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Le débat sur la liberté d'expression : entre norme et valeur

The Debate on Freedom of Expression: Between Norm and Value

Abstract: This paper is focusing on the concept of “freedom of expression”, a philosophical notion that could be framed either as a norm or as a value. After clarifying the contexts of its utilization, I am interested in analyzing the ways in which an ethical framework for freedom of expression is proposed. I do this by investigating a prominent example from the contemporary political life of Canada, namely Justin Trudeau’s response to Emmanuel Macron’s position concerning the publication of Muhammad’s caricatures. I will argue that differences in conceiving freedom of expression go hand in hand with an antinomy between a consequentialist ethic and a deontological ethic. As such, disputes between norm and value and between consequentialism and deontology constitute sub-debates of the central debate on the limitation or ethical regulation of freedom of expression. This investigation reveals, yet again, the presence of the motif of dissymmetry at the core of public debates: more often than not, discussions are not dominated by the intrinsic logic of the arguments, but by discursive force.

Keywords: freedom of expression, norm, value, ethical consequentialism, deontological ethics, dissymmetry