30.2 Abstracts

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In recent years philosophical debates on human rights have focused upon the contrast between humanist and political conceptions of human rights. Defenders of the humanist conception take human rights to be those rights that we have solely in virtue of being human. By contrast, defenders of the political conception aim to offer an account of human rights practice without any recourse to notions such as human dignity, personhood, etc. They take human rights to be those rights that we have in virtue of being subject to political authority. In this essay, I show some of the problematic implications of endorsing this aspect of the political conception. After analyzing some key functions that the concept of human dignity plays in human rights practice, I focus on the gradual extension of legal human rights to corporations. I analyze the negative effects that the distinctive functions of human rights norms can have upon the human rights of natural persons once corporations are recognized as legal persons bearing human rights. Turning to human rights jurisprudence I then explore the normative resources that the concept of human dignity has to offer in order to prevent such negative effects and which are unavailable to a conception of human rights that disregards the humanist core of human rights practice.

Keywords: human rights, human dignity, corporations, humanist conception, political conception, jurisprudence of dignity.