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NOTION OF IDENTIFICATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL CASE STUDY

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Human life should be good life in the real world which is not merely a function of objective facts but also a function of subjective factors like hopes, fears, interests, etc. Goodness, or excellence, is an ethical notion. The factors of good life cannot be identified solely by using the so-called factual (descriptive) methods of identification. This means that the identification cannot be fully “objective” or fully “public”. Furthermore, there is a need for other methods of identification that also take into account certain “subjective” aspects of the object of identification. Following Jaakko Hintikka we call these methods contextual (perspectival) methods of identification. Here ethics is not a set of ethical rules but rather the practical study of human life. How should we live our unique life? A philosophical-conceptual study is thus practical for this purpose. This is what Aristotle called practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

Keywords: action, ethics, methods of identification, security, safety.

Introduction

The notion of identification is a central philosophical notion. The notion plays central role, for example, in the philosophy of identity, in the philosophy of communication, and in the philosophy of science. An intention of the present paper is to formulate a philosophical case study which shows the philosophical importance of the notion of identification. The notion of identification is used in the philosophical analysis of the notion of human security. The analysis

shows the philosophical depth of the notion of human security but, at the same, the analysis demonstrates the philosophical importance of the notion of identification. The analysis shows, for example, how objective and subjective aspects are related to each other.

1.

Security is a deep concern for humankind. Perhaps for this reason human security is a

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notion with several meanings. We will classify the meanings into the following two different classes: subject-centered and non-subject-centered meanings of the notion. The subject-centered meaning of the notion is, as the name of the class implies, related to some subject. However, this does not mean that the subject-centered meaning would be subjective in any usual sense. For example, the notion of good human life is subject centered: it refers to the good life of a human being. It is not reasonable to speak about good life without any reference to the person whose good life it is. The individual whose good life we are considering is not some specific individual with special characteristics of his or her own. The individual is taken under consideration at a conceptual level. Of course, subject-centered meaning also refers to typical subjective meanings like the feelings, beliefs, or attitudes of the subject. However, the actual feelings of a human being are subjective, but the (linguistic) characterization of these feelings is not subjective even if it is subject centered (for further discussion, see Hintikka, M. B., Hintikka, J. 1986). The non-subject-centered meaning of the notion refers, among others, to administrative or sociological meanings or general politics.

The multiplicity of meanings implies that we have to focus our attention on some fundamental notions related to human security. The fundamental notions are part of the so-called practical philosophy. The notion of practicality is understood in the Aristotelian sense: practicality means the orientation of human life. Human security should be included in a map of human life. The map may be understood, for example, as someone's personal map, as a map of some occupation, or as a map of all human beings. The structure of the map depends on whose map we are characterizing but in every case the map has to have a solid conceptual foundation (Hintikka 2007).

2.

Security is provided by the so-called security sector. If security disappears in a certain area, then the security sector may restore security in that area. This may be understood as the normalization of the situation. In the case of a natural catastrophe, it is clear that the situation should be normalized, but in the case of some catastrophes there is no baseline normality that could be restored. Moreover, the security sector may provide security but, in a sense, the presence of a security sector underlines human feelings of unsafety. Safety is something that cannot be provided by the security sector or by any other agent. Safety is susceptible to collapse: it is difficult to achieve but easy to lose. One has to cherish safety; security, on the other hand, is something one has to provide.¹

Human security is something concrete, something that influences everyday life. Human life should be good life in the real world. Good life is not merely a function of objective facts but also a function of subjective factors like hopes, fears, interests, etc. Characterizing the goodness of human life is a philosophical-conceptual task. Security, in one sense or another, is part and parcel of good life. Goodness is a Pandora's box that reveals a multiplicity of meanings the instant one starts to analyze the notion (Wright 1996).

The notion of goodness is an extremely difficult notion to examine. In the world of facts, there is only human action without any values. From this point of view, values seem to be only something added retrospectively by human beings. However, if this were true, then goodness or excellence would be merely a question of performance: a soldier's excellence means acting effectively in his or her role. If the soldier's role is to kill effectively, then excellence refers to his or her skill in killing and the effective use

¹ I am in debt to Professor Timo Airaksinen for this idea. He explicated the idea in his public lecture at the congress held at the National Defence University (Finland) on 15 October 2010.

of this skill. Are there any values in human activity? Where do ethical values come from into human activity?

Goodness is a fundamental notion in human well being. Good is a translation of the Greek term *agathōs*, and virtue and excellence are translations of the corresponding Greek noun *aretē*. Ethicality does not necessarily refer to some general rules under which an agent's action should be subsumed. Moreover, ethicality is not added to action after the event but is somehow built into human action (Toiskallio 2008). So, ethicality is something that comes together with human action, something that is included in human action: human action is ethics laden.

Basically the term “excellence” refers to the role of an individual in his or her society. According to Aristotle, the goal of this role is something that is given, not something that an individual can decide for himself or herself: “We deliberate not about ends but about means. For a doctor does not deliberate whether he shall heal, nor an orator whether he shall persuade, nor a statesman whether he shall produce law and order, nor does any one deliberate about his end” (Aristotle 1999a: 39). Human deliberation considers only the means, not the ends of human action due to conceptual reasons: if a doctor does not work as a healer he or she is no longer a doctor. There is something intuitively true about this kind of characterization, but, at the same, we are not inclined to accept it.

3.

Children's education is a central task in reproducing the society. It does not merely entail teaching children the knowledge and skills that are needed in the chosen occupation (role). The Greek notion of *paideia* originally refers to the education of children. For the Greeks, finding an acceptable definition of the notion of *paideia* was a problem of central importance. However, for the Greeks the definition was not a formal

stipulation on how to use the term “children's education”. The intention of the sought-for definition is to give the essential content of the (corresponding) notion of children's education and also to characterize how to educate children (Hintikka 1974).

The goal of children's education is to reproduce the society. Reproducing entails both conveying the existent tradition and renewing the tradition: in the words of the Finnish philosopher Johan Wilhelm Snellman, education is the creative adoption of the tradition (Snellman 1982b: 130–131, 1982a: 169). However, this supposes that good citizenship of the society must be a goal of education. The Greeks were compelled to characterize their entire culture in accordance with the definition of the notion of *paideia*. To that end, the notion was broadened to mean “the totality of the Greek cultural ideas” (Hintikka 1974: 44).

In antiquity, the excellence of a doctor was his skill in healing the people, producing health and care. Healing means to produce good life for the people, not just (scientifically) curing their sick bodies. Healing means not only producing health but also providing holistic care for human beings. Healing is not operating but caring; healing is being a good neighbor for the patient. This is both a medical and ethical task. A doctor is not a knowing expert, but a human being with medical knowledge and skills providing care to a person who is in need of care (Toiskallio 2008).

4.

Human security is something we have to maintain. Its maintenance is the duty of each human individual: each individual should respect humanity. However, we also have human security professionals – security providers. Security professionals include different kinds of actors, for example, military forces, private security companies, and organizations of citizens like the Red Cross. All these different security organizations

engage in cooperation with each other and with local people. The provision of security is human activity – intentional activity. The agent is the responsible agent (Mutanen 2007).

The agent of human action is basically an individual human being (Toiskallio 2008). Of course, it is possible to think of community as a basic agent, but in this context we employ an individualistic methodology (Tuomela 2000). Certainly, the agent of human action is a human. What about a machine as an agent of action? Sometimes it is characterized that the action of a machine differs from the action of a human being simply because a human being is a conscious and intentional actor, while a machine, on the contrary, acts according to a predetermined procedure (program) (Toiskallio 2008). This characterization falls short: it over-emphasizes the role of intention in human action and does not see the creativity of machine action (Mutanen 2004).

There seem to be obvious examples to which practical inference can be applied. However, in general, human actions do not suppose such explicit deliberation, but in spite of this they are clearly human action. Think about, for example, driving a car. Most of the acts one does are not deliberated but automatic. In fact, training aims to achieve automatic behavior. However, these kinds of “counterexamples” do not hit the target. To see this, we have to analyze human action more precisely.

Human action is not just a physical activity. In human action, human mental aspects are connected with physical ones. Human action is deliberated action. A human being thinks about his or her alternatives before he or she acts. Since Aristotle, deliberation has been under philosophical study. Aristotle studied practical inferences in an attempt to get a better grasp on the role of deliberation in human action. “A man argues with himself: ‘I want to make the hut habitable. Unless it is heated, it will not become habitable. Therefore I ought to heat it.’ I shall call this type of argument a *practical inference*. In it the person who conducts the

argument extracts, as it were, a prescription for his own conduct from a technical norm” (Wright 1963: 11).

We cannot capture human action with mere physical analysis. Physical excellence is of course important, but in everyday language we also look for spirit or affection in action. However, there is no agreement on the nature of the non-physical part of human action. There are more and more metaphorical characterizations, but in philosophy only explicit conceptual analysis is acceptable.

5.²

To act is to cause changes in the environment. In fact, according to Georg Henrik von Wright (1971), this is the original meaning of the notion of cause. By acting, an actor in a situation does something – the act – that in fact changes the situation. For example, by opening a door, the opener opens that door. The presupposition of the whole act is that at the beginning the door is closed; otherwise the whole act of opening it would be – for conceptual reasons – impossible. After the act is completed, the door is open – which is the goal of the act. If the door is not open, he or she did not open it – again, this would be conceptually impossible. Although this example is extremely simple, it clarifies several things. The conceptual connections in acting are essential: that is, the presuppositions and goals of the acts.

This allows us to define the following notions. We say that the initial state of an act is the situation from which the act starts. The initial state has to satisfy the presupposition of the act. We say that the end state of an act is the situation in place after the act. The end state should satisfy the goal of the act. We say that the goal of the act is to achieve the desired end state. The initial state and end state can be characterized in some given language; the expression of the initial state and end state is language dependent.

² This is closely connected to Anders McD Sookermany (2012).

However, it is possible to characterize the initial state and end state by using possible world semantics, which release us from language dependence (Wright 1963; Mutanen 2007, 2008).

Some acts may be legally or socially forbidden or obligatory for the agent. These kinds of prohibitions or obligations restrict or extend the scope of the possible acts. Moreover, the natural course of states determines a framework in which the agent may act. Natural courses of states are determined by the laws of nature and socially acceptable courses of states are determined by the laws and social customs of the society (Mutanen 2007).

The notion of act presupposes success in the same way as the notion of knowledge: if *a* knows that *p* then *p* has to be the case (Hintikka 1969). Notice that, for example, the notion of belief does not have such a presupposition of success; there is nothing strange in believing something that is not the case. However, in the case of the notion of perception, which has some importance for us, it is much more problematic whether or not such a presupposition of success holds (Hintikka 1969, 2007). If the end state of an act does not actualize the goal of the act, it would be strange to say that the agent performed the act but did not succeed. It would be more natural to say that the agent tried to perform the act (but did not succeed) (Wright 1963).

The agent is trying to achieve the goal in the actual world in which there are natural and social restrictions. The agent's competence to act – his or her knowledge, skills, and social and ethical sensitivity – is actualized in actual situations. The competence to act will be actualized as a unified wholeness. The competence to act is never completed but always imminent (Toiskallio 2004, 2008; Mutanen 2008).

6.

Apart from its goal, the act also has consequences. For example, if someone opens a door, the open door may allow a dog that is running

around the house to enter the house. Letting the dog in is not the goal of opening the door, but in a clear-cut sense the opening of the door made it possible for the dog to come in. The relationship between the opening of the door and the dog's coming in is not conceptual, but a contingent factual relationship. The relation between the goal and the act is conceptual, but the relation between the act and its consequences is causal (or factual). One may think about the difference between the acts of opening the door and of letting the dog come in. The difference should be specified in one way or another, whether linguistically or non-linguistically (Wright 1963).

The conceptual distinction between a goal and consequence is both theoretically (conceptually) and practically important. By definition, the actor achieves the goal of the act, and hence he or she in a very strict sense causes the goal of the act. It is therefore clear that the actor is responsible for the goal of the act. What about the consequences of the act? How far does the responsibility follow in the series of consequences of the act? To be responsible, should the actor be conscious of the consequences (Wright 1996)? These are difficult questions to answer. In the security sector in particular, the complexity of acts and their consequences becomes extremely difficult.

The more complex the action, the more difficult it is to know the consequences of the act. Moreover, the identification of the act is not an easy task in complex cases. In fact, the goals of the actions of human beings are usually much more complex than in the example above. A doctor does not write a prescription, but heals the patient; a security provider does not stand at the road but guarantees the inviolability of the people in the area. The identification of such a goal is not an easy task: What is healing? What is inviolability? What guarantees inviolability? The identification presupposes not only a lot of knowledge, but also a lot of experience of the field in question (for further discussion about identification, see Hintikka 1969, 2007).

The relationship between knowledge and human action is not a direct one. Mere

propositional knowledge does not suffice for human action. An individual has to feel that the goal of the action is worth accomplishing; the person's understanding of the goal and the means for the goal plays a central role in his or her actions; the agent should identify all the aspects of the act that are relevant and suitable to its purpose; etc. Some of these reasons are knowledge laden; some of these reasons are value laden (Mutanen 2010). In the case of human security, the value ladenness is obvious. Whose values – those of the security providers or the people in the area – should be emphasized? How to characterize the goal: whose knowledge and whose influence should be emphasized?

7.

The agent chooses the goal and means for his or her act intentionally. This supposes extensive knowledge, both theoretical and practical. Aristotle in *The Metaphysics* (Aristotle 1999b: book *zeta*) characterizes the scope of theoretical reason as the truth. He mentions mathematics, physics and theology as examples of the pursuit of theoretical reason. Aristotle contrasts theoretical reason with practical reason whose scope is good conduct and deliberation of human action. Practical reason may not be identified with productive reason whose scope is making (Hintikka 1974). The notion of reason may refer to human reasoning, or more generally to argumentation, that, for example, explains the phenomenon or constitutes an act. In the case of theoretical reasoning, the conclusion is a statement and in practical reasoning the conclusion is a constitution of the act. According to Aristotle, “a practical inference leads up to or ends in action, that its conclusion is an action” (quote from von Wright 1983: 18).

Human action takes place in an actual chain of events. In fact, an actor does not have enough time to obtain all the relevant knowledge before he or she performs an action; he or she does not have enough time to deliberate the means,

goal and consequences of the action. The more complex the action we are considering, the more troublesome the deliberated action becomes (Hintikka 1969, 2007). As a case in point, the provision of human security involves several different kinds of goals, several different kinds of action, but also several different kinds of agents. This makes it extremely difficult to handle the tasks of providing security. However, the more complex the task, the more conceptual clarity will help: the search for a conceptual foundation is an extremely important task.

Through his or her actions, an agent builds up a connection between his or her internal (mental) activity and external reality. Bodily behavior bridges the internal and external reality. However, what the agent communicates with his or her bodily behavior is “information rather than ordinary physical influence” (Hintikka 1974: 86) about the object. The agent's intention to do something entails that “the agent must be able to tell ahead of time (among other things) what counts as success and what not” (Hintikka 1974: 87–88). To that end, the agent has to be able to compare and evaluate different possible outcomes.

8.

The methods of identification refer to our capability to determine the identity of entities in different kinds of situations: How can we identify the entities in different contexts or situations? To answer these kinds of questions, we have to consider several different situations at the same time. So, the methods of identification are methods of identification between these different situations (cross-identification). By factual methods of identification, we refer to the following kinds of factors: bodily continuity, continuity of memory, material bodies in space and time, and the very similar physical and psychological regularity. By the perceptual (perspectival) method of identification, we refer to descriptions of different states of affairs

compatible with what an observer sees, and with two individuals figuring in these respective descriptions, we can ask whether they are identical as far as the observer's visual impressions are concerned. Often we can answer this question (Hintikka 1969).

In practice, theoretical and practical knowledge and production join together. Identification is done through factual knowledge (physical identification), perception (perceptual identification) and other means. Even if the conceptual distinction is clear, in practice the methods coincide and cannot be separated. Think, for example, of the discussion between a security provider and local people: they identify the entities in different ways (using a different mixture of methods of identification). The identification cannot be fully "objective" or fully "public". There is also a need for other methods of identification that also take into account certain "subjective" or, rather, subject-centered aspects of the object of identification (for further discussion, see Hintikka 2007). For example, safety in the sense characterized above should be identified by using (mainly) perspectival methods of identification. The discussion supposes general respect for humanity. The security provider intends to increase objective security, which supposes physical methods of identification. Dialogue is difficult to achieve, and the presupposition is reciprocal respect – general respect for humanity.

Human security is something that has to occur in the real world. We have to carry it out together. This is practical work, human action in which several different actors act together – multi-agent action (for more on multi-agent actions, see Tuomela 2000). Let me mention just a few simple problems that are faced in security actions. Let us briefly consider the identification of security. The security sector is working with what may be called objective security. That is, the notion of security is identified by using physical methods of identification. In other words, the emphasis is on factual and causal

factors, using non-subject-centered methods. The people in the area (usually) emphasize perspectival methods of identification. Security (and safety) will thus be identified by using subject-centered methods. The first emphasize structural factors, like the healthcare system, security systems, etc., while the latter emphasize perspectival factors, like felt security, experienced health, seen wellbeing, etc. The question is not whether one or the other would be truthful or more reliable, but how to interconnect the two (Mutanen 2010).

9.

From this perspective, the cooperation between the security sector and the subjects of security actions and between different security providers is extremely important. Common deliberation of the goal and the means to achieve the goal plays a central role in this cooperation. From this perspective, all the setups in which some of the actors become specialists in some area without intensive cooperation with other actors seem to be more or less problematic. This includes health care providers and military security providers. This allows us to establish a security action system in which ordinary people and all the security providers work together to build human security – good human life. This is an enormous task, but surely worth striving toward (Toiskallio 2008).

The task is factual, but this factuality includes ethicality. The intended ethics cannot be a set of ethical rules, but rather a practical study of human life: how should we live our unique life? We have to unify philosophical-conceptual study and practical life into unified wholeness. Aristotle called this practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). The focus of human security work should be on practical wisdom. This would help us to enrich the good life of human beings. For example, this would increase human security, which is part and parcel of good life.

Conclusions

The notion of human security is a very complex notion which interconnects individual's personal aspects and social aspects into a complex whole in which the different aspects are closely related. The notion of identification plays conceptually and methodically central role in the analysis. Especially, the different methods of identification give a philosophically clear conceptual framework in which the rich conceptual structure can be explicated. The analysis shows how theoretical and practical are connected to each other. This explicates why identification of the human security is as difficult as it in real life is. The analysis shows the theoretical and practical strength of the notion of identification.

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IDENTIFIKACIJOS SĄVOKA: FILOSOFINIO ATVEJO TYRIMAS

Arto MUTANEN

Žmogaus gyvenimas turi būti geras gyvenimas realiame pasaulyje, kuris nėra tik objektyvių faktų funkcija – kartu jis yra ir subjektyvių veiksnių, tokių kaip viltys, baimės, interesai ir kt., funkcija. Gerumas ar tobulumas – etinės sąvokos. Gero gyvenimo veiksniai negali būti nustatomi vien tik pasitelkiant vadinamuosius faktinius (deskriptyvinius) identifikavimo metodus. Tai reiškia, kad identifikavimas negali būti visiškai „objektyvus“ ar „viešas“. Be to, esama poreikio kitų identifikavimo metodų, kuriais būtų atsižvelgiama į tam tikrus identifikuojamo objekto aspektus. Sekdami Jaakko Hintikka, šiuos metodus vadiname kontekstiniais (perspektyviniais) identifikavimo metodais. Čia etika nėra etinių taisyklių rinkinys – veikiau praktinis žmogaus gyvenimo tyrinėjimas. Kaip turėtume gyventi savo unikalų gyvenimą? Tad šiuo tikslu filosofinis-koncepcinis tyrinėjimas kyla kaip praktinis. Būtent tai Aristotelis įvardijo kaip praktinę išmintį (*phronēsis*).

Reikšminiai žodžiai: veiksmas, etika, identifikavimo metodai, saugumas, patikimumas.