

https://dspace.org/

Anonymity, accountability and rights: a Kantian view of online anonymity in the South African constitutional framework

Grieve, Candice Leigh

2021
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/33072

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Anonymity, accountability and rights: A Kantian view of online anonymity in the South African constitutional framework

Candice Leigh Grieve

Abstract

The internet has introduced a number of new ethical challenges or, at the very least, added complexities to existing ones. Whereas in the physical world, human action is limited by constraints such as time and place, the same is not always true online. In particular, anonymity is easier to attain online and can be maintained with greater surety that one's identity will not be exposed. Thus, people are able to mask their identity and act anonymously with greater ease and on a much grander scale.

Some argue that online anonymity cannot be regulated and we have to accept that online anonymity is increasingly prevalent and practically unavoidable. Further, there are those who defend anonymity online for its alleged positive impacts (e.g. freer self-expression). This paper argues that there is good reason to regulate online anonymity, specifically on a Kantian-based perspective of human rights. In particular, it is argued that:

1. There are no human rights on which a "right to act anonymously" can be founded; and
2. Anonymity undermines agent accountability and therefore (at least from the Kantian perspective of the right), there is good reason to restrict people's ability to act anonymously.