

The Indispensability of Human Dignity

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Abstract: Human dignity is often seen as a fundamental moral idea grounding a basic duty to respect one another. Yet, the two leading philosophical accounts of human dignity face well-known difficulties: they struggle to explain how human dignity could generate a moral duty of respect and why human dignity is necessary for practical thought. My aim in this article is to propose an alternative, relational account. Roughly, human dignity consists in an *original practical standing* necessarily correlated with a directed duty of respect by others. The relational account promises to solve these difficulties. Since dignity consists in an original practical standing, it necessarily entails a moral duty of respect. And since dignity is not reducible to some further value, it is indispensable for the notion of respect for persons.