

INTRODUCTORY WORDS

This section of Issue 113 of *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Iuridica* focuses on legal-philosophical approaches to Human Rights that are innovative or rather unusual. However, looking back at the massive abuses of Human Rights registered “just” in 2025, thinking about Human Rights’ Law as a working or living system is a challenging endeavour. This is not the place to list all events – whether international, such as Israel’s war on Gaza and Lebanon, national, such as Milei’s systematic attack on Human Rights by using direct violence against unarmed retired persons and many others in Argentina, or global, such as the ongoing killings of Human Rights’ defenders and the systematic destruction of natural ecosystems that inevitably entail Human Rights’ violations. Nor is this the place to list all weak and inconsistent calls for Human Rights, even by outspoken and action-oriented governments in Europe, which further deepen a sense of illegitimacy around Human Rights and a perception of futility of the international system as a whole. Surely, this journal is not the place to list all the issues that make our work with Human Rights Legal Philosophy often a paradoxical (if not cynical) endeavour.

But it is a place to ask: “What then?”

What do we do when the usual philosophical and legal tools we have to engage with offences against humanity or, better, to foster human liveliness, are not sufficient?

This section of *Folia Iuridica* is the result of a journey that started back in 2022 at the IVR in Bucharest, when I met Michał Rupniewski and Olga Rosenkranzová for the first time. Back then, one of the main concerns leading scholarly discussions was the escalation of the situation in Ukraine following the Russian invasion in February, and the start of the current phase of the war. Three years later, not only is this war ongoing, but we also face a drastic recession in humanitarian aid funding by some of the biggest world economies as well as a major deployment of military forces, for example those of the United States in the Caribbean. It is no coincidence that this issue of the *Acta* developed within this frame of radical weakening of the international system. In a way, this circumstance returns me to the original sense of searching that moved me to call for the Special Workshop “Encountering Difference: The ‘Other’ Philosophies

of Human Rights” at the IVR 2022, seeking for new perspectives in Human Rights’ philosophy that could resignify and revitalize Human Rights or at least reconnect theory to lived experiences within a context marked by the diminishing legitimacy of Human Rights and Law altogether.

While not all articles presented here focus explicitly on those issues of international political relevance pointed out above, all of them embody a commitment to the question “What then?” They question “how can we make sense of Human Rights in a fractured world with uncertain legal and political structures, and pluralized (individual) identities?” Thus, the question about the bearer of rights, of personhood, “*for whom* are these Human Rights?” pervades this issue. On another line the papers included also ask: “What for? What is the aim pursued by Human Rights and to what extent do contemporary approaches allow us to address it?”

The questions are obviously too big and, therefore, this issue offers only some paths of reflection that can (and need to) be further explored. In fact, because of the positive resonance, the workshop was continued at the IVR 2024 and connected to a methodological workshop on arts-based research. The proposal followed the idea that we need not only to enter into dialogue with a variety of perspectives on Human Rights and legal philosophy, but also that this process of renewal requires us to inquire and reshape the methodologies that form our thinking. While the original plan was to introduce methodological experiments in this printed outcome of the workshop, we had to leave this aspect to a future opportunity. This is also true for a variety of perspectives that are unfortunately not represented in this issue, like approaches emerging from indigenous perspectives (often mistakenly relegated to legal anthropology) and those focusing on environmental issues. As with any good research, pointing out these shortcomings does not diminish the value of the work presented, but signals open doors for further engagement.

This issue presents a variety of perspectives ranging from revisiting historical sources to addressing digital identities, always aiming to nurture contemporary debates in Human Rights Legal Philosophy. Unsurprisingly, a recurrent element is the dialogue with other disciplines like sociology and psychology, as well as other branches of philosophy. The first article, written by me, elaborates on the link between Human Rights philosophy and contemporary theories of Peace and Conflict Studies, considering how plurality and relationality can reshape our understanding of human dignity. With this aim it addresses Pico della Mirandola’s historical work, in a similar manner as Olga Rosenkranzová does in the subsequent paper. She critically inquires trans- and posthumanist approaches, linking them with key concepts of Renaissance philosophy. Piotr Szymaniec further engages with transhumanism through Slavoj Žižek’s thought examining issues around individual freedom and dignity.

The question of the legal subject endowed with Human Rights is further explored by Elena Papangelodemou, who invites us to consider fractured, unstable and unconscious dimensions of subjectivity, drawing particularly on insights from Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis. The legal subject in Human Rights law is also at issue in Zsófia Folkova's work in dialogue with Bruno Latour's theory and the notion of fluid personhood rooted in animist perspectives presented by Guido Sprenger. The section concludes with the collaborative work of Ondrej Hamulák, Lusine Vardanyan and Hovsep Kocharyan, who call for a reconsideration of legal concepts of bodily integrity, informational self-determination and digital sovereignty, advocating for a more comprehensive protection of individuals in the digital sphere.

From this short overview, it becomes clear that the editorial team had to make a particular effort to make possible an issue encompassing such a variety of approaches. I would like to thank Michał Rupniewski, who invited me to co-edit this issue and was both encouraging and patient throughout the process. Special thanks are due to my colleague Olga Rosenkranzová, who co-edited the issue with me, from the initial concept through content development and practical coordination. From the editorial team, I would like to thank especially Agata Dąbrowska, who, as Scientific Secretary, played a crucial coordinating role across institutions and platforms, solving all sorts of problems on the way.

I also especially thank Assoc. Prof. Özlem Derin Saglam, who contributed significantly to this issue through a thorough process of cross-reading during the preparation and writing phase. In a different role, many colleagues supported this issue anonymously, namely as academic reviewers. Saying it was "not easy" to find suitable and willing reviewers is a mere euphemism. All the more, I am grateful to all those who made space in their agendas to take this responsibility with integrity purely for the sake of ensuring the quality of academic research. In the same spirit, I thank all institutions supporting this issue, exemplified by the University of Łódź, which opened its doors to me and to unconventional research paths. Finally, this issue would not exist without the contributions of the authors. My sincere thanks to each one of you for exploring new paths in the philosophy of Human Rights. May this publication provide a platform for opening further dialogue in the Legal Philosophy through our research.

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