

Introduction: Should we be allowed to disagree and break with our families?

The case of 18-year old Nasser, suing his parents for trying to abduct him and force-marry to someone he didn't care about

15-year old Nasser and his parents lived in Berlin, Germany. Nasser runs from home after he tells them about his homosexuality.

Once he returns home, but only to find out a marriage was arranged to a Lebanese. He runs again, tells the authorities he's being abused so his parents lose their parental rights.

Again, he returns home for a visit more recently. His father abducts him, intending to take him to Lebanon. At the border to Romania, the father is being arrested.

Upon returning to Berlin, Nasser reports his father to the police. He's now 18 years old.

In the interview, he says he did so both for the sake of his own peace of mind and for making cases such as his publicly aware.

<http://www.rbb-online.de/politik/beitrag/2015/02/deutsch-libanese-wehrt-sich-gegen-zwangsheirat.html>

Zwangsverheiratung liegt dann vor, wenn die Betroffene sich zur Ehe gezwungen fühlt und entweder mit ihrer Weigerung kein Gehör findet oder es nicht wagt, sich zu widersetzen, weil Eltern, Familie, Verlobte und Schwiegereltern mit den unterschiedlichsten Mitteln versuchen, Druck auf sie auszuüben.[7][#1zwang]

We may call a marriage a forced one if one or more partners feel they're being forced, their objections aren't heard, or they don't dare to oppose due to pressure from parts of their family.

[#1zwang]: Zwangsverheiratung. Informationen des Berliner Arbeitskreises gegen Zwangsverheiratung, BIG e.V. Berlin, 2013. <http://www.big-berlin.info/medien/zwangsverheiratung>

While it's necessary to look at his parent's claims to fully understand the situation, it isn't necessary to understand their point in order to judge Nasser's actions.

Not the truth of Nasser's convictions or that of his parents are important. Their coherent set of convictions matters mostly.

Usually, philosophers try to find out when moral convictions are accurate and in line with a universal truth. Dworkin instead argues for moral responsibility, to claim ownership of one's values and act according to them.[102]

- This is the foundation of authenticity. §201503230933
- will discuss this in the next section

According to the realist's view, moral convictions are accurate if they are universally true. Dworkin argues both that there's no reason to believe in external truth-makers or "morons" is morals, and that it wouldn't even help if it were otherwise. To find the morons which make our convictions true, we'd have to find out which convictions are true first. Without truth-makers which can demonstrate truth and falsity of convictions, there's no accuracy to be had.

Instead of accuracy, Dworkin argues in favor of responsibility. Or convictions aren't *just* true, but they are true in context of our system of

values, their coherence.

- <!--ct: §201506251022 Hedgehog's faith that moral truth equals coherent values-->
- "We can seek truth about morality only by pursuing coherence endorsed by conviction." [120]
- That's the hedgehog's faith: "all true values form an interlocking network", and "each of our convictions about what is good or right or beautiful plays some role in supporting each of our other convictions in each of those domains of value." [120]
 - §201506250945 Moral responsibility necessitates coherent convictions
 - This is part of our being responsible.

Responsibility entails that we have good reasons to hold on to our convictions. Instead of arguing for the truth of our convictions, we make them plausible. There are convictions which don't stand this test, but these have to be either integrated or thrown out in order to maintain responsibility.

How can we resolve the issue that both parties may be equally convinced in and equally morally responsible for their actions?

We will turn to authenticity, and owning one's life, and that Nasser's parents violate the principle of non-harmful interfering.

Dworkin uses the metaphor of swim lanes in his theory. [371]

[#dworkin2011just] The metaphor conveys the intention of not interfering with somebody else's life without good reasons. You need to worry about your performance in life, swimming in your own lane.

In ethics: how do you find out how well you did swim? -- Judging the quality of your performance.

In moral: sets the boundaries of the swim lanes, that is, what's your life about? Generally, you should stay in your own lane. It may be allowed to cross lanes, though. When is it appropriate to cross lanes in order to help someone? Also, it's never allowed to cross lanes in order to harm someone.
[288][#dworkin2011just]

One has to find out what makes one's one life a successful life, define what "success" means, and work towards that goal coherently. That's the special responsibility we have to take for our lives.

She who lives with authenticity can only agree to those ways of living which are not a waste of opportunities from her vantage point. [according to Sen] [#sen2010igel] There is no objectively best career path, and there's no objectively best gender to bond with.

Each person has a special, personal responsibility for identifying what counts as success in his own life; he has a personal responsibility to create that life through a coherent narrative or style that he himself endorses.[204][#dworkin2011just]

The opposite side of self-respect: because you respect yourself, it matters which ways of living you chose. You develop a life-style.

From there it follows that:[210][#dworkin2011just]

- one has to take responsibility for each of one's actions and is not allowed to ascribe responsibility to external causes
- one has to deal with the cost and consequences of one's decisions; he who delegates responsibility to others acts without dignity

We have to understand Nasser's point of view and his system of values first and foremost. It doesn't make sense to try and force an external template onto a complex interpretive system. (We'll see why that is so.)

Interpretations can be true or false, just like scientific claims. Using any other other difference than true/false, for example reasonable/unreasonable, is useless in practice. [151][#dworkin2011just]

Dworkin's point is this: not the eligibility for truth but the content of both systems of concepts, that is the system of moral versus the system of scientific claims, delineates one from the other. Science doesn't have exclusive right to truth.

Usually, interpretation is considered highly subjective, while truth is considered to be an objective value exclusive to science. Fittingly, interpretive propositions aren't "barely true". They depend on a system of values and are true only in respect to them.[153--4][#dworkin2011just]

Dworkin calls this a holistic approach.

Conversely, convergence of interpretations are highly accidental because their foundation is shaky: since there is no bare truth, every truth we obtain is contingent.[155][#dworkin2011just]

What does it mean to marry someone, anyway?

Marriage is an institution, and being a spouse a social role which creates obligations through association.

Institution

When two people recognize recurring actions as types of actions, and when this typification is reciprocal, that is, both share this assessment. Institutions are like agreements, only implicit. You perform actions and someone else

forms justified expectations about your behavior in certain situations. That's habitualization; and if your concrete actions vary while being of a common type, we've got typification.[#berger-luckmann1980sozkon][1]

Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution.[53][#berger1966con]

Bundles of expectations of a social role which survive the test of time. It doesn't matter who is playing the role, it only matters that the expectations attached to that role are satisfied.

Institutions are bound to expectations. They make orienting on role expectations reliable.[cf 104][#luhmann1971polplan]

Even though there might not be anyone actually enforcing certain behavior through punishment, say, you have to worry far less about the outcome of a choice someone in a certain role will make. Given a set of options to act, and given an institution, the outcome will far more likely match the institutional expectations. This reduces uncertainty in deciding what to do in the light of other actors around us tremendously. When established social roles and institutions come to play, things roll smoother.

A social role is a set of expectations on the actions of someone.

Formally put, it's a social typification of actions. It has to be attached to an objectified set of knowledge: more than one person has to have the same expectations in order to make it a shared typification and establish a role. [78f][#berger-luckmann1980sozkon]

According to Hardimon, a role is a “[constellation] of institutionally specified rights and duties organized around an institutionally specified social function”[334][#hardimon1994obl]

[#hardimon1994obl]: Hardimon, Michael, 1994. "Role Obligations," The Journal of Philosophy, 91: 333–363.

[#berger-luckmann1980sozkon]: Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1980): *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie* ([x-bdsk://berger-luckmann1980sozkon](#)), Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch.

Marriage

What is marriage?

Though this isn't a paper about marriage, we need to agree on some baseline in order to proceed with the analysis of Nasser's case.

I want to find a pragmatic concept of marriage which satisfies the following criteria:

- point out the consequences: what does marriage change? How do we treat someone we're married to differently than foreigners; what kinds of claims can our spouse¹ make?
- strength of the bond: what's the difference between marriage and sharing someone's car? In what respect is the former a stronger bond than the latter?

We can rule out political, sexual, or religious aspects for now, even love. In this context, marriage is of concern to us as an institution only, and as a change of the base of our decisions.

- 200910011300 Concept Institution
- 200912061046 Concept social role

The weight of the consequences of marrying someone entail that no one

should be force-married. Forcing violates the principles of dignity. And being forced into marriage has long-lasting consequences. It changes a life tremendously. Forcing your child into marriage is a very large infringement of your child's self-actualization.

Legal implications

We vow, which constitutes the promise-like character, but we also enter a legal relationship with our spouse. This has strong implications for our lives. That alone does make marriage a serious thing, and not a change in lifestyle to take lightly.

Promise

To marry entails making a promise, literally: I vow to spend my life with you until I withdraw or am released from the promise. What "spending my life with you" means will vary. Exclusivity and a strong expectation to not disengage lightly are part of the institution. Some details may be up to us to decide as there's a leeway of interpretation.

As a promise which can never be fulfilled, our actions will have to be judged differently from the marriage onward. We have to take the welfare of our spouse into account until death or divorce. Even if we don't feel like it. That and more could be part of the promise, depending on our concrete expectations.

Marriage as an institution has consequences for our lives through the eyes of others. Institutional expectations on one hand lay the foundation of our own expectations. On the other hand, they are shared among our peers. Social pressure will make it more likely to keep the promise even if our intrinsic motivation ceases. No one will ask my spouse if it's okay for her that I make out with someone else; it's just expected that it's not.

Breaking promises will diminish trust people put in you, given others find out about it. Breaking the marital promise is more likely to become wider spread information.

Exclusivity

Once you're married, you cannot marry again until disengagement. There's just a single slot for a spouse in your life at any point in time, so to speak. Getting married is intended to be a change for a lifetime. Here, intention and practice diverge, as the divorce rate indicates. It's okay to get married multiple times in most western societies, but only in succession. (The motto is "Forever, for the time being"; "Erst mal für immer")

Association and Special Obligation

Marriage is a kind of association. Formally, it is backed by a promise. The contents of the promise determine the consequences in cases of involuntary marriage together with legal obligations. Without the will to marry, there's no special obligation.

Informally, even more so under circumstances of freely choosing a spouse, marriage is also backed by caring. Intimacy is the basis for special obligations in friendship and family, and it roots in caring. Intimacy has to grow, and is usually considered a prerequisite instead of a consequence. It cannot be forced. (Although both spouses may suffer the same from their forced marriage and end up becoming partners in and through their suffering.) Without intimacy, there're hardly special obligations.

- 201506041035 Association
- 201506211238 Dignity is the foundation of a defense against inroads from parents

Brake, Elizabeth, "Marriage and Domestic Partnership", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/marriage/>.

Useful Concepts in *Justice for Hedgehogs* and Care Ethics

Role and weight of tradition in Dworkin's theory; moral is no subject to a community

Recall the hedgehog's faith:

"We can seek truth about morality only by pursuing coherence endorsed by conviction." [120] [#dworkin2011just]

That's the hedgehog's faith: "all true values form an interlocking network", and "each of our convictions about what is good or right or beautiful plays some role in supporting each of our other convictions in each of those domains of value." [120] [#dworkin2011just]

- Moral responsibility necessitates coherent convictions-->
- We should try to create a well-working filter for influences on our decision-making, so that our decisions are grounded in our values instead of our tastes and emotions. This is a moral filter, which is created by a coherent web of convictions. These convictions are backed by reason: we can argue for them. Consequently, they aren't superficial and cannot be contradictory, for contradicting convictions depend on superficiality and lack of reflection. [107--8] [#dworkin2011just]
- Moral responsibility requires us to bring our initially compartmentalized convictions into a coherent form. [108] [#dworkin2011just]

- Here, Dworkin's refusal to let emotions guide our lives is clear.

Reasonable convictions should guide our decision-making. However we design our lives, this design should be argued for. Simply feeling like living so and so doesn't suffice *until* our convictions include a strong claim that this is indeed an important part of living well.

- Responsibility requires interpretation and authenticity-->
- "[I]nterpretations knit values together"[101][#dworkin2011just] -- We have to make sense of our convictions through reflection and bring them into a coherent web. This is a moral imperative, because without doing so, we are not morally responsible,. Moral responsibility is the foundation for authenticity, to claim ownership of our lives.[210][#dworkin2011just] Dworkin calls it a moral virtue.
 - Concept authenticity
 - Interpretive concepts

Values are interpretive concepts. Interpreting values enables us to form moral convictions which may become themselves values and the basis for further interpretation. Since there's neither beginning nor end to be had, this is a self-supporting system of propositions.[162][#dworkin2011just]

TODO weight of tradition

Dworkin's concept of dignity, responsibility to ourselves and others

According to Dworkin, we maintain dignity through the principles of self-respect and authenticity:[204][#dworkin2011just] we want to live our lives according to our terms, and we take responsibility to create a coherent narrative.

Self-respect entails that our way of living is genuinely important to us. It is the foundation of being able to live a good life in dignity:

Each person must take his own life seriously: he must accept that it is a matter of importance that his life be a successful performance rather than a wasted opportunity.[203][#dworkin2011just]

The principle of self-respect requires that we care about our way of living, so we should strive to make a higher impact, to increase the performance value of our lives. We should want to make our lives successful.

Product value is a value inherent to an object in its existence. Performance value is a value connected to its coming-about.[197][#dworkin2011just]

Dworkin applies this distinction to the value of a life. If someone lives a life in contemplation, say, then it may be a life which subjectively feels good. This can be called the product value of a life. But in judging someone's life, we tend to attach objective value to the ripples her life creates, to the amount of change in the world, and thus refer to the performance value. [198][#dworkin2011just]

In the same vein, product value doesn't matter to make the world a better place: more people don't equal a better world. The performance value of lives is highly unequal, so some lives lived were worth more than others. [205][#dworkin2011just]

- <!--ct: Comprehensive outcome, §201302021448-->
- Sen's concept of a comprehensive outcome enables us to say that a victory is *fair* or an arrest is *arbitrary*. Taking the comprehensive outcome of actions into account, we judge an action by looking at procedural aspects of the action instead of the outcome only.[51] [#sen2010ger]

- This works well together with *nyaya*, which is an Indian term for a particular kind of justice. Nyaya takes the state and the process into account and helps us find an answer to the question "How should we live?" [15, 53] [Sen 2010]

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From there it follows that: [210] [Dworkin 2011]

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Responsibility qqqq

We can understand responsibility for decisions and actions by looking what things find their way into our psychologic self: emotion and keeping

everything coherent.

All conditions for living a successful life, which is an authentic life, can be found in mental states of a person. One would live a life without dignity if one would attribute responsibility to external causes exclusively.

- <!--ct: 201503230933 Re: Dignity, notes on Authentizität according to Dworkin-->

- Authenticity is the other side of self-respect: because you respect yourself, it matters which ways of living you chose. You develop a life-style.
- From there it follows that:[210][#dworkin2011just]
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The origin of a decision doesn't matter at all for its weight and value. Only the feeling of coherence counts. Decisions may be in part determined by external factors, but they cannot replace decisions themselves.[NOT CITEABLE, book 2, part 3, §1, p. 407][#hume1975treatise]

For example, if I were a fan of Justin Bieber, my decision to visit the Ringlokschuppen in Bielefeld for a concert will depend on Justin Bieber announcing a concert there. Without an announcement, which is not in my power, I wouldn't visit the venue. But the announcement didn't cause my visiting the place at a particular date and time.

Decisions become important to our lives and become genuinely *ours* by reflecting our desires, plans, and convictions. We attribute decisions to

ourselves and take responsibility for them because they fit our mental state. Conversely, decisions which do not fit our mental state are of no value to us.

[T]he thesis of Justice for Hedgehogs is this: what a person has reason to want is an authentic life – one that accords with and reflects the decisions he or she makes about how to live, and in which these decisions themselves reflect his or her desires, plans, and convictions and are based on true beliefs about the world.[607][#scanlon2010resp]

The notion of "true beliefs" rules out misinformed people and some of those with serious mental disorders.

Only decisions with personal weight and value have meaning for social life: others react to this kind of decision with praise or admonition. If I were too mentally ill, no such reaction would be considered appropriate; instead, people would attribute my actions to my special condition. This has consequences for people bonding with me and creating obligations.

So responsibility is a twofold requirement:

1. It is necessary to have the moral virtue of responsibility to claim integrity or authenticity for one's life. In this sense, responsibility focuses on our actions and the story of our lives.
2. Moral responsibility is also a prerequisite to creating the foundation of our lives' stories: the system of values, formed through interpretation and argument. Without this integrated system of convictions, we cannot live authentic lives.

Dworkin's concept of associative obligations

Special obligations

: "obligations owed to some subset of persons, in contrast to natural duties that are owed to all persons simply *qua* persons."[#jeske2014obl]]

Dworkin recognizes two kinds of special obligation:

1. Performative obligation, which is the case for example when we promise something to somebody. They are called thus because we need to act in a certain way (performance) to form the obligation: "we make some people special through deliberate and voluntary acts like making a promise to them."[301][#dworkin2011just]
2. Associative obligation, which is the case when we're in a special kind of personal relationship to somebody. It's called thus because the mere relationship to another person suffices to give rise to obligation. It's not called "personal" or "relationship obligation" because Dworkin recognizes citizenship as one kind of relevant association.[301][#dworkin2011just]

Role obligations are culturally contingent conventions.[301]

[#dworkin2011just] The underlying institutional force (Hardimon) may differ from culture to culture.

Relationships create a "special kind of responsibility". They are fed-back by and reinforce themselves a set of social practices.

Social practices and convention reduce uncertainty. If there's a social favored way to respond to a certain situation, we at least have one way to react at hand.

- <!--ct: §200912061046 Concept social role-->
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an objectified set of knowledge: more than one person has to have the same expectations in order to make it a shared typification and establish a role.[78f][#berger-luckmann1980sozkon]

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Associations are risky relationships which make us open for a special kind of benefit and make us vulnerable to a special kind of harm.

Sexual intimacy is an association.[312][#dworkin2011just] Intimacy is characterized by excluding others -- from secrets, and from sharing personal vulnerabilities. Sexual intimacy is also characterized by mutually exclusive agreements to not have sexual intercourse with others. So both partners refrain from sharing the joys of having sex with other people. That's the benefits of trust and intimacy in sexual relationships. Meanwhile, if one partners breaks the rules of intimacy, the other is going to be badly hurt.

Political associations are another example.[320][#dworkin2011just] To participate in a democracy will raise questions about justice: what penalties are we allowed to inflict upon each other? How much tax paying can the poor handle?

Only those decisions I deem my own, those which fit my mental state, my plans and convictions, are the basis for forming associations. If other people would not think I'm responsible for my decisions and actions, they wouldn't bond with me.

In the case of severe mental illness, there's still a relationship of doctor or caregiver and patient. These are no associations, though. I would expect my mother to still love me, but under certain conditions, even that could

become a case of conflict with her dignity. She must not make herself vulnerable to my abusing or exploiting her love to live in accordance with the second principle of dignity.

In order to form associations with other people, I have to be able to take care of myself and to live a life in dignity. (Is she who suffers from severe mental illness not capable of living a life in dignity according to Scanlon?)

We have a special responsibility to those we're in close relationships with because these relationships make both parties more vulnerable to each other.[312][#dworkin2011just] Intimacy is the key component.

Associations are risky relationships because they make us vulnerable for a special kind of harm, even when they make us open for a special kind of benefit.

It is permissible to be more vulnerable to some people when this vulnerability is met with a heightened concern for oneself. The other party should care. Without reciprocity, one's dignity is compromised in principle. Even when the other party inflicts no harm, her unilateral power over one's well-being is in conflict with the second principle of dignity, namely that we ourselves should take full responsibility for our lives.

Looking at care ethics: why it's okay to pay no respect to your parents' claims if your family is non-supportive

Care ethics is rooted in everyday reasoning instead of transcendental ideals like God or dignity. Neither of those two have a high stand nowadays anyway. Real needs of real people are important.[chapter 4]
[#manning1992fem]

Care ethics is grounded in "care", and "to care for".[61f][#manning1992fem]

"Care" is dispositional. Care entails we raise our awareness for the needs of fellow human beings. It's the responsibility to be a caring person. Care ethics is highly contextualized because momentary analyses and high awareness play a prominent role. There are no hard rules, like in deontology.

"To care for" means to respond to the needs of other persons, animals, groups, values, or objects. It's the acting out of the disposition.

Should Nasser have sought a compromise?

A compromise, as sketched by care ethics, can be translated to Dworkin's theory:

When we're in conflict with someone, we have to take the interest of the other person into account. We have to respect their needs. It is not allowed to simply override what they want. This is because fellow human beings have dignity and a right to design their life according to their own terms.

A compromise for the sake of making a compromise or as the easier way out should not be taken lightly: we also have to maintain our self-respect, that is holding up our own dignity and defend against inroads from others. We just have as much right to design our lives to our own liking. (As long as we harm no one.)

In care ethics, compromises are important: they're not the way out with the highest computable utility, but they are better inasmuch as to make a compromise it is necessary that both parties are open to each other's interests and needs. A compromise is a solution with a higher awareness for the needs of our fellow humans.

When the best solution is the one which takes the interests of all parties

involved into account, we have to make real compromises, sometimes, as opposed to making a compromise for the sake of making a compromise, or as an easier way out of a difficult situation. It's more important to take everyone's needs into account than making a compromise per se.[141] [#manning1992fem]

- 201504070954 Care ethics according to Manning

A compromise can deter from the best possible solution for the sake of feeling well: at least no one's feelings seem to be hurt. That's not a good motivation.

In a conflict, opening oneself up for the needs of the other party can result in being able to value them again. If they don't play their part of making a true compromise, it is allowed to ignore their expectations completely. Without mutuality, a compromise doesn't work.[105][#manning1992fem] It seems to be better to care for yourself first if the other refuses to do.

It would work just as well to say that not taking a compromise into account simply violates the other party's dignity: you'd ignore their needs to make their life a successful one according to their terms. (Of course abstract concepts like dignity have no place in care ethics.)

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- <!--ct: §201503231003 Concept self-respect-->
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Justifying Nasser's Actions

Dworkin doesn't get specific enough in his theory. Re-interpreting care ethic's justification of breaking with your family in Dworkin's terms. (They are compatible, but the foundation differs.)

Care ethics fits our intuition nicely: if the relationship is not one of mutual support, it is allowed to break with our parents. This seems to be quite a good rule of thumb, but it doesn't make breaking bonds operationizable: it doesn't provide criteria to decide whether the description applies to our case.

We can turn to Jeske to find out more about the conditions of a supportive relationship.

Jeske states that familial bonds are tied through intimacy. The relationship between parent and child is just a special case of a relationship not unlike friendship. It takes time to develop, and it takes energy to maintain. Biology alone doesn't suffice to ground special obligations in familial relationships according to Jeske.

So if intimacy like in friendship is the key to familial obligations, a non-supportive relationship to one's parents may be characterized as one lacking intimacy, which is grounded in understanding.

When parents force their children to actions against their own will, especially if they are adults, the relationship clearly lacks a friendship-like grounding.

Even if we said, like Kant did, that sometime we're supporting our friends best when we do things they don't seem to like, we still have to take into account their autonomy to uphold a relationship which respects both parties's dignity.

That's where Dworkin, Jeske, and claims of care ethics according to Manning converge: the individual's exclusive right to choose for her own which lifestyle suits her the best is the foundation for a concept of dignity. A person's dignity shall not be allowed to be violated, and it is just to defend against such infringements, even from one's parents, even if they claimed their actions are to one's benefit.

Pay attention to your own life and your "performance" first as long as you do no harm to others

In care ethics, Manning grounds special obligations towards family members in affection. ("ties of affection"[105][#manning1992fem]). Through a natural want to care comes the obligation.

Expectations and a shared history become important only in second instance. The true motivational force is the care for the other.

It's always a bad thing to break familial bonds, but sometimes it's necessary to do so: if the family doesn't support you as a person with her own interests but instead treats you like a means to their end.[105]

[#manning1992fem]

Self-actualization has precedence over maintaining familial bonds. Manning wouldn't call it self-actualization of realizing one's dreams, but rather care for oneself.

Pondering parents' demands: what justifies them? What doesn't?

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- <!--ct: §201504090830 Making a true compromise results in more care-->

Nasser's parents seem to care from their own point of view, but they don't seem to care in a way which takes his personality into account. They want to form him instead of respect him.

So is Nasser universally justified in his actions?

Dworkin tells us that his theory doesn't depend on a particular community. But you can say we're never independent from our upbringing intellectually ("Standortgebundenheit"). So is Dworkin a child of western philosophy only and does his theory not have power over eastern culture?

Respecting other people's lives is coherent with the foundation of individualism. An upbringing in a culture which doesn't put an emphasis on the individual will make most of Dworkin's foundation unplausible.

Cultural upbringing as the foundation of our values:

There's no room for relativism in Dworkin's understanding of interpretive concepts among cultures and languages. If one thing is unjust in one culture, it should be similarly unjust in every other. Just like we teach our children to adopt certain values, we can suppose that it's logically possible for other cultures to understand them. It will need a different kind of effort, though.

To Dworkin, being able to translate a term to "justice" presupposes enough similarity in concepts to argue about its interpretation.[171]

[#dworkin2011just]

Different cultures may apply the concept of justice differently, but that doesn't make it right for them. If we share a coarse understanding of the concept, but discriminate women while we don't, or prohibit slavery while we get rich from it, one of us will be wrong in either case. It takes moral argument to find out who's right.

If a culture doesn't seem to have the concept at all, its member's actions can still be unjust according to the concept of everyone else. Dworkin's explanation is very short, and there's no formal argument except that someone doesn't need to have a concept of unjust actions to act unjust. It seems these people have to be educated in some way to enter a moral discourse about their actions. This presupposes that even a people without the concept of justice has values, and that a discourse about values will help give rise to new ones, like justice.

So either we share a concept and argue about its interpretive contents, or one of us doesn't and has to be taught to reflect on his actions properly. This sounds quite similar to what a child has to go through. After all, raising children to adopt certain values is an indicator that teaching unknown values is possible. We don't even need to presuppose a realm of ideas or "morons" which we teach a child to recognize.

If moral argument is possible with cultures that don't share your concepts and convictions, and if one way to solve the conflict is through education, it's only a matter of time before someone begins to shout "colonialism!"

Dworkin doesn't simply want to export western values to less developed countries, though. His point is more profound: it's a matter of utmost importance of having convictions to defend them, and to stand in for your values. If your values entail to defend the weak, then you've got no choice but apply it to weak people in different cultures as well.

There are strong moral concepts like "justice" which will need a lot of work to be taught if not present, and even more if conflicting concepts have to be discussed. There's nothing inherently wrong in teaching. We do it all the time. As soon as you enter an argument, you become a teacher of sorts: you argue in favor of your position, so under the governance of reason, the other party will have to learn to better defend or to change their mind. You teach your children. Teaching is part of authentic self-expression.

The burden of moral interpretation lies on everyone's shoulders, but it needn't be carried alone: it is our duty to strive for a coherent web of values and convictions. But we can rely on our culture to help. We don't start with a blank slate. We start our lives with a shared language and a shared understanding of values.[109][#dworkin2011just] This eases bringing convictions into a coherent system.

But his method may survive: they, too, may argue in favor of coherence, only they won't accept the underlying convictions of Dworkin, the westerner.

Nasser may or may not care much about his parent's upbringing as he, too, is a child of western ideology.

If Nasser truly cared about his parents, we should ask him if suing his father was the only way to express discontent with his actions, the only way to liberate from his parent's claims.
He is justified to go separate ways.

The question turns into one of measure: did he have to go this far, or would a less severe defense have sufficed?

1. Although there are cultures which tolerate or even expect polygamy, for

the sake of Nasser in Lebanon and Germany, it suffices to talk about monogamous marriage and having a single spouse only. 