Philosophy of human rights in light of contemporary analytic metaphysics

What is the foundation of human rights? Is it really human dignity, as international documents claim? And if it is, what in turn is the foundation of human dignity? Many philosophers and legal thinkers try to answer these questions. These are very important questions to understand human rights, which are one of the fundaments of contemporary world. The goal of this project is to explore answers based on the application of contemporary analytic philosophy.

Analytic metaphysics has employed and developed interesting tools that aid in understanding the structure of the reality. The first, which will be adopted by this research, is the distinction on facts, values and norms. I will explore whether human nature is a fact, human dignity is a value and human rights are norms.

We have a strong intuition that there is some kind of ontological dependence between human nature, human dignity and human rights. I will analyse the possibility of applying two relations that involve connections between objects in the multidimensional structure of the reality in order to study and explain this ontological dependence. The first is supervenience, and the second is metaphysical grounding. My hypothesis is that supervenience is too weak of a justification for explaining relations between human nature, human dignity and human rights but that grounding can be successfully applied.

One of the crucial points in contemporary analytic philosophy is the debate on the possibility of naturalization. Ontological naturalization involves reducing or defining naturalized concepts in natural terms, that is, in ways which can be studied by empirical sciences. Methodological naturalization involves founding philosophical analyses on scientific knowledge. My hypothesis is that ontological naturalization of the justification of human rights is not possible; however, methodological naturalization can be used for their justification.

The project will consider objects used in the justification of human rights, such as metaphysical objects. The goal of the project is to look at the justification of human rights through the lens of the dominant contemporary philosophical school, which is analytic philosophy.