

# The Role of “Human Dignity” in a World of Plural Values and Ethical Commitments

**Professor Adeno Addis**

*Tulane University School of Law*

**Monday, 26 March 2012, 6:00 – 7:30 pm**

**Room 404, 4/F T.T. Tsui Building, The University of Hong Kong**

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The Concept of human dignity plays a central role in many legal and political theories. The concept also occupies a prominent place in numerous national and international legal documents as well as judicial decisions. Yet, it is not always clear what the concept actually means. It is one of those phrases that “carry unspoken assumptions and connotations” that can powerfully influence the discourse they permeate while escaping critical scrutiny. Professor Addis first subjects the phrase ‘human dignity’ to critical scrutiny to see which or what understanding (among many) is politically or logically defensible and credible as a matter of practice. He then defines and defends an understanding of human dignity that develops from the bottom up rather than from the top down (philosophically or theologically). This understanding of human dignity, Professor Addis argues, will have a better chance of succeeding as a standard of achievement in a world of plural moral values and ethical commitments.

**Professor Adeno Addis** is the W. Ray Forrester Professor of Public and Constitutional Law at Tulane University School of Law. He has also been a visiting professor at a number of universities, including Boston University, Chuo University (Tokyo), Cornell University, Duke University, and the University of Melbourne (Australia). He has lectured at many other universities worldwide. His most recent lecture was on human rights and shared responsibility at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). Professor Addis has published extensively in the public law area. His works have appeared in journals such as NOMOS (Yearbook of American society of Legal and Political Philosophy), University of Pennsylvania Law Review, Notre Dame Law Review, Comparative Law Review, Human Rights Quarterly and Boston University Law Review, among many others. Two of his most recent publications are entitled “*Constitutions as Autobiographies of Peoples*” and “*Torture as a Counterterrorism Strategy*”. He is currently working on a book length manuscript entitled “*Imagining the Homeland from Afar: Community and Peoplehood in the Age of the Diaspora*”. Professor Addis is a member of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy as well as the American Society of International Law (ASIL). For three years he served on the Executive Board of the ASIL - the highest governing body of the Society.

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**Please email Flora Leung at [fkleung@hku.hk](mailto:fkleung@hku.hk) to reserve a place.**