

Appignani Foundation Lecture on Science, Reason and Secular Ethics

“When Fear Undermines Autonomy: Concretized Emotions and Deliberative Incapacity”

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Jodi Halpern is an Associate Professor of Bioethics and Medical Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley. She was in the Medical Scientist Training Program at Yale University and received her MD in 1989 and her PhD in Philosophy in 1994, winning Yale's Porter Prize for outstanding dissertation across all disciplines. She completed her internship and residency in Psychiatry at UCLA in 1993 and a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar Fellowship at UCLA in 1996. During 1997/1998 she was a Rockefeller Fellow at Princeton University. Halpern uses philosophical methods to analyze concepts at the intersection of philosophy and psychology, such as empathy and aspects of personal autonomy, as in her book [From Detached Concern to Empathy: Humanizing Medical Practice](#). (Oxford University Press, New York, 2001). Her recent papers focus on the complex role of emotional and social factors in both making possible, and yet also sometimes interfering with, empathy and autonomy. She has a Greenwall Faculty Fellowship to study the role of emotional predictions in health care decisions about unfamiliar future health states.

Abstract

Current philosophical interpretations of respect for autonomy fail to distinguish patients whose reactive fear and other emotions lead them to make bad decisions from patients whose emotions undermine their very *capacity* for autonomy. This distinction is crucial given that, according to the Kantian views and the current medico-legal applications derived from them, the capacity for autonomy suffices to ensure a person's right to make health decisions, including refusing treatment. In this paper I develop a detailed account of what distinguishes reactive emotions that undermine the capacity to deliberate (concretized emotions) from those that simply lead to poor judgment or akrasia.

The discussion will begin at 7PM in Learning Center Room 179*

Refreshments will be served following the discussion.

This event is open to the public. Bring a friend!



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* Take US-1 to Granada Blvd., then Granada Blvd. west across University Drive to Pisano Ave. The parking lot is to your left across from Doctors Hospital.

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