"When Law Forgets About Dignity": Selected Historical and Modern Contexts of Sterilisation of People with Disabilities


What is human dignity? How to define the dignity of a person? Is it possible to identify key features that show the principles of respecting the dignity of another person? Attempts to define the concept indicated here may inevitably fail. On the one hand, human dignity is a universal concept. It refers to all people. Nevertheless, on the other hand, each of us has our own sense of dignity. Paradoxically, e.g., humiliation of a particular person’s dignity shows us the importance of the area that has been violated. Similar violations often affect sick and disabled persons. Examples of similar activities throughout human history abound. In this context, special attention should be paid to the interventions undertaken by the Nazis before the outbreak of WWII. Here, we are talking especially about mass and legalised activities that resulted in the sterilisation of many thousands of people with intellectual disabilities, people with physical disabilities and people experiencing mental disorders. The Nazi practices indicated here are presented as examples of human right violations. At the same time, they are examples of the unlawful rule of the state over an individual. Is there still a danger of reverting to similar practices today? Can standards of respect for human rights created years ago successfully protect disabled people against violation of their dignity? Can the knowledge of Nazi activities