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Controlled Authenticity: A Hybrid Account of Autonomy

An Honors College Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

by Eric Fox

May 2018

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at the Honors Symposium on April 18, 2018

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Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Mark Piper for his invaluable guidance and level-headed support throughout the entire thesis process. Without him, quite simply, this thesis would still be questions echoing in my head. I would also like to thank both my Dr. Andrea Veltman and Dr. Scott Hammond for their aid despite the time-crunch on both ends.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

In this paper, I will be focusing in on the idea of personal autonomy. Much has already been discussed on the subject, and in my endeavors, I plan to present a new hybrid account of personal autonomy. My aim in this is to account for a greater number of possibilities and sets clearer guidelines regarding its definition, application, and value. I will look to include externalities and socialization more prominently into an internally focused conception of personal autonomy, as well as further expounding upon how one’s dispositions and skills are requisite to autonomy. To do this, I will begin first by exploring what exactly constitutes personal autonomy and how it differs from other conceptions of autonomy. I shall compare it to political, existential, and moral autonomy to demonstrate personal autonomy’s unique features.¹ I will then present two concepts of personal autonomy that I find compelling, namely those proposed by Diana Meyers, and Maria Oshana. While these two conceptions have their differences, I feel that there is benefit in mixing them together into a hybrid interpretation. My approach in doing this will be to take the parts of Meyers and Oshana that do not contradict and determine how these parts could be blended together to conceive of something familiar but new. Following my blending of the views, and once I feel I have properly defined my stance, I will move onto the benefits that come with personal autonomy. This will range from general to conception-specific examples that, if successful, will demonstrate to the reader why, if at all, autonomy is a useful tool in their lives. Several possible objections will then be raised, and I will attempt to cross-examine both the definition I have presented, as well as the value claims that I make. I shall provide responses and

¹ I recognize that these are not all the conceptions that autonomy takes, but for the sake of brevity I will focus on these three as I feel they will give the broadest and clearest sweep of the spectrum that autonomy runs.

endeavor to give as full an account of the benefits and possible issues as is reasonable within my constraints (both knowledge and space based). In my final section, I will attempt to come to some conclusion on the extent to which autonomy is indeed of practical use within a person's life.

What is Autonomy?

I will now go into greater depth on just what personal autonomy is. Within the realm of autonomous thought, there are several subdivisions which crop up. Personal autonomy is simply one conception of a large collection. I will focus here on just three other conceptions of autonomy – namely political, existential, and moral autonomy. To begin this, we must first investigate what exactly autonomy means.

Autonomy, derived from Greek, is a state of self-rule. This self-rule can be over one's self (personal), over a state (political), and so on. Specific to the self, this self-rule can take on a number of forms. One approach to the concept might be found in Plato's identification of justice in *Republic: IV*, wherein it is determined that a just person is one who lets reason rule their other parts.² This conception is rather like what autonomy has developed into, namely that there is a rational aspect guiding one's self. Reason applies an overlying control to one's actions and direction, and this control is partly what is meant by the term of 'self-rule.' There is along with this the fact that one's control is stemming independently from the self, not another person. It is perfectly conceivable to imagine a person who has a form of reasoned control expressed over their actions and self that is derived from another, external source. This would not count as self-

² There is the further stipulation that each part of a person (Reason, Spirit, Appetite) is doing its duty and not straying from its position, but this is not central to our current topic. See *Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), *Republic: IV*, 431a: "...the soul of a man within him has a better part and a worse part, and the expression self-mastery [i.e. self-governance] means the control of the worse by the naturally better part."

rule, though the individual has applied these reasoned rules from what might arguably be their own doing. The rules and directions must first be embraced by the one who will then apply them.³ In any conception of autonomy, this is a central component. However, as Gerald Dworkin points out, there are specifications that must be made to understand what it is when we refer to the ‘self’.⁴ We could possibly be speaking of the noumenal self of Kant or the historical self of Marx. There is further debate over if autonomy is a local or global act within a person, or perhaps both. How long must one plan out to remain autonomous? Is there a specific amount of skill required to be autonomous in the first place? What, in particular, sets personal autonomy apart from its counterparts?

In this way, autonomy cannot be immediately simplified into any single idea. While the translation itself is straightforward, the definition and application are murky. As is noted by Diana Meyers, there are not “sharp boundaries” that delineate distinctions within the spheres of autonomy, and so personal autonomy must be “gently extricated” from these other conceptions.⁵ I will begin with exploring the bounds of political autonomy first.

Political Autonomy

Political autonomy is, as noted by Meyers, perhaps the most distant form of autonomy from personal autonomy.⁶ Where personal autonomy is a state strictly regarding the singular person, political autonomy is instead targeted at sovereign states, cities, and the like. A state is autonomous in-so-far as it is self-ruling, self-regulating, and free from undue external pressures

³ I will further investigate the aspects and properties that go into one being autonomous, but I will save this for later in the paper.

⁴ Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13.

⁵ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 9.

⁶ *Ibid*, 10.

which might attempt to interfere in the internal efficiency of the first two components.⁷ A politically autonomous state could still be likened to a personally autonomous person in ways much like what was done within Plato's *Republic*, but ultimately the difference of autonomy of the will of the many (political autonomy) and the autonomy of the will of the individual (personal autonomy) are quite separate.

Some conceptions of political autonomy declare that democratic ideals stand as an integral part to any state being truly autonomous. These conceptions believe that the only state that can be autonomous is one that is legitimate, and then they further posit that the only state that is legitimate is one in which popular sovereignty rules.⁸ Meyers goes on to point out that this establishes a need for laws regarding the rights of citizens to vote, as well as publicly voice their opinions, run for office, and be involved within their respective society. Political autonomy could be seen to blend with personal autonomy here under this conception in so far as it supplies individuals with these rights and freedoms. Beyond this, however, there are few striking similarities or overlaps.

Existential Autonomy

Following political autonomy is the concept of existential autonomy. This formatting of autonomy is a more radical conception than many of its counterparts and as such, requires more out of the individual than most. Existential autonomy, namely attributed to the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, deals with an agent and their freedom to create a self from nothing, essentially deriving their essence on their own rather than it being defined by their existence. Much of this

⁷ The required extents to which a nation remains unhindered by outside influences remains a question, and there is also still a noticeable vagueness to what exactly counts as these "outside influences."

⁸ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 10.

conception lies within the conceptual idea of radical freedom, and as Sartre says in “Existentialism is a Humanism”, “In life, a man commits himself and draws his own portrait, outside of which this is nothing”.⁹ The essence of existential autonomy shows through in this statement in so far as to demonstrate two things, namely that we as individuals are fully in control of our own self-image and personhood (as we draw our own portraits), and this is our ultimate goal in life.

There is a sense in which this could be seen as a moral obligation, wherein being human and expressing our selves is intrinsically important in being active and moral in a community or society. However, I wish to highlight much of this conception that appears to be untenable upon closer inspection. For instance, the belief that one is entirely in charge of the self and determines the self based solely on one’s own choices seems rather difficult to support. As we will explore later in this piece, there seem to be many externalities which impact and influence a person’s self-image, and which would prevent one from ever being autonomous. This, of course, could not be said to completely remove existential autonomy as a viable consideration, but I will take it that this exclusion is justification to show a separation between itself and personal autonomy.¹⁰

Moral Autonomy

Finally, there is the conception of moral autonomy. Of the forms of autonomy, moral and personal autonomy are the only two that answer the question of what kind of life is desirable.¹¹ Moral autonomy primarily consists of setting rules for oneself and then following them.¹² These

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), 37.

¹⁰ There is an aspect of existentialism that I will employ, namely the concept of “bad faith” as being a useful tool or competency in determining whether one’s actions are autonomous or not.

¹¹ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 13.

¹² *Ibid*, 13.

rules must be arrived at and accepted by a rational being, and the method of arriving at these conclusions requires the use of universalization to ensure that there is no internal tension present. Much in the way that existential autonomy required a person to form their own self, moral autonomy requires an individual to form their conceptions of morality. This is only half of the process. Once the laws or rules have been set by and for the individual, there is a necessity to then follow them. In moral autonomy, any rules that one creates are “absolutely binding” and must be followed through if the individual is to remain autonomous.¹³ Autonomy comes into play more prominently at this point as the individual must apply their rules to actions, ensuring that in anything they do, these self-made principles are always upheld.¹⁴

In this way, a morally autonomous person must necessarily be both self-regulating and uphold their obligation to follow through with their moral conclusion which they arrive at. Yet there is an issue with moral autonomy, namely that not all our actions are ruled by morality. For example, regarding questions of education, what occupation to take up, who to marry, where to live, morality is distinctly silent. There is no *morally correct* answer to these questions (usually). This is the point where personal autonomy can distinguish itself specifically.

Personal Autonomy

Personal Autonomy distinguishes itself as being uniquely qualified to deal with personal questions outside of the realm of morality and more focused on concepts of well-being and flourishing. While certain questions that fall into the realm of personal autonomy might in fact

¹³ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 13.

¹⁴ There is much debate over this concept of autonomy and specifically the universalization component and Kant’s absolutism that I will not go into.

seem to still have a tinge of morality in them, they are more often strongly correlated to personal choice and do not necessitate the involvement of morality in arriving at a decision.¹⁵

Hierarchical Model

Within personal autonomy, there are different conceptions that have arisen over the years as modes of achieving the duality of control and authenticity required. One such example comes from Harry Frankfurt and Gerald Dworkin in the form of the hierarchical model. In this model, the concept of autonomy is broken down into a multi-leveled conception that takes place within the mind. This theory recognizes the fact that humans are faced with desires on a moment to moment basis, ranging from simple sensational pleasures to ones more complex.¹⁶ These are classified as desires of the first order (first-order desires) and are where much of our human desires are founded. For example, should I find that I suddenly would very much like a cup of coffee, we would say that this desire was conceived at the first-order level – that is to say, it is a want. However, Dworkin states that simply promoting every first-order desire “is to ignore a crucial feature of persons...” namely, “their ability to reflect upon and adopt attitudes toward their first-order desires”.¹⁷

This capacity to reflect and judge our first-order desires becomes the focal point of the model. Since we have this capacity to form opinions and pass judgements upon our desires, to either want or not want what we want, Dworkin feels that we ought to put it to use. We may find ourselves identifying or agreeing with first-order desires or quite the opposite. We might find that our second-order identifications are fully aligned with our first-order desires, that we

¹⁵ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 15.

¹⁶ This is not to say that this conception ranks pleasures as being objectively better or worse.

¹⁷ Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, 15.

approve of these wants and would find a great satisfaction in their accomplishment. On the other hand, it is possible that our second-order could not identify at all with the first-order desire and instead feels a sort of alienation or resentment of that want – essentially identifying that we would rather *not want* that desire to be a part of us. What Dworkin suggests is that it is one's capacity to question and interrogate their first-order desires with their second-order capacities that makes them autonomous".¹⁸ There must be a harmony between the first and second order on this conception for a person to be autonomous. If one does not accept their desires, does not want to want them but still follows through with the action, then this is not autonomous.

This importance placed on harmony is something that is often recurring throughout other autonomy conceptions, but this model is unique in its application of a dual level thought process. There is a greater importance placed upon one's reflective wants, and much of what is stated by this second-order is taken to be a true identification of the self. First-order desires might in fact be what we want, but we can only be sure when we move to the second-order and interrogate them.

There are some issues of course with this conception. First, there is the immediate quandary of an infinite regression. If, as the theory suggests, I can come closer to a true answer by judging my want, then what's to say that I could not come to a more authentic answer by judging this judgement? Essentially adding in a third-order desire. Yet, if this is true, then certainly a fourth-order or fifth-order could yield some greater benefit. The issue boils down to a question of which level is the "final" level that offers the clearest sense of what some individual wants. There is also the issue that we cannot be sure if our higher orders are in fact unaffected by

¹⁸ Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, 15.

socialization. It seems likely that each of these could, in some way, have been influenced by some externalities and as such do not truly represent the authentic self. These worries have led to much debate within the scope of personal autonomy, but I will not be focusing in on them more now. Instead, let us turn to grasping a better understanding of the components of autonomy.

The Authentic Self

Much of the discussion within the field of autonomy centers around the notion of “the authentic self” or “authenticity” in general. As such, a clear understanding of this concept is imperative to any discussion on the topic itself. As Simon Feldman points out, authenticity might be conceived firstly as a desire to be “true to yourself”.¹⁹ But realistically, authenticity is composite of a few aspects. For the purposes of this paper, I will assume some knowledge on the different ideals of authenticity that Feldman lays out and focus on just a couple that seem to compose the authentic self that seems to be desired for the autonomy.²⁰ I take this to include wholeheartedness as well as self-knowledge. I will break each of these down respectively, but first I wish to enunciate what authenticity is *not*.

For one, authenticity is not something buried within an individual. There is no ‘hidden self’ waiting to be stumbled upon, like a vein of gold, that will miraculously answer all of one’s questions and reveal their path in life. Nor is it something that is entirely composite of a person’s conception of who they want to be.²¹

Wholeheartedness can be interpreted as judging one’s desires and choosing the one’s which fully seem to align with them. This might seem like the concept posited in the hierarchical

¹⁹ Simon Feldman, *Against Authenticity* (New York: Lexington Books, 2015), 3.

²⁰ For a more in-depth look at the types of authenticity, see Simon Feldman’s *Against Authenticity*.

²¹ A more detailed discussion on this point will come later in the paper.

model, namely that the various levels of our desires are all aligned. This concept, however, is not perfect. Wholeheartedness is not always viable as competing desires might directly conflict one another and the individual may indeed want them both. Wholeheartedness in this conception should not, as such, be a narrowing of desires. One does not need to ween away all the desires in them until they are focused on a single set that has no contradictions or possible changes. Aside from this seeming to be quite impossible, it is similarly against authenticity to dispose of competing desires. Instead, wholeheartedness should be interpreted as a feeling of accord or harmony with one's decision, or a lack of regret with one's chosen actions. Wholeheartedness should be interpreted here as an agreement with reason and desires.

Self-knowledge should be interpreted as information one collects on their dispositions, general proclivities, and usual wants. It is not a hard and unchanging disposition that can always be tapped into once found, but rather more like an ever-evolving laundry list of traits, characteristics, and wants that have defined who we are now and that we might want to define who we are in the future.

Control

Simply allowing authenticity to lead one through life seems to come with many issues. In the case of competing desires, it is not necessarily clear which way one ought to go, or if one has desires but no way of accomplishing them then the authentic self is in some way failing. Regarding these issues, autonomy introduces the concept of control. I will be understanding control in this paper as the conscious application of restraints, judgement, and guidance on oneself and their desires. We use this in tandem with our authentic desires to fulfill them and put them into action. Control, as such, is something that happens both in the decision-making

process of what desire we would like to choose, as well as in creating and sticking to convictions made by these desires.

Skills

Autonomy requires the development of skills to be attained. It is neither a trait or disposition naturally in a person, and as such can be trained and developed to various levels. There is much debate on what exactly these levels are and how to determine which level some individual sits at, and some of these will come up later in chapter two. However, what is important to note is that there are different degrees of aptitudes. Some people might have certain characteristics and skills trained into them from a young age that allow them to more readily and easily become autonomous.²² However, as it stands, it appears that all humans capable of rational thought and questioning have at least the capacity to be autonomous. There is a sliding scale of autonomy that we participate in, where some people who lack the skills and characteristics necessary to excel are at a lower end juxtaposed to those who have spent time perfecting and polishing their own skills.

Why Personal Autonomy

As has been demonstrated, there are a handful of conceptions that autonomy can fall under, but I have chosen to focus specifically on personal autonomy for this paper. A few of these reasons have been laid out in our investigation of the types of autonomy, but I shall restate them and a few more here. Firstly, personal autonomy is one of the few conceptions uniquely positioned to investigate individual desires and decisions. It focuses primarily on the concept of well-being and flourishing, both of which are central components to what this paper will be

²² More discussion on this in Chapter two.

investigating. On top of this, personal autonomy does not limit itself to the realm of morality as was true of moral autonomy. As will be noted in this paper, there are many actions that fall outside the scope of morality that can still be acted upon autonomously, as well as some actions which are immoral that similarly could be autonomously acted upon.

As I will be focusing in on the benefits of autonomy, and my main area of concern will be how acting in such a way might be conducive to an individual's flourishing, it seems to be within personal autonomy that I find the most fertile grounds for argumentation.

Chapter 2 – Comparing Meyers’ and Oshana’s Accounts

Introduction

In the following chapter, I will investigate the two main conceptions of autonomy I feel merit discussion and see where they are similar and dissident. While there are myriad conceptions, I feel through my own personal reading that those posited by Dianna Meyers and Marina Oshana are the most conducive to discussion and combination.²³ I will treat each of these accounts as fully as possible, beginning with Meyers and then moving into Oshana. In doing this, I will attempt to give as broad an overview as possible while providing the essences of each. It will also become clear that while these two views hold similarities, there are some rather drastic differences present.

Considering this, I will attempt to extract from both views common ground they hold that I find fundamentally important to any conception of autonomy. I will attempt to support this foundation with evidence provided by the texts as well as examples where necessary. The aim of this whittling down to common ground is meant to give a grounding point for any conception of autonomy that is to follow. I will attempt to justify why these parts are in fact necessary.

²³ Note that this reading is regrettably not extensive, and as such ignorance may show through in certain areas of argument. Of the body of work that I have read, Meyers and Oshana have been the most compelling in the area I wish to investigate, namely the practical value of autonomy and its application. Also note that though these are the two works I shall primarily focus on, I will still pull in concepts from other thinkers to support my claims.

However, there still will remain differences in the conceptions. On this note, I will move to display these differences side by side and analyze where the fundamental split lies in each view. Once both sides have been laid out, I will attempt to justify which concepts seem to fit best into the foundation we have set in the first section based on our necessary components. I will support this with aspects from the definition as well as showing how each piece fits best into our current framework. I will attempt to prove that each conception provides something of use, and neither one nor the other is without its merits.

Following this, I will present my own take on the subject, offering forward a hybrid account of autonomy based on the foundation we have established. This account will attempt to rectify Meyers' and Oshana's accounts as one, showing how the parts we discussed fit neatly together to form a new account that provides a greater breadth of treatment to autonomy.

Should all the pieces fit together in this chapter, I shall hope to provide the reader with a familiar but new account of autonomy that bridges the gap between Meyers and Oshana and considers both internal and external circumstances. This hybrid account will look to rectify the internal states of Meyers and external conditions of Oshana in a way that acknowledges their impacts on an agent's autonomy while attempting to offer a clear path forward for an agent attempting to achieve autonomous ends.

Part I – Similarities

I will now investigate the similarities present between Meyers and Oshana's accounts. To do this, I will attempt to lay out each similarity the accounts hold in individual subsections. I shall discuss what each similarity entails, providing any extraneous definitions that might

become necessary as well as alluding to the text in areas that these aspects appear to shine through most prevalently.

The aspects that I have found to be common within each account and that will be investigated fully below will establish our grounding and future direction for the hybrid account. This by no means incorporates every similarity present within each account. Rather, I have chosen to focus on the conceptions and the aspects that each contains, as well as judiciously picking which aspects I feel will provide a solid grounding for the work to come later in this paper.

I A. Some Hierarchical Components

Autonomy as a whole has been founded on the conception that there are, typically, two types of desires an individual might have.²⁴ These have been labeled as first-order and second-order desires, with privileges being afforded to one's second-order desires. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, in making a decision, an agent must analyze her first order desires – which may or may not be authentic desires – through the lenses of the agent's reason. This then suggests an ability for an agent to judge their first-order desires and contemplate whether or not they wish to accept (embrace) them as her own or reject these desires as alien, or to decide on if they want to want the given desire.²⁵ This epistemic privilege to an agent's second-order desires

²⁴ Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*.

²⁵ See Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, 15: "It is characteristic of persons, and seems to be a distinctively human ability, that they are able to engage in [adopting attitudes toward their first-order desires, wishes, intentions]. One may not just desire to smoke, but also desire that one not have that desire... A person may identify with the influences that motivate him, assimilate them to himself, view himself as the kind of person who wishes to be moved in particular ways. Or, he may resent being motivated in certain ways, be alienated from those influences, prefer to be the kind of person who is motivated in different ways."

and a required component of internal reflection on first-order desires is the basic premise behind classical hierarchical models of autonomy.

In both our current accounts there seems to be some amount of hierarchy allowed for within the decision-making process. I will argue that though it does not appear by name, there is at least a provision of hierarchy present within each account.

Regarding Meyers' account, hierarchy takes form as introspection specifically. As such, there is no concept of first or second-order desire fulfillment, rather; Meyers utilizes hierarchy in her account as a form of self-definition.²⁶ To Meyers, autonomy stated as doing what one wants does not account for actual autonomy, nor does doing what one really wants to do either. This sort of definition of autonomy, Meyers points out, assumes a true self where one's desires originate and stem from.²⁷ However, having such a self would remove the necessary component of self-definition, and this is not to the benefit of the account presented.²⁸

Meyers points out that this conception of a self – one that exists unchanging within, that can be “discovered,” and that holds all the answers to questions one might pose, devoid of socialization – is a myth more than anything.²⁹ Instead of accepting the concept of a true-self that can be uncovered by the removal of social influences on oneself, there is a strong push for an authentic self that is, in part, defined by the individual. This “procedural view” allows for the individual to test different characteristics, ideas, life paths, and more to see if they would like to

²⁶ See Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 20: The “[establishing of] one’s own standards and [ability] to modify one’s qualities to me [these standards].”

²⁷ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 43.

²⁸ Note that one cannot remove self-definition from this account, or any other modern account of autonomy, for to do so would indicate that the authentic self is a purely unchanging entity that is “discovered” in its whole rather than being a combination of discovery and self-definition. I will go on to prove this over the course of this chapter.

²⁹ Meyers holds that the claim people are autonomous when purged of social influences “not reasonable”. Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 44.

incorporate it into themselves. This is also used to question aspects of the individual already present. This seems to indicate a form of hierarchy then, without there being a ‘true-self’ regulating, but rather one’s rational decision-making process.³⁰ As such, Meyers’ account seems to echo the concepts of hierarchy.

She also highlights the importance of methodical choice making and the implementation of these choices. The method here is not to rectify one’s first-order desires with their second-order desires and then remove any remaining desires that do not make the cut. Instead, what Meyers provides for is a framework of introspection that accounts for externalities as well as future-projected self-goals. One must weigh the outcomes available to them against one another before deciding which desire or goal to go with. The individual must make their choices “based on her understanding of her needs and interests as well as her limitations”.³¹ This understanding comes from the individual’s reflectively constructed self, which as such shows the implementation of hierarchy. In other words, the individual reflectively constructs a self-concept that is authentic as it takes into account as much information about the agent as possible at that time.³² From this developed authentic self, desires and goals are then weighed against one another, and outcomes are reflected upon in reference to the authentic self in order to discern if the consequences are in fact one’s that the agent would desire. While one does not fall back on the true selves’ judgement (in the sense of Dworkin), they instead pay heed to their authentic self as defined by themselves.

³⁰ In this case, our rational decision-making process is very similar to Dworkin’s concept of second-order desires.

³¹ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 48.

³² This involves the agent partaking in self-discovery and self-definition. I will cover both of these topics in further detail in a later chapter.

As was the case with Meyers, Oshana follows a loose form of hierarchy. Once again, while it does not take on the same form that Dworkin & Frankfurt propose, there are still hints of hierarchy present. In much the same ways as was demonstrated for Meyers, Oshana holds room for reflection on one's desires as a necessity for one's actions to be autonomous.

An individual is deemed autonomous if they set goals for themselves that they have "selected from a range of options" and determined as being important to themselves.³³ In her account, Oshana describes her hybrid concept of authenticity.

"...I [Oshana] consider a hybrid theory of authenticity accounts according to which the criteria are higher-order identification or satisfaction with the operative desire (or lack of estrangement toward the desire), integration of motivational and valuational systems, planning agency, competencies, and historically proper preference formation."³⁴

In this way, it is characteristic of an autonomous person that some desire is being satisfied with which they have identified themselves. This aspect of psychological accounts of authenticity provides for a basis from which the agent can determine a direction and is as such invaluable to a concept of autonomy.

For example, should an agent be struck with multiple different options before them, each of which offers unique outcomes, the presence of a hierarchical model will offer some standard from which they can base their decisions on.³⁵ In investigating the various choices before them, the agent will be able to excise desires which work against their personally identified goals, or those that would require some action or trait which is alien to the individual. Note that this does

³³ Marina Oshana, "How Much Should We Value Autonomy?" *Autonomy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100.

³⁴ Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 52-53.

³⁵ The standard they are able to base decisions on is the authentic self.

not ultimately direct the individual to what is the correct choice, but rather offers a starting point. For this reason, I hold that the presence of the hierarchical model ought to be kept in this account. The individual is not able to consult a specific, unchanging self against which they can consider options, but instead an authentic self which is imperative for their decision-making process.

I B. Planning

In both accounts, there is an emphasis placed upon the concept of planning. To Meyers, this could be termed as “programmatically planning,” while Oshana refers to it as “global autonomy.” In either case, the underpinning concept that ties together all autonomous action is the presence of an overarching plan.

This plan need not be extensively laid out or perfectly set in stone, such a concept would be untenable in practical application as externalities and persons are pliant and always changing. What one could plan at time t for instance x is not guaranteed to occur at instance x , and neither account pretends to claim anything like this.³⁶ Instead, planning is meant to offer guidance to an individual by providing goals for them to attain that align with their authentic desires.³⁷ These goals can come in a varied typology. They might consist of qualities the person desires, projects they wish to accomplish, relationships they want to foster, interests they want to develop, and so on.

³⁶ Meyers emphasizes the fact that what one plans is not what will always be the outcome. Meyers’ talk on life plans (which are established through programmatic thought) sets out conditions, one of which is that these plans remain “loose enough to allow for the inception and satisfaction of unanticipated desires” (pg. 49).

³⁷ Both Meyers and Oshana use the terminology “goals” regarding a person’s plans. See Marina Oshana, “How Much Should We Value Autonomy” *Autonomy*, 100; Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 48.

To return to our example from earlier, with these goals in mind our agent is now able to go beyond these hierarchical considerations. The choices have been narrowed down as was demonstrated before, but now the individual is able to compare the perceived outcomes with their own personalized goals. As was stated before, these goals can be diverse but offer important insight into what actions might in fact be in the agent's best interest. Options that best maximize the chances of the agent achieving a goal upon completion would appear to be the more desirable and, arguably, more autonomous choices.

I C. Naturalistic Approach

In historical and contemporary literature there is present a split between analyzing autonomy as something traceable to a noumenal world or that can be traced, recorded, and measured in the natural world. This split is more present within moral autonomy, lending to Kant's original interpretation, however; it still could be a consideration regarding personal autonomy.

Both Meyers and Oshana agree that to speak on personal autonomy requires us to ground our conversation within the natural world. This then requires that whatever we build into the account must be traceable and can be supported through evidence present in the sense-perceptible world. This does not relegate us from speaking of internal states. Though they might be difficult to track or measure accurately, they are still occurring within the natural world.³⁸

Meyers' whole account is based within a naturalistic approach to autonomy. All aspects, both threats to autonomy and applications of it are grounded within the natural world. On the threats front, Meyers recognizes four. These threats include social pressure, externally applied

³⁸ I will raise issues regarding internal states and their difficulty in measurement in a later chapter.

coercion, internalized cultural imperatives and individual pathology. Each of these threats is sense perceptible (or related to sense perceptible aspects of this world) and as such are naturalistic.

Much of what is discussed regarding self-concepts falls to a naturalistic conceptual tie between the self and one's life plans for Meyers. As was discussed earlier, Meyers does not hold that there is a *complete preformed* self awaiting our discovery, but rather the self is something formed through self-discovery, self-direction, and self-definition.³⁹ She goes further to state that one's self-concept, that is, the conceptual self that we check our decisions against, is formed through the application of one's life plan.⁴⁰ That is to say, one's self-concept is something formed through self-definition and self-discovery, but it is cemented through our life plans and self-direction. No matter how firm of a concept one might have through their self-definition, it is only through application and testing that it can be said to in fact be the *correct* self-concept. As such, both the threats to and the internal state necessary for autonomy have been shown to be naturalistic.

There is also a requirement for action in this account, and that action must occur within the natural world.⁴¹ This relates back to the last point on self-concept, as without an application of one's self-concept and life plan, there would be no way to test either and determine their validity to the individual. This action is also able to be measured and tracked, giving both the actor and observer tangible evidence of autonomous actions being committed.

³⁹ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 43. Meyers defines these terms respectively as: "to achieve personal autonomy, one must know what one is like, one must be able to establish one's own standards and to modify one's qualities to meet them, and one must express one's personality in action" (20). Also note that while Meyers discounts the idea of a complete preformed self, she does allow that there are aspects of ourselves that are inherent in our being that are discovered through self-discovery.

⁴⁰ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 53

⁴¹ Note that this will be covered in detail in a later subsection in this chapter.

As Oshana's account is deemed as a social-relational typology, it is necessarily rooted within the natural world.⁴² Much of the agent's ability to be autonomous falls on their interaction with others around them, the roles they partake in, and how they are impacted by socialization and society. Oshana attempts to pull autonomy out of the 'inner citadel' conception it has often been rooted within, attempting to ground it even further in the natural world.⁴³ I do not take this to be existential in nature (namely that we receive our identities solely through interactions with others) but as more a denial that one needs a preset authentic self at all as a part of autonomy. Instead, Oshana is much more concerned with self-discovery and self-definition much in the same way that Meyers was. Putting this aside, however, Oshana still holds that personal autonomy worth talking about must occur within the naturally occurring world.

I D. Action is Necessary

As a practical theory related to a person's flourishing, autonomy must necessarily incorporate some amount of action into its foundation. An agent who never acts would never express their volitional wants or desires, nor ever succeed in accomplishing them, and as such, would fall short of accomplishing anything authentic.⁴⁴ As such, it would seem a necessity that an account of autonomy incorporate action into its foundation.

⁴² Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 50.

⁴³ Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 51: Oshana claims that "I do not think the imagery of the inner citadel advances our understanding of personal autonomy" from which she attempts to extricate the concept of authenticity from autonomy. I will not address this at this time. For further reading on how and why Oshana makes this move, see *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 50-68.

⁴⁴ There is a distinct possibility that one's authentic desires could be to do nothing. However, I would argue that should an individual deem this to be true, then doing nothing would constitute an action at that point. Action should not be necessarily understood, as such, as physical activity only. Rather, it should be interpreted as one's desires manifestly being expressed into the world. Thus, one could in fact desire to do nothing, and in willing this into reality, be acting autonomously. This, as such, should also be a way to interpret autonomy as something available to those with disabilities that might hinder their independent ability to act. It is not required that they themselves do specific actions, but that they look to implement their authentic desires into reality.

Of course, not any action will do. It is perfectly reasonable to consider a person who follows through with our concept of action yet fails fully to be autonomous. An individual might be acting heteronomously, and though they are expressing desires through action, they are not expressing their *own*.⁴⁵ The agent must recognize their options, limitations, freedoms, and then through these, act.⁴⁶ This could be in line with Meyers' concept of self-concept and life plans where one weighs the two against one another and allows each to influence the other. Through action, self-concept is reinforced, and life plans are accomplished.

The concept of self-definition must also necessarily involve action as it is a process of selecting, adding, and removing traits one deems either authentic to their self or not. While this action will not physically be manifested immediately, it is still being implemented into reality.⁴⁷ Should an agent wish to change their self-conception, say through adding a new trait, they would have to act to add it into their conception. Once this is done, there would be further action taken with this trait as it would incorporate itself into future decisions as criteria to judge by, and possibly manifest itself as a trait within that action.⁴⁸

Oshana similarly works within the bounds of action orientated autonomy. Not only is autonomy dependent upon one's action, but upon their willingness to accept and work with the

⁴⁵ This is a point of contention between the two conceptions that I will pick up on later. (namely retrospective autonomy)

⁴⁶ Marina Oshana, "How Much Should We Value Autonomy?" *Autonomy*, 101: "An autonomous person is able to meet her goals without depending upon the judgements of others as to the goal's validity and importance. One is autonomous when one is '*an independent source of activity in the world*'." (my emphasis). Note that this also comes from Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 206.

⁴⁷ Note, however, for this to be autonomous it requires an action to occur in the physical world. What I am speaking of here is the process by which one can choose to change aspects of themselves internally (self-definition) and how one can act upon themselves in this way. But as was stated, for this to be autonomous requires externalized action.

⁴⁸ If someone were to decide that they wanted to add the trait of gregarious to their self-concept, it would require this sort of implementation. They would first have to decide, based on their current self-concept, if this is an authentic addition. If this were the case, then in actions in the future where an option to *be gregarious* arise, the individual would then be acting on this new trait, thusly demonstrating the necessity of action once more.

consequences it presents. An agent's expression of control over their authentic self is rooted within action. Control is only a channeling aspect through which the agent can pause to pass judgement over different alternatives, weighing their individual worth, and then choosing. It would be counter-intuitive to say that all that is required to be autonomous is the *choice*.

I E. Substantive Accounts

Substantive accounts of autonomy require greater justification from the agent to be deemed as acting autonomously. Simply following the procedures set out in autonomous thought is not enough, as would be the case in a proceduralist view. Rather, an individual must also satisfy standards for their actions which have been set (i.e. the procedure of thinking through one's desires is not enough to have an action be autonomous for a substantive account. Such accounts tend to place limits on actions, deeming certain situations and actions as non-autonomous, despite the present application of a recommended autonomous procedure.

In Meyers' case, this interpretation could be open to some debates. In fact, Oshana herself labels Meyers as a procedural account rather than substantive. However, I wish to argue that there is a substantive account more present within her work than Oshana gives credit to.⁴⁹ On this line, I will attempt to first justify this fact before moving into explaining why the presence of a substantive account should be taken as a fundamental aspect of our hybrid account to come.

⁴⁹ I wish to enunciate the fact that this will be laden with my interpretation of Meyers' work and as such is open to argument and other interpretations. I certainly see avenues for interpretation in both proceduralist and substantive accounts within Meyers' writing; however, I wish to argue that the substantive aspects ought to be weighed more heavily than they seem to be while the proceduralist aspects should be taken simply as outlining a loose procedure that will ensure a greater aptitude at being autonomous.

Of great importance in this line of argumentation, I feel, is to consider what Meyers holds as evidence of autonomous action. Meyers' account holds a strong basis in the development of skills and their application – there is also some component of a substantive account present. This appears namely in her declaration that there must be a form of satisfaction acquired from action for it to be considered autonomous.⁵⁰ An action that fails to bring about any satisfaction to the individual could be argued as non-autonomous as the point of autonomy for Meyers is to be self-governing, and to govern oneself in such a way that frustrates her personal satisfaction seems to be at odds with the point of autonomy. As such, despite the competencies demonstrated or executed in achieving the goal, Meyers would argue that this is not autonomous.

In having even this most basic requirement beyond the procedure, I feel that Meyers at least demonstrates the necessity of substantive application within an account of autonomy. On this line of reasoning, Oshana agrees. I understand Oshana's interpretation here to be regarding primarily the competencies that Meyers feels must be developed in an individual for agents to act autonomously.⁵¹ She notes in her social-relational theory that simply obtaining internal states and holding certain competencies does not ensure autonomy to an agent.⁵² In other words, developing the skills some philosophers deem autonomy-producing does not thusly allow an agent to be autonomous. Oshana presents five case studies that attempt to highlight this fact, showing that aside from our own internal states, there is also always the presence of an external

⁵⁰ Diana Meyers (1989), *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 43: "Autonomy is not merely doing what one wants but doing what one really wants." Also see 49 "by introducing some degree of order into people's lives, life plans enable people to want more and to satisfy a greater number of their desires than random satisfaction-seeking possibly could." This second quote should highlight the fact that the control introduced is aimed at achieving goals and ultimately bringing about satisfaction to the agent at a greater capacity than "random satisfaction-seeking" as Meyers terms it. While I will later raise questions on the validity of this statement, what is important in this instance is to note the fact that both accounts allow for substantive interpretation. The validity of their substantive aspects will not be questioned at this time.

⁵¹ More on competencies will be covered in the later sections of this chapter.

⁵² Marina Oshana (2006), *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 53-68.

state and society that impact the individual at all times. Though an individual might choose an action based on their developed competencies, this is not enough to clearly state that whatever actions follow are autonomous.

In this way, Oshana holds that there must be a substantive element to autonomy. One's actions, despite being in line with classical conceptions of the self, or that use certain competencies, can still fail to be autonomous when juxtaposed with external factors or with one's actions and their outcomes. These external factors can include coercion, societal pressures, social standings, etc.

As such, I will similarly hold that a fundamental part of our interpretation of personal autonomy ought to include substantive requirements. One cannot simply think themselves autonomous simply due to possessing certain internalized states. Rather, there seems to be required certain measurable qualities that come from one's actions that can affect their autonomy.

I F. Summary Thus Far

I will now shortly offer a summary of how our account of personal autonomy has progressed, expressing the general aspects that now account for our foundational conception. Following this, I will investigate the differences posed between the two conceptions of personal autonomy we have been supplied and attempt to justify choices regarding which aspects to keep and which to jettison in our hybrid account.

To recap on our foundational structure, we have concluded that a handful of aspects are required for our account of autonomy to begin. Namely, these were the subsections that came before wherein we outlined similarities between the two accounts we are studying. To recount in

general terms what our foundation looks like, we will see that we require the presence of some hierarchy that allows for plans and direction to be crafted by the individual, that these plans, directions, and their corresponding actions must take place in the natural world and demonstrate substantive outcomes which are measurable and comparable.

Part II – Differences

In this section I will focus in on the major differences present between the two accounts, highlighting those that I feel need to be investigated and discriminated between to bring about a more complete hybrid account. This section will provide the differences present in each account, followed by a section describing which I feel is most suited for our current account and why. This might involve choosing aspects of a single account or blending them to create a middle ground as both offer something of general worth to the account. I will provide arguments for such discriminations and attempt to prove that what we are constructing is fuller with these additions and is able to better describe aspects of the autonomous agent than just Meyers' or Oshana's accounts alone.

Once I have shown both sides and chosen aspects from each I wish to include into the hybrid account, I will then briefly bring together the parts for the first time. Should my arguments hold, then we will have established the premise of our account. Once this has been done, I will look to explore the account a little further in the chapter, explaining how it is utilized within certain contexts. This will give us a base to then analyze its relative worth to individuals.

II A. Internal or External

This is a rather basic difference on which both accounts seem to differ drastically on first inspection. Oshana openly attacks the amount of emphasis placed on internalized aspects by

other views and posits her social-relational theory as a response. Meyers, on the other hand, is primarily focused inward, attempting to discern the types of internal processes, structures, and competencies necessary for one to have autonomy.⁵³

In response to this split, I wish to first locate where we will be entering the conversation regarding autonomy. By this, I mean that we must discern our external conditions, namely those of the state, our freedoms, and the people around us. In this account, I will be assuming some amount of freedom – both positive and negative – as being present in the society our agent presides within. I will declare that our agent is not living within a dictatorial regime where freedoms are restricted, and a status quo is not only recommended, but often a necessary component of a prolonged life. This assumption is necessary for us to continue our discussion on several levels. First, I feel it is not debatable that anyone living in a state that completely denies them freedoms and restricts the plasticity of their self-image cannot have autonomy nor be autonomous. They certainly could hold such things as competencies and characteristics of an autonomous individual, but when it comes to enacting these as fully-fledged autonomy, the outcome is questionable at best. As such, it seems distracting to the overall goal to argue too deeply on this component, and I will as such move forward assuming that our agent is existing within a society that is conducive to individualistic flourishing.⁵⁴ On this note, we will now set out the differences presented between Meyers and Oshana respectively.

⁵³ Meyers also provides for the fact that externals will be involved in anyone's attempts at autonomy, not discounting the fact that society impacts who we are. However, she does not base the primary aspects of her investigation around this fact. See *Self, Society, and Personal Autonomy*, Part 3, Obstacles to Personal Autonomy, 133-189.

⁵⁴ However, for further investigation into social circumstances more like this, see Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 48-74.

Meyers approaches autonomy from an internalist standpoint. Her account, while considering the aspects of external circumstances and effects on the agent, still focuses primarily on the internalized characteristics, traits, and skills that an individual must develop to be considered autonomous to begin with. Within her account, she labels these parts as ‘characterological strands’ and speaks of autonomy as a sort of “competency”.⁵⁵ These traits do not come from any ontological sense of an authentic self, nor does the competency; rather, Meyers defends that:

“Autonomous people are not vouchsafed a glimpse of their inner selves that other people are denied. Rather, they possess and exercise skills that maintain a fluid interaction between their traits, their feelings, their beliefs, their values, their extended plans, their current possibilities for realizing these plans, and their conduct.”⁵⁶

This list lays out a few of the traits that are intended to be necessary for Meyers’ account. Namely, what one ought to take from this quote is that all those traits listed are primarily internally focused and allow for plasticity within the self to occur. There is allusion to dissuade one from interpreting the inner self as something singularly existing within the individual in an unchanging state that somehow also denotes one’s competency in autonomy. Instead, we see that the possession and exercise of *skills* is what will denote autonomous actions to individuals.

Further supporting this is the importance of life-plans for Meyers in her account.⁵⁷ For Meyers, such plans consist of two main components or types of planning: programmatic and

⁵⁵ Reference to these two aspects can be found in *Self, Society, and Personal Identity* on pages 70-73 & 56-58, 76-97 respectively.

⁵⁶ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society and Personal Choice*, 55.

⁵⁷ This can be seen alluded to in section I B. of this chapter.

episodic self-direction.⁵⁸ Before discussing each of these individually and what they entail, it is important to note that these are plans for the individual that are achievable and deemed worthy of pursuit by the individual's authentic self. The self-direction is, as such, typically internally focused, accounting for one's individual traits as what will enable them to accomplish it, as well as receiving its worth from the internalized authentic self. One can only plan and accomplish said self-direction through the development of internal characteristics and traits as were briefly mentioned earlier.

This internalized process consists of two types of plans as was mentioned: programmatic and episodic.⁵⁹ Programmatic planning is the larger scale of the two plans and can also perhaps be conceived of as a life-plan of sorts. One's programmatic plan is the guiding plan to their future endeavors, laying out a path for the agent to follow as well as creating tangible goals. This programmatic plan should not be misinterpreted as an overarching, unchanging plan however. As Meyers states, "no one's life plan, however comprehensive it may be, can possibly provide for all contingencies".⁶⁰ For this reason, the programmatic plan is more like a sort of guidelines – a frame work established through self-direction and self-definition that allows the individual to grasp the bounds of their authentic self. Programmatic plans are set to avoid the pitfalls of other desires, some of which might be heteronomous in nature, and ensure that the individual is remaining on the correct path that they themselves desire.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Note that I will refer to programmatic self-direction as "programmatic plans" interchangeably in this paper.

⁵⁹ These can also loosely be interpreted as global and localized accounts of autonomous planning.

⁶⁰ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 53.

⁶¹ It should be noted then that since these plans are a contingency of self-definition, they are equally malleable as the identity. Should one wish to change their plans, they have the ability to. This of course can raise some issues regarding how one knows that changing a part of the self-concept might not be autonomous, but I will not discuss that in this paper.

The other component, episodic self-direction, is much like what its name suggests – episodic instantiations of control over one’s conduct. One is episodically autonomous when they are confronted with a situation that they contemplate how they wish to become involved, see how their interaction with the situation fits into their authentic self-image, and then acts.⁶² Such moments of self-direction are one-off moments that utilize what one has planned programmatically to help them arrive at the most appropriate conclusion. Individuals also use their traits and characteristics that they have developed to aid them in their decision-making process. The key mark to episodic self-direction is its moment to moment nature and specific focus on answering a problem set before the agent at the present moment.

In both cases, the focus has fallen on the internal self and its capability to use characteristics, concepts, and traits at its disposal in a way that allows the agent to act authentically toward whatever end they truly desire. Thusly, we can categorize this as primarily *internalized*, despite the effects that it might have externally. Oshana on the other hand takes a more *external* focus to her concept of autonomy. Oshana speaks against the concept of the inner citadel, or an authentic self as the driver behind one’s autonomous actions, because such a concept not only misrepresents the idea of self,⁶³ but also ignores the presence of external interaction with one’s autonomy. She states that “[e]ven if a core [self-identity] can be identified and an explanation of the true self can be given, having a true self is no guarantee of autonomy”.⁶⁴ This is not entirely incredible a claim – after all we have agreed in this paper that

⁶² As Meyers states: “Autonomous episodic self-direction occurs when a person confronts a situation, asks what he or she can do with respect to it—the options may include withdrawing from it as well as participation in it in various ways – and what he or she really wants to do with respect to it, and then executes the decision this deliberation yields”. Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 48.

⁶³ Such conceptions lead to the idea of a “buried treasure self” that we have discussed earlier as being an incorrect conception of the self. Oshana agrees with this, but then goes on to say that even if we throw away this concept, the focus on the inner citadel still removes validity from the fact that our selves are pliant and plastic.

⁶⁴ Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 52

one requires control over their self – what Oshana seems to be stating more so is that even this control over a self would not be enough to guarantee autonomy. One cannot judge their own levels of autonomy, rather there is a relationship with those around them that has an equally, if not greater, impact on this fact.⁶⁵ As her conception is one of social relations, Oshana propounds that for us to adequately judge autonomy, we must necessarily take a more externalist approach and see how the agent themselves interacts with those around them.

Due to this, Oshana expends a good deal of energy addressing the concepts of positive and negative freedom in a society and their impacts on an individual’s ability to be autonomous.⁶⁶ Oshana points out that while both types of freedom are necessary for autonomy, one’s social standing or external features could impact their ability to function autonomously. For instance, she raises the case of an individual in abject poverty, stating that since this situation “forces him to depend on the willingness of his government and the good graces of others” he might not be able to experience the full range of autonomous actions at others disposal, but he still “can be described as self-governing only in an attenuated sense”.⁶⁷ Such an individual could have a perfectly stable self-conception and well developed traits and characteristics conducive to autonomous action, but their externals pull against their complete individual self-direction. This is much of what Oshana wants to point out with her account. In her book *Personal Autonomy in Society*, she lays out a handful of case studies where internalized accounts of autonomy seem to

⁶⁵ See Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 50-51: “Only individuals can be a measure of their sense of autonomy. But sensation and feeling are qualia, and qualia alone do not decide the fact of autonomy any more than a feeling of oneself as non-autonomous decides against autonomy...”

⁶⁶ See Marina Oshana, “How Much Should We Value Autonomy” *Autonomy*, 103-126.

⁶⁷ Marina Oshana, “How Much Should We Value Autonomy” *Autonomy*, 2003, 104.

be satisfied (psychological authenticity and autonomy competency), yet on an externalist view the individuals would still not count as autonomous.⁶⁸

On this account, Oshana insists on a more externalized approach to the concept of autonomy. She provides for a more hybridized account of authenticity that does not only consider the internal structure and self-definition, but also societal standing, relations, and socialization to a greater extent.

II B. Demands on the Individual

Within any account of autonomy, there are several requirements that the agent must fulfill to be considered autonomous at all. As we have laid out, there are basic necessary components that any agent must fulfill in being autonomous, but regarding how loose or stringent the requirement need to be is still greatly open to debate.⁶⁹ This divide can be seen clearly between Meyers and Oshana's accounts, with Meyers holding a looser approach while Oshana requires a greater amount from the agent.

Meyers' account could be interpreted as an attempt to bring autonomy to as large an audience as possible. Within her account, there are aspects that loosen the requirements for an agent to be deemed autonomous and allow for a greater number of people to accomplish this feat. Primary to this fact is Meyers' concept of "retrospective autonomy." Retrospective autonomy is taken as a defense to the objection that one cannot always be steering their lives from an autonomous standpoint, or at least it is very difficult for one to do this. Meyers posits this as an acceptable answer to how an agent can demonstrate "autonomous spontaneous

⁶⁸ Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 52-68.

⁶⁹ This was discussed in Part I, sections A-F. I also am not stating that the foundations I have laid out are not open for discussion, specifically the substantive portion as this is still debated frequently; however, I feel that most of the foundation as it has been laid out is firmly accepted as necessary aspects of autonomy.

conduct” as she puts it.⁷⁰ In her given examples she demonstrates how individuals might, after an autonomous decision, make numerous decisions based on that without retreating to a point of autonomous reflection. As Meyers states regarding a student who denies offers to rejoin her college tennis team once she has autonomously decided to drop:

“Subsequent to her decision against a professional tennis career, [the student] spontaneously refuses all invitations to rejoin her college team; however, the fact that these refusals are congruent with her programmatic career choice and that this overall plan has not been called into question render these actions autonomous, too.”⁷¹

Meyers leaves room for a change of heart, stating that these refusals would remain autonomous so long as the student is remaining cognizant of her possible shifts in inclination. But so long as the student does not feel regret over her decision, any action that is in line with her decision is then deemed autonomous.

This allows for a greater range of actions, and thus people, to be deemed autonomous. Meyers still requires that the base action be autonomous, and that there be an integrated self making these decisions, but once the decision has been made, it is able to “green light” all others of the same type that follow.

Oshana takes a different approach, requiring much more to be satisfied by the agent if their actions are to be autonomous. Oshana focuses in much more heavily on the concept of control, raising some strong objections to the ideas posited by Meyers’ retrospective and spontaneous account. For an agent to be autonomous in Oshana’s account requires a greater

⁷⁰ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 52.

⁷¹ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 52.

amount of conscious effort on their part, and spontaneous action falls short of being able to satisfy her requirements.

Examples of this can be seen in Oshana's case studies throughout her work. One such example, that of the monk, highlights many of the differences between her own account and Meyers', demonstrating why Oshana feels that spontaneous autonomy is untenable with a general account of autonomy. Within this case study, Oshana posits an agent who, upon autonomous reflection, has decided that they wish to renounce their current lives in favor of becoming a monk.⁷² She leaves room for the monk to annually reconsider his commitment, but once he agrees to stay, his life direction is once again thrust into the hands of his superiors. We could look at this from the perspective of Meyers' spontaneous autonomy and perhaps state that once the monk has autonomously chosen his path (to be a monk resigned to follow the orders of his superiors), then whatever actions he takes following that which are inline with this decision are in fact autonomous. However, what Oshana argues is that this is rather counter-intuitive. Though the monk has indeed made the autonomous decision to forfeit his freedoms, that does not then denote autonomy to all his following actions.

Oshana admits that the monk is within range of autonomy, since he is given the option within his contract to back out and reclaim his prior freedoms, but despite this, his actions when he agrees to stay as a monk are not technically his own.⁷³ As we saw in Meyers' account with spontaneous autonomous action, it would seem that so long as the initial decision was autonomous, and all actions that follow it fall within the realm of his prescribed scope, then these actions too are autonomous. But clearly in the example of the monk, his actions have all been

⁷² There are a number of cases where Oshana uses this case study, but for the fullest investigation see: Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society* 62-64.

⁷³ Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 63.

decided and dictated by his superiors – aside from the choice to stay.⁷⁴ In this way, Oshana differs from Meyers' in her prescribed requirements for control present on the agent's part. Where we could perhaps interpret autonomy under Meyers' account, for Oshana there is merely authentic action at best, heteronomous as worst.

Based on the information that Oshana's account creates a higher threshold for autonomy, what falls out from this is that there is a lower frequency of autonomous actions in her account than Meyers'. In Oshana's account, due to the stricter requirements for an action to be deemed autonomous, fewer agents will be classified as autonomous, while in Meyers' account – where one need not always be in control for their actions to be autonomous – a greater number of agents will be classified as autonomous.

II C. Valuation of the Authentic Self

The final difference I wish to investigate in this paper between Meyers and Oshana's accounts is the concept of the authentic self and one's valuation of it. Meyers holds that the agent must take some level of satisfaction in the authentic self that they have built for themselves, while Oshana argues that it is possible for one to not value every part of their authentic self while still being autonomous.

In Meyers' case, she wishes to establish a requirement of desirability within the individual's conception of themselves. What this means is that in the end, however one's authentic self begins to take form, the agent must be satisfied with the outcome. If, on the other

⁷⁴ Oshana also argues the validity of this statement, mentioning that it is very likely there would be tremendous pressure *to stay* expounded upon the monk that might in fact remove the decision from his hands entirely. So, though he is given full access to the decision to leave whenever he chooses, it seems very possible that he would experience a lack of freedom in this decision still, and perhaps choose not based on his own wishes and desires but based on those that the order has heteronomously led him to. See *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 62-64 & 68-72.

hand, there are parts of the self that are not accepted, or integrated as Meyers puts it, then the agent is not actually embracing their authentic self or desires, and therefore their actions proceeding from this self cannot be deemed autonomous. As Meyers initially states, the function of autonomy is “self-governance—controlling one’s life by ascertaining what one really wants to do and by acting accordingly.”⁷⁵ Of great importance is the concept of controlling one’s life through discovering what one *really* wants to do. When acting, the individual must defer to their life-plan, which is based on their conceptual self-image, and then act in a way that allows them to achieve the desired outcome. This would mean that at the end of the actions, there would have to be some level of satisfaction. This satisfaction stems from the individual’s general acceptance and similar satisfaction with their personal self-conception, or, from successful wholehearted integration of the self as described through the agent’s self-definition and self-discovery. We see here then that for Meyers, autonomy’s aim is something more fundamental than satisfaction from one’s actions, but rather satisfaction with one’s self.

As such, Meyers claims that the true aim or function of autonomy is to secure an “integrated personality” for the agent. Doubling back, we can recognize the importance Meyers places on one’s life plan, and here she further describes the function of one’s life plan, namely that it implicates a conception of “a desirable personality”.⁷⁶ This desirable personality is what our life plan outlines through its possible projects and aims, and as such, is the outcome of autonomy. So, what comes from all this planning and control is a desirable personality that allows for us to act spontaneously without experiencing regrets too frequently as to diminish the quality of the personality we have directed ourselves to.

⁷⁵ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 59.

⁷⁶ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 60. Also, previous discussion of Meyers’s life plan concept can be found in Part 1, Section B.

In contrast to this, Oshana disagrees over the idea of self-discovery and the implications that might arise within this aspect of autonomous direction. She cautions that while it is true that our self-direction can craft a desirable personality, there are aspects of the self that are inherent to each of us that cannot be changed or dictated through self-definition.⁷⁷

These aspects of the self that we discover are, on average, not open to redefinition. For example, it is not true that in the case of being born Hispanic that one could, through self-definition, leave this fact behind. It is, instead, a part of the self that is already integrated into us. What Oshana goes on to argue is that one might not be wholly satisfied with the facts that they uncover through self-discovery, but this does not detract from one's autonomy. If we were to assume that our agent was Hispanic and growing up in an area where such a fact is greatly looked down upon (perhaps there is some amount of social pressure stating that being Hispanic is less desirable than being some other nationality), then it seems wholly possible there could be a level of resentment or regret regarding this fact.

However, the fact that our agent is Hispanic is an unchanging aspect of their personality, and one that should frankly not be looked down upon. But based upon their social-relational standings and the surroundings they find themselves in, it is in fact undesirable. Or in other cases, an agent might discover upon reflection that there is a chemical imbalance present in them that causes depression and anxiety. Clearly, this is not a desirable outcome for most people, but to deny this as a part of their integrated self-identity seems to be a greater issue than embracing

⁷⁷ This is not to be interpreted as a 'buried treasure' self as was discussed and counted as inviable earlier. Rather, these aspects of self-discovery come from fundamental aspects of individuals such as nationality, race, genetic disposition, mental health, etc.

it, even if it is not a desirable thing to do. To this, Oshana states that there is not a satisfaction element required within autonomy relating to one's personal conception.

Part III – Conclusion

As has been noted, there are a multitude of levels over which there is clear debate between Meyers and Oshana. Each account holds disparate views of components such as

- the focus for autonomous development in an agent,
- the demands placed upon the individual in achieving autonomy
- the frequency with which autonomy occurs and
- the valuation of the authentic self.

Each account, though similar, stands apart from the other in sometimes contradictory ways.

However, I feel that these two accounts can be combined into a hybrid account that will allow for a fuller and richer treatment of autonomy with the individual. In the following section I will attempt to bridge the gaps between these conceptions and unify them into a single, hybrid account of autonomy.

Chapter 3 – Toward a Hybrid Account

Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce my attempt to bring the prior two conceptions together into a unified, hybrid account for autonomy. To do this, I will first review the basic requirements we established in the first section. Following this, I will go through each difference mentioned in the previous section and present arguments for the aspects that I feel ought to be kept or rejected. This will involve taking aspects from both Meyers and Oshana, possibly also blending together their conceptions by finding some middle-ground between their views. Finally, once I have gone through each difference, I will display the final product of the hybrid account all together.

First, I will layout once again the aspects of a personal autonomy account that I have argued are basic and necessary. These include

- The presence of some hierarchical model,
- The involvement of structured planning for an individual's actions and future goals,
- A naturalistic approach focusing on concepts and ideas that can be measured,
- A requirement for action to occur for an individual to be deemed autonomous, and
- A substantive account wherein progress and competency can be measured in an individual.

Based on these components, I will now begin to investigate the proposed differences present within the two accounts. In doing this, I will choose aspects of each that will be added to our list above and which will then compose our final hybrid account.

Part I – Internal or External Focus

I feel that any account of autonomy is in some way lacking were it to not address both aspects of internal competencies and external pressures and factors that an agent will experience. Such concepts as that of a self-made man living wholly separate from society are vastly unlikely, and the concept of an individual without any personal opinions or valuations separate from those of her society may be equally unlikely. Most agents fall somewhere in between these two extremes, having both internal and external aspects competing within them and affecting their decisions. As such, it seems that neither a purely internal nor external account will do.

This being said, I feel that there are stages of importance we must consider for internal and external accounts. What I mean by this is that an agent's autonomy faces different threats and developmental stages, and in these stages, a focus on internal or external conditions holds a different import. For example, an individual who finds herself in a state where she struggles to express her own self, desires, and wants due to external pressures will find that there ought to be a greater importance placed upon the development of external circumstances and freedoms. Such an individual would ultimately have little use of internalized aspects such as autonomy competencies since she would have no way to enact any individual conclusion that she came to under the duress of her surroundings. Or, just as likely, an agent might have greater concerns than that of her own autonomy such as ensuring that she has food and shelter regularly. These examples of agents could be said to be lacking access to autonomy not based on their own actions, but due to their surroundings and possible lack of freedoms.⁷⁸ As such, at this stage, we ought to place a premium on the development of external conditions before anything else.

⁷⁸ In the case of the agent who is unable to act themselves due to threat, they lack the freedom of expression, clearly. Their surroundings restrict them from ever acting autonomous without some sort of possible reactionary punishment

However, I do not believe that many autonomy accounts attempt to speak on autonomous agents in this capacity, nor to focus on how one could be better autonomous under such circumstances as this would ultimately appear futile. Rather, most assume the agent does not lack the freedom to express themselves nor to engage in self-discovery and exploration. I will follow suit in this case and assume that our agent, wherever she might be, is not lacking in any substantial freedoms such as these. She does not have to fear external threats to her autonomy from her society, nor does she have to worry primarily of her basic requirements for survival. We can posit that this stage is secured by the agreement for a free society⁷⁹ and a stable living arrangement.

In this stage, I feel that one's focus must necessarily turn inward. Since the agent is no longer worried about immediate external threats, these concerns ought not to be what we focus our investigation and developments on. While it is true as I have stated before that though the agent has these freedoms she will still necessarily be involved with a society and external pressures, I feel that provided the aforementioned freedoms, an agent's next concern ought to be the internal development of their ability to act autonomously. That is to say that investigating an agent's internal competencies will ultimately be more fruitful to our current discussion than further analysis of her environment.⁸⁰ To use analogy, in planting a sapling one must choose a spot where it will have the freedom to grow as well as be provided with water and sunlight. Once these externals have been provided, the next goal of growth is to develop what is already there, namely to help the branches grown and expand. If we apply this analogy to an agent wishing to

from the society. In the case of the agent who must ensure that they have food and shelter, they lack a freedom to plan and enact any form of self-discovery or self-development as their primary concern is that of basic survival.

⁷⁹ "Free society" meaning one where the individual agents each have the ability to develop themselves as they see fit without the worry of threat or duress being applied should they not act according to a set code of personal conduct as presented by whomever is in charge.

⁸⁰ Note that social-relational theorists, including Oshana, might deny this fact.

be autonomous, then our next step would appear to be strengthening the individual so that she might grow. This is best done through the development of internal characteristics and traits that will allow the agent to be positively disposed to acting autonomously.

To support this, consider an agent, Ana, who has all the necessary freedoms we have mentioned before. Not only does she live in a free society, but she also holds a steady income and has no worries about where her next meal will come from. Ana has all the makings then of a worthy agent to act autonomously.⁸¹ However, if Ana does not have a place to start, a grounding for how she ought to act, then it would seem she would lack a direction to be autonomous to begin with. She does not have any conception of who she is or who she would want to be, nor does she have a plan for the future. Rather, Ana moves from day to day doing whatever catches her fancy and perhaps following along with those around her. Though we might be able to label some of her actions as authentic in some sense⁸² we cannot call them autonomous.

Ana cannot act in any autonomous ways just by her freedoms alone; rather, she still requires some direction that must come from a development of internal competencies. We can see then that just as was the case with our account of autonomy, so too must an agent develop a base for their actions to be autonomous. So, if Ana is to be autonomous, she must turn her attention inwards.

As such, I claim that having a *type of character* must fundamentally come next once we have guaranteed a certain level of freedom to the agent. Having freedom provides the individual with

⁸¹ Note that there is also an assumption present that Ana is capable of rational thought, something I feel we can take as true based on her nature as a human.

⁸² Certain actions that Ana might commit to might in fact be things she authentically wants to do, but it seems rather inappropriate to classify these actions as autonomous all the same. She is simply doing whatever desire arises most prominently in her at any given time with no aim to a predisposed end or concern about how such an action might in fact impact herself and those around her.

the opening to act as she wishes; however, without a self to draw from, nor a goal to aim at, it seems that this alone could not inspire an individual to act, and as I have already claimed, action is a necessary component to this account of autonomy. Though an agent has all the freedom to act in an autonomous manner, if she lacked the internal structure and competency to act autonomously, then she would be lacking a crucial aspect of autonomy. Returning back to Ana, let us assume that she has the similar freedoms as before but lacks any detailed understanding of herself as well as any form of a plan. Let us now assume Ana is faced with a difficult choice between two desires – say she must choose between two universities to continue her education. Both universities are ones that she would *like* to go to, that is, she has a desire to attend both. Beyond this, however, it would seem Ana has nothing to base her choice on. She has no future plan, however tentative, to compare each school’s possible outcome to, nor does she possess any skills to imagine herself in either university environment or how she would enjoy her time there.⁸³ One could perhaps offer the advice of “doing what feels right,” but in this instance such a concept seems to not hold any real worth. Ana desires both universities equally and it could be argued that both would feel right. Should Ana be able to come to a decision, it would seem unlikely that it would be informed by any sort of reasoning and could very well be going against what she might authentically want as well as what would ultimately be best for her.

As such, it seems that one must develop internal traits and competencies to enable themselves to act autonomously. Ana very well could have chosen a university in the end, but the distinct lack of control over this decision would seem to once again indicate that we could not label this act as autonomous.

⁸³ Note that I recognize this example of an individual is highly unlikely, but I believe the general concept behind it of an individual without a direction or a self-image to base decisions on provides us with some conclusive ideas on why the development of competencies is of paramount importance at this stage.

Part II – Threshold of Achievement

As was discussed earlier, autonomy achievement can be viewed as something that is easily achieved or something more difficult. This is accomplished through the general requirements necessary behind an action for it to be considered autonomous. Meyers sets a lower threshold, making autonomy more commonly achievable, while Oshana requires more out of an agent's actions for them to be autonomous.

Basic to autonomy is the presence of control over the agent's desires as well as a life plan, however tentative it might be. As such, I feel that a few cases can be ruled out as being autonomous. For an action to be deemed autonomous, we must necessarily be in control of the action as we are committing ourselves to it. What amount of control is needed is what we must now decide upon.

A minimal presence of control seems to offer autonomy to the greatest number of individuals. If we set the requirements for an agent's actions as easily attainable, then many people will naturally obtain autonomy. Such an idea would require individuals to apply only occasional moments of direction to themselves. For example, should an agent, Lou, at one point decide that he wishes to be more charitable and he considers this option deeply – considering the outcomes it might provide, comparing it to his personal identity, and finally deciding that it is conducive to who he wishes to be – then his adding of “charitable” to his personal identity seems to be an autonomous decision. On this minimalist account, it would then follow that his application of control at this time allows for any action that is charitable to be labeled as autonomous.

However, there appear to be issues with this account. It seems wholly possible that after this decision, Lou goes about his days being charitable of his own accord, giving extra when and where he can. But let us consider that Lou might also run into a situation where he acts charitably against his own will. Perhaps he is asked to donate to an organization he is fundamentally against. This presents a problem, as donating would fulfill his desire to be charitable, thus being authentic, but at the same time would frustrate his genuine stance against the tenants of this organization, thusly also acting unauthentically. In this situation, it would be clear that Lou would have to apply control to his decision once again, choosing to be charitable or not based on this new instantiation of control. This moment of extra control would at least demonstrate that autonomy requires more than a single moment of control behind all consequential⁸⁴ actions.

But let us investigate further the amount of control necessary. Say that Lou decides one way or the other with his last issue, but now is faced with a moment where he is fatigued, distracted, and very much lacking awareness. There is nothing more that Lou would like than to get home and get some rest. But let us suppose that in this state Lou is approached and asked to provide a donation, and without any thought he willingly gives his money so that he might exit the situation he finds himself in. In this case, Lou does not consider where his money is going to or to whom, but rather commits without thought.⁸⁵ Were we to take the minimalist requirements for autonomy, it would seem he has certainly acted autonomously. He has decided at some prior time to be charitable, and now that he has been faced with such an opportunity he exercises this desire. However, I see possibly three issues with this.

⁸⁴ Consequential should be read to mean actions that follow naturally from the autonomous decision, not actions of importance.

⁸⁵ Thank you to Dr. Piper for this example

For one, Lou has not even considered what this act of charity is doing and his donation could very well be going to an organization he disagrees with. If this were true, then it would seem this moment called for another enactment of control to decide on an action as was demonstrated previously. Yet, this minimalist form of autonomy would not demand it, which seems counter-intuitive.⁸⁶ If Lou had this information provided to him as well, it is wholly possible that he would still act in the way he did, depending upon if the main aim of his action was to get out of the situation he was in, as we have posited. In this case, with the information presented to him, Lou's actions would have to count as unauthentic and, as such, non-autonomous. Though he has perhaps acted charitably, he has frustrated one of his other desires – to not give to such an organization that he fundamentally disagrees with – and as such this action could lead to regret over his own actions.⁸⁷

Similarly, his action is done solely to get out of the situation he finds himself in, making its charitability questionable. If we take charitability to mean something along the lines of “purposeful giving of time, money, or effort to those who would ask it and need it” then there seems to be room for argument that Lou's action in this instance fails to meet our standards.⁸⁸ Since Lou is aiming to act charitably, and in this instance, such a denotation is questionable at best, it appears he has even missed the mark of his earlier established goal. This also could be

⁸⁶ Should this information have been apparent to Lou at the time then I am sure the minimalist account would call for a more controlled action, but it is still wholly possible that Lou would not enact this. In such a case I doubt anyone would argue for this action being autonomous. I also would like to mention that this example harkens back to our previous discussion on the internal/external divide. It is clear here that Lou's development of internal skills does not guarantee autonomy in every case. However, by having these skills developed, he will be better equipped to deal with situations such as this.

⁸⁷ According to Meyers, “although autonomous people may experience disappointment as a result of circumstances beyond their control, they have no reason to regret their conduct if they handled the situation as well as could be expected.” It could be argued that Lou, in his fatigued state, has done the best that he could in this situation, but it would seem that he still had the ability to consider the outcomes of his actions, which he did only so far as to see that it would remove him from this current situation. Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 34.

⁸⁸ I also take it that the giver must consent to give, meaning that the giver would have to agree with the cause to which their money goes to. Perhaps this is better coined as “reasoned charity”.

seen as a source of regret for Lou later on as he has not lived up to his own personal values, further demarking this act as inauthentic and non-autonomous.

Even more so, if we suppose the action was brought about by insistent nagging and Lou acted in the way he did as a means to end this frustration, then not only is this action of questionable charitability, but there is a possibility that it could even have been heteronomously instilled in him. Just as one might swipe at an annoying fly without any thought, this action could be seen as wholly reactionary and lacking any personal motivation on the agent's part.

Considering all of this, I feel it is warranted to be cautious with the concept of a minimalist set of requirements. Yet the question of how high a threshold we would require still stands. Just as we could not consider a nearly non-existent threshold, so too could the concept of too-strict a threshold be dismissed as it would seem likely that such a concept would either remove action as a possibility (the agent, in attempting to act autonomously would spend their time in a state of "analysis-paralysis" and fail to act), or it would be wholly unachievable to anyone.⁸⁹

In response to this, I posit a threshold that sets relatively high standards for agents but is not beyond the reach of anyone. Let us once again consider Lou to demonstrate what these requirements might look like in action.

Lou's desire to be more charitable and his decision to add it to his character traits demonstrates a strong instance of what Meyers terms "programmatic planning." He has taken a moment to consider the possibility that this new trait is in fact what he wants, comparing it to his

⁸⁹ I note that this second reason is not the most reasonable grounds to dismiss too-strict restrictions for autonomy, but as autonomy is meant to be a concept useable by individual agents, it seems rather pointless to make it so difficult to achieve that no human actor could possibly be considered autonomous. In all of this discussion, if we are to take autonomy as something we seriously consider for individuals to partake in, then it *must* be achievable.

current self-conception and seeing if it fits into his life plan as well. After this fact, he decides to add it to his personal conception, adding it as a new characteristic. What I would add as requirements is that before accepting the character trait into his personal conception, Lou should also spend time deciding on both what charitability means to him⁹⁰ and determining a realistic range within which he can be charitable. What I mean by a “realistic range” is that Lou must recognize that his definition has set limits on what is charitable. Should we believe that Lou has agreed with my before supplied definition, then we can see that giving due to external pressure does not satisfy charitability, nor would giving without consent. Lou would similarly have to recognize that giving away everything would defeat the purpose of his charitability as he would end up being the one in need, frustrating his ability to give. There may well be other implications he could consider, but for now let us be satisfied with these.

Based on our framework supplied by our definition, we have now established a range within which Lou may act and be satisfied that he is being charitable. If, in acting, he ever noticed his action would cause him to sway from this range or definition, he would readily be able to notice that this is a situation requiring some further thought beyond what has been done in this instance. Similarly, once Lou incorporates this character trait into his personal conception, he can rest assured that so long as he does not waver outside of this range, he is acting charitably and *authentically* to himself. This would then remove the need for him to consider every instance of possible charity that he might come across as his definition and range has provided him with

⁹⁰ This would come in useful when faced with our dilemma earlier as Lou would have a working definition of charitability to go on with his actions. This definition should still be recognizable to others, so it would not be permissible for Lou to define charitability as “wonton destruction of other people’s property” as this would not be accepted as charitability by others. As such, his definition must satisfy internal requirements (being in line with what the agent desires) while also remaining recognizable as charitability to external actors. This further propounds the point that though internal development is necessary at this stage, it cannot occur inattentive to externals.

adequate ability to discern what is and is not charitable to him. However, it does not denote autonomy to each of the actions that fall within this range; rather, they are authentic.

This method also allows for a greater capacity to recognize moments where one's authenticity might be at risk, such as the second case presented with Lou. Armed with his personal definition as well as an understanding of the reasonable range for his actions, Lou should readily be able to recognize that acting in a seemingly charitable way to get out of a situation does not in fact align with his personal conception. Though it might appear charitable, and thus not receive any external scrutiny, it would still possibly cause internal regret which ought to be avoided. As such, with his understanding of his personal definition and reasonable range to act within, Lou would more readily pick up on this discrepancy and be able to enact control over his actions. In this instance, we could also declare that Lou would act autonomously in an episodic manner.⁹¹ Though he might leave the situation dissatisfied with its result, this is by no fault of his own.

It does not seem to follow that the threshold be set too low for autonomy, nor too high. Either case presents issues with achievement that frustrate the end autonomy aims at. As such, a balanced approach seems to be the most beneficial as has been laid out. However, though it remains more balanced, I will admit to a heavier leaning on stronger restrictions. Spontaneous actions cannot be deemed autonomous under this account; rather, such actions take up the label of being *authentic*. This feels satisfactory all the same, for though autonomy is indeed what our

⁹¹ Note that "episodic autonomy" is a concept from Diana Meyers, see: Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 48: "Autonomous episodic self-direction occurs when a person confronts a situation, asks what he or she can do with respect to it – the options may include withdrawing from it as well as participating in it in various ways – and what he or she really wants to do with respect to it, and then executes the decision this deliberation yields." This deliberation all occurs in a very short period of time, and is typically in response to a single event that is occurring to which the agent must react.

focus falls on, the end goal is to still to act authentically and be satisfied in so doing. What prevents these spontaneous acts from being declared autonomous is their nature as spontaneous. Autonomy requires the presence of control, and by such a definition spontaneous acts necessarily *lack control*. As such, I feel that autonomy is something more like a moment, or extended period wherein the agent is deliberating upon their action, followed by a calculated response.⁹² A simple example of this might be found in a practiced chess player's moves. The individual sits down at the board with a plan or aim in mind – to put her opponent in checkmate. To accomplish this, the player does not spontaneously move her pieces around the board in response to her opponent, but rather considers possible moves, taking into account the situation across the board before making a reasoned or strategic response that is aimed at her desired outcome.

The analogy aptly demonstrates a significant difference between authentic and autonomous action and highlights the fact that autonomy is difficult to achieve. A seasoned chess player might have had the logical capacity to play at a very young age, but to become skilled requires the dedication of numerous hours to the pursuit of strengthening her strategic abilities. Likewise, autonomy is something nearly all rational beings are disposed toward and have the capacity to do, but to be autonomous requires the development of skills over time – and even with these developed not every action can count as autonomous.

From this conclusion, we can determine as well that since not every action an agent commits themselves to is autonomous, then autonomy does not occur too frequently. Establishing autonomy as taking place in a dedicated moment rather than across a wide range of actions removes the ability for the vast majority of an agent's actions to be deemed autonomous.

⁹² For future simplification, I shall refer to this as an “autonomous moment” and for an individual to be deemed acting autonomously there will be a need to prove that such a moment has occurred regarding the questioned response.

The autonomous moment, as I have called it, is not something that can readily be applied to one's everyday actions.⁹³ The autonomous moment requires that the agent have time to consider the viable options set out before them, define their goal, establish a realistic range within which they could then operate, and then act upon these variables. Due to this nature, many actions will not be able to be categorized as autonomous. It is likely that an agent will experience moments of autonomy at disparate times, between which they will be committing spontaneous, authentic actions. Though these actions will all aim to the achievement of one's autonomously chosen ends, this is not necessarily enough to confer autonomy to them.

Thus, we can conclude that not only should autonomy have a high threshold for achievement, but due to this fact it will also necessarily be rather rare. This conclusion is not stating that few people will be able to achieve it, thus making it rare; rather, it is stating that when judging an individual's actions over a span of time, most of their actions will not be able to be categorized as autonomous but rather authentic (should she have properly applied herself in her autonomous moments).

Part III – Valuing the Authentic Self

We have thought the authentic self up to this point as a combination of self-direction, self-definition, and self-discovery. Knowing this multi-faceted view of the self, I feel that our discussion on the valuation of the self must necessarily consider each part in turn. In judging the valuation of the authentic self, we must consider whether the individual is satisfied with the self that they develop based on these three facets. I shall investigate each aspect of the authentic self

⁹³ This in fact presents a problem that I will address in the following chapter. (Not every action can be autonomous, nor should we strive to make it that every action is)

and see if it is possible for an individual to not value it while still being able to act autonomous despite this.

Self-direction

Self-direction seems to be the most straightforward to answer in the end. Lacking satisfaction in one's self-direction seems to act contrary to the notion of autonomy, and as such making it difficult to consider any option wherein an agent could be dissatisfied with her self-direction and still be autonomous.⁹⁴ Self-direction, in the end, is the action component of autonomy, and therefore must align itself with the direction that the agent wishes to authentically go. Should an agent's self-direction not match up with her plan, then she could not be said to be acting autonomous to begin with. Due to this fact, our investigation should now fall on self-definition and self-direction.

Self-definition

Like self-direction, it seems counter-intuitive to hold that one can act autonomously while also not finding satisfaction in their self-definition. One's self-definition is something that is crafted and chosen.⁹⁵ The goal of self-definition is to establish one's own standards and qualities that will allow them the ability to achieve these ends, and therefore does not admit to any perceivable allowance of dissatisfaction.

First, we must consider how an agent could possibly be dissatisfied with their self-definitions. Consider an agent, call him Reid, who has a self-definition that states he is humble

⁹⁴ Unless the agent is dissatisfied with their self-direction and chooses to change it. This could certainly be deemed autonomous should the change yield a more satisfactory conclusion.

⁹⁵ Note that self-direction is a direct result of one's self being expressed, meaning that self-direction is a combination of self-discovery and self-definition combined. For a more precise look at the interplay of these three aspects of authenticity, refer back to chapter one.

and his action must necessarily accord with this. Let us also suppose that Reid is not personally satisfied with this fact. It does not follow that he would have incorporated a standard into himself that he finds no value in for this would suggest that Reid was not the one behind this decision, but rather that it was heteronomously introduced to him. The presence of dissatisfaction with an aspect of one's authentic self that hinges on personal choice should seem to more readily describe the presence of alien standards than anything authentic. For Reid to have chosen humility as an end that he wishes to pursue, there would have to be some reason for him to have chosen it that in some way either benefits him or acts as a means to this specific end. The latter case would suggest there is some usefulness to humility for Reid, such as it would allow him to be viewed more positively by those around him. However, this would suggest that Reid in some way places importance in the opinions others hold of him, meaning that if being humble increases the chances of people holding *favorable* opinions of him – and such an outcome is pleasing to Reid – then he has chosen humility as a means to his personal satisfaction still. Reid might not place any pride or value in his humility, using it primarily in an egoistic means to accomplish an end goal, but its presence and incorporation as a standard in his character is still ultimately aimed at the end goal of satisfaction. As such, it would seem even if we cannot say he humility itself is satisfying to the agent, the possible results of exemplifying it are, and as such it causes satisfaction.⁹⁶

In the former case, namely that humility in itself is valuable to Reid, there is an even clearer presence of satisfaction. Reid does not use his humility as a means to some further goal but finds it to be valued as a quality. This would suggest similarly then that there is something

⁹⁶ Though in this case Reid does not see humility as an end in itself, he finds the results to be valued for this reason. As such, humility has been incorporated as a means *to* satisfaction, suggesting still that Reid must in some way be satisfied with its inclusion in his personality. So long as the results are favorable (i.e. his peers hold good opinions of Reid), he can be said to be satisfied with humility.

satisfactory to Reid in the act of being humble. He finds value in the act of humility and when he acts in accordance with this value there would be some presence of satisfaction with his actions for they aligned with his personal values. The importance of the value for itself is of great enough importance that the achievement of being humble causes some positive reaction for Reid, in short, satisfying him and his desire to be humble.

Let us return now to the concept that neither of these cases are true, Reid does not value humility itself nor the ends that it brings about, yet it is still an aspect of his self-definition. As we have seen with our examination of humility being valued for the ends it can bring about, as soon as these results falter, we would expect Reid to do away with humility for something more efficient to his aims. If we apply this logic to our current situation, it would appear Reid should act similarly in this case. If humility is not a quality he places any value in and it does not bring about ends that are valuable to him, then there would appear to be no reason at all for him to practice it. This would in turn suggest that Reid himself is not the one responsible for having chosen this quality, instead indicating that it is in some way alien to himself or otherwise heteronomously instilled in him.

Alternatively, it could also be said that Reid has been misguided or made an error in choosing to incorporate humility as a part of his self-definition. Perhaps Reid's ability to imagine the outcomes of such a quality were not accurate to the reality, or some other ignorance prevented him from ascertaining the results he would receive from the quality. In short, had Reid known of the limitations present in being humble and its inability to bring about satisfaction, he would not have chosen it to begin with. This should stand as further evidence that satisfaction is a necessary result of one's self-definition.

Self-discovery

Self-discovery is different from the previous aspect of the authentic self in that it involves introspection into who we *already* are. This ought not to be mistaken for the concept of a ‘hidden’ self that is awaiting discovery as we have already dismissed such a concept. While self-definition involves the individual choosing goals or characteristics, self-discovery asks that we investigate the aspects of ourselves that are inseparable from who we are.⁹⁷ These aspects are not hidden away from us but are rather aspects that are integral to the person and personality we occupy.

Before we can act as individual agents making independent actions, we must necessarily start as beings in a society with little such freedoms. As children, we are taught in certain ways, brought up with certain ideals, impacted by external events, categorized and judged by our peers, and more. Before personal self-definition can occur, all individuals are subjected to heteronomous definitions of who and what they are. This might be as inescapable as one’s race, or as plastic as one’s perceived social standing or worth, but both compose aspects of the individual that are not chosen by the individual. These aspects of the self, though external, can root themselves into the individual and alter certain aspects of their personality or offer external hurdles and challenges.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Marina Oshana, “autonomy and Self-Identity” *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 90: “Can a person, for example, be autonomous despite the fact that she does not endorse, or wholeheartedly identify with, an aspect of her character that is essential to her self-identity? Does the person who forgets her race, or gender, lack a ‘healthy, authentic psychology’? Is such a person condemned to a diminished state of autonomy as a result of this forgetfulness?”

⁹⁸ Some of these externally applied aspects can certainly be cleared out of the individual’s self conception through the application of self-definition. What is important to take away from self-discovery is that the individual is taking stock of things that are fundamentally part of who they are. Some of these aspects can be caused by the external factors enacted upon them in their youth but are not necessarily one in the same. I will discuss this further later in the section.

Self-discovery thus involves concepts such as one's race, ethnicity, income, mental and physical health, and so on. It is a compilation of all these aspects of an individual – those that we cannot necessarily choose for ourselves – that fleshes out fundamentally what makes the individual *who* and *what* they are. By this very nature, there is yet another difference present between self-discovery and self-definition: self-discovery does not involve the picking or choosing of aspects the agent *prefers* but is rather a form of acknowledgement.⁹⁹

Let us now consider whether an individual then must necessarily find satisfaction in their self-discovery. To do this, I will posit two cases where an individual has discovered something about themselves that fundamentally describes their self and their actions and I will attempt to see if they might still act autonomously though they are dissatisfied with these aspects.

For our first example, let us consider Heather. Heather's mother and father are both immigrants from Guatemala and she as such has deep ties to the culture herself, being a first-generation daughter. Heather grew up in a rural area somewhere in Texas, where all her life she was surrounded by other families of Latin American descent. This fact, along with the upbringing her parents provided her with, has left a lasting impression on a young Heather and her mannerisms. Let us also suppose that the sentiment where she grew up was anti-immigration and heavily exclusive to those who were not "native" (or more accurately, naturalized) United States citizens. Due to this, Heather and found that she was often bullied and excluded due to her own family history and heritage. As such, Heather began to distance herself from the

⁹⁹ Marina Oshana, "Autonomy and Self-Identity", 91: "But while self-betrayal and self-deception are disabling, they are very different phenomena from that of acknowledging, with eyes wide open, the experience of disaffectedness from certain aspects of one's self-conception. The former injures autonomy, whereas the latter does not." Oshana states that self-deception and disaffectedness with what one finds are wholly separate, and that being disaffected with one's self-discovery does not in any way harm autonomy.

mannerisms of her family and found that she was not entirely pleased with being Guatemalan, instead longing to be more like those who picked on her.

Now a college junior, Heather has discovered that this anti-immigration sentiment and bullying from her youth has caused her to distance herself from the fact that she is Guatemalan. Though she is still not perhaps proud of her heritage, she has begun to realize that there is no escaping this aspect of herself and that many frustrations she faces in her day to day life might exist, in part, because she has so desperately attempted to cut ties with this aspect of who she is. Though Heather never really *forgot* about this aspect of herself, in this instance we might say that she is engaging in self-discovery as she re-recognizes an intrinsic and integral part of herself. Heather might still resent the fact that people hold her heritage against her, taking little satisfaction in her acceptance of who she is, but this would seem not to impact her ability to be autonomous. In fact, though Heather is not satisfied with the labels that might come with the recognition of her heritage, acknowledging it as part of her self-conception lends Heather a greater ability to consider what it is she wants as an individual. Perhaps there were desires she associated with her heritage and as such dismissed without thought on this basis before, but with this new acknowledgement she discovers that even if there is a connection, she truly wants to want these desires.¹⁰⁰

Thus, though this discovery might not yield great satisfaction in Heather, it provides her with an understanding of herself on which to base future decisions. Were she to continue to ignore this part of her personal identity, Heather not only is attempts to fool herself into believing there is truth in the lies or misrepresentations she creates, but also restricts herself from

¹⁰⁰ One could perhaps think of this as like the idea of “guilty pleasures” as discussed by Simon Feldman in *Against Authenticity*, pages 31-33.

discovering desires that might in fact present her with greater satisfaction through the application of autonomy.¹⁰¹

Let us now consider another option in which the self-discovered aspect of a person might in fact be changeable. Consider Graham who, unbeknownst to himself, is struggling with depression. While Graham remains unaware of this aspect of himself he finds that he often lacks motivation to act on certain desires as well as feels a deep sense of detachment from himself and those around him. Let us say that Graham's depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in his brain, making it even more of a fundamental aspect of himself, something that he did not choose to be.¹⁰² It is highly unlikely that Graham or anyone else would be satisfied with their mental health were they to discover this aspect of themselves. However, this does not mean that armed with this knowledge of himself that Graham cannot be autonomous due to his dissatisfaction. In fact, I argue that once again this knowledge leads him to be more autonomous than before.

Armed with this new understanding of himself, Graham can now begin considering how depression impacts his decisions and note when he or the depression is in control. Even supposing that Graham is not pleased with this aspect of himself, he can now begin to act more in accord with what he wants. His dissatisfaction, if anything, will push him to change this aspect of himself as best he can, and this change will be headed by his authentic desire to do so. Whether this change be through medication or other means, this piece of self-discovery allows for Graham to make better informed decision regarding his self-direction, even if it causes dissatisfaction.

¹⁰¹ This can also be understood as Heather living in the Sartrean concept of "bad faith." Also, see Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*: "Forgetting one's race involves a lapse of self-awareness" (70).

¹⁰² Though I do not believe anyone can *choose* to become depressed. Certainly once made aware of the issue, one can choose not to act on it, but this will be discussed briefly later on.

Conclusion

As such, we cannot outright say that one must be satisfied with their authentic self to act autonomously, though we cannot say that they need not be satisfied *at all*. One ought to be satisfied with the aspects that they control, namely their self-direction and self-definition, as these both are chosen by the agent. Should either of these cause dissatisfaction, then autonomy could be questioned as one should not feel regret over the aspects of themselves nor the projects they can willingly choose. This would operate against the aim of autonomy. However, an agent can be dissatisfied with aspects of self-discovery and the aspects of themselves they cannot change. What is not conducive to autonomy is bypassing self-discovery or fooling oneself into believing a caricature of themselves is in fact the truth. This would preclude the agent from acting in a way that considers their authentic self to the fullest possible extent, and thus diminishing the overall autonomy of their actions. We have now established our new hybrid account.

I shall review what our fundamental structure and add on our newly developed requirements to present a full interpretation of what this hybrid account shall entail.

Our full account includes:

- The presence of some hierarchical model,
- The involvement of structured planning for an individual's actions and future goals,
- A naturalistic approach focusing on concepts and ideas that can be measured,
- A requirement for action to occur for an individual to be deemed autonomous, and
- A substantive account wherein progress and competency can be measured in an individual,
- A focus primarily on internal development of autonomy skills and competencies while taking into account the presence of external influences,

- A high threshold of achievement, requiring the presence of an “autonomous moment” that involves an establishing of definitions and a range to act within for programmatic autonomy,
- And requires satisfaction with the authentic self of the agent regarding aspects that are directly controlled and defined by them (these being self-definition and self-discovery), while allowing for dissatisfaction with aspects of self-discovery.

Chapter 4 – Benefits of the Hybrid

Account

Introduction

Now that we have established a working theory of personal autonomy, I will turn my attention to first proving autonomy is not a perfect ideal, followed by discussing the benefits that are still available despite this. Since autonomy does a great deal of work in practical philosophy, it is necessary that we investigate how our account will positively impact an individual. I will hold this discussion through presenting a number of possible case studies to which our account shall be applied, discussing the outcome to discover what benefits the agent might experience. In this chapter I will primarily strive to restrict our discussions to the effects that personal autonomy produces for our agents, though I will also attempt to include allusions to possible objections one might raise.

The case studies I shall lay out will establish situations within which an individual is faced with a challenge, and in them I will attempt to discern how the application of personal autonomy on the agent's part could produce beneficial results. In order to do this, we must first make a few assumptions about each individual discussed.¹⁰³ First, we must assume that each agent fulfills our requirements for autonomous action. As such, they have the ability to plan, introspect, consider different options, as well as have an understanding of what aspects of the

¹⁰³ Note that these assumptions will hold true in each case study unless otherwise specified.

self make up their authentic self.¹⁰⁴ Based on this knowledge, we will be able to apply our account of autonomy and trace its outcomes without worrying about whether these requirements have been fulfilled. The aim of this chapter is to determine why autonomy is not an ideal and to uncover the still present values of autonomy regardless of this fact.

Part I – Autonomy as a Perfect Ideal

Before addressing the benefits of autonomy, it makes sense to discuss whether it is a perfect ideal or not. Should we conclude that it is in fact a perfect ideal, further discussion of benefits would be trivial as autonomy would provide every benefit toward one's happiness. Should we, on the other hand, find that autonomy is not an ideal, then we must discuss what benefits one might derive from it that would then make it a worthwhile endeavor.

If autonomy is in fact an ideal, the following should hold true: the most satisfaction in any instance can be derived from autonomous action, a meaningful and satisfying life can only be achieved via autonomy, and it is thus only harmful for an agent to choose not to act autonomously. At first glance, it is an alluring claim to say that autonomy is an ideal, for as we have discussed, its ultimate aim is to bring about satisfaction to the agent and lead them to flourish as an individual. However, on further inspection, this ultimate aim alone does not seem to provide us with enough evidence to say autonomy is an ideal form of action. While autonomy's aim is to lead to satisfaction, it is possible that some agents can still achieve the same end through heteronomy. In other words, an individual might discover that their personal satisfaction lies in contrast to autonomy, or that to be satisfied with themselves they must necessarily not act autonomously. To demonstrate this, I will investigate instances wherein an

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion on these aspects, look to Chapter one, "authenticity".

agent can choose something in a heteronomous way, and how despite this fact the agent is still capable of achieving satisfaction from their actions.

Let us first consider the case of an agent, Turner, who wishes to become a monk.¹⁰⁵ Turner has thought through his desire to be a monk and is well aware that any monastery he joins will strip him of much of his personal freedom. He will have to follow the tasks the master sets out for him to do and act as a part of a larger group rather than follow through with his own independent desires or following personal aims. In effect, by becoming a monk Turner is knowingly giving up his ability to be autonomous and free acting. Despite this, upon reflection, Turner decides that this is in fact what he wants and that his greatest satisfaction lies in following this path. Note that this decision could very well be autonomous, containing all the required elements of an autonomous action. However, the result of this act is to lose all ability to be autonomous in the future, which if autonomy were an ideal, would mean that anything that occurs once he has forfeited his autonomy would not be contributing to Turner living a satisfying life. As such, he willingly cedes his autonomy and joins a monastery where his day to day routine is ordered for him by his superiors. In this form of living, however, Turner still finds that he is in fact satisfied and does not wish for more control, nor does he regret his decision upon any reflection.

If a scenario like this is possible, then we must admit the possibility that an individual can be satisfied by actions outside the realm of autonomy – indeed contrary to the entire notion. By constructing autonomy as a means to achieving satisfaction in individuals, we cannot then ignore the fact that there seem to be separate ways to achieve a similar end with equally pleasing results

¹⁰⁵ This example is in reference to a study presented by Marina Oshana in *Personal Autonomy in Society*, pg 62.

for the agent. If Turner finds that he is satisfied, or possibly *more* satisfied, with this living arrangement than when he was when living and acting independently, it would be counter-intuitive for us to deny his satisfaction. In fact, if we were to prescribe that Turner *must* act autonomously, we would be falling into a paternalistic trap that we have set out to avoid by supporting the value of autonomy. Those who endorse the value of autonomy seem to deny the possibility for individuals to paternalistically guide another agent to what is better or best for him, for such an act would cause the agent to forfeit his autonomy so that he could cede to another's concept of good. This misstep is present in the claim that autonomy *must* be how all agents act. As we have seen, Turner derives satisfaction from his actions as a monk, despite their heteronomy, and if we are not to deny an agent who autonomously chooses to harm themselves, it would appear contradictory to claim that we can intercede in another agent's actions simply due to a lack of autonomy on his part. This should be especially true should the agent find satisfaction in his acts.

A similar case might be observed in an agent joining a group with long-standing traditions and built-in ideas on what it means to succeed in that particular environment – one could think of Greek life as such an example.¹⁰⁶ In such organizations there are set rules and regulations on how an individual ought to behave and act: perhaps they are socially based, philanthropically based, or religiously based. In each case, they have a prescribed end – to develop one's social skills, philanthropic capabilities, or religious sentiments. In all of these situations, an individual who wishes to join such an organization must, in some way, forfeit their individual desires, “toeing the line” that the organization sets up through the traditions specific to

¹⁰⁶ Note that this is true of many different organizations though. We could perhaps apply this to Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the military, and other organizations that have a code of conduct and “chain of command” that people must obey to act well and flourish in those environments.

it. These groups mold their members to accept their code of conduct and traditions, creating a mindset that is often heteronomous in nature.¹⁰⁷ Yet clearly people derive satisfaction from this fact, perhaps enjoying the ability to slot themselves into a definable role, surrounded by like-minded individuals who hold the same values and traditions as they themselves now do.

Let us consider another agent who is faced with the choice of joining such an organization, call her Leela. Once arriving at university, Leela becomes bored with her day to day activities. She has wanted for a long time to find a group with which she can fit into and feel as though she is surrounded by like-minded individuals. Leela perhaps feels that philanthropy is indeed important before joining, but once she enters, the organization makes it clear that the main aim everyone ought to hold is that of achieving the most hours in servitude to others as possible. To this end, the organization has several meetings a year in which they track each member's allotted hours. Further, the organization requires that each member behave according to the prescribed guidelines that they agreed to when entering and that they must follow the traditions set out in the code of conduct at all times.¹⁰⁸ After getting to know the organization and participating in it over the span of a year, Leela comes to discover that she does not agree with all of the traditions and finds some of the restrictions cumbersome due to them not being fully her own. However, Leela also notes that she is pleased with the new friends she has made as a result of joining the organization and is, all things considered, happy to follow the guidelines for required hours of volunteer work. While she still has difficulty with internalizing the

¹⁰⁷ This would be heteronomous since these concepts of conduct and proper tradition are not being derived by the agents self-reflective thought and are instead being prescribed as true and best by external actors.

¹⁰⁸ I will not attempt to lay out such possibilities out of both ignorance of what they could look like and a desire not to strawman such organizations.

heteronomous traditions of the organization, she finds that she is more pleased to be a part of the group than she is displeased or worried about acting as others have told her she ought to.

Here we might again note that Leela forfeits autonomy to join this organization; however, just as was the case with Turner, Leela finds considerable satisfaction. We could further hypothesize that Leela found at a younger age that she was greatly uncomfortable whenever she was left to her own devices to determine how she ought to act or what she ought to do. In such circumstances, she always found herself defaulting to whatever act those around her or nearby were doing, never feeling any sense of regret due to this. In fact, we could posit that she felt greater regret whenever she would do something that was *against* the norm or wholly of her own doing. On this new addition we can see even further how Leela's continued involvement in a group that supports heteronomous action is not impeding on her ability to find satisfaction and is in fact *supporting* her satisfaction to a greater extent than autonomous action would appear to do.

Finally, let us consider a third agent, Stan, who finds that the act of introspection and thinking deeply into a plan for his future causes him both great discomfort and anxiety. Stan has on many occasions attempted to act in autonomous ways, stopping to consider how he truly wants to live and contemplating the ways he could achieve this end through action. However, every time Stan stops to engage in such thought, he finds himself paralyzed by anxiety at the myriad choices before him, and from this reflection, Stan is pushed into a panic that causes him a great deal of mental anguish. Due to this fact, Stan has found that in instances where he is unsure of what to do, he prefers to ask others for advice and then heed whatever they might prescribe for him rather than have to experience the anxiety that such reflection causes him.

It is undoubtedly true that Stan lacks self-definition due to this fact, which would deny him the ability to be autonomous; however, considering the pain that he would incur in

establishing a self-definition, much less forcing himself to live it out, Stan finds that he is perfectly satisfied with allowing another person's thoughts and advice to guide him.¹⁰⁹ He is aware that the results he gets from following this advice is perhaps not the best available to him, but since he is unable to discover what his own personal desires might be without subjecting himself to panic attacks and uncontrollable anxiety, he is perfectly happy to follow others' lead.

We cannot deny that Stan is finding satisfaction in this instance, though we can certainly say that he might not be achieving as much satisfaction as he could were he able to get past the mental road block presented by his anxiety. However, it does not seem either reasonable or humane to demand Stan act autonomously all the same. If he is receiving satisfaction, and he is pleased with the amount that he is getting, then any act wherein we might force him to be more autonomous would be paternalistic and, in this case, even cruel.

Furthermore, it would appear that in all of these cases each agent has been able to express some part of their authentic desires without the continued application of autonomy. In the case of Turner, he authentically wanted to join the monastery he chose and similarly was content with abdicating his personal autonomy. With Leela, she had a desire to be similar to those around her, and so though she might act heteronomously in many instances due to this, she is still achieving an authentic desire. Finally, Stan has a greater desire to avoid the mental anguish caused by introspection, and in so far as he accomplishes this he to could be seen as acting authentically. Judging from these cases, we can conclude that engaging in autonomy would likely frustrate their aims and render them unhappier than they would be when acting heteronomously.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Stan seems to satisfy self-discovery due to this, meaning that this decision is still coming from a place of authenticity, though how much is questionable still.

¹¹⁰ This concept was discussed in chapter two in the section on acceptance of the authentic self. What we found in this case was that the individual in question would only choose to direct themselves toward ends that they found

These examples have established the claim that autonomy is not necessarily a perfect ideal since one can still act authentically and achieve satisfaction without the rigorous control that is required for autonomy.¹¹¹ This conclusion leads to further discussion on what the benefits of choosing to act autonomously might be, as well as an investigation into how this proposed hybrid account might supply these benefits.

Part II. Case Studies

In this section, I introduce a number of case studies to which I apply our personal autonomy account to see how the account impacts each agent's situation and what benefits this application brings about. However, near the end of the chapter I will turn my attention to possible objections that might arise to the concept of personal autonomy and our established account.

I shall present first the issue in each case, followed by how we might layer the application of personal autonomy over the issue at hand. I will avoid considering all other possible ways that an individual might be able to respond to these dilemmas beyond personal autonomy.¹¹² As such, I will focus purely on the application of autonomy to the studies and then analyze and discuss the different benefits each agent has experienced through the practice of autonomy.¹¹³

either a) valuable in themselves or b) offered a means to a valuable end. If we apply this reasoning to these instances, we can clearly see that in each of our examples the agents do not find autonomy valuable in itself nor feel that it will aid them in achieving a valuable end.

¹¹¹ What really remains in question here is *to what extent* one can be authentic or achieve satisfaction. I will not delve into discussing this here.

¹¹² I realize that this would possibly enhance the discussion; however, there is too great an opportunity to lose sight of our target in this method. As such, I shall strive to avoid it.

¹¹³ Note that many of our examples might provide all the benefits we talk about in this section. For clarity, however, I have chosen to only address the two most clear benefits in each case.

Case One

For our first case study, I will return to a dilemma provided in the previous chapter regarding a student, Ana, having to choose between two universities. As we had previously established, Ana has just received two acceptance letters in the mail to the two universities she applied to.¹¹⁴ Again, Ana faces a dilemma in choosing: she seems to want to go to both universities equally.¹¹⁵ However, in this instance we will assume that Ana has developed at least a basic competency in autonomy and is able to introspect, imagine, define, and think critically on her two choices. The issue that this presented us with previously was that choosing in line with one's strongest desires is not always a viable solution in such cases where there seem to be many equally strong desires.

However, let us investigate how Ana would approach this problem through the exercise of personal autonomy. Once Ana has recognized her predicament, she must enter into what we have termed the autonomous moment.¹¹⁶ Her first task is to establish an authentic valuation of the university experience she wants, in other words, Ana must attempt to define what she wants out of her university experience. After some deliberation, we will say that Ana values universities as places (1) to continue one's education to higher levels as well as (2) to discover what one is truly passionate about and (3) to make life-long friends.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ For the sake of simplicity, we will assume that these are the *only* two universities Ana applied to. Also, for our previous discussion regarding Ana, see Chapter 2 Section

¹¹⁵ Note that this does not assume Ana knows much about each university as a whole; rather, just that she has an equally strong desire to attend both.

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 2, III B for this reference.

¹¹⁷ Note that this individualized aspect of Ana's definition, though useful for making it subjectively her own, is not necessary. It is purely possible that one might define university in the way that the majority of their society does because this is what they too see the value as. What is required is deliberation in deciding this, not uniqueness or individuality. We also are necessarily assuming that by Ana's inclusion of "discover what one is truly passionate about" that this is still an aspect of herself she needs to explore. As such, while she cannot definitively state what it is she has a passion for, she can still use this information to help inform her future decision.

This understanding of the collegiate goals that Ana authentically values, though simplistic, is satisfactory to Ana's ends at this time as it has now also established the reasonable range for her to consider her options within. This range would cause Ana to exclude any universities that would not satisfy the values that she authentically seeks, should this be provable.¹¹⁸ Armed with an understanding of what she authentically values, Ana may now look at her two choices in a different light: no longer is she choosing between mere competing desires, but now she is seeing how each of these schools might live up to the values she has authentically endorsed.¹¹⁹ Ana now must take the time to determine whether her choices offer her what she is authentically seeking, and then make her decision.

Let us assume that of the two universities, *A* and *B*, there is a clear distinction between what they have to offer. Let us say that *A* offers a liberal education, has a large undergraduate class size, and offers myriad opportunities to their students, while *B* is much more specialized, competitive, and has a small class size. If we compare this information to what Ana authentically values, it seems clear that of the two, university *A* is more in accord with what Ana really wants due to its academic flexibility and large student body.¹²⁰ Knowing this, Ana would be able to make a more informed choice regarding which university to choose. If this is correct, then all that would be required at this point is the action of choosing. We will assume that she would choose university *A* in this case as it seems to most accurately live up to the different aspects of Ana's definition as was presented earlier. The focus on a liberal education not only allows for

¹¹⁸ By this I mean should she be able to hold sufficient evidence that the university does not satisfy all three of these components of her definition.

¹¹⁹ Again, note that her definition, since it has personal ties in it, still represents her desires. However, the desires stated in her definition are clearer and allow for discriminating between her two choices as we will see.

¹²⁰ Thus satisfying her ability to find her passion (and we have stated before she does not know what this is yet), and have many opportunities to make friends. In this case, both universities offer her the ability to receive higher education.

her to receive higher education, but also allows for exploration which would more readily support the ability to find what one is passionate about. The larger student body and less competitive nature of the school also suggests that Ana would possibly have an easier time satisfying her desire to make life-long friends.¹²¹ Thus, it would appear that university A most accurately represents Ana's authentic valuation of universities and would be the better option of the two for her.

Now that we have discussed the application of autonomy in this instance, let us investigate what sorts of benefits its application has given Ana. For one, we can immediately note that Ana's decision was not one of mere unthinking whim or random choice, but of *reasoned deliberation*. Due to this, we could safely assume that Ana's final decision would reflect her authentic self, taking into consideration her plans and authentic desires to a greater extent than searching for the stronger of two desires would permit. Along this same line of reasoning, and perhaps more importantly, we can deduce that Ana's action was *her own*. The values she endorsed and the eventual action that was taken on her part were not instilled in her by some external source or, in short, were not heteronomous. Through tracing Ana's lines of reasoning and judging her self-definition and character traits, we can justifiably claim that there was little to no external control over her actions, or at least no *meaningful* external control.¹²² Certainly, we must admit that her end decision was made based on information that has been provided by external sources (e.g. the universities presenting themselves in the ways that we

¹²¹ Most would claim that it is easier to find friends in a large group of people who do not want to first and foremost do better than you.

¹²² Keep in mind that this is meaningful undue external pressures. As such, the requirement for our authentic valuations to be recognizable by our society is not infringed upon, as for our actions to hold up as what we claim them to be, (e.g. kind) others must see them as such, thus making this external meaningful. What this precludes is for our processes to be controlled entirely outside of ourselves, or to involve aspects that, while others hold to be true, the individual does not.

discussed), but this kind of constraint is unavoidable. An agent cannot live in a vacuum and her decisions cannot occur within one either. Ana has acted to whatever extent it is possible for her without undue external coercion or pressure. It would be a gross exaggeration on my behalf to claim that her decision is not informed in any way by external sources, but it is her own to the extent that it was possible in the circumstances provided. With her developed skills of introspection, imagination, and reasoning, Ana was able to express personal control over her action and can be, to a similar extent, satisfied with this fact.¹²³

Ana also reaps the benefit of being able to act spontaneously after her decision has been made with reasonable assurance that subsequent actions will, because they match her authentic self, give her satisfaction. So long as the experiences and decisions Ana faces are in accordance with her prior value endorsements and operate within the reasonable range she established for action, then Ana has no reason to enter into a further autonomous moment to contemplate just what she ought to do. Similarly, should she run into an issue that is *not* in the range of her prior value endorsements, then this serves as a clear indication that she must pause and once again enter into an autonomous moment.

As we can see, personal autonomy has afforded Ana a great many benefits. Ana chose a university that lived up to her authentic value endorsements and allowed her to feel satisfied with how her time and money are being spent. Her autonomy allowed for her to differentiate between two desires that seemed to be equally acceptable and viable and ultimately choose in a way that

¹²³ What I mean is that to the extent that Ana exerted herself in introspection, imagination, and reasoning she can similarly be satisfied that her action was in fact under her personal control. This goes back to our earlier discussion on the required threshold for an action to be autonomous. Should Ana have not applied herself and these characteristics at all, then she cannot be satisfied that her action is autonomous or under her personal control. The greater extent to which Ana expresses these aspects, the greater a claim she has on the concept of having personally controlled her decision.

expressed what she truly wanted (at least at the time of action). Furthermore, this choice was her own, as much as this can realistically be the case, and holds its own worth to her in this way. More so, Ana has been afforded the satisfaction of when, as a result of her acting on reasoned value judgements, she gets it right. In other words, when an agent acts autonomously, she is more likely to make an informed (and by that nature, correct) decision about what choices she truly desires and what ends suit her best. If the conclusions that an agent arrive at and follow through with are in fact correct, then she has the added satisfaction of knowing that she knows herself and has acted in her best interest.

Case Two

In our next case, let us consider an instance where the agent's attempt at autonomy does not go quite as smoothly as was presented in Ana's case. I will argue that our hybrid account allows for agents to make mistakes in their previous actions, and that such issues are easily dealt with under our current definition. To highlight this, I will look at an agent who previously decided on a plan based on a mistake or shortcoming in his competencies that led to him misunderstanding what his goal would ultimately entail.

Here let us consider Josh who has previously chosen autonomously that he wanted to be a doctor. Josh has developed the autonomy competencies we have discussed, and thus at the time of his decision to become a medical doctor he had clarified to himself exactly what he wanted, which provided him with a specific range to act within. Josh seeks to become someone who has a deep understanding of human anatomy, a deep caring for each patient, and is able to help his patients get better. However, let us consider what would happen should Josh discover he is greatly uncomfortable with the sight of blood and is somewhat of a germaphobe.

What we can immediately note is that Josh has some tensions within his valuation of being a doctor and his authentic self. While being a doctor would satisfy his desire to help others, it would exacerbate his discomfort with the sight of blood as well as cause him great worry when dealing with patients who are sick. Josh would, in such cases, find that his job as a doctor is rather frustrating and unsatisfying, despite having the possibility to fulfill the plans he formed through reasoned deliberation at the outset. This conflict would make itself known to Josh through the recurrent regret he would feel when working with blood and patients who are sick, as he would regularly find himself expending mental energy to ignore these aspects of himself in order to achieve the end goals of helping others.

In the present case, it does not seem difficult to say that Josh's experience of being a doctor are not fully in accordance with his authentic self. While he might in fact truly value helping others, it seems that what is entailed in being a doctor is not suitable to his disposition or mental state. In fact, his continued perseverance in aiding those who are sick despite the regret and possible revulsion that it instills in him seems to demonstrate an ignorance of his self-conception. Should Josh notice that being a doctor is not as satisfying as he wants, he would quickly find that it was due to this fact. Such a career choice is largely against his authentic self.

At this point, it might appear that Josh would be at a loss regarding how to proceed. His decision to become a doctor was not entirely heteronomous as it ultimately came from him, but it was caused by a misinterpretation of his self. We could certainly presume that Josh *does* authentically want to help others and see them get better, but Josh failed to realize that he was not suited to certain core parts of medical work. This is all clear in part due to Josh's initial work of dictating what the value of such work was to him, and due to this he will have an easier time

rectifying his mistake: he will be able to consult his earlier self-conception in order to see where he went astray.

Let us consider what this would look like. Firstly, Josh would have to decide whether he would want to change his career, or if he could change his self. It seems wholly possible for an individual to become more acquainted with the sight of blood with exposure, and it is possible that Josh could do so if he applied himself to this end. Similarly, it is possible, though difficult, for Josh to reorient himself with regard to his fear of germs. He might be able to overcome this fear entirely, or he might be able to find a way within the scope of his job to adequately deal with these concerns. Perhaps he goes about wearing a mask while working with sick patients and washes his hands enough to satisfy himself. If, on the other hand, Josh were to determine that his aversion to blood and germs was not something he could readily overcome, or did not want to invest himself in changing, then he would be able to see that he needs a career shift instead. This change would be able to be identifiably autonomous as he would have arrived at such a decision after an autonomous moment wherein he has contemplated his issue and compared his valuation of being a doctor with his understanding of himself and what he finds satisfying.

Should Josh choose to shift careers, he would again have to reconsider what he would authentically value in his next choice. This decision, however, would be coming from a position of stronger personal understanding and would also not necessarily have to be a complete change. Rather, Josh could still find that he wants to help people as much as possible and help them get better but wishes to take a less hands-on role in this process, perhaps joining the Red Cross and helping with fundraising for patients who cannot support themselves. As such, Josh did not so much act against his authentic self in becoming a doctor as much as he was acting in ignorance of aspects of himself that later came to light. This made Josh's self-concept change, and his

valuation of his career had to follow suit as far as it related to the changes he instituted to his guiding self-conception.

People's self-conceptions are not entirely unchanging, but can change over time, as was discussed before. As such, autonomy must account for this plasticity and be flexible in the hands of its users. The hybrid account presented in this paper accounts for this through the flexibility in one's authentic valuations, allowing for aspects of it to change over time along with the developing characteristics and desires of the agent. In the case of Josh, if over time he developed a greater desire to help others and his fears of blood and germs dissipated, his self-conception would be able to yield to this new development.¹²⁴ We can see this flexibility was also present in Ana's case as her valuation of what a university experience would provide her with was susceptible to change over time. This brings up the fact that one's valuations are also flexible to changes *external* of the individual agent. Regarding Josh, if we were to find out that he developed his valuation before becoming a doctor, we might understand better how he was able to think this was a good career path despite the subsequent difficulties he discovered on the job. Though agents develop their skills at imagining what their future might offer and how their plans might come to fruition, they cannot account for every externality that might affect their plans, nor can they account fully for their ignorance of certain aspects of their end goal.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ What I mean is that Josh would no longer fear germs or blood and his authentic self would be more readily able to derive satisfaction from helping others. He would also, as was mentioned before, be able to feel the satisfaction of developing himself to a point where he could achieve the ends that he desired, despite the roadblocks that were positioned before him.

¹²⁵ This ignorance is derived from not being able to know exactly what positions they might be in regarding their specific plans, having externals change, etc.

Case Three

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, autonomy is not something all people are immediately predisposed to, but rather it is gained through practicing and developing skills and competencies that compose it.¹²⁶ Thus, for an agent to become a better autonomous agent requires practicing these skills and developing an understanding of who they are, what they truly want, and how to get it. What I will attempt to demonstrate in this section is how our hybrid account allows for the development of these competencies more readily and, as such, provides a clearer and more manageable route to achieving autonomy for agents who are new to the concept.

Let us consider Kate who has just recently decided that she wants to be in greater control of her life. In short, she wishes to develop her autonomy. Given that Kate has had a typical life and upbringing, we can say that Kate, despite never consciously attempting to develop her autonomy before, has likely at least engaged in aspects of it.¹²⁷ Therefore, it is of no surprise that when she applies herself to be autonomous in the future, she will be able to accomplish some of these aspects; however, I doubt anyone would claim that these characteristics or competencies are developed well enough to ensure that Kate is always acting perfectly autonomously. Rather, I take it that most would claim that she must continue to develop these aspects of herself. In the practicing of these traits, Kate would become more and more capable of being autonomous. On this note, I feel that we can note that Kate would still be able to view herself as practicing for autonomy, *even when* she was applying these characteristics poorly at the start.

¹²⁶ These include imagination, introspection, and so on. This discussion can be found in Chapter 2.

¹²⁷ Most clearly, she has to have engaged in introspection to arrive at the decision that she would like to act authentically, and that autonomy is the most suitable way *relating to her* for accomplishing this end. This would suggest that Kate at least has some understanding of her self.

To illustrate this, think of a young athlete who decides that he wishes to become a baseball player. Let us suppose that he has the athletic competencies needed to first get involved in the sport, but we would say that these aren't necessarily tailed to his ends. Simply being athletically inclined does not then make an individual good at a given sport. So, what our young athlete would have to do is find out what aspects of his athleticism he should work on improving and honing so that he could achieve the end of being a baseball player. If he comes to the conclusion that he needs to train his hand-eye coordination, speed, and arm strength, then we would say he has correctly identified areas of necessary improvement for his desired ends. Should he, on the other hand, conclude that he should work on his ability to hold his breath or how to do breaststroke, then he has chosen incorrectly.

The end result of this is that so long as the boy is developing his correct skills (i.e. those that will help him be a baseball player) he can be said to be *practicing baseball*. He is not doing it well or to the highest level that he is perhaps capable of in the future, but he is developing and using the correct skills (or in the case of autonomy, competencies). As such, the more the boy practices baseball, and the more an agent practices her autonomy competencies, the stronger they will become and the more disposed they will be to do their given ends *well*.

Let us posit a case where Kate has to engage in an act of self-definition. We will say that Kate chooses to become more studious. Kate goes about directing herself toward this now established end. The hybrid account as it has been laid out in our previous chapter sets out clear guidelines that an agent can follow that, if properly applied to one's competencies, can yield autonomy. How well one's competencies are developed will thus yield differing results, allowing long practitioners with well-developed traits to be more successful, while those with less experience are equally less successful. Herein lies the benefit, namely that so long as an

individual is able to satisfy the requirements, they can rest assured that their conclusion is autonomous insofar as their competencies and traits were well developed in them.¹²⁸

Think perhaps of a technician who finds himself faced with a new machine that he must learn inside and out. Faced with this new technology, the technician must first orient himself on what the machine does and its intricacies, which he can learn from reading the manual. But ultimately the way that he will best be able to understand it is by using it himself. The technician has all the needed abilities at his disposal, but he has not been accustomed to working with this specific piece of technology, and as such he will not be able to excel immediately. However, he will be able to learn of the shortcomings he has in this regard and address them in relation to the piece of technology, becoming more competent over time. This is also the case with this hybrid account. It allows for a new agent to recognize the components of autonomous action quickly and see how their developed skills fit into it, but also allows for ease of learning when applying themselves. Just as the technician is able to develop his skills to become more competent in regards to his specific machinery, so too will an agent be able to develop their skills more readily. The requirements we have laid out for autonomy provide the groundwork (i.e. the “manual” to refer back to our analogy) on the concept. These are then able to be applied quite simply, and when the application is then compared to the concept, the agent is able to see where there is room for development.

¹²⁸ Essentially, it is easy for one to get a grasp on what it takes to be autonomous while not being all that successful at it. The account provides the capability for hands-on application rather quickly, and as such makes it more accessible to discern what competencies need developing.

Part III – Conclusion

Should our work have been successful in this chapter, then not only should the benefits of autonomy as a whole be clear, but also the benefits unique to our hybrid account. We began by defining how autonomy is not an ideal based on our reasoning that satisfaction can still be achieved by other means, even heteronomous means. We then directed our attention to discussing the benefits that autonomy still in spite of this. These benefits include personal control over actions that are reasoned through and wholly the individual's insofar as they have applied their competencies in arriving at their conclusions. We then discussed how this allows for agents to achieve desired ends more readily than following their strongest desires. On this note, we clarified why exactly reasoned decisions were better than purely spontaneous decisions, also keeping in mind that our hybrid account does not rule out the possibility of such spontaneous acts. Finally, regarding autonomy writ large we considered that it provides avenues for greater satisfaction in an agent, allowing them to both name their end and target it accurately.

Following this, we discussed the benefits specific to our hybrid account, such as the ease with which it allows new users to increase their actual autonomy. It also provides a framework for agents to understand more readily where certain failures might have occurred in their reasoning.

Chapter 5 – Objections to the Hybrid

Account

Part I – Introduction

I have laid out the proposed benefits of both autonomy writ large as well as those afforded by the hybrid theory of autonomy that I have developed. However, up to this point I have neglected to address any possible objections or worries that my work might attract. In the following section, I shall raise a handful of possible objections and provide my responses.

Part II – Objections

First Objection

It is possible that at this point the reader might not be satisfied with our current procedures for evaluating one's self and arriving at authentic personal valuations. How are we to be satisfied, if ever, with either our personal valuations of actions or that we have ever arrived at what is in fact authentic if both of these are so susceptible to change?

In response to this, I would like to begin by restating that our authentic self is always open to re-valuation and is never something that we can ultimately “uncover” as we discussed previously.¹²⁹ As such, many aspects of the authentic self that takes shape through our self-discovery, self-definition, and self-direction are ultimately plastic and evolving. To become

¹²⁹ See Chapter Two

satisfied with a single version of the authentic self would more likely demonstrate a lack of autonomy in some sense as it might indicate that individual refuse to reconsider herself as new information is brought forward.¹³⁰ This could mean that the individual, when acting, have discovered that her valuations do not match reality but despite this, since she has decided to make her valuations final, she is unable to adapt, denying the possible plasticity of her self-conception. Agents are constantly being acted upon by externalities that impact individuals and could reveal new information about themselves and their valuations.¹³¹

This is the case when an individual feels she has no room for change and as such stops her introspection. For example, assuming that Josh was simply satisfied that his initial valuation to be a doctor was his base authentic self, he would have to then ignore the aspects of himself that came to light through his actions – these being his aversion to blood and germs. These facts, when considered, *should* force Josh to reconsider his valuation of the self and his career path as they bring to light new information about himself that was not clear on his initial decision. If Josh did not update his valuations, he would frustrate his aim of satisfaction. As such, this indicates that an individual's self is not purely discoverable through introspection alone, but also requires insights from the experience of living out her plan.

¹³⁰ Note that it is entirely possible for an individual to settle upon aspects of themselves that are unchanging in the end. For instance, should an agent discover that they enjoy tidiness, symmetry, and right-angles in their surroundings at a young age and, even on further investigation later in their years, never feel a need to change this aspect of themselves, then they could keep this part unchanged and still be acting autonomous. As such, it is wholly possible to discover aspects of the self that are unchanging/immutable (as was also discussed in the previous chapter) and remain autonomous. However, should one note that there is possible room for change and ignores exploring this possibility in preference of remaining unchanged, then there could be a lack of autonomy present in their self-concept and valuations. Thank you to Dr. Piper for pointing this possible objection out.

¹³¹ See Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 60: "A life is not one of autonomy [if] it eliminates the *possibility* (my emphasis) of practical change. For things do change in our lives. Circumstances change. We change. And if we are to be self-directing in these lives we must have the psychological ability to rethink our choices as well as the opportunity to remake our choices and the option to live in a manner that reflects our revised points of view."

Preferring to stick to one's initial plan, while not always a good indicator of autonomy, also indicates perhaps a deeper problem of frustrating the self. If, with the information Josh had about himself, he continued to act as he always had up to that point, it is likely that he would have continued to achieve the same results, namely that of having difficulty in doing his job, which in turn could lead to both his desires and sense of personal satisfaction being frustrated. Unable to account for the changes he had discovered, Josh would constantly repeat the same actions, receiving internal push back of varying degrees each time. As such, the notion that one could infallibly discover one's authentic self seems to offer greater issues than can be solved by accepting that the self is susceptible to change.

Perhaps the best response to this objection is whether the agent is satisfied continuously – without regret – from decisions made in accordance with the authentic plan that they have formed, especially if they have lived out their authentic plan in a variety of different circumstances. Although an agent might be satisfied with an act at first blush, that does not show that that action is robustly in accordance with their authentic selves. Rather, it is through continuous application and successive satisfaction *more often than not* that one can begin to feel they have struck upon a properly authentic valuation.

For instance, take the example of an agent who autonomously chooses to partake in being efficient with her time and finds satisfaction from doing this the first few times she tries. As the agent continues to practice efficiency, if she continues to feel satisfied with her actions *more often than not*, then it becomes more and more likely that she is in fact acting in a way that is of intrinsic value to her. Should she find, on the other hand, that over time or due to a change of circumstances that she no longer receives satisfaction from her efficiency and, in fact, comes to regret acting in such a way, then we can judge that this mode of acting is likely based upon a

misjudgment about who she really is. The evaluation of one's decisions as such is an ongoing inductive investigation that becomes increasingly stronger the longer it supplies satisfactory results (i.e., it is more and more realistic to believe that the agent authentically wants to be efficient the more times she observes that doing so has led to her personal satisfaction).

Pure introspection, as we have seen, is not sufficient to yield a perfect understanding of the self. As we have also discussed previously,¹³² action is a necessary component for one to act autonomously and so anyone who would engage in only pure introspection would not be able to be called autonomous as such. Action is a necessary part of self-discovery as well, as we saw previously with Josh. Had he not acted on his decision to be a doctor, it is possible that he would never have discovered his aversions to blood and germs.¹³³ In such a case, we can certainly say that Josh discovered truths about his self at the time of introspection – namely that he wanted to help others – but without action he would never have arrived at the better understanding of himself that he is afforded in our study. On the other side, impulse does not allow for the agent to ever relate their actions back to themselves, thus causing them to never be capable of learning from their actions about their character or about what actions are most suitable to their personal satisfaction.

As such, autonomy falls somewhere in the middle in the sense that agents are able to put into practice the best knowledge they have from their previous actions and their introspection. Autonomy is not aimed at perfect action, but rather at action that will ultimately lead the agent to greater self-satisfaction. A purely autonomous action then is one wherein both ends of the

¹³² See Chapter 2

¹³³ It is wholly possible Josh might have been aware of these facts, but never discovered them as facts about himself. Perhaps he saw his disgust of germs as wholly natural before engaging in his career path and his lack of exposure to blood never triggered any realization that the sight of it caused him any ill-effect.

spectrum have been balanced as best as is possible in the given circumstances. This was demonstrated in the case of Ana as we mentioned that she was autonomous *in so far* as she exercised her competencies. It is not required that we have perfect information to act autonomously, only that we discover what we can with our competencies and put this knowledge into action. This, we might say, is not a theory about perfect autonomy, but about the kind of autonomy that is realistically available to human beings.

Second Objection

One might also make the claim that basing autonomy on purely satisfaction requirements seems to allow for autonomous choices that are far from admirable. For example: Greg has chosen to do nothing with his life but eat Cheetos and play video games, allowing his possible capabilities as a florist to waste as a result. We can note that Greg takes both affective satisfaction in his Cheetos eating as well as higher-level satisfaction in his capacity to continuously beat video games. But, it might be stressed, autonomy is typically said to be worthy of respect. Yet Greg's life, which is consistent with my hybrid theory of autonomy, does not seem particularly admirable. So, it might be thought that there is something wrong with a theory that gives rise to such counterintuitive results.

In response, it must be admitted that this account does allow for Greg's actions to count as autonomous; however, I feel that we have to take into account that becoming a florist could in fact offer Greg a greater amount of higher-level satisfaction than the video games if being a florist exercised his capabilities better than the life he has chosen now. So, while we could not make Greg take up being a florist – as this would work against our discussion of autonomy, involving paternalistic action against an agent – our account would still provide Greg with the ability to see that his talents could be put to use in a way that affords him greater satisfaction.

While it is true that Greg would be satisfied with what he is doing now, it is entirely possible to expect that he could receive greater satisfaction out of being a florist, as it would exercise his capacities at a higher level.¹³⁴

However, it is important to stress that it is wholly possible that an individual, upon reflection, might endorse a course of life that is undesirable to outside viewers, but this fact does not diminish the autonomy of that agent's decision. There is no component within this account that requires that an individual objectively flourish in the eyes of society; rather, the central goal of autonomous self-direction has been *individual* satisfaction. Therefore, in a case like Greg's, where he has gone about his introspective processes and considered the different avenues of action he could take, and in so doing has satisfied our requirements and receives satisfaction from his actions, then he is autonomous.

Just because outside observers might not personally find any merit or value to Greg's authentic valuations and autonomous ends does not in any way diminish their value for Greg himself. Autonomy is a matter self-governance, and that governance need not be focused on objective flourishing. The consequence of this is that our actions, though they might not produce or lead to flourishing, can still be autonomous. This suggests that others need not value Greg's decision, but they must still respect it (provided that Greg's actions do not involve harming others). Should we require that Greg act only in ways that contribute to his own objective flourishing, not only would we be infringing on his autonomy, but quite possibly on his personal satisfaction as well. We must respect Greg's thought process and take the results as having been

¹³⁴ This relates back to the benefit mentioned in Case one earlier in the chapter where choosing correctly and doing what one is well disposed to do can afford an individual a great deal of satisfaction.

concluded upon after careful deliberation and consideration of likely consequences on Greg's part.

Third Objection

The next objection I wish to investigate is the claim that most of what is contained in this account is already included in Meyers' account of autonomy. As such, it would seem that our study and inclusion of Oshana was unnecessary, and that our claim to having developed a hybrid account was false

In response to this, we must consider that Oshana has provided us with changes to both (1) our conception of valuing one's self, as well as (2) the factors required to achieve autonomous action. Oshana's account has afforded us the point that one might not end up being satisfied with the aspects of the self they uncover in self-discovery, but that this fact does not detract from the agent's autonomy. As we saw in our discussion in chapter two, when our agents engaged in self-discovery and then included those parts of themselves that they might not have fully been satisfied with in the course of engaging in self-direction, more satisfying outcomes were afforded to them. For instance, in knowing that he has depression, Graham is able to take this into account when considering his decision-making process and account for the discrepancies it might cause in his valuation process.¹³⁵ This conclusion was only afforded by the inclusion of Oshana's insights, as Meyers states that a core part of autonomy is developing a *desirable* personality.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ See our discussion on page 62 for this example

¹³⁶ Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, 60.

Furthermore, Oshana has allowed us to develop autonomy into something that is not as simple to achieve as Meyers makes it appear in her account.¹³⁷ One cannot retrospectively call an action autonomous, nor does one autonomous action necessary make actions that follow it autonomous. As we discussed, Meyers' conceptual framework was too loose, and Oshana offered a reasonable response to how our actual requirements ought to look. With the help of Oshana, we were able to demonstrate that only in immediate relation to the autonomous moment can we call an action autonomous, and from this, that all actions following this moment that are acted on within the reasonable range developed in this way are authentic. Oshana, as such, allowed us to more finely tune what autonomy *ought* to look like.

Fourth Objection

The final objection we will investigate in this paper poses the question of what worth autonomy and our account holds in instances where there is not an environment free of undue pressures on the individual that acts directly against their autonomy. Though we have assumed up to this point that we were not existing within such a state,¹³⁸ I feel such a question is best not left unaddressed.

Up to this point, much of the merit and possibilities discussed have relied on the agent living in a state wherein their freedoms are respected so as to allow them to act as they saw fit. Should we, however, consider a state where this is not true, the worth of autonomy and our account of it seems to diminish a great deal. Let us, for instance, consider an agent who finds himself living in North Korea. This agent has lived there his whole life, having been born and raised within the country, and as such has been raised within the mindsets, beliefs, and culture

¹³⁷ See page 48 for our discussion on this.

¹³⁸ See Chapter 3.

that are present within the country. These might include a valuing of the self as a subject (or beholden to something greater, i.e. the state), believing that what is laid out for oneself is in fact what is best for them, and a tacit agreement with heteronomous action as a whole.¹³⁹ On such an account, it seems as though the agent is in no way capable of acting autonomously as even his internal aspects have been, in as far as possible, molded for him by the state. As such, the relative worth of autonomy does in fact seem to be in question for such an agent.

However, I feel that both autonomy writ large and our account still provide the individual in such conditions with worth. Let us first recall that, as we have laid out before, autonomy is a competency that one develops and becomes more competent at over an extended period of time. To say that a new agent when first engaging in autonomy is perfectly autonomous is highly unlikely. Rather, the individual must develop their abilities over numerous attempts and slowly accrue a greater capacity to think and act autonomously. With the development of these skills comes a greater capacity to think for oneself and question the motives behind an agent's actions. Even if the decision-making process initially is held together by heteronomously instilled values that does not necessitate that the individual will not, through the development of individualistic competencies, be able to more clearly see what is best for oneself.¹⁴⁰

But beyond this, let us for a moment forget our posited North Korean and instead focus on a child. On most accounts, a child would not be afforded or seen deserving of autonomy for the consequences that such a state of mind might bring about is not best permitted to one who is

¹³⁹ Namely, acting as the state sees most fit for the individual and holding beliefs that the state feels the individual ought to hold.

¹⁴⁰ In a freer society, this range of action is much greater, but even within a state lacking such freedoms, there are still times one must decide on what is best for themselves.

unable to consider all outcomes at a high capacity.¹⁴¹ A child is not able to consider outcomes for themselves with the same critical reflection and at the same capacity as an adult who has developed their competencies. Despite this, it seems an overstatement to deny children any possibility of acting autonomously – that is to say, insofar as they are capable and it is reasonable, children are still afforded some amount of independence in their decision making in the hopes of helping develop their competencies. Though a child does not have the well-developed reasoning strategies or the freedom to act of an adult, one could still see the worth in allowing them to practice autonomy within such constraints. This practicing of autonomy within constraints set by external sources that limit greatly the options available to the agent is our main concern here. I feel few would deny that there is worth in a child practicing autonomous skills, despite the possibly drastic external limitations such decisions might have upon them.

In the case of the North Korean, it is clear that they have external pressures acting upon them that constrain and limit the range within which they can actually act (just as the child does). While these limits might not in fact reflect what the agent holds as his own values, they still establish a range within which he can realistically act. Let us posit a decision then: say that the agent must decide on a career path much like Josh did previously. However, given our current agent's standings, his choices are severely limited compared to the choices that Josh had at his disposal. As such, the North Korean is limited to two options – being a computer scientist or a mathematician. Beyond the concept of self that the state might push onto our agent, it is still highly likely that he in some way values one choice more than the other – whether it be for the pay, the social standing, or aid to his family it might provide. As the agent is likely limited in his

¹⁴¹ See Marina Oshana “How Much Should We Value Autonomy?” 103: “Now, if we value autonomy too highly, we might attempt to free a child from the supervision of her parents before she is qualified to care for herself.” Oshana mentions the questionable results of such action.

scope of recognizing other valuations, he is similarly limited in his choices in this field as well. However, that does not mean that there is no reasoning occurring in his choosing of valuations. Should our agent decide that he wants to take whatever affords him the best social ranking as it will allow him to live comfortably, we could say that he has done introspection *as far as he is capable* given his circumstances.

Part of the agent is the fact that he is North Korean – this is something that is a part of him and is immutable, and thus is a part of self-discovery. As we have stated with self-discovery, there are aspects of the self that are not always satisfying, and these aspects may also not be the most conducive for autonomy (as is the case here and with other examples such as depression and addiction). However, to deny these aspects of the self would indicate a falsification of oneself.¹⁴² As far as our agent is able to recognize his limitations, and in his recognizing of where those limitations might end, and his will begins, he is able to choose for himself. While this does not likely afford much room, it still offers value.

Further, should the agent find that he derives satisfaction from this decision and feels that he would not have received more from his other option, then he has acted correctly in his personal interest for his greatest satisfaction as far as is possible in the circumstances. Simply because one is living in a society where choice is limited, and values might be dominated by an external force does not then remove any worth of applying autonomy in that given situation. It would be incorrect to apply autonomy to our North Korean agent as his decisions are severely dominated and limited by an external force, but this is not of his own choosing. Therefore, it

¹⁴² I.e. living in bad faith. Also, see Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, 70: “Forgetting one’s race involves a lapse of self-awareness.” In the case of our North Korean agent, forgetting himself would be to forget the external pressures around him, and to deny these would indicate a similar lapse of self-awareness. In doing this, he would be denying who he is, and from this, likely make even less personally informed decisions. He is limited by his location, and while this unjust, it is still a truth that he must accept.

does not seem unreasonable to say that his introspection under these stipulations are valuable as introspection, and his action is valuable as attempted autonomy.

Based on this reasoning, we can see that there is value to those even in oppressive social circumstances in learning as many autonomy competencies as possible. An agent who finds themselves lacking in freedoms – while they might not be able to choose what they truly want, and while their thought processes might be invaded by heteronomous or alien desires, can still disseminate and choose based on as accurate a depiction of her authentic self that such a society might afford her.

Part III – Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the possible objections one might pose against our theory of autonomy. We have addressed concerns about the authentic self and its plasticity, investigated how agents might be able to discern whether their choices have in fact been authentic, discussed why Oshana was necessary to our account, and have considered autonomy's worth in a society that lacks the previously assumed freedoms. Based on these objections and their responses, it should be clear that our account is able to stand on its own as a unique account and is capable of still viable despite these objections.

With these objections answered, our work on establishing and defending the hybrid account of autonomy has been completed at this time. In the final chapter, I shall briefly summarize once more what we have discussed and restate our account, followed by an inclusion of my final thoughts on the matter of our account and autonomy writ large.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the concept of autonomy writ large as well as investigated two specific accounts provided by Diana Meyers and Marina Oshana. Through the combination of these two accounts we have created a hybrid account that takes from both Meyers and Oshana. To do this we had to build a basis of our account using the components found in both Meyers and Oshana, and from there we developed the final aspects by blending where the two accounts differed. In doing this, we have created an account that, while familiar, holds a new take in between the previous accounts investigated.

To review, our account required

- The presence of some hierarchical model,
- The involvement of structured planning for an individual's actions and future goals,
- A naturalistic approach focusing on concepts and ideas that can be measured,
- A requirement for action to occur for an individual to be deemed autonomous, and
- A substantive account wherein progress and competency can be measured in an individual,
- A focus primarily on internal development of autonomy skills and competencies while taking into account the presence of external influences,
- A high threshold of achievement, requiring the presence of an “autonomous moment” that involves an establishing of definitions and a range to act within for programmatic autonomy,
- And satisfaction with the authentic self of the agent regarding aspects that are directly controlled and defined by them (these being self-definition and self-discovery), while allowing for dissatisfaction with aspects of self-discovery.

Following the establishing of these criteria, we discussed the benefits of the account, applying it to a number of case studies and analyzing the results the agents received from their application of autonomy. Following this, we discussed the possible objections to the account, responding to each in turn. Having done this, we have been left with a loose but complete conception of this new hybrid account of autonomy.

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