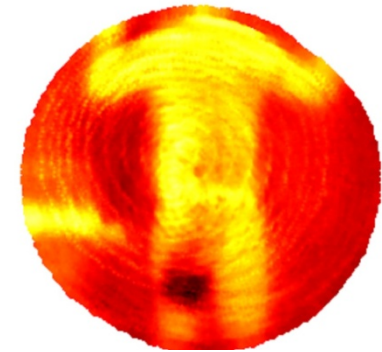
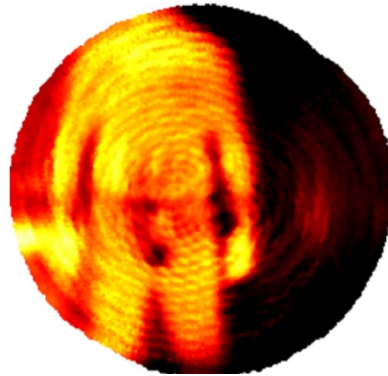
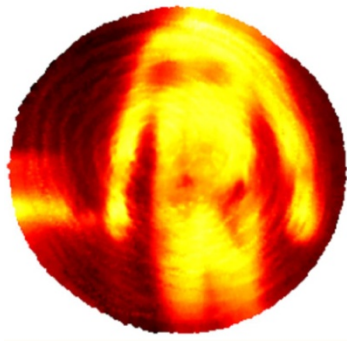


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Dignity and its Role in Security Ethics

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22.06.2012 – Andreas F.X. Wolkenstein (University of Tübingen)



Overview

- (1) Brief characterization of the main thesis
- (2) Overview of current concepts of and debates about dignity
- (3) Debating the entitlement conception of dignity + an alternative
- (4) Some consequences for security ethics



Brief characterization of the main thesis

(Partly) Received view: dignity as a useless concept

→ Dignity has a role to play, although traditional views have to be revised

Thesis defended: Violations of dignity occur when people are denied their access to institutions shaping society

→ Dignity as authority to justifying one's claims

Yet there is no right apart from human rights and apart from positive rights; no rights over and beyond what is positively set

Positive rights: *Codified laws and social norms*



Overview of current concepts and debates

Health Care Analysis, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 2004 (© 2004)

(1) Dignity as merit

(2) Dignity as moral stature

The Varieties of Dignity

Lennart Nordenfelt¹

(3) Dignity of/as identity

(4) Dignity as *Menschenwürde*

Ethics

Dignity: not such a useless concept

Suzy Killmister

Kantian Conception:

- Medieval universalism applied to all human beings
- Autonomy, rationality, morality as source of dignity
- Non-interference with autonomy as prescribed by the CI
- Dignity as entitlement in social interaction: agreement, consent



The entitlement conception of dignity

Dignity as entitlement in social interaction + dignity as self-respect

Self-respect:

- Objective, not psychological-subjective
- To have sovereignty over one's life:
"I should be treated as an entity that has normative authority over one's own life" (102)

Conditions of adequacy:

- Dignity reserved for serious cases
- Dignity must ground (human) rights

Methodology: Examination of typical cases





The entitlement conception of dignity (2)

Arguments *for* the entitlement conception of dignity:

- (1) Kantian arguments for consent-oriented entitlement fail
 - not using others as mere means presupposes knowledge about what it means to wrong somebody
 - dignity as entitlement to self-respect as specifying what it means to wrong somebody

- (2) Criticizing dignity fails
 - a. It is not useless or reducible
 - b. It is not mysterious
 - c. It is not incoherently used and therefore to be dismissed



The entitlement conception of dignity (3)

Arguments *for* the entitlement conception of dignity (cont'd):

- (3) Other attempts to analyze dignity fail
 - a. Sanctity of life, Natural Law, ...
 - b. Status views: Assigning dignity =
 - a. Assigning the right to have rights (Raz)
 - b. Assigning the right to justification (Forst)
 - c. Assigning authority to make claims (Darwall)

Criticizing status views:

- Too imprecise: cannot infer concrete rights (\leftrightarrow grounding relation)
- Identical with rights talk (\leftrightarrow grounding relation)
- Incoherence: authority is generated in reciprocally raising claims
→ Yet in raising claims authority must be already existent



The entitlement conception of dignity (4)

Arguments *against* the self-respect entitlement conception:

- (1) Methodology is at least incomplete:
 - a. Dignity not an everyday, but a technical concept
 - b. What are the intuitions and which intuitions count?
→ more X-Phi needed
 - c. Particular worries:
 - i. Why do only cases of serious moral transgressions count?
 - ii. Does dignity ground human rights, or are there any other relations conceivable?
- (2) Dismissal of contractarian accounts too easy
- (3) Dignity necessitates provision of certain goods → Yet, who is responsible? Possibly massive redistributions



The entitlement conception of dignity (5)

Arguments *against* the self-respect entitlement conception (cont'd):

- (4) Is the grounding relation the only conceivable relation between dignity and rights?
 - Rights *express* commitment to (the value of) self-respect
 - Importance/value of self-respect motivates implementation of rights

- (5) Criticizing the status-view fails: for having an entitlement implies having the authority (status) to issue, defend, and justify the entitlement
 - entitlement as the bare fact of making a claim
 - entitlement as generating reasons for others



An alternative: The authority conception

Authority = Property of being legitimately capable of making claims

Content of claims:

- (1) Rights
- (2) Shaping of society

(1) Rights as objects of authority:

- Making rights-claims effective
- Specifying content, justifying applicability

→ Rights may be officially existent, but they are often imprecise and must be actively respected to be effective, the authority of which is referred to by the concept of dignity



An alternative: The authority conception (2)

Authority = Property of being legitimately capable of making claims

Content of claims:

- (1) Rights
- (2) Shaping of society

(2) Shaping of society:

- Background: Society as a community of cooperation, serving to protect individual conceptions of the Good (Life) (= security)
- Each perspective counts (or else instability lurks); continuous re-evaluation needed
- Re-evaluations not accomplished by using public reasons, but by bringing together private reasons



Consequences for Security Ethics

Security Ethics as study of the (political) question of how to collectively produce security

→ security as the core of morality and politics

Collective reasoning about the means to produce security = collective reasoning about means to collectively secure individual conceptions of the Good (Life)

→ This is what dignity is meant to provide the authority for

Collective reasoning about security as an end = collective reasoning about the extent to which politics has to serve this end

→ This is what dignity is meant to provide the authority for

Background: Henry Richardson (1994, 2002)



Thank you for your interest!

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