

## **DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC (IN ENGLISH)**

In the face of the atrocities of the World War II the international law and constitutions of many countries employed the concept of inalienable human dignity. The idea of dignity, however, was not conceived in the half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – it was present in the European culture since at least Cicero's writings. Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages have worked out a rich and multi-faceted understanding of human dignity that became a reference point for later modern and contemporary conceptions. The aim of this research project is to investigate this fundamental notion of European culture in the writings of the Church Fathers and the Doctors of the Church.

The significance of the patristic era and the Middle Ages for the formulation of the contemporary understanding of dignity is unprecedented: it is was it this period that dignity became conceived of as common among man: not linked to a social status or birth, but resulting from the simple fact of possessing human nature. It was this period, moreover, that stressed not only the obligations that the third parties have towards the subject of dignity but also how the dignity-bearers themselves are obliged by it. Major characteristics of the contemporary idea of dignity stem from the patristic era and the medieval times. This points to the necessity of an in-depth investigation into the meaning and history of this concept in the mentioned period. This necessity is partially addressed by the existent analysis in the fields of philosophy and history of ideas, yet the lack of a monographic, systematic study of the history of that concept throughout the fifteen ages of ancient and medieval Christianity, is distinct. The present project aims at filling that gap.

Conducting the described research is dictated not just by the lack of its systematic and comprehensive scientific descriptions, but also by its significance for the adequate description of subsequent to it, both Polish and international philosophical, theological and legal theories formulated and disputed in Europe, including Poland. A detailed study of this influential concept will greatly contribute to the development of scientific research, filling in a gap in historical studies into philosophy and theology and opening the gates for further studies over the history this profound idea.

The methodology assumes a critical analysis of the original works with the concurrent estimation of their cultural, historical, theoretical and linguistic contexts. All texts are analysed in an original language (ancient Greek, Latin, medieval Italian or Spanish) with consulting the most important commentaries, modern translations and critical descriptions. Each text is investigated in light of the knowledge required for its hermeneutical analysis in an original language. The research is conducted with the full employment of the methods of textual criticism and modern hermeneutics, i.e. the texts are interpreted from the perspective of the entire extant work of a given author as well as in consideration of the historical, cultural etc. context of his/her thought. When necessary for the adequate description of the topic, the relevant scholia and manuscript tradition are investigated as well.

The final product of the work will be a monographic book publication dedicated to the topic of the research, published in an international publishing house that provides a wide distribution of books to the academic libraries and most significant scientific centers in Europe.