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Mette Lebech, *European Sources of Human Dignity. A Commented Anthology* Peter Lang Verlag, 2019, 345 pp.

Although many people give no thought to the idea that humans have an intrinsic dignity, Mette Lebech has no place among them. For this, the reader is in her debt. Our time seems to be especially in need of an exploration of the idea of "human dignity," so that we can understand why black lives and all human lives matter. The notion of our dignity as humans essentially accrues to the inherent value of each person. We may be able to take our worth for granted again after we gain insight into the thought of men and women who wondered about what comprises the specifically human dignity and what our dignity may entail.

The study traces the origins and development of the idea from its beginnings in sources in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. That her sources are European is a function of her languages. Her limited sources, Professor Lebech explains, are not so much tribute to Europe as, "a regrettable lack of linguistic competences" (p. 4). Indeed, what the non-European world thought about human dignity and from what sources they refine the idea would be another fascinating book. What Lebech does accomplish with her remarkable linguistic abilities is to select and present relevant documents in English as well as in their original European languages. The reader's questions about translations can readily be resolved since the volume includes the texts in their original languages as well as in their translations.

The reader delights in Lebech's erudition. The depth and range of her references and her mentions present a vast world of major and minor philosophers as well as intellectuals from other fields. This reader particularly rejoiced with her inclusion of obscure women who contributed to the discussion of dignity, "in a different voice." After all, the notion that some humans were more human (men) must be overcome.

Lebech's overriding interest in the topic is showing how the notion of human dignity becomes a suitable constitutional principle for grounding human rights.

In order to do so, she organizes four periods in the history of the West around identifying "who counts as citizen in the state" (p. 5). The volume begins with representatives of ancient sources who have first to sort out the intrinsic and extrinsic sources of the fundamental value of human beings. The last entry concludes with the "Declaration on Religious Liberty" from Vatican II in 1965.

During the Middle Ages, the Church bestowed dignity with baptism. All could be included in the citizenship of the Church. Indeed, the Church continues to locate the source of human dignity in our likeness to the God who created us. Modern states emerged from the prevalent kingdoms and the moneyed economy gradually took over from the landed aristocracy. The last stage in Lebech's telling begins with the French revolution when men other than aristocrats claimed the rights of citizens. The history of the West in the period that follows is a history of emancipation, of redefining inclusion in the ranks of citizens. Eventually after World War II, human dignity came to include members of all races, both female and male. All humans became equal before the law.

Lebech's scholarship can be turned to contemporaneous themes as well; she says that she writes and collects for the controversies which have arisen since 1965. Secular culture even in its western democratic versions, much less its authoritarian regimes can threaten religious freedom. On the other hand, religious freedom amounts to folly when the rights it ensures are taken as absolute.

Black lives matter? Since race is not a condition for human dignity. That human lives matter is a function of the intrinsic worth of the human, the unique dignity of the human person, formerly universally assumed to be above the animals. Human dignity includes the appreciation of human rationality, which until the 1960s was highly prized. It demands an end to holocausts and genocide. The other is a brother.

Lebech's study stops with 1965, for notable historical reasons. Maybe 1948 with its claim that religious freedom is entailed by human dignity, as the United Nations in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims, is the apotheosis of the idea of intrinsic human dignity which demands equal and inalienable rights for all humans. The 21st century seems reluctant to support the weight of the mantle of human exceptionalism. Reliance on the physical, the material, the natural truncates the domain of human hope and action. The idea of human dignity, as a constitutional principle, grounds ethics as well as law. The common good functions for the good of all. For Lebech, human dignity is, in addition to the recognition of the worth of the human being, "[a] value that can and has been restored by God's love for us in the redemption brought by Christ" (p. 309).

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