

## A Further Note on Human “Rights” and “Dignity” from a Buddhist Perspective

Claudio Cicuzza

Department of Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University

[Received: 25/09/2565 Revised: 04/11/2565 Accepted: 05/11/2565]

### Abstract

In this article, I propose a few working hypotheses on the correlation between Buddhism and Human Rights. The exchange of opinions in this particular field has been carried on by eminent scholars in the last few decades, reaching a profound and fecund level. Here, I explore two crucial terms, “rights” and “dignity”, in order to find more elements to better delineate their significance. I try to show how essential elucidation might come from Buddhist philosophical traditions, which – I believe – can help us to enhance our comprehension of what “rights” and “dignity” are.

\*  
\*\*

[During that “Interregnum of swords” (*satthantarakappa*)], they will perceive each other as wild beasts. Sharp swords will appear in their hands and, using those sharp swords, they will massacre each other, shouting the battle cry: “He is a wild beast! He is a wild beast!”<sup>1</sup> But, Bhikkhus, some of those beings will think: “Let us not be the massacrers, let us not be the victims!”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> “[...] if people are perceived as lacking what distinguishes humans from animals, they should be seen implicitly or explicitly as animal-like. [...] Disgust enables us to avoid evidence of our animality, so representing others as animal-like may elicit the emotion”. See Nick Haslam, “Dehumanization: an Integrative Review”, *Personality and social psychology review* 10/3 (2006): 258.

<sup>2</sup> *te aññamaññamhi migasaññam paṭilabhissanti, tesam tiṅhāni satthāni hatthesu pātubhavissanti, te tiṅhena satthena – ‘Esa migo esa migo ti’ – aññamaññam jīvītā voropessanti. Atha kho tesam, bhikkhave, sattānaṃ ekaccānaṃ evaṃ bhavissati – ‘mā ca mayaṃ kañci, mā c’ amhe koci. Cakkavattisutta, DN 7 (PTS III, 73). All citations of Pāli texts are from the Pali Text Society (PTS) editions in Roman scripts; I adopted the abbreviation system given by Oskar von Hinüber in *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, Berlin*

## 1. Introduction

There have been many attempts to study the concepts of “human rights” and “human dignity” from a Buddhist perspective. Some of these studies have been carried out with great care and certainly contributed to the indispensable dialogue between different cultures and religions.<sup>3</sup>

In the last few decades, venerated religious leaders have already discussed Buddhism and Human Rights: we can mention the Dalai Lama,<sup>4</sup> Thích Nhất Hạnh,<sup>5</sup> P.A. Payutto,<sup>6</sup> and others. Among the first scholars who produced pioneering works on the comparison between Buddhist philosophical thought and Human Rights, we find Sulak Sivaraksa,<sup>7</sup> L.P.N. Perera,<sup>8</sup> and Damien Keown.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, an enormous contribution has been offered by

---

1996, pp. 250–255; bibliographic data concerning Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translations have been given only in the final Bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> All the cited works have been included in the final extended Bibliography. I hope this long list might become a helpful instrument for further research.

<sup>4</sup> See McCarthy, Stephen, “Why the Dalai Lama Should Read Aristotle”, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 8 (2001): 42.

<sup>5</sup> See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Buddhists and Martyrs of the Civil Rights Movement. Joint statement by Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thich Nhat Hanh, International Committee of Conscience on Vietnam*, New York 1966 (<https://plumvillage.org/buddhists-and-martyrs-of-the-civil-rights-movement/>), Thich Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change*, Berkeley 1993, and Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, New York 1998.

<sup>6</sup> See P.A. Payutto, *Buddhist Solutions for the Twenty-First Century*, Bangkok 1994, and P.A. Payutto, *A Constitution for Living*, Bangkok 1996.

<sup>7</sup> See Sulak Sivaraksa, *Seeds of Peace. A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, Berkeley 1992. In 1989 he founded the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, and in 1995 he won the “Right Livelihood Award” for “his vision, activism and spiritual commitment in the quest for a development process that is rooted in democracy, justice and cultural integrity”.

<sup>8</sup> See L. N., Perera, *Buddhism and human rights: a Buddhist commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Karunaratne and Sons, Colombo 1991.

<sup>9</sup> See Damien Keown, C. Prebish, and W. Husted (eds), *Buddhism and human rights*, Curzon Press, Richmond (UK) 1998.

Bhikkhu Bodhi. He has not only translated a large part of the Pali Canon into English, but has also published an anthology of Pali texts dealing with social welfare, *The Buddha's Teaching on Social and Communal Harmony*: this work is an unlimited source of inspiration. I owe a debt of gratitude to all of them: their insightful ideas gave me encouragement and motivation to study this significant subject.

In various texts published in Europe or the US concerning “human rights” and “dignity”, Asian scholars’ contributions are largely, if not totally, absent. Furthermore, this regrettable scarceness is noticeable in publications which are mainly conference proceedings, and this implies that few Asian scholars shared their ideas in academic meetings. We certainly have books that propose interesting examinations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereafter UDHR) from Indian and Chinese cultural perspectives, occasionally including also Buddhist philosophy. Unfortunately, they often deal with a delimited range of cultures, lacking vital confrontation with other points of view. Two very interesting works, which seem to be relatively rare exceptions, have been recently published: the book edited by Remy Debes, *Dignity. A History*, which contains short and not exhaustive overviews of Islamic, Confucian, and Buddhist traditions, and, from a political perspective, the volume by Michael Sandel and Paul D’Ambrosio, *Encountering China: Michael Sandel and Chinese Philosophy-Harvard University*, which is an outstanding attempt to bridge the gap between the Western world and Chinese culture.

In some of the works dealing with Buddhism and Human Rights, there are serious attempts to analyse Buddhist texts written in several languages and expressing the positions of numerous philosophical schools. In this article I will focus on the Theravāda tradition reading Pali canonical texts: they contain precious inspirations that could become helpful to reinforce the foundations on which the entire structure of Human Rights has been erected.

I observed that the research methodology adopted in various studies is mainly based on the attempt to detect a correspondence between the modern terms “rights” and “dignity”, and the words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*). This effort is undoubtedly praiseworthy, but it might also pose a risk to the comprehension of the problem. As we will see in the following sections of the article, scholars are still producing accurate exegeses in order to understand those two concepts in depth: hence it appears rather untimely to search in other cultures or textual traditions for concepts that are still not perfectly plain to us. A different and, I believe,

not less effective procedure, should prioritise reading Buddhist texts and collecting pertinent teachings on social and communal harmony (as Bhikkhu Bodhi has done in his work). After this essential phase, it will be possible to establish a serene exchange of ideas among scholars and activists, aimed at a common comprehension of these two important terms. This approach might contribute to avoiding misunderstandings or even doubts about the genuine intention to create an egalitarian dialogue. More explicitly: it will radically reduce the deleterious propagation of the wrong assumption that there is a predilection for a Western approach to the UDHR, giving a subordinate position to other cultures.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, the activities carried out by the Global Affairs department of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Bangkok are worthy of note. Their *modus operandi* is somehow opposed to the method mentioned above. They ask Buddhist scholars (bhikkhu and lay) to offer suggestions on how to deal with suffering during conflicts and reduce the impact of violence in wars through Buddhist ideas.<sup>11</sup> This cooperation is truly effective and should become a criterion for all subsequent exchange of ideas.

As mentioned above, the process leading to the formulation of a stable conception of “human rights” in the West was very long: to some degree, a recognized definition was produced only in the 17th-18th centuries. We know that even nowadays, in western philosophical, religious, and legal fields, the ideas of “rights” and “dignity” are still subject to discussion, and we do not have a unanimous opinion on the true nature of these terms. Some scholars affirm that there is an absolute “foundational vacuum” in human rights; they also admit that the concept of “dignity”, which seems to underlie the entire philosophical and legal nature of human rights, is still debatable.<sup>12</sup> Much work remains to be done.

---

<sup>10</sup> On this subject, see Thomas Pogge, “Can liberalism envision a widely acceptable world order?”, in Yun-han Chu and Yongnian Zheng (eds), *The decline of the western-centric world and the emerging new global order. Contending views*, London 2021, pp. 129–145.

<sup>11</sup> See Andrew Bartles-Smith (*et al.*), “Reducing Suffering During Conflict: The Interface between Buddhism and International Humanitarian Law”, *Contemporary Buddhism* 21 (1-2) (2020): 369–435.

<sup>12</sup> See Christopher McCrudden, “In Pursuit of Human Dignity: an Introduction to Current Debates”, in Christopher McCrudden (ed.), *Understanding Human Dignity*, Oxford 2013, pp. 43–58. Moreover, it has been noticed that the meaning of “dignity” should be analysed in an interdisciplinary context and, in that context, it might have even more numerous interpretations: “It seems of greater importance, though, that

## 2. Linguistic quandaries

2.1. In a study published a few years ago,<sup>13</sup> several linguistic problems related to the official translations of the UDHR have been found. The authors of this work dissected seven versions of the Declaration and discovered the presence of subtle differences reflecting each language's cultural predispositions. A universal agreement among people from different linguistic groups seems difficult to achieve unless we do not meticulously verify every crucial term, building a perfect map of their histories and their modifications of the semantic range.

Therefore, a constructive dialogue must start from a basis of mutual clarity, including linguistic intelligibility. The official translations of the UDHR into some Asian languages, at least those that I have been able to interpret by reading the original versions, can generate additional perplexity and do not foster mutual understanding. Apart from gross and noticeable errors which can be easily corrected,<sup>14</sup> ambiguity appears when we try to

---

the notion, be it theological or philosophical by origin, is transferred into a different context if becoming part of a legal document. This transfer disconnects it from its roots, not in a way that completely changes its meaning but in a way that any inference from a theological or philosophical understanding of dignity to its legal meaning is prohibited". See Dieter Grimm, "Dignity in a Legal Context: Dignity as an Absolute Right", in Christopher McCrudden (ed), *Understanding Human Dignity*, Oxford 2013, pp. 381–391. See also Conor O'Mahony, "There is no Such Thing as a Right to Dignity", in *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 10/2 (2012): 551–574.

<sup>13</sup> Kyounghee Kwon, Barnett, George A., and Hao Chen, "Assessing Cultural Differences in Translations: A Semantic Network Analysis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights", *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 2/2 (2009): 107–138.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, the Dzongkha (Bhutanese) translation of the first UDHR article is not complete: it does not contain most relevant words such as "dignity", "reason" and "conscience". One of my former students at Webster University, Khendum Tshogyel, revised it in 2019 and proposed a new complete translation: 'gro ba mi'i rigs ga ra skye wa da thob dbang dang btsi mthong tshu 'dra mnyam yodp yin || khong chā khyab lu bsam zhib dang mam rig tshu yodp las gcig gi gcig lu spun cha'i dam tshig bstan dgo || I sent her new translation to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Methodology, Education and Training Unit, hredatabase@ohchr.org) on the 7th of December, 2019, just as a sample of the revision process that the entire Bhutanese translation should undergo.

compare essential terms like, for example, “rights” and “dignity”. I am aware that there are several legitimate interpretations of the transformation these two words have undergone in European history,<sup>15</sup> and I also know how this investigation is complex and fraught with different understandings. For these very reasons, we should become familiar with other transformation processes occurred in languages and cultures other than those of Europe.

2.2. Western scholars not trained in modern foreign languages might not have specific knowledge of the gradual changes that lead toward a modern interpretation of “rights” and “dignity” as translated – for example – in some Asian languages. These changes seem to have followed the same process that, in the West, produced the emphasis on the “horizontal” idea of dignity and gave to the “vertical” meaning less importance.<sup>16</sup> It is highly possible that this process happened not only because of the mutual exchange of ideas among different cultures during the last decades, but also because of an original cultural substratum which nourished and promoted this evolution in Asia. We should look at ancient Asian cultures, histories, religions, and philosophical traditions with renewed interest as sources of constructive conceptions. It goes without saying that Buddhism is one among them.

2.3 An example could be given by the two words used to render “rights” and “dignity” in the official Thai translation of the UDHR text, i.e. สิทธิ (*sitthi*, rights) and เกียรติศักดิ์ (*kyarti sak*, dignity).<sup>17</sup> It seems they underwent a radical metamorphosis similar to the semantic development that occurred in the English words “rights” and “dignity”. These two Thai terms

---

<sup>15</sup> An emblematic example of this transformation can be observed in the substantial evolution that fortunately occurred to the word “dignity” as it was used in old legal documents belonging to the Western colonial period. For instance, in the “*Requerimiento* of 1513” the word *dignidad* was used to describe the power and the supremacy of Popes, Kings, and conquistadores, and aimed only to take away others’ freedom, not to assert it. See Robert, A. Jr, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought. The Discourses of Conquest*, New York 1990, pp. 88–93.

<sup>16</sup> On the “vertical” (hierarchical) and “horizontal” (collective) senses of the word “dignity”, see Lauretta Maganzani, “Appunti sul concetto di dignità umana alla luce della casistica giurisprudenziale romana”, *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris* LXXVII (2011): pp. 521–543.

<sup>17</sup> Generally, “dignity” is translated with the word ศักดิ์ศรี, *saksi*, which seems to be a more appropriate term. However, in the official translation on the UN website we find เกียรติศักดิ์. See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/thai>

do not indicate a form of prestige, honour, fame, and power anymore,<sup>18</sup> but they communicate the same concepts found in Western languages today, namely the sense of “universal inherence” transfused into the preamble of the UDHR: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. The linguistic, historical, religious, and social analysis of the UDHR crucial terms in all languages is one of the essential tasks that we should accomplish. In some of these languages, the contribution of Buddhist philosophy and terminology could be essential for a correct understanding of the message we deliver in our societies.

2.4. Further problems emerge when we analyse Pali texts. As mentioned in the Introduction, we should perhaps avoid reading them just to support ideas that belong to contemporary documents (for instance, the UDHR). Conversely, we should continue to devote efforts to understand concepts that, although commonly expressed in modern languages, are still shrouding numerous complexities and forms of vagueness. Buddhist texts can certainly help us to broaden our comprehension of principles such as “rights” and “dignity” and give them a more global significance. If we follow the former approach, we could be tempted to use the meaning of some modern terms and project them on the canonical texts, forcing the sense of Pali (and Sanskrit) words to adhere to a different linguistic context. The Pali adjective *sammā*, “right”,<sup>19</sup> represents a very interesting and complex case. It reveals its crucial importance when it is connected to the eight elements of the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*), as it defines the ethical connotation of all Buddhist practices. When view (*diṭṭhi*), resolve (*saṅkappa*), speech (*vācā*), action (*kammanta*), etc., are “right” (*sammā*), they can be undoubtedly associated with the basic principles of the UDHR since they guide human beings to achieve their inherent freedom. The term *sammā* can be translated using the adjective “right”, but we cannot use *sammā* if we want to render “right”

---

<sup>18</sup> These terms are from Sanskrit *siddhi* (fulfilment, success, perfection), *kīrti* (fame, glory), and *śakti* (power, ability, might, and regal power).

<sup>19</sup> The semantic fields of these two terms are not similar, though their etymologies seem to be at least comparable. The Pali word *sammā* has connections with the Sanskrit *samyañc*, which literally means “correct” and “right”, but not because of a predictable, certain, and reassuring straight (*rectus*) course but because of an idea of wholeness and completeness, which has an even more profound philosophical significance.

(or “rights”) as a noun. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, in several canonical Pali texts, the word “rightness” (*sammatta*, which is the abstract noun from the adjective *sammā*) is considered to be the ethical core of all wholesome *dhammas*.<sup>20</sup> Rightness, *sammatta*, is the essence of the right path, the end and the means, the idea of “goodness” impeccably delineated by Damien Keown:

“Instead, the most promising approach will be one which locates human rights and dignity within a comprehensive account of human goodness, and which sees basic rights and freedoms as integrally related to human flourishing and self-realization. This is because the source of human dignity in Buddhism lies nowhere else than in the literally infinite capacity of human nature for participation in goodness”.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Surmounting perplexities in a dialogic space

3.1. The importance of establishing, in international documents, a “shared meaning” concerning some crucial terms, such as “rights” and “dignity, is undeniable. This complex and patient quest implies a steady awareness of our ideas and the comprehension of several different histories and languages. The consequential effects of this process could

---

<sup>20</sup> The canonical explanation of *sammā* is always given by synonyms like *suṭṭhu* (well), *aviparīta* (unequivocal, certain), *yāthāvato* (exactly, truly), or *niyyānika* (saving, leading out of saṃsāra). The abstract noun *sammattaṃ*, “rightness”, has been thoughtfully commented in several different *aṭṭhakathās*: for instance, *sammattāti yāthāvā sammāsabhāvā*, “rightness is the own nature of right (*sammā*) which is true”, (Sv, III, 1043) e *sammattanti sammāsabhāvam*, “rightness is the own nature of right (*sammā*)” (Spk, III, 131). In the recurrent technical expression *okkamati niyāmaṃ kusalesu dhammesu sammattaṃ* (see for instance, AN 3.22 [PTS I, 121]), translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi as: “He enters upon the fixed course [consisting in] rightness in wholesome qualities” (p. 218), the word *sammattaṃ* is expressing the concept of “rightness” that is existent in the wholesome *dhammas*. The word *sammattaṃ* and the word *niyāma* are considered connected in the *Visuddhimagga* (*Vism* V, 41, PTS 177): [...] *kusalesu dhammesu niyāmasaṅkhātāṃ sammattasaṅkhātāṅca ariyamaggaṃ okkamituṃ* [...], “of entering into the Noble Path called “certainty” and “rightness in profitable states” (tr. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, p. 172).

<sup>21</sup> Damien Keown, “Are There ‘Human Rights’ in Buddhism”, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 2 (1995): 16.

hopefully include a global understanding of the UDHR and genuine recognition of the connected legal aspects. Here are just a few of the difficulties I have noticed in this productive dialogue: they primarily concern the term “dignity”.

It is generally said that “Human Rights” are based on “Human Dignity”. However, the latter notion is often considered axiomatic: this supposed self-evidence might create difficulties as we cannot easily offer an adequate explanation of its deep sense.<sup>22</sup> “Until about 1830-1850, neither the English term “dignity” nor its Latin root *dignitas*,<sup>23</sup> nor the French counterpart *dignité* [nor the Italian *dignità*], had any currency as meaning the ‘inherent or unearned worth of all person’”.<sup>24</sup> The history of the concept of “dignity” is deeply complex: we can hardly find a clear explanation of “dignity” in moral philosophy or even in juridical documents: “There does not seem to be any canonical definition of ‘dignity’ in the law. One esteemed jurist has observed that its intrinsic meaning appears to have been left to intuitive understanding”.<sup>25</sup> This equivocality is confirmed by the coexistence of words which show two divergent senses, though being connected to the same Latin root, *dignus/dignitas*. The words “dignity” and “disdain” can offer an explicative example: only “disdain” retains the

---

<sup>22</sup> George Kateb, *Human Dignity*, Cambridge (MA) 2011, pp. 1, 111–112.

<sup>23</sup> In the ancient Roman legislation, we find the word *dignitas* used in “vertical” (hierarchical) and “horizontal” (collective) senses. Although there is no unanimous idea about the meaning and the enforceability of this term, in several ancient Roman thinkers – strongly influenced by Stoicism – human beings always deserve respect regardless of their social or legal status. See the entire article by Laurretta Maganzani, “Appunti sul concetto di dignità umana alla luce della casistica giurisprudenziale romana”, *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris* LXXVII (2011): pp. 521–543.

<sup>24</sup> Remy Debes (ed.), *Dignity a history*, Oxford 2017, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> See Jeremy Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*, Oxford 2012, p. 15. John Milbank thinks that “‘rights’ and ‘dignity’ stand for two radically opposed political philosophies, and indeed for the two *most* opposed political philosophies: the politics of the modern and the politics of the ancient”. See John Milbank, “Dignity Rather than Rights”, in McCrudden (ed.), *Understanding Human Dignity*, Oxford 2013, pp. 189–205. This position could appear too strong but becomes somehow a plausible one if we look at some of the official translations in Asian languages of the term “dignity” in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. See paragraph 2.2.

“vertical” or hierarchical sense and appears to be unaffected by the development of the word “dignity” occurred in the last century.

Among the numerous and valuable attempts to give a stable meaning to “dignity”, we can also find strong sceptical positions, which leave me unconvinced.<sup>26</sup> However, since they are not directly relevant to this paper, I will deal with them elsewhere, in the near future.

---

<sup>26</sup> One hypothesis on which I disagree is that it is possible to connect – at least partially – the Nazi idea of “honour” to the modern concept of “dignity”. See James Q. Whitman, “On Nazi ‘Honour’ and the new European ‘Dignity’”, in Ch. Joerges and N.S. Ghaleigh (eds), *Darker Legacies of Law in Europe: The Shadow of National Socialism and Fascism over Europe and its Legal Traditions*, Oxford 2003, pp. 243–266, and the interesting answer by Gerald Neuman, “On Fascist Honour and Human Dignity: a Sceptical response”, in Ch. Joerges and N.S. Ghaleigh (eds), *Darker Legacies of Law in Europe: The Shadow of National Socialism and Fascism over Europe and its Legal Traditions*, Oxford 2003, pp. 267–273. This seems to be an incomplete view of the complex history of the word dignity: the implicit assumption that the general word “honour” could have given birth to the idea of “dignity” seems to be not truly convincing. The dreadful old legislative tradition of “honour killing” was abolished, in Italy, in 1981: this happened precisely in the name of that supreme idea of “dignity” that appears to be totally in contrast with the fascist idea of “honour”. Other scholars expressed doubts: among them we find Stefano Rodotà, a member of the legislative body who wrote the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. He said: “This control of economic activities through the principle of dignity has aroused the criticism of those who have discerned in it an “oppressive moral order”, the transformation of dignity into a vehicle for the authoritarian imposition of values limiting people’s freedom and autonomy. This criticism seems to meet with the aggressive argument of an American scholar [James Q. Whitman], who emphasised the conflict between “freedom” and “dignity” to such an extent that he even depicted the latter as a version of Nazi “honour”. The misunderstanding is glaring, but it reveals the existence of a problem”. Stefano Rodotà, *Il diritto di avere diritti*, Roma-Bari 2012, p. 194. The differentiation between a “vertical” and a “horizontal” idea of “dignity” is very old (as we have seen above, in footnote 23). There is no space here to deal with the complex Greek notion of *timē* (τιμή) (see Nikos Giannakopoulos, “Decrees Awarding Offices for Life and by Hereditary Right as Honours”, in Anna Heller and Onno M. van Nijf (eds), *The Politics of Honour in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire*, Leiden 2017, pp. 220–242, and Douglas L. Cairns, *Aidōs. The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford 2002, pp. 268–272) or with the ancient Roman distinction between *existimatio* and *dignitas* (see Arianna

3.2. Given this uncertainty in the definition of “dignity”, it appears evident that any attempt to search for a correlated word in Buddhism (and particularly in Buddhist Pali texts) is not only doomed to fail but also fundamentally misguided.

3.3. The assumption that, in Buddhism, we have problems finding a concept of “human dignity” because the idea that human beings “have been created in the image and likeness of God” (*imago dei*) is missing, is not convincing. This specific association between God and man is supposed to be a source of “dignity”, but somebody may retort that this is a purely theistic and not universally accepted hypothesis.<sup>27</sup>

---

Visconti, *Itinerari di diritto penale*, Bologna 2018, pp. 84–88). We would just observe that the modern idea of “dignity” has its roots in a very far past and is not necessarily connected with the concept of “honour”. But even if we want to look at contemporary political examples, we do have numerous predecessors of “dignity” in modern Europe. Just extending, for instance, our analysis to the legislative program of welfare reforms introduced by Otto von Bismarck, we notice that, apart from being an obvious political strategy to control possible radical socialist claims, it was also a substantial advancement of the German workers’ conditions, with uncountable effects in other European countries. In his book (*Hitler’s American Model. The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*, Princeton 2017, p. 192, n. 27), James Whitman seems to give a different title to his own publication: *On Nazi ‘Honour’ and the new European ‘Dignity’ becomes From Fascist ‘Honour’ to European ‘Dignity’*.

<sup>27</sup> See Damien Keown, “Are There ‘Human Rights’ in Buddhism”, in Damien Keown, Charles Prebish, and Wayne Husted (eds), *Buddhism and Human Rights*, Abingdon 1998, p. 25. The discussions on this theme are relatively numerous, and we cannot simply affirm that this is the fixed position of Cristian Theology. There is also, for instance, a clear emphasis given to human reason (see below), and, in Protestant Christianity, the sacredness of life takes a pre-eminent role. See, for example, David Hollenbach, “Human Dignity: Experience and History, Practical Reason and Faith” in McCrudden (ed.), *Understanding Human Dignity*, Oxford 2013, pp. 123–139, and David P. Gushee, “A Christian Theological Account of Human Worth”, in Christopher McCrudden (ed.), *Understanding Human Dignity*, Oxford 2013, pp. 275–288. These two essential notions, i.e. human reason and life, are central in Buddhist philosophy. Concerning the reference to the “image of God” (*imago dei*, Genesis 1:27), there are several criticisms of the connection between dignity and the image of God not only formulated by Christian scholars but also by Jewish intellectuals: see Avishai Margalit, “Human dignity: between kitsch and deification”, *The Hedgehog Review* 9/3 (2007): 7–19. When we read the illuminating words by Thomas Aquinas, we could

3.4. Several scholars have discussed the significance of *anattā* (non-self) in relation to the idea of “dignity”.<sup>28</sup>

Doing justice to this complex subject would involve long quotations and analysis of Buddhist texts; neither can be included in the space of a single article. The theory of *anattā* tells us that there is no isolated and permanent centre and that continuous reference to this absolute dimension, which is, in fact, non-existent, generates additional suffering in oneself and others. “Dignity” cannot be assigned to this illusory centre, but rather, it must belong to a flow of function that we may designate as “life”: we should devote our compassionate care to this very flow of existence, and prevent it from suffering. “Rights” and “dignity” belong to this fluid entity.

---

think that the idea of *imago dei* might even confirm the presence of “dignity” in Buddhist texts. In his *Summa Theologiae* (II, 1, Prooemium) Thomas Aquinas says: *Quia, sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imaginem significatur intellectuale et arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum; postquam praedictum est de exemplari, scilicet de Deo, et de his quae processerunt ex divina potestate secundum eius voluntatem; restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, idest de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem.* “As Damascene affirms, it is said that man was made in the image of God, meaning by image ‘a being endowed with intelligence, free will and dominion over his own acts’. Therefore, having spoken of the model, that is God, and of what is derived from divine power according to his will, it remains to deal with his image, i.e. man, as he too is the principle of his own actions, by virtue of the free will and dominion he has over them” (my translation). See Tommaso d’Aquino, *La Somma teologica. Seconda parte, Prima sezione*, Bologna 2014, p. 13. I would not venture to say that these words somehow invalidate the chance to see a form of human “dignity” in Buddhist philosophy. Quite the opposite, Thomas Aquinas seems to confirm several Buddhist ideas about the precious nature of human beings based on their intellect and free will.

<sup>28</sup> See Stephan Evans, “Buddhist Resignation and Human Rights” in Damien Keown, Charles Prebish, and Wayne Husted (eds), *Buddhism and Human Rights*, Abingdon 1998, pp. 141–154, and Charles R. Strain, “Socially Engaged Buddhism’s Contribution to the Transformation of Catholic Social Teachings on Human Rights” in Damien Keown, Charles Prebish, and Wayne Husted (eds), *Buddhism and Human Rights*, Abingdon 1998, pp. 155–174.

The well-known *Ānandasutta*, from the Saṃyutta Nikāya, clearly indicates the subtlety of the theory of *anattā*:

“If, Ānanda, when I was asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta, ‘Is there a self?’ I had answered, ‘There is a self,’ would this have been consistent on my part with the arising of the knowledge that ‘all phenomena are nonself?’” “No, venerable sir.” “And if, when I was asked by him, ‘Is there no self?’ I had answered, ‘There is no self,’ the wanderer Vacchagotta, already confused, would have fallen into even greater confusion, thinking, ‘It seems that the self I formerly had does not exist now’”.<sup>29</sup>

3.5. Since we have several interpretations of “dignity”, generally derived from four different bases,<sup>30</sup> and it is impossible to give here an exhaustive analysis of all of them, I prefer to

---

<sup>29</sup> Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 1394. *Ahañ c’Ānanda Vacchagottassa paribbājakassa Atthattā ti puṭṭho samāno Atthattā ti vyākareyyaṃ || api nu me taṃ ānanda, anulomaṃ abhaviṣṣa ñāṇassa uppādāya Sabbe dhammā anattāti || No hetam bhante Ahañ c’Ānanda Vacchagottassa paribbājakassa Natthattāti puṭṭho samāno Natthattāti vyākareyyaṃ || sammūlhasa Ānanda Vacchagottassa bhiyyo sammohāya abhaviṣṣa Ahañ vā me nūna pubbe attā || so etarahi natthīti.* SN 44.10 (PTS IV, 401-401). I find Bhikkhu Bodhi’s comments very enlightening: “Probably this means that Vacchagotta would have interpreted the Buddha’s denial as a rejection of his empirical personality, which (on account of his inclination towards views of self) he would have been identifying as a self. We should carefully heed the two reasons the Buddha does not declare, “There is no self”: not because he recognizes a transcendent self of some kind (as some interpreters allege), or because he is concerned only with delineating “a strategy of perception” devoid of ontological implications (as others hold), but (i) because such a mode of expression was used by the annihilationists, and the Buddha wanted to avoid aligning his teaching with theirs; and (ii) because he wished to avoid causing confusion in those already attached to the idea of self. The Buddha declares that “all phenomena are nonself” (*sabbe dhammā anattā*), which means that if one seeks a self anywhere one will not find one. Since “all phenomena” includes both the conditioned and the unconditioned, this precludes an utterly transcendent, ineffable self”. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 1457.

<sup>30</sup> See the traditional four sources of human dignity commented by Ralf Stoecker in “Three Crucial Turns on the Road to an Adequate Understanding of Human Dignity” in Kaufmann, P., Kuch, H., Neuhäuser,

adopt an apophatic description, an indirect or negative way to describe this concept, taking into consideration various situations where a supposed “dignity” was absent, subtracted, neglected, or violated.<sup>31</sup> Among the sadly numerous descriptions of “hells on earth”, Primo Levi’s words represent a shining example of the negation of “dignity”.<sup>32</sup> The humiliations perpetrated against prisoners in concentration camps were part of a specific plan to dehumanize them. This strategy implies a radical annihilation of pity and compassion in prisoners’ hearts: they were deprived of any interaction with other human beings, preventing any form of friendship, eradicating any hope to change their own destiny, and insinuating the fear of recognizing others’ pain as their own pain. When we remove friendship, pity, compassion, and reciprocity from a human being, we bereave him of his dignity.

“Part of our existence lies in the feelings of those near to us. This is why the experience of someone who has lived for days during which man was merely a thing in the eyes of man is non-human.

---

Ch., Webster, E. (eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization. Human Dignity Violated*, New York 2011, pp. 8–10.

<sup>31</sup> On this possible approach, see the important volume by Paulus Kaufmann, Hannes Kuch, Christian Neuhäuser, and Elaine Webster (eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization. Human Dignity Violated*, New York 2011. Ralf Stoecker writes: “If we want to understand human dignity, we should start with instances of its violation. Instead of attempting to derive a conception of human dignity from our normative ethics (as Kand did) or anthropology, we should choose a *negative approach*, i.e. start from situations which we are inclined to describe as violations of human dignity [...]”. Ralf Stoecker, “Three Crucial Turns on the Road to an Adequate Understanding of Human Dignity” in Kaufmann, P., Kuch, H., Neuhäuser, Ch., Webster, E. (eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization. Human Dignity Violated*, New York 2011, p. 11. See also Arianna Visconti, *Itinerari di diritto penale*, Bologna 2018, pp. 509–512: “The mere description – in positive terms – of the qualifying features of dignity (its universal, equal and innate nature in every man, its inalienability and intangibility), alone, cannot concretely define its content, and could even be susceptible, if considered on its own, to appearing a mere petition of principle or even a mere and specious ‘style clause’” (p. 511).

<sup>32</sup> I owe the inspiration to read again *Se questo è un uomo (If this is a man)* by Primo Levi to Sophie Oliver, and to her article “Dehumanization: Perceiving the Body as (In)Human” (in Kaufmann, P., Kuch, H., Neuhäuser, Ch., Webster, E. (eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization. Human Dignity Violated*, New York 2011, pp. 85–97). The citations from Levi’s work are taken from her article.

We three were for the most part immune from it, and we owe each other mutual gratitude. This is why my friendship with Charles will prove lasting”.<sup>33</sup>

Levi’s words show us that a human being is such when he still owns the “right” to recognize and respect life in other beings, to feel the reciprocity of their existences, to hope in friendship and to claim justice: these assertions of humanity are undeniably constitutive parts of Buddhist thought. Therefore, in the following sections, I will discuss a few selected Pali Buddhist texts relevant to the theme of the study.

#### 4. Buddhist ideas for a shared understanding

4.1. One of the fundamental Buddhist practices that best represents the concept of reciprocity and connection between human beings is undoubtedly that based on the four Brahmavihāras, or “Divine Abodes”. This process consists of developing Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity and radiating them inwards and outwards, in the direction of other beings. The persons practising the Brahmavihāras expand the four “abodes” beyond their existence, destroying all the barriers between themselves and other beings. This “meditative radiation”<sup>34</sup> is also defined “immeasurable” (*appamāṇa* or *appamaññā*) because it goes beyond any division between subject and object.<sup>35</sup> In their boundless course, Love, Compassion, Sympathetic joy, and Equanimity will pass through and annihilate all possible separations among beings. Brahmavihāras’ meditation widens itself in increasingly larger circles and involves several degrees of achievement.

---

<sup>33</sup> Primo Levi, *If this is a man*, New York 1959, p. 205.

<sup>34</sup> See Anālayo, “Immeasurable Meditation and Mindfulness”, *Mindfulness* 10 (2019): 2620–2628.

<sup>35</sup> On this important aspect, see Dhammadinnā, “Semantic of Wholesomeness: Purification of Intention and Soteriological Function of the Immeasurables (*appamāṇas*) in Early Buddhist Thought”, in Chuang Kuo-pin (ed), *Proceedings of the international conference “Buddhist meditative traditions: their origin and development”, held at Dharma Drum Buddhist College, Taiwan, October 26th and 27th, 2012*, Taipei 2014, pp. 52–129, in particular pp. 93–94.

These progressively growing spheres of influence will eventually include even enemies, as explained in the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>36</sup> The presence of “enemies” in this process seems to appear *in nuce* in many *suttas*, such as the *Vatthūpamasutta*:

“Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, vast, exalted, measureless, without enmity (*averena*), without ill will”.<sup>37</sup>

A similar concept also appears in the well-known *Mettasutta*: in the 150th stanza, it is said that radiating *mettā* to all the beings in the world,<sup>38</sup> in all directions (*uddham adho ca tiriyañca*),<sup>39</sup> a man can dissolve all the possible forms of enmity (*avera*) and rivalry (*asampatta*) towards those around him.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> See the entire chapter IX (PTS 295–325). On the presence of “enemies” in the *Visuddhimagga* and in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, see Anālayo, “Immeasurable Meditation and Mindfulness”, *Mindfulness* 10 (2019): 2624.

<sup>37</sup> MN 7 (*Vatthūpamasutta*), PTS I, 38: *iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharivā viharati*. We find the same text in many other *suttas* of the DN, SN, and AN.

<sup>38</sup> *sabbalokasmī[ṃ]* (*Suttanipāta* 150, PTS, 25), explained in the *Paramatthajotikā* (Pj I, PTS I, 248) as *lokasminti sattaloke*, “towards the world of beings”.

<sup>39</sup> A different interpretation of *uddha*, *adho*, and *tiriyaṃ* – which are terms indicating directions – is given in the commentary (Pj I, PTS I, 248). *uddham* (lit. above) is interpreted as [beings living in the] “formless realm” (*arūpabhava*), *adho* (lit. below) is interpreted as [beings living in the] “desire realm” (*kāmapbhava*), and *tiriyaṃ* (lit. across) is interpreted as [beings living in the] “form realm” (*rūpabhava*). This shows an even larger extension of the radiation of *mettā*, which is operating in all possible dimensions of reality.

<sup>40</sup> It is worth noting that this process is explained in its whole dynamic: the radiation of Love on other beings – even on persons who are showing hostility – dissolves their mental status of enmity only through its presence. This beneficial effect seems to imply that all beings have an inherent peaceful attitude which manifests itself when it is exposed to a pure form of *mettā*. *asapattan ti vigatapaccatthikaṃ, mettāvihārī hi puggalo manussānaṃ piyo hoti amanussānaṃ piyo hoti, nāssa koci paccatthiko hoti* (Pj I, PTS I, 249). “The absence of “rivals” is the absence of hostile persons. A person who dwells in Love is

4.2. It is perhaps helpful to mention one of the best known aspects of Stoic philosophy, the *oikeiosis* (Ancient Greek: οἰκείωσις, Latin: *concordatio*). This concept – and generally much of Greek and Roman Stoic philosophy – is understood as one of the foundations of human rights and justice.<sup>41</sup> It prescribes that man should expand his mind in ever larger circles, going beyond himself, his family, his citizenship, etc.

The discourse on kin is based broadly on a particularly successful and rightly famous illustration: around our own minds, conceived of as the centre, there run a series of ever wider concentric circles, beginning with that representing our own body, then the circles representing our parents, siblings, spouse and children, and on to more remote relatives, and then to members of the same deme and tribe, to fellow citizens, to those who belong to the same people or *ethnos*, until we arrive at the widest circle, which is that of the entire human race.<sup>42</sup>

If the *oikeiosis*, along with other Stoic theories, were really among the most important sources of the idea of “human rights” in Western cultures, then the meditative process based on the four Brahmavihāras should also be taken into account. This meditative radiation could become helpful for the understanding and widespread propagation of human rights, providing a basis for the modern communication of “right” and “dignity”. Furthermore, I notice that what seems to be missing in the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*, i.e. the actual

---

dear to humans, is dear to non-humans, and there is no one hostile to him” (based on Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation). See Bhikkhu Bodhi, pp. 580–581.

<sup>41</sup> See Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals. The Origin of the Western Debate*, New York 1993, pp. 122–133, and Johan Strijdom, “Paul, the Stoics and human rights”, *Phronimon* 9/1 (2008): 101–110.

<sup>42</sup> See Ilaria Ramelli, *Hierocles the stoic: Elements of Ethics, fragments, and excerpts*, Atlanta 2009, pp. iv–lvi. She adds: “The width of the circles and their distance from the centre constitutes the standard by which to measure the intensity of our ties, and therefore of our duties, toward people”. See also Roberto Radice, “*Oikeiosis*”. *Ricerche sul fondamento del pensiero stoico e sulla sua genesi*, Milano 2000, pp. 222–234, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis. Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy*, Esbjerg 1990, pp. 119–126.

satisfaction of basic human needs, is undoubtedly available in Buddhist practice as it aims to reduce suffering.

4.3. Several Pali canonical texts express the idea of reciprocity, compassion, friendship, and social justice.<sup>43</sup> Among them, I will mention here only the *Sīṅgālovāda-sutta*.<sup>44</sup> This discourse is often quoted, sometimes not very accurately, as it provides details on the Buddhist view of society and on the relationships among individuals.<sup>45</sup> In the chapter *Chaddisāpaṭicchādana*,<sup>46</sup> we can read an exhaustive description of the reciprocal behaviours that child and parents, teacher and pupil, husband and wife, friends, layperson and ascetics, master and man, should take. Even this form of meditation is based on a dynamic idea of “diffusion”, as it focuses on all different human beings, living in all directions.

The first point I would like to highlight is the relationship between wife and husband. Among the various forms of mutual respect, there is also the directive not to commit adultery, and it is addressed to both wife and husband. It is interesting to note how the words used to

---

<sup>43</sup> Among the numerous passages that could be mentioned here, I would like to refer in particular to the *Kāmaḥhogīsutta* (AN 5.91, PTS V, 176-182), extensively quoted by Ven. Payutto in his *Buddhist Economics*, or the well-known *Sedakasutta* (SN 5.2.9, PTS V, 168-169), or the interesting *Cakkavattisutta* (DN 26.21, PTS III, 73).

<sup>44</sup> DN 31, PTS III, 180-193.

<sup>45</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi is very clear in his words: “This practice of ‘worshipping the six directions,’ as explained by the Buddha, presupposes that society is sustained by a network of interlocking relationships that bring coherence to the social order when its members fulfill their reciprocal duties and responsibilities in a spirit of kindness, sympathy, and good will. [...] Thus, for Early Buddhism, the social stability and security necessary for human happiness and fulfillment are achieved, not through aggressive and potentially disruptive demands for ‘rights’ posed by competing groups, but by the renunciation of self-interest and the development of a sincere, large-hearted concern for the welfare of others and the good of the greater whole”. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *In the Buddha’s Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*, Wisdom Publications, Boston 2005, pp. 109–110.

<sup>46</sup> The “Chapter on the protection of the six directions”, DN 31.27 (PTS, III, 188). The meaning of *paṭicchādana* is “covering”, “hiding”, “concealment”. The commentary (Sv, PTS III, 951) explain it: “since any fear, which might approach from the six directions, does not come, there is peace, and he is living with no fear” (*yathā chahi disāhi āgamanabhayaṃ na āgacchati, khemaṃ hoti nibbhayaṃ evaṃ viharanto*).

express these two recommendations are equivalent, and there is no difference between the two injunctions in terms of semantic intensity.<sup>47</sup> The reciprocal evidence of an existing amity between two persons<sup>48</sup> is offered in a very interesting list of behaviours that two friends

---

<sup>47</sup> They both use the verb *an-ati-√car*, which expresses the idea of faithfulness. This seems to be a very advanced approach. It is worth noting that, in the Italian penal code, the juridical and terminological equalization between the two forms of adultery (adultery committed by men and adultery committed by women) was established and ratified by the Constitutional Court only in 1969.

<sup>48</sup> The text refers to a fraternal relationship between friends (*mittāmaccā*, literally “friends and companions”) and the son of a good family (*kulaputto*), which in this case seems to denote just a gentleman. *Mittāmaccā* is not completely clear to me. It seems to be a compound used to describe a group of people who live in the house, who are friendly and good-hearted, and who could be considered a unified community. Their relationship with another person is, without a doubt, taken as an example of friendship. Concerning *mittā*, four kinds of good-hearted (*suhado* or *suhajja*, see Pj II, PTS I, 73: *suhadayabhāvena suhajjā*) friends (*mittā*, which is a word connected to *mettā* [see Pj II, PTS I, 73: *mettāyanavasena mittā*] or to *mejjati*, to love, to feel affection [see Spk-pt, My I, 185: *mejjati siniyhatī*]) are described in the *Singālovāda-sutta*, in the paragraphs 21-26 (DN III, 187–188). They are those friends who are helpful (*upakāra*), who are the same in happiness and suffering (*samānasukhadukha*), who tell (from *akkhāti*, to declare, to reveal) what is good for you (*atthakkhāyī*), and who are sympathetic (*anukampaka*). We find a similar description in the commentary to the *Suttanipāta* with the additional specification that the friends who tell what is good for you are homeless or ascetics (*anagāriya*). The other three are householders (*agāriya*). (Pj II, PTS I, 73–74). The term *amaccā* (Sanskrit *amātya*) literally means “those who belong to the house”, and it is often commented with *suhajjā*, good-hearted (Mp, PTS II, 332). It is one of the four people whom we should give heed: *mittā vā amaccā vā ñātī vā sālohitā* (see, for example, *Mittasutta*, SN V, 188. Bhikkhu Bodhi translates them as friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen, pp. 1663–1664). In the commentary, these four terms are explained as follows: “*mittā*, friend, because they are in the ordinary life, mutually sharing food in the house; *miccā*, the experts in the protocol, are taking care of the obligations that are related to the activities [i.e. expert in the code of behaviour] of one side: addressing, answering, good manners, etc.; *ñātī*, the relatives belonging to the side of the mother-in-law and father-in-law; *sālohitā*, the consanguine, i.e. brothers, sisters, maternal uncle, etc.”. (Spk, PTS III, 285).

should keep.<sup>49</sup> People should express friendship with generosity (*dāna*), endearing speech (*peyyavajja*), helpfulness (*atthacariyā*), equanimity (*samānattatā*),<sup>50</sup> and loyalty (*avisamvādanatā*). And the persons who received these manifestations of friendship should reciprocate by protecting their friend when he is careless (*pamatta*), protecting his properties (*sāpateyya*) when he is careless, becoming a refuge (*saraṇa*) when he is afraid (*bhīta*), remaining close to him in unfortunate events, honouring (*paṭipūjenti*)<sup>51</sup> his future generations (*aparapajā*).

The section dealing with the relationship between employer and employee<sup>52</sup> is crucial to understand the Buddhist idea of a just society. The “master” should respect the workers arranging their duties according to their strength (*yathābalaṃ kammanta-saṃvidhānena*), providing them with food and wage (*bhatta-vetana-anuppadānena*), nursing them when they are sick (*gilānupaṭṭhānena*),<sup>53</sup> sharing special delicacies with them (*acchariyānaṃ rasānaṃ saṃvibhāgena*), letting them having time off work at the right time (*samaye vossaggena*).<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> All those points seem to echo Levi's words on the importance of friendship among beings as a tangible aspect of human dignity: “Now nothing of this sort occurred between me and Lorenzo. However little sense there may be in trying to specify why I, rather than thousands of others, managed to survive the test, I believe that it was really due to Lorenzo that I am alive today; and not so much for his material aid, as for his having constantly reminded me by his presence, by his natural and plain manner of being good, that there still existed a just world outside our own, something and someone still pure and whole, not corrupt, not savage, extraneous to hatred and terror; something difficult to define, a remote possibility of good, but for which it was worth surviving”. Primo Levi, *If this is a man*, p. 142.

<sup>50</sup> On the four *saṅgahavatthu*, i.e. *dāna*, *peyyavajja*, *atthacariyā*, *samānattatā*, see for example AN 4.2 (PTS II, 32).

<sup>51</sup> The commentary explains this with “treasuring” (*keḷāyanti*), “fostering” (*manāyanti*). See Sv, PTS III, 995.

<sup>52</sup> I intentionally use “employer” and “employee” to offer a modern terminology which, I hope, will make this text plain. The words used (*ayyiraka*, master or chief, and *heṭṭhimā*, low or subordinate) denote a hierarchical status, but this vertical social order gives even more value to the incredibly advanced and demanding requests made to a “master” to act towards his “workers” in a right and respectful manner.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. UDHR, Article 25.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. UDHR, Article 24.

The commentary<sup>55</sup> is even more radical and incisive in describing these points: the duties of the workers should be carefully designed and assigned according to the different ages and gender; wages and meals should also be given considering the workers' family situation (for example, if they are alone or have children); if the workers are sick, the employer should take care of them, provide beneficial medicines, etc., and guarantee a "sick leave" when they cannot work; the employer should grant vacations to workers when they are tired from having worked [for a long period], or even when they have to attend festivals, festivities, sports events, etc.<sup>56</sup> In the latter case the employer should provide the workers with ornaments, useful objects, soft and solid food, etc. The workers should reciprocate waking up early and going to sleep late when necessary, not stealing, being diligent in their work, and promoting good reputation.

All the "protections" (*paṭicchādana*) described in the *Sīṅgālovādasutta* are patently showing a very high level of reciprocal care and respect. As we have seen above, these forms of attentiveness for others could be identified as possible foundational concepts of "human dignity": health care, social inclusion, refusal of poverty, refusal of labour exploitations, and protection of children and future generations, are undoubtedly essential parts of a Buddhist ideal society.

4.4. The *Dhammikasutta*, from the *Suttanipāta*, contains a passage which is unambiguously dealing with social justice. The underlying idea of this sutta is that our ethical behaviour should also function to build a stable and peaceful society, where the right to life, property (without attachment), and truth are respected. In this discourse we find an original interpretation of the well-known "triple form of purification" (*tikoṭīparisuddha*, literally "[food] purified in three respects").<sup>57</sup> This formula describes a rigorous rule concerning food that the Buddha requested all bhikkhus to respect. Later, it was also applied to the idea of "no

---

<sup>55</sup> See Sv, PTS III, 995.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. UDHR, Article 27.

<sup>57</sup> In Sanskrit *tikoṭīparisuddha*, in Tibetan *mtha' gsum yongs su dag pa*, in Chinese 三種淨. See Lambert Schmithausen, *Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im indischen Buddhismus. bis ca. zur Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.: Teil 1 (Studie und Übersetzungen)*, Hamburg (Hamburg Buddhist Studies 12) 2020, p. 35.

meat-eating” (*amāṃsabhakṣaṇa*), as it was developed in the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*.<sup>58</sup> The formula is used in three different forms.

4.5. The first form merely concerns the rule about food. We can find it in the *Jīvakaśutta*,<sup>59</sup> where the Buddha explicitly asked the bhikkhus not to eat any sort of meat if it has been seen (*diṭṭha*), heard (*śuta*), or suspected (*parisaṅkīta*) that the living being has been slaughtered for the bhikkhu’s meal. The rule was included in the Vinaya of the Theravādins, but also in the Vinaya of the Dharmaguptakas, Mahīśāsakas, Sarvāstivādins, and in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin.<sup>60</sup> In the Theravāda Vinaya, this instruction is given in specific sections of the Canonical texts dealing with general Sīha<sup>61</sup> and with Devadatta,<sup>62</sup> who claimed that the bhikkhus should not eat meat and fish. In this case, the triple form of purification concerns the fact that the bhikkhus should refuse to eat meat when they have a direct perception that the animal was slaughtered to prepare their meal, when the bhikkhus know about the violence perpetrated because they have heard authoritative words, and

---

<sup>58</sup> See the eighth chapter, especially in stanzas 12, 13, and 19. On this topic, see Hyoung Seok Ham, “Manipulating the Memory of Meat-Eating: Reading the Laṅkāvatāra’s Strategy of Introducing Vegetarianism to Buddhism”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 47 (2019), 133–153, and Lambert Schmithausen, *Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im indischen Buddhismus. bis ca. zur Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.: Teil 3 (Editionen)*, Hamburg 2020, pp. 97–98, 100–101.

<sup>59</sup> MN 55, PTS I, 368–371.

<sup>60</sup> On this see Lambert Schmithausen, *Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im indischen Buddhismus. bis ca. zur Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.: Teil 1 (Studie und Übersetzungen)*, pp. 32–35, Teil 2 (Endnoten), Hamburg (Hamburg Buddhist Studies 12) 2020, pp. 25, 27, 29.

<sup>61</sup> *Mahāvagga* (Vin I), PTS I, 237. See also *Sīhasutta* (AN IV, 188): ‘*alaṃ ayyo, dīgharattañhi te āyasmanto avaṇṇakāmā buddhassa avaṇṇakāmā dhammassa avaṇṇakāmā saṅghassa, na ca pana te āyasmanto jīranti taṃ Bhagavantam asaṭā tuccā musā abhūtena abbhācikkhantā, na ca mayaṃ jīvītahetu pi sañcicca pāṇaṃ jīvītā voropeyyāmā’ti*. “Enough, good man. For a long time those venerable ones have wanted to discredit the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. They will never stop misrepresenting the Blessed One with what is untrue, baseless, false, and contrary to fact, and we would never intentionally deprive a living being of life, even for the sake of our life”. (tr. by Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 1136.)

<sup>62</sup> *Cūlavagga* (Vin II), PTS II, 196 and *Suttavibhaṅga* (Vin III), PTS III, 171.

when the bhikkhus have persistent doubts or suspicions<sup>63</sup> that the animal was killed for them.

4.6. The second form of *tikoṭiparisuddha*, from the *Veḷudvāreyyasutta*,<sup>64</sup> was taught to lay followers and has a more evident social significance. In this discourse, the Buddha is expressly addressing the teaching to a lay person, with the specification that these principles are valid also for other people, in a very reciprocal manner.<sup>65</sup>

Here, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘I am one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die; I desire happiness and am averse to suffering. Since I am one who wishes to live ... and am averse to suffering, if someone were to take my life, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to take the life of another—of one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die, who desires happiness and is averse to suffering— that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?’ Having reflected thus, **(I) he himself abstains from the destruction of life, (II) exhorts others to abstain from the destruction of life, and (III) speaks in praise of abstinence**

---

<sup>63</sup> *Pācityādivaṇṇanā*, My 576: *Parisaṅkitoti punappunaṃ saṅkito*.

<sup>64</sup> SN 55.7, PTS V, 352–358.

<sup>65</sup> The compound *attūpanāyikaṃ*, ([this principle] has to be related to oneself) is commented in the *aṭṭhakathā* (Spk, PTS III, 280) with *attūpanāyikanti attāni upanetabbam*, “this should concern oneself”, and in the *ṭīkā* (My II, 529) with *attāni upanetabbanti attāni netvā parasmim upanetabbam*, “[this principle] should concern oneself” means that when one has related it to oneself, then it has to be applied to others”. See also *Nettipakaraṇa* (Nett, PTS 176): “The teaching of the Enlightened Ones, the Blessed Ones, is of two kinds, namely with themselves as guiding example (*attūpanāyikā*) and with another as guiding example (*parūpanāyikā*)” (tr. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, p. 231).

**from the destruction of life.** Thus this bodily conduct of his is purified in three respects.<sup>66</sup>

This deductive reasoning is related to the first precept, respect for life (*pāṇa*). Similarly, the following two parts are centred on stealing and committing adultery: these three sections are aimed to offer a triple purification of “bodily conduct” (*kāyasamācāro tikoṭiparisuddho*). The last four examples, centred on lying and on three forms of wrong speech, i.e. divisive (*pisuṇa*), harsh (*pharusa*), and frivolous (*sampha*), deal with the purification of the “verbal conduct” (*vacīsamācāro tikoṭiparisuddho*).

The teaching we can read in the *Veḷudvāreyyasutta* affirms that any bodily and verbal action, to be pure and wholesome, should not be confined only to our moral sphere: all ethical concerns have to be extended to other people, following the evident principle of reciprocity expressed in the entire sutta. To consider our conduct perfectly pure, we do not only have to respect the precept of non-killing, but we also have to encourage other people to establish this rule for themselves, and we have to speak about it, showing its importance.

4.7. The social aspect of the “triple form of purification”, which is visible beyond any doubt in the *Veḷudvāreyyasutta*, becomes preponderant in the third form that appears in the teachings given to the lay follower Dhammika, in the *Suttanipāta*.<sup>67</sup> Even in the *Dhammikasutta* the precepts have to be purified in a triple manner. However, in this case, the purifications seem to involve an intense aspiration to establish a just and right (NB: *dhammika*) social system with precise legal norms.

The precepts, starting from respect for life, are here scrutinised under a more powerful magnifying glass and reveal a high level of social commitment.<sup>68</sup> I analyse here only the

---

<sup>66</sup> Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 1797 (emphasis and Roman numbers mine). SN 55.7 (PTS V, 353–354).

<sup>67</sup> See *Dhammikasutta* in *Suttanipāta*, 376–404 (Sn, PTS 66-70).

<sup>68</sup> On the five fundamental precepts, the importance of a morally purified conduct throughout the entire life, and the presence of *sīla* as an essential characteristic of the liberated mind, see Giuliano Giustarini, “The Interaction of Morality (*sīla*) with Cognitive Factors in the Pali Nikāyas”, *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 18 (2017): pp. 43–70.

first stanza as an example: the concept remains similar in the following verses of the sutta, which deal with the other precepts.

Having laid down weapons toward all beings,

The beings in the world, both strong and frail,

**(I) One should not kill (*hane*) a living being, (II) nor cause to kill**

(*ghātayeyya*),

**(III) Nor allow (*anujaññā*) others to kill.**<sup>69</sup>

In the commentary,<sup>70</sup> it is stated that the first precept, “abstaining from the destruction of life” (*pāṇātipātā-veramaṇi*), is purified in three respects (*tikoṭiparisuddhā*). Nonviolence has to be the cardinal principle in the life of a lay follower, but, to make it perfect and formally pure, he is also not allowed to ask other people to kill, nor approve any killing.

The second and third exhortations of the “purification process” are no less stern than the first one: I would say that they are binding injunctions. The second exhortation, “do not cause to kill”, is mentioned to remove the possibility that somebody, using a subterfuge – that I may define as “delegative loophole” –, could escape from the responsibilities of a crime by just asking somebody else to perpetrate it. This is forbidden by the second phase of the “purification process” expressed here by the verb *ghāṭeti*, “to cause to kill”, a causative form of the same verb used for the first phase, *hanati*, “to kill”. The use of the same verb seems to corroborate the idea that direct involvement in acts of violence and indirect participation in crimes generate the same amount of ethical problems.

The last phase of the purification taught in the *Dhammikasutta*, “nor allow (*anujaññā*) others to kill”, gives us a vivid depiction of the social repercussions of the Buddhist precepts: we are not allowed to kill, we cannot delegate other people to kill, but we also have the duty (expressed by the verb *anujānāti*) to prohibit any form of violence among beings. Here, respect for rights and dignity is not a personal issue: it is a depiction of the ideal Buddhist

---

<sup>69</sup> Sn 39 (PTS, 69) (emphasis and Roman numbers mine).

<sup>70</sup> Pj II (PTS I, 376).

society that should be based on the refusal of killing, stealing, and lying, and the deep awareness that this ethical domain does not have internal or external borders.

I think that Buddhist texts could not only help us clarify some of the foundational concepts of Human Rights, but very often they can even show practicable ways to promote and develop social justice and peace. The ideas expressed in the stanza from the *Dhammikasutta* evoke the notion of the “Right to refuse to kill”, the option we all have to refuse our consent to be transmuted into killers or victims,<sup>71</sup> the inherent freedom to lay down arms, which is clearly asserted in several suttas of the Canon by the words *nihitadaṇḍo* and *nihitasattho*, “with the rod and sword laid aside”.<sup>72</sup> This additional right was proposed at the World Conference on Religion and Peace in Kyoto (1970), but above all, clearly stated by Seán MacBride, during his Nobel Lecture, on 12 December 1974: “To the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights one more might, with relevance, be added. It is “The Right to Refuse to Kill”. [...] The right of an individual to refuse to kill, to torture or to participate in the preparation for the nuclear destruction of humanity seems to me to be fundamental”.

## 5. Conclusion

I hope these reflections could be beneficial for a better understanding of the numerous and challenging concepts concealed within the words “rights” and “dignity”. I am convinced that the ideas we find in Buddhist texts should be studied not only in Asia or by Buddhist scholars (bhikkhu and lay), but also by historians, philosophers, and scholars of political science who do not belong to Asian cultures. Social justice and mutual respect are integral parts of the

---

<sup>71</sup> Cf. footnote 2: *mā ca mayaṃ kañci, mā c’ amhe koci. Cakkavattisutta*, DN 7 (PTS III, 73)

<sup>72</sup> The entire passage is: *So evaṃ pabbajito samāno bhikkhūnaṃ sikkhāsājīvasamāpanno pāṇātipātāṃ pahāya pāṇātipātā paṭivirato hoti. nihitadaṇḍo nihitasattho lajjī dayāpanno sabbapāṇabhūtahitānukampī viharati*. See *Cūlahatthipadopamasutta*, MN 27 (PTS I, 179), and other suttas such as *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhasutta*, MN 38 (PTS I, 267), *Kandarajasutta*, MN 51 (PTS I, 345), *Ghoṭamukhasutta*, MN 94 (PTS II, 162), etc. “Having thus gone forth and possessing the bhikkhu’s training and way of life, abandoning the killing of living beings, he abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings” (tr. by Bhikkhu Bodhi, pp. 272–273). I thank Giuliano Giustarini who drew my attention to this exceptionally significant passage.

Buddha's teachings: we have the right and the duty to pursue welfare and happiness for the entire world (*ditṭha-dhamma-hitasukha*).

## 6. Acknowledgment

I sincerely thank Prof. Dr Pagorn Singsuriya, Head of the Department of Humanities at Mahidol University, for his endless support in Academic matters and for his ability to accompany me in the *non-lieu* of the intercultural dialogue. I discussed philosophical ideas and analysed several Buddhist texts with Giuliano Giustarini and Mattia Salvini: our fraternal and insightful dialogue has enormously nourished my understanding of these complex topics. I express my sincere gratitude to Michelangelo Pipan, Ambassador of Italy to the Kingdom of Thailand (2009-2013): he encouraged me to pursue my research on Human Rights and Buddhism, and fostered my hope that this dialogue will help us to create a modern and global idea of "dignity". I am deeply indebted to Peter Skilling: since our first meeting twenty-three years ago, he has not only donated his vast knowledge of Buddhist thought to me, but also shared his ideas on social and political themes in long and inspiring discussions, often evoking his own dialogues with his father, Prof. Gordon Skilling. I also thank the anonymous reviewers for careful reading the manuscript and for their important comments and suggestions.

## 7. References

- Anālayo. "Immeasurable Meditation and Mindfulness." *Mindfulness* 10 (2019): 2620–2628.
- Angle, S.C. *Human rights and Chinese thought a cross-cultural inquiry*. Cambridge, 2003.
- Annas, G.J. *American Bioethics: Crossing Human Rights and Health Law Boundaries*. Oxford, 2005.
- Arendt, H. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York, 1963.
- Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, 1962.
- Bartles-Smith, A., Kate Crosby, Peter Harvey, P. D. Premasiri, Asanga Tilakaratne, Daniel Ratheiser, Mahinda Deegalle, Noel Maurer Trew, Stefania Travagnin, and Elizabeth Harris. "Reducing suffering during conflict: the interface between Buddhism and international humanitarian law." *Contemporary Buddhism*, 21, no. 1-2 (2020): 369-435.

- Baumann-Pauly, D., and Justine Nolan. *Business and Human Rights Challenges and Opportunities*. London, 2016.
- Beckert, S., and Seth Rockman. *Slavery's Capitalism A New History of American Economic Development*. Philadelphia, 2016.
- Bell, D.A. *East Meets West*. Princeton, 2000.
- Berger, P. "On Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor." In Hauerwas, S., and MacIntyre, A. (Eds), *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, pp. 172–181. Notre Dame (Indiana), 1983.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi. *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*. Boston, 2005.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Buddha's Teaching on Social and Communal Harmony*. Boston, 2016.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha. A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Boston, 2000.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha. A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Boston, 2012.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Suttanipāta. An Ancient Collection of the Buddha's Discourses together with Its Commentaries*. Boston, 2017.
- Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Boston, 1995.
- Bob, C. (Ed.). *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*. Philadelphia, 2009.
- Boucher, D. *The Limits of Ethics in International Relations Natural Law, Natural Rights, and Human Rights in Transition*. Oxford, 2009.
- Brownsword, R. "Human Dignity, Human Rights, and Simply Trying to Do the Right Thing." In Christopher McCrudden (Ed.), *Understanding Human Dignity*, pp. 345–358. Oxford, 2013.
- Budiyanto, A. and L. Latifah. "Reading Conflicts, Achieving Peace: Dhamma in the Contemporary Indonesian Buddhist short stories." In Thich Nhat Tu (Ed.), *Buddhist Studies: Contemporary Approaches*, pp. 283–300. Hanoi, 2019.
- Cairns, D.L. *Aidōs. The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*. Oxford, 2002.
- Campbell, G. *Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*. London, 2005.
- Chapman, A.R. *Global Health, Human Rights, and the Challenge of Neoliberal Policies*. Cambridge, 2016.

- Chu, Y., Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan, and Doh Chull Shin. *How East Asians View Democracy*. New York, 2008.
- Clapham, A. *Human Rights A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, 2015.
- Collins, S. *Selfless Person. Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism*. Cambridge, 1982.
- Coward, H. *The Perfectibility of Human Nature in Eastern and Western Thought*. Albany, 2008.
- Coward, H., and Gordon S. Smith. *Religion and Peacebuilding*. New York, 2004.
- Cozort, D., and J.N. Shields. *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*. Oxford, 2018.
- Crowe, J., and Kylie Weston-Scheuber. (Eds). *Principles of International Humanitarian Law*. Cheltenham, 2013.
- Cruft, R., S. Matthew Liao, and Massimo Renzo. *Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights*. Oxford, 2015.
- Debes, R. (Ed.). *Dignity. A History*. Oxford, 2017.
- Degooyer, S., Alastair Hunt, Lida Maxwell, and Samuel Moyn. *The Right to Have Rights*. London, 2018.
- Dhammadinnā. "Semantic of Wholesomeness: Purification of Intention and Soteriological Function of the Immeasurables (*appamāṇas*) in Early Buddhist Thought." In Chuang Kuo-pin (Ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference "Buddhist Meditative Traditions: Their Origin and Development"*. Dharma Drum Buddhist College, Taiwan, October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012, pp. 52–129. Taipei, 2014.
- Dillon, R.S. *Dignity, Character, and Self-Respect*. New York, 1995.
- Donnelly, J. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*. Ithaca, 2013.
- Düwell, M., Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword, and Dietmar Mieth. (Eds.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Cambridge, 2014.
- Engberg-Pedersen, T. *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis. Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy*. Esbjerg, 1990.
- Englund, H. *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*. Berkeley, 2006.
- Ernst, G. *The Philosophy of Human Rights: Contemporary Controversies*. Berlin, 2012.
- Finn, J. *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Oxford, 1980.
- Fitzgerald, T. *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth*. New York, 2011.
- Flannery, K., and Joyce Marcus. *The Creation of Inequality: How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery, and Empire*. Cambridge, 2012.

- Garfield, J.L. *Buddhist Ethics. A Philosophical Explanation*. Oxford, 2022.
- Garfield, J.L. *Losing Ourselves. Learning to Live without a Self*. Princeton, 2022.
- Garnsey, P. *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*. Cambridge, 1999.
- Gethin, R. "Can Killing a Living Being ever be an Act of Compassion?". *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 11 (2004): 167–202.
- Ghanea-Hercock, Nazila, Alan Stephens, and Ralph Walden. *Does God Believe in Human Rights*. Leiden, 2007.
- Giannakopoulos, N. "Decrees Awarding Offices for Life and by Hereditary Right as Honours." In Anna Heller and Onno M. van Nijf (Eds.), *The Politics of Honour in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire*, pp. 220–242. Leiden, 2017.
- Giustarini, G. "The Interaction of Morality (*sīla*) with Cognitive Factors in the Pali Nikāyas" *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 18 (2017): 43–70.
- Gorman R.F. *Historical Dictionary of Human Rights and Humanitarian Organizations*. Toronto, 2007.
- Griffin, J. *On Human Rights*. Oxford, 2008.
- Ham, H.S. "Manipulating the Memory of Meat-Eating: Reading the Laṅkāvatāra's Strategy of Introducing Vegetarianism to Buddhism." *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 47 (2019): 133–153.
- Harvey, P. "Buddhist Motivation to Support IHL, from Concern to Minimise Harms Inflicted by Military Action to Both Those Who Suffer Them and Those Who Inflict Them." *Contemporary Buddhism*, (2022): 1–21.
- Harvey, P. *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues*. Oxford, 2000.
- Haslam, N. "Dehumanization: An Integrative Review." *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10/3 (2006): 252–264.
- Haynes, S.R. *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*. Oxford, 2002.
- Hersch, J. *Birthright of Man: An Anthology of Texts on Human Rights*. New York, 1969.
- Hiskes, R.P. *The Human Right to a Green Future Environmental Rights and Intergenerational Justice*. Cambridge, 2008.
- Hunt, L. *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. New York, 2007.
- Ignatieff, M. *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*. Princeton, 2005.
- Ishay, M.R. *The History of Human Rights from Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*. Berkeley, 2004 (2008).
- Ishay, M.R. *The Human Rights Reader*. New York, 2007.

- Joerges Ch. and N.S. Ghaleigh. (Eds). *Darker Legacies of Law in Europe: The Shadow of National Socialism and Fascism over Europe and its Legal Traditions*. Oxford, 2003.
- Kateb, G. *Human Dignity*. Cambridge (MA), 2011.
- Kaufmann, P., Hannes Kuch, Christian Neuhaeuser, and Elaine Webster. (Eds.). *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization. Human Dignity Violated*. New York, 2011.
- Keown, D. (Ed.). *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*. Surrey, 2000.
- Keown, D. "Are there "Human Rights" in Buddhism?", *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 2 (1995): 3–27.
- Keown, D. "Human Rights." In Cozort, Daniel and Shield, James Mark (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*, pp. 431–551. Oxford, 2018.
- Keown, D. *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. New York, 1992.
- Keown, D., .). Buddhism and Human Rights (Eds.). *Buddhism and Human Rights*. Richmond (UK), 1998.
- King, S.B. *Socially Engaged Buddhism: dimensions of Asian Spirituality*. Honolulu, 2009.
- Kingsbury, D., and Leena Avonius. *Human Rights in Asia: A Reassessment of the Asian Values Debate*. New York, 2008.
- Kolnai, A. "Dignity." In Robert S. Dillon, *Dignity, Character, and Self-Respect*, pp. 53–75. New York, 1995.
- Kraus, S. and Sharon Sears. "Measuring the Immeasurables: Development and Initial Validation of the Self-Other Four Immeasurables (SOFI) Scale Based on Buddhist Teachings on Loving Kindness, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity." *Social Indicators Research*, 92(1) (2009): 169–181.
- Kwon, K., George A. Barnett, and Hao Chen. "Assessing Cultural Differences in Translations: A Semantic Network Analysis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 2/2 (2009): 107–138.
- Lee, P., and Robert P. George. The Nature and Basis of Human Dignity. *Ratio Juris*, 21/2 (2008): 173–193.
- Levi, P. *If This is a Man*. New York, 1959.
- Maganzani, L. "Appunti sul concetto di dignità umana alla luce della casistica giurisprudenziale romana." *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris* LXXVII (2011): pp. 521–543.
- Malpas, J., and Norelle Lickiss. *Perspectives on Human Dignity*. Dordrecht, 2007.

- Manou D., Baldwin Andrew, Cubie Dug, Mihr Anja, and Thorp Teresa. *Climate Change, Migration and Human Rights*. London, 2017.
- Mapp, S.C. *Human Rights and Social Justice in a Global Perspective: An Introduction to International Social Work*. Oxford, 2008.
- Martin, F.F, Stephen J. Schnably, Richard Wilson, Jonathan Simon, and Mark Tushnet. *International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Treaties, Cases, and Analysis*. Cambridge, 2006.
- McCarthy, S. "Why the Dalai Lama Should Read Aristotle." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 8 (2001): 42–60.
- McCrudden, C. (Ed.). *Understanding Human Dignity*. Oxford, 2013.
- Meyer, D. *Violence Against Queer People Race, Class, Gender, and the Persistence of Anti-LGBT Discrimination*. New Brunswick, 2015.
- Minkler, L. *The State of Economic and Social Human Rights A Global Overview*. New York, 2013.
- Moyn, S. *The Last Utopia Human Rights in History*. Cambridge, 2010.
- Nash, K. *Cultural politics human rights*. Cambridge, 2009.
- Neier, A. *The International Human Rights Movement: A History*. Princeton, 2012.
- Neuman, G.L. "On Fascist Honour and Human Dignity: A Sceptical response." In Ch. Joerges and N.S. Ghaleigh (Eds.), *Darker Legacies of Law in Europe: The Shadow of National Socialism and Fascism over Europe and its Legal Traditions*, pp. 267–273. Oxford, 2003.
- O'Mahony, C. "There is no Such Thing as a Right to Dignity." *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 10/2 (2012): 551–574.
- Oh, I. *The Rights of God: Islam, Human Rights, and Comparative Ethics*. Washington, 2007.
- Oliver, S. "Dehumanization: Perceiving the Body as (In)Human." In Kaufmann, P., Kuch, H., Neuhäuser, Ch., Webster, E. (Eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization. Human Dignity Violated*, pp. 85–97. New York, 2011.
- P.A. Payutto. *A Constitution for Living*. Bangkok, 1996.
- P.A. Payutto. *Buddhist Solutions for the Twenty-First Century*. Bangkok, 1994.
- Peerenboom, R. *Human Rights in Asia: A Comparative Legal Study of Twelve Asian Jurisdictions*. London, 2006.
- Perera, L.N. *Buddhism and human rights: a Buddhist commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Karunaratne and Sons, Colombo, 1991.

- Plomer, A. *The Law and Ethics of Medical Research International Bioethics and Human Rights*. Lanham, 2005.
- Pogge, T.W. "Can Liberalism Envision a Widely Acceptable World Order?." In Yun-han Chu and Yongnian Zheng (Eds.), *The Decline of The Western-Centric World and the Emerging New Global Order. Contending Views*, pp. 129–145. London, 2021.
- Pogge, T.W. *World Poverty and Human Rights*. Cambridge, 2002.
- Powers, J., and Charles S. Prebish. (Eds.). *Destroying Mara Forever: Buddhist Ethics Essays in Honor of Damien Keown*. New York, 2009.
- Pramaha Chanya Khongchinda. *The Buddha's Socio-Political Ideas*. New Delhi, 1993.
- Premasiri, P.D. "Implications of Buddhist Political Ethics for the Minimisation of Suffering in Situations of Armed Conflict." *Contemporary Buddhism*, (2022): 1–16.
- Premasiri, P.D. "The Place for a Righteous War in Buddhism." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 10 (2003): 153–166.
- Radice, R. *"Oikeiosis." Ricerche sul fondamento del pensiero stoico e sulla sua genesi*. Milano, 2000.
- Ramcharan, R. and Bertrand Ramcharan. *Asia and the Drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Bangkok, 2019.
- Ramelli, I. *Hierocles the stoic: Elements of Ethics, fragments, and excerpts*. Atlanta, 2009.
- Robertson, G. *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice*. New York 2012.
- Rodotà, S. *Il diritto di avere diritti*. Roma-Bari, 2012.
- Rosen, M. *Dignity: its History and Meaning*. Cambridge, 2012.
- Ruegg, D.S. "Ahiṃsā and Vegetarianism in the History of Buddhism." *Buddhist studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*, pp. 234–241. London, 1980.
- Runzo, J., and Nancy M. Martin. *Human Rights and Responsibilities in World Religions*. Oxford, 2003.
- Sandel, M.J., and Paul J. D'Ambrosio (Eds.). *Encountering China: Michael Sandel and Chinese Philosophy-Harvard University*. Cambridge, 2018.
- Sangiovanni, A. *Humanity without Dignity*. Cambridge, 2017.
- Schmithausen, L. *Buddhism and Nature. The Lecture delivered on the Occasion of the EXPO 1990. An Enlarged Version with Notes*. Tokyo, 1991.
- Schmithausen, L. *Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im indischen Buddhismus, zur Mitte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.: Teil 1 (Studie und Übersetzungen), 2 (Endnoten), 3 (Editionen)*, Hamburg Buddhist Studies 12. Hamburg, 2020.

- Schmithausen, L. Meat-eating and nature: Buddhist perspectives. In *Supplement to the Bulletin of the Research Institute of Bukkyo University*, pp. 183–201. Kyoto, 2005.
- Schutter, O.D. *International Human Rights Law Cases, Materials, Commentary*. Cambridge, 2010.
- Sen, A. *Human Rights and Asian Values*. New York, 1997.
- Sharma, A. *Hindu Narratives on Human Rights*. Santa Barbara, 2010.
- Shimoda, M. (下田正弘). “Sanshu no jōniku» saikō” 「三種の浄肉」再考 (“On the Subject of ‘Trikoṭipariśuddhamāṃsa’”). *Bukkyō Bunka*, 22 (1989): 1–21.
- Stenmark, M., Steve Fuller, and Ulf Zackariasson. *Relativism and Post-Truth in Contemporary Society Possibilities and Challenges*. Coventry, 2018.
- Stoecker, R. “Three Crucial Turns on the Road to an Adequate Understanding of Human Dignity.” In Kaufmann, P., Kuch, H., Neuhäuser, Ch., Webster, E. (Eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization. Human Dignity Violated*, pp. 7–17. New York, 2011.
- Straumann, B. *Roman Law in the State of Nature. The Classical Foundations of Hugo Grotius’ Natural Law*. Cambridge, 2015.
- Strijdom, J. “Paul, the Stoics and Human Rights.” *Phronimon*, 9/1 (2008): 101–110.
- Sulak Sivaraksa. *Seeds of Peace. A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*. Berkeley, 1992.
- Sulak Sivaraksa. *Socially Engaged Buddhism*. Delhi, 2005.
- Teays, W., John-Stewart Gordon, and Alison Dundes Renteln. (Eds.). *Global Bioethics and Human Rights Contemporary Issues*. Lanham, 2014.
- Tham, J., Kai Man Kwan, and Alberto Garcia. *Religious Perspectives on Bioethics and Human Rights*. Pittsburg, 2017.
- The Roots of Restraint in War*. International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, 2018.
- Thích Nhất Hạnh. *Creating True Peace: Ending Violence in Yourself, Your Family, Your Community, and the World*. New York, 2004.
- Thich Nhat Hanh. *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change*. Berkeley, 1993.
- Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*. New York, 1998.
- Thornton, H. *State of Nature or Eden? Thomas Hobbes and his Contemporaries on the Natural Condition of Human Beings*. Rochester, 2005.
- Tilakaratne, A. “Two Dimensions of Buddhist Practice and their Implications on Statecraft.” *Contemporary Buddhism*, (2022): 1–15.
- Trew, N.M. “‘Not Knowing is Most Intimate’: Koan Practice and the Fog of War.” *Contemporary Buddhism*, (2022): 1–30.

- Visconti, A. *Itinerari di diritto penale*. Bologna, 2018.
- Waldron, J. *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*. Oxford, 2012.
- Weston, B.H., and David Bollier. *Green Governance Ecological Survival, Human Rights, and the Law of the Commons*. Cambridge, 2013.
- Whitman, J.Q. "On Nazi 'Honour' and the new European 'Dignity'." In Ch. Joerges and N.S. Ghaleigh (Eds.), *Darker Legacies of Law in Europe: The Shadow of National Socialism and Fascism over Europe and its Legal Traditions*, pp. 243–266. Oxford, 2003.
- Williams, R.A., Jr. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought. The Discourses of Conquest*. New York, 1990.
- Wong, D.B. "Reflection: Dignity in Confucian and Buddhist Thought." In Remy Debes (Ed.), *Dignity a history*, pp. 67–72. Oxford, 2017.
- Zhang, Q. *Human Dignity in Classical Chinese Philosophy Confucianism, Mohism, and Daoism*. New York, 2016.