

Review of: "Kantian Constructivism and Practical Reasoning in Clinical Bioethics"

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The article represents an interesting attempt of dealing with applied ethics by referring, at the same time, to history of ethics.

In what follows, I will refer to some points, which could be improved for the sake of the argumentation.

PART I deals with (1) a general presentation of constructivism in its broader meaning; (2) the concept of reason and its constitutive principles. It is the Author's intention that this second focus should lead to a discussion of the Kantian variety of constructivism ("Some Kantian constructivists tried to ..."). However, the move from the first focus (and, in this way, from constructivism in general) to the second focus (and, in this way, to Kantian constructivism) remains unclear. The comprehension of this move needs deeper analysis, in which the peculiarities of a Kantian position in constructivism should be further underlined.

At the end of this part, a so-called "CI-Procedure", i.e., a procedure referring to Kant's Categorical Imperative, is presented not as "a test of rationality", but rather as "a tool that can help us detect practical irrationality in some cases". In this way, a strong interpretation of Kant's thought comes to the fore, so that a further elucidation of this reading could be very helpful.

PART II provides, firstly, an insight into the way of reconnecting "the perspective of Kantian constructivism" to an approach in what is called an "empirical/normative debate", and, secondly, aims "to give specific importance in philosophical argumentation to the concept of dignity of the person". What follows is a "Kantian analysis of a clinical case".

Now, the most pressing question is: does the Author want to furnish a "Kantian" analysis of the clinical case? Or does the Author rather aim at providing a "constructivist", even a "Kantian constructivist" way, of interpreting the case itself? This is a point to which I would recommend dedicating more attention.

A second doubt I have about the proposed reading has to do with the way of referring to contemporary argumentations concerning “dignity” without taking into consideration the concept of dignity in Kant's philosophy. The fact that dignity does not play a significant role in the context of Kantian constructivism does not tell us much about the role played by dignity in the context of Kant's ethics altogether. There exist a number of analyses in this direction (see, among others: Oliver Sensen, *Kant on Human Dignity*, Berlin/Boston 2011).

I would suggest to have a look at Kant's text – rather than focussing solely on Kantian Constructivism –, since I believe that this could provide the Author with more coherent arguments for defending the thesis regarding the necessity of newly considering the importance of the concept of “dignity of a person” in the context of bioethics.

A last point in this direction: even though the reference to Viafora's studies seem to be very interesting as an attempt of broadening the debate in bioethics, in order to give justice to the title of the paper (“Kantian Constructivism and Practical Reasoning in Clinical Bioethics”) and the aims of the article more generally, a more careful analysis of

1. what Kantian (!) Constructivism is taken to be;
2. what Kant's thesis about the concept of human dignity consist in;

are necessary. This strategy might help in not deluding the expectations of the readers.