acts with dignity this has only rarely to do with her morality. She acts in a way that conforms to her standing, acts appropriately and in seriousness, follows the rules of her high function. In part there is then a *convention* which she follows. But it is not a simple conventionality. She must also follow the convention in an elevated way. Acting with dignity partly entails that one abstains from vulgarity, and also that one can remain strong and calm in the face of hardship. There should be a serenity about one's behaviour.

These observations are in line with the following dictionary explications: "Befitting elevation of aspect, manner or style" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) "A formal, stately or grave bearing" (*Collins English Dictionary*), and "seriousness and propriety in behaviour" (the Spanish dictionary).

The idea of acting with dignity or acting in a dignified way indicates that dignity is not necessarily a quality of a person. It is in these cases *a quality of a person's acts*. And acting with dignity on a particular occasion does not in itself warrant the general ascription of dignity to the agent in question.

Respect and self-respect

A typical feature of dignity of all kinds, as mentioned before, is respect. Indeed, this is made evident by all the dictionary entries. We should respect all human beings (because of their human dignity). We should respect presidents and bishops (because of their attributed dignity). We should respect the outstanding moral agents (because of their moral actions and attitudes). And we should each

and every one of us respect ourselves as the person he or she is, with both merits and faults. Thus, a person with any of these dignities deserves respect of some kind.

What is respect? There is a basic sense of the word which is particularly evident in the case of human dignity. When one respects a human being one at least respects the rights of this human being. Every state and every individual shall act towards every human being in accordance with the rights set out in the UN Declaration. Thus, every state shall protect the lives and health of its inhabitants, shall provide general health care and education, shall provide for freedom of expression etc.

The concept of rights is connected to some of the dignities but not to all of them. It is connected obviously to some of the attributed dignities, viz. the formal ranks and positions. But there are no rights connected to the informal merits. A reputed scientist or a sports star has no particular rights as such — they have such rights only if they have some more formal standing. Such a standing might be conferred by, say, a university in the first case, a sports association in the second.

The person with a high moral standing does not have a particular right. There is an important difference between most attributed dignities and the dignity of moral stature in that the latter, as I have said, does not provide the subject with any rights. A prime minister has certain rights attached to the position held, so has the general. But the extremely moral person has not acquired any rights through his or her deeds. It is an interesting feature of morality that the moral value of an action would be lost or at least diminished if the action were to result in certain rights or privileges for the subject.

This observation has consequences for the notion of respect as tied to moral stature. Respect is related to morality in several ways. First, the moral agent pays respect to others. This is a central feature of morality itself. Part of the sense of being moral is to respect other people's rights, either the special rights bestowed upon them by legal authorities or the specifically human rights that all people have. But, second, there is a special respect that the moral agent deserves, albeit a respect that is not tied to any of the person's rights. We ought to pay respect to the moral agent in the sense of thinking highly of and speaking well of him or her.

A third way in which respect enters into the dignity of moral stature is as *self*-respect. In our way of talking about this we usually use the negative mode. We say that we cannot respect ourselves if we betray our country or let our people down. Socrates could not keep his self-respect if he did not choose the moral route. I think this indicates that self-respect is a threshold notion. If one remains a moral agent then one can keep one's self-respect. One will not end up despising oneself. It is not, however, a feature of moral agents to think very highly of themselves as a result of

particular moral "achievements". This would turn the self-respect into pride or self-satisfaction, which are alien to the moral stance.

I have suggested that self-respect is a threshold concept. From this does not follow, however, that it is not dimensional. On the negative side one can respect oneself less and less, depending on the varying degrees of negative value that one's actions have.

What about the inflorescent dignities other than the dignity of moral stature? There are partly similar observations to be made with regard to these dignities. As mentioned above, persons who excel in, say, science or sports do not as such have any special rights. They cannot — unless they have been attributed some more formal standing — claim special treatment. However, they can, like the highly moral person, be greatly respected.

Respecting one's dignity of identity is different. To respect this dignity is, first, to acknowledge that one is a human being, i.e. that one has the basic human dignity, including its rights; and, second, to acknowledge that one is a distinct person with a set of specific qualities, including weaknesses. This entails among other things that one has a duty to take care of oneself, to protect one's body or in general one's integrity.

Respecting one's dignity of identity does not, however, entail any special rights for oneself, for instance the right to special education or health care. If I say that I have the right to my life and health or the opportunity of education I am relying on my general human dignity.

A comparison between Sulmasy's system and my own previous system

I shall now consider how my own previous categories fit into the new conceptual system.

Consider first my concept of dignity of merit. How should it be placed with regard to the new system? It has a place both in the category of attributed dignities and the category of inflorescent dignities. People's ranks and official honours are clearly attributed dignities. But their informal merits, their excellencies, which need not be expressed or indeed even recognized, are inflorescent dignities.

The dignity of moral stature is clearly an inflorescent dignity. Morality is a special kind of excellence. The limitation of my system is that it does not explicitly recognize other kinds of excellencies (distinct from attributed ones), for instance intellectual, athletic, artistic and aesthetic ones. These have been acknowledged only as expressed and publicly recognized.

One can discuss what kinds of excellencies deserve the label "dignity" as distinct from ordinary "worth". I have argued that excellence in simple computation is a worth but not a dignity. Similar arguments can be put forward concerning limited excellencies in the other categories. An interesting exception, however, might be *moral* excellence. Morality seems always to qualify as dignity.

Can moral stature be an attributed dignity? No, the dignity of moral stature is an instance of inflorescent dignity. However, a person with a high moral standing may be recognized and respected. As a result she may be praised and generally declared to be a virtuous person. Thus there is an attribution of dignity. The grounds of the inflorescent dignity of moral stature are the actions and expressed thoughts of the subject. We evaluate these actions and thoughts as having a high moral value. As a result we may formally or informally attribute a special dignity to the person.

The categories of human dignity seem to be identical in Sulmasy's and my system, even though the grounds for attributing human dignity to humans can differ in some respects.

Turn now to the dignity of identity. This is not basically an inflorescent dignity. The properties grounding a person's dignity of identity are ones that the person has just because they belong to the person. The dignity of identity is not an intrinsic dignity. The individual properties of a person need not all be instances of the constitutive properties of humans. What they have in common is that they are specifically individual properties: the person's particular temperament, intelligence, interests, inclinations and looks. Some of these properties may be inflorescent worths but they typically are not.

A person's individuality has a worth in all its weakness. The ground for the person's dignity of identity defines himself or herself as an individual. Normally, but not always, people have a positive attitude towards their individuality. Thus one may grieve when one loses one's particular hair or looks even if they were nothing remarkable. But, as I have observed, the dignity of identity is not completely dependent on people's attitudes to themselves.

A comparison with Nussbaum's theory of dignity

I shall here briefly consider the relation between Martha Nussbaum's theory of dignity and the conceptual framework that I introduced above. In my presentation of Nussbaum's theory I noted that she seems to waver between two quite different ideas. One is the idea of a universal equal human dignity based on the inner capabilities that all humans (or nearly all humans) have, the other is the idea that not all humans live a life "worthy of their dignity". By the latter she means that far

from all people can realize all their combined capabilites (that is, their inner capabilities together with their opportunities). More specifically they cannot accomplish what they should be able to accomplish in ten crucial areas. There is, Nussbaum says, a threshold with regard to all these areas that everybody should be able to reach.

How might we relate Nussbaum's two uses of the term "dignity" to the system I have attempted to construe? It seems reasonable to say that Nussbaum's universal human dignity is close to the traditional one, although it has an unusual foundation. In classical systems the universal human dignity is tied to human rationality and autonomy (in the Kantian sense). Nussbaum founds her concept of universal dignity on human agency and human striving, the capability of humans to accomplish things in the world.

In order to live a life worthy of one's dignity the person has to be able to exercise her basic capabilities — that is, she must also have the opportunity and motivation to reach her thresholds in the ten areas, and act on these combined capabilities. Then she lives a "dignified life".

A fundamental question is whether Nussbaum introduces a genuinely new concept of dignity here. Does the person who lives a dignified life have dignity in a new sense of the word, i.e. a sense distinct from the universal human dignity? Or, is it the same sense of dignity that one's life is worthy of?

A different and perhaps more plausible option is to say that Nussbaum in the latter case approaches my concept of dignity of identity. When a person is deprived of her ability to remain healthy or of her combined capabilities to move around and keep her integrity intact, or when she cannot control her surroundings in a reasonable way, then her dignity of identity is highly reduced. And when her fellow human beings or her society give her the possibility of realizing these goals, her dignity of identity is restored or raised. Thus, enabling a life worthy of the person's dignity could perhaps be translated into: raising the person's dignity of identity to an acceptable or decent level.

On Sulmasy's thesis concerning the relation between the different kinds of dignity

I will now turn to a discussion of Dan Sulmasy's provocative thesis concerning the relation between intrinsic dignities, attributed dignities and inflorescent dignities. Sulmasy contends that the attributed and inflorescent dignities are logically dependent on the subject's intrinsic dignity. Let me first test the idea with regard to worths in general.

We say that the intrinsic worth of a stone is based on factors having to do with the intrinsic constitution of stones, but clearly a stone can have a worth due to some of its non-constitutive, lasting or temporary, properties. The stone may, for instance, have an extrinsic worth on the grounds of its being useful as a means or an instrument for various purposes, because of its particular shape, hardness or colour.

Thus this extrinsic worth of the stone is not dependent on the stone's belonging to the natural kind of stones. Admittedly, some of these individual properties of the stone are partly dependent on its constitutive properties. The particular hardness of a stone is a reflection of the constitutive hardness of stones. But some of the particular properties may be completely independent. The colour of a stone need not have anything to do with its constitution. There may be colourless stones. The stone's particular colour is only dependent on its constitution in the very narrow sense that a stone is of such a kind that it is *the possible bearer of colour*.

The extrinsic worth of A can therefore be largely independent of A's having an intrinsic set of properties and thereby an intrinsic worth.

A similar argument can be devised for the worth or dignity of human beings. We assume that there is an essential constitutive definition of being a human: for instance, being a free, rational and autonomous agent. These, then, are the intrinsic properties of a human being, having intrinsic worth. In the human case we call this intrinsic worth human dignity.

But a particular human being has properties which are not constitutive ones, such as his or her particular strength, agility, intelligence or wit. The human being may also have certain extrinsic properties, such as being a brilliant manager of a firm. It may be because of one or more of these specific properties that we attribute dignity to the person. Thus the dignity attributed to A need not depend on the intrinsic dignity of A, more than in the trivial sense that human beings are capable of possessing various specific properties.

My argument can be extended to the inflorescent dignities. Some of a person's inflorescent properties are not specific instances of intrinsic properties, nor need they be dependent on the person's intrinsic properties more than in the trivial sense that a human being may have a property of this or that kind.

Thus the claim that a person's attributed or inflorescent dignity is logically based on the person's intrinsic dignity is either vacuous or a very thin claim.

Conclusions with regard to seeming contradictions in the philosophy of dignity

In the light of the system of dignities which I have proposed I will now scrutinize some of the inconsistencies and paradoxes that Herbert Spiegelberg observed in his crucial article "Dignity: A Challenge to Philosophy" and which I presented above on p. xxx.

Our ordinary way of talking about dignity is confused, he said. It is sometimes so confused that it is vulnerable to attack. As noted above, certain writers, in particular Ruth Macklin, hold that the concept of dignity completely lacks content and ought to be removed from serious moral debate.

But which are the inconsistencies? Let me summarize.

1. The various grounds of human dignity can be set in relation to different philosophies.

I quite agree.

2. The way to a better philosophy of human dignity requires certain basic distinctions: absolute and relational, intrinsic and extrinsic, dignity in itself and grounds of dignity. (p. 40)

Excellent. This is what I have attempted to realize in this essay.

9. Human dignity is described as inherent in every person. But it is also held as a goal to be "achieved" or even "created". (p. 40)

Yes, human dignity is inherent in every person. But it is not the human dignity but other kinds of dignities, namely inflorescent ones, in particular dignity of moral stature, that should be goals of people's endeavours.

10. Human dignity is proclaimed as "unassailable". Yet "indignities" are denounced as flagrant violations of such dignity. (p. 40)

Human dignity is unassailable. However, we talk about violations of human dignity. That does not entail that the human dignity is reduced. According to my analysis, however, a person's dignity of identity can be reduced by, for instance, an act of cruelty.

11. Freedom movements aim at awakening in the oppressed a sense of their dignity. But often the statements made within such movements would seem to suggest

that the oppressed are deprived of the very dignity of which they are to develop a sense. (p. 40)

Freedom movements may awaken in the oppressed a sense of their human dignity. Such movements may also awaken a sense of the dignity of identity, whereby the oppressed realize that they have been deprived of this dignity.

12. Every person is supposed to be incapable of losing human dignity. Yet some seem to be losing it by doing things which are beneath human dignity. (p. 44)

Indeed, every person is incapable of losing human dignity. Some people may, however, lose their dignity of morality (a kind of inflorescent dignity) by doing things which are beneath them.

13. We should distinguish dignity itself from the *expression* of such dignity in inward and outward behaviour and the recognition of both by outsiders. (p. 54)

I quite agree. Consider my section on the expression of dignity.

14. A "sense of dignity" presupposes that there is an inherent dignity of which one can have a sense. But it need not be a realized dignity. (p. 54)

This statement is hard to comment on. A sense of dignity seems to presuppose that the subject possesses a concept of dignity and a belief that such a dignity can be realized.

15. "Losing one's dignity" can be a question either of being deprived of it by someone else or of depriving oneself of it through one's own behaviour. (p. 54)

I agree with this observation. In the first case one is deprived of one's dignity of identity, in the second case one loses one's dignity of morality.

16. "Treating someone with dignity" does not imply that dignity is used as a means. Its primary sense implies respecting the person's dignity, though there may be an implication of the way in which the agent's own dignity is manifested in the action. (p. 55)

As we have observed, one can act with dignity. Here dignity is a qualification of an action in the moral sense. The dignity itself, however, is hardly a means towards an end (though this does not preclude that some of the elements of the action, such as help and support, can function as means).

17. Can human dignity be identified with worthiness of respect? Respect seems directed mostly towards human beings. But one must not overlook respect for truth or the law. (p. 58)

Human dignity deserves to be respected but it cannot be identified with worthiness of respect. Other kinds of dignity, for instance some attributed dignities, are also worthy of respect. It seems to be correct, though, that respect is mostly directed towards human beings. But there is a sense of respect for the law and the truth. The latter sense has not been analysed in this essay.

18. Human dignity implies the inherent worth of a person, regardless of the person's usefulness for another. A person may also have non-instrumental qualities such as beauty and charm which all add to his or her intrinsic worth but can hardly be identified with human dignity. (p. 59)

I largely agree. Beauty and charm are inherent worths of a human being, but hardly dignities. They cannot be identified with, or be seen to be part of, human dignity.

19. Human dignity is the kind of intrinsic worth which attaches to a person in his or her capacity of being a responsible person. (p. 60)

Human dignity, as understood by most debaters (including me), is a quality possessed by everybody simply through the fact of being human. It is the inflorescent dignity of morality that attaches to a person in his or her capacity of being a responsible person.

20. Human dignity and its grounds: we may say that dignity is a peculiar characteristic, but based on the fact that its owner has a personality. (p. 57)

Human dignity is not based on the fact that its possessor has a personality. It is the dignity of identity that is based on the owner's personality.

A summary of the four concepts of dignity

I started off this analysis on the basis of my four concepts of dignity: dignity of merit, dignity of moral standing, dignity of identity and human dignity. After considering Dan Sulmasy's (2013) analysis of dignity I have found good reasons for a revision of my schema in the following way.

Instead of using the label "dignity of merit" I have adopted the concept of *attributed dignity*. This is a dignity which is completely based on human attribution. Such attribution can be well-founded but need not be. A person who has been awarded the Nobel Prize in physics has an attributed dignity which is well-founded. A person who has acquired fame as a result of fraudulent behaviour has an attributed dignity that is ill-founded.

In contrast to attributed dignity I accept the idea of *dignity of inflorescence*, which entails that the bearer has an excellence of some kind. The excellence can be intellectual or athletic, but it can also be moral or aesthetic. This means first that my previous category of "dignity of moral standing" is now viewed as a subcategory of dignity of inflorescence. In many situations where we talk about acting with dignity, including dying with dignity, we refer to dignity of moral standing.

I have also noted that there is an aesthetic sense of acting with dignity. The dignified behaviour of a queen performing her duties can have the aesthetic qualities of elegance and elevation. We might then say that she is acting with dignity. Similar considerations can be made when we talk about the acts of certain non-human animals. A horse, for example, can be said to move in a dignified way when it is trotting beautifully and elegantly.

In my present analysis I keep the two further categories unchanged. *The human dignity* is still by me considered to be the universal high value of all human beings throughout their whole lives. *The dignity of identity* is the specific dignity belonging to a an individual person related to her self-image but also to certain qualities of the person that are unrelated to her self-image. When a person's integrity is violated her dignity of identity may be shattered even if she is not aware of this fact.

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