

**SOME FEMINIST REFLECTIONS ON AUTONOMY,
SELF-RESPECT AND THE LIBERAL STATE**

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the women of a breakaway polygamist Mormon sect in Bountiful, B.C. defended their choice of religious beliefs, which are premised upon female submission and inferiority. In response to this case, I asked: what conditions must obtain in order that we can say that an individual has chosen autonomously? In this project, I offer a weakly substantive account of personal autonomy, which states that an autonomous individual must meet certain procedural conditions and must have self-respect. In addition, I argue that a weakly substantive account is attractive for feminist aims and for women in general. However, the account of personal autonomy I offer is problematic for political liberalism, in that political liberalism is committed implicitly to the account of personal autonomy that I have set forth. This raises questions around the claim that political liberalism does not favour any comprehensive doctrine in its political conception of justice.

KEYWORDS: Personal Autonomy, Self-Respect, Feminism, Political Liberalism, John Rawls.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The polygamist Mormon sect in Bountiful, British Columbia, has been the focus of the media, women's groups, government officials, law enforcement agencies and legal analysts. This scrutiny has come from both Canada and the United States, for a variety of reasons. Given that the members of the Bountiful sect live peaceably and do not attempt to force their beliefs on others in the majority, one might question the motivation behind government investigation and media attention. In what follows, I want to highlight what I take to be the legal, moral, and philosophical grounds for the attention as well as consider the dilemmas inherent in this issue.

In particular, I understand the problems that emerge from the Bountiful case as representative of the more general issues of personal autonomy, which I will discuss in chapter two and what conditions we take to be necessary for an individual to be autonomous, which I will discuss in chapter two and three. The concept of personal autonomy is a divisive issue, since it is not clear immediately what autonomous action consists in and what conditions must obtain in order to deem an individual autonomous. Some women in Bountiful claim that their choice to live within their community is an autonomous choice. Yet, as we will see, intuitions based on feminist commitments tell us that such a choice may not be autonomous in any robust sense, even if the women of Bountiful believe this is the case.

In addition, the case of Bountiful raises the issue of the extent to which the liberal state can intrude with respect to social and religious practices of non-liberal minorities. We can make two distinctions here. First, liberalism is a theoretical position, which is committed to the fundamental concepts of liberty, equality, and individual freedom. Analogously, the liberal state embraces the basic commitments of liberalism, which in turn generates the need to justify its policies and principles in light of these commitments to liberty, equality, and individual freedom. One significant issue we can raise in light of the theoretical commitments of the liberal state concerns whether the state is justified in interfering with minorities who reject liberal principles and ideals. If individual freedom is sacrosanct for the liberal state, is it possible for an individual to believe in something that denies the value of the liberal principles under which she lives? This will be the focus of my discussion in chapter four. In any event, I wish to illuminate the difficulties in attending to the Bountiful case, with respect to the ideal of autonomy, feminist concerns around the choices and preferences by the female members, and the liberal state's role in dealing with a non-liberal minority. Before I begin my project, I will provide a brief overview of the community of Bountiful itself, in order to discuss its origins and central religious doctrines and practices.

Bountiful, British Columbia is a polygamist Mormon community that has approximately 1000 members. It is a fundamentalist breakaway sect of the mainstream Mormon Church, the latter of which is also known as the Church of the Latter-Day Saints (henceforth referred to as the LDS Church). The LDS church, centred primarily in Salt Lake City, Utah, repudiated the practice of polygamy (or plural marriage) in 1890, as

required by the U.S. Federal government in order to be eligible for statehood.¹ The LDS Church has banned the practice of polygamy and excommunicates any members that enter a plural marriage. However, fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (henceforth the FLDS Church) maintain that the rejection of the practice of polygamy², along with other traditional religious practices and beliefs, was wrong and have retained these practices as necessary requirements for their faith.

The FLDS Church was founded in 1935 and the community in Bountiful, British Columbia, was founded in 1947. Six men who continued to practice plural marriage, in defiance of the ban by the LDS, settled the community in Bountiful, in the belief that the mainstream LDS Church has strayed from authentic Mormonism. The majority of members in Bountiful are descendants of these men. Currently, the FLDS church, which is centred in Colorado City, Arizona and Hildale, Utah, is administered by Warren Jeffs, who assumed leadership of the FLDS after the death of his father in 2002.³ All of the polygamist communities are isolated enclaves and all practice a fundamentalist interpretation of Mormonism, as founded and practiced by Joseph Smith in the 19th century.⁴

¹ In fact, the LDS Church was required to ban polygamy as a practice and it was written into Utah's constitution. Utah was admitted to the union in 1896.

² These others practices and beliefs are primarily doctrinal disagreements. For example, the LDS Church has rejected the Adam-God theory, first declared by Brigham Young in 1852, which states that Adam literally *is* God the Father. Instead, the LDS believes now that this means Adam is *like* a God. However, the FLDS still retains this theory as doctrinally correct.

³ Warren Jeffs's position as president and "prophet" of the FLDS is contested, particularly by some members of the Bountiful community in B.C. The leader of the Bountiful sect was Winston Blackmore, whom Jeffs dismissed in 2002. It is also worth nothing that Jeffs is currently wanted by the F.B.I. in the U.S.. He is accused of raping a minor as well as concealing the sexual abuse of minors. (See http://www.sltrib.com/search/ci_3957743).

⁴ It is interesting to note that the LDS does not consider the FLDS to be Mormons. In a 1998 interview, Gordon Hinkley, the prophet of the LDS Church, proclaimed that, "They [the FLDS] have no connection with us [the LDS] whatsoever. They do not belong to the church. There are actually no Mormon Fundamentalists."

The practice of polygamy, along with literal adherence to the Law of Consecration, are the two major differences between the LDS Church and the FLDS Church. The Law of Consecration is based on a literal interpretation of the biblical passages found in Acts 2:44, which states that, “All the believers were together and had everything in common,” and Acts 4:32, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.”⁵ This literal interpretation calls for religious communism, in which members devote all material possessions and abilities to the Church.⁶ In the case of the FLDS, the prophet Warren Jeffs owns everything⁷, which he administers through the United Effort Plan.⁸

Similar to the LDS Church, The FLDS is guided by several religious texts, including the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Literal interpretations of these texts provide the foundation for the actions and beliefs of the FLDS. With respect to the practice of polygamy, “one of the most sacred credos of Joseph [Smith]'s church [was polygamy] - a tenet important enough to be canonized for

⁵ Accessed from <http://www.bible.com/>, on April 10, 2006.

⁶ The LDS Church also believes that the Law of Consecration must be followed as part of religious faith. However, the LDS re-interpreted this Law to extend only to tithing a portion of one’s income, rather than wholesale bequeathal of one’s possessions, and to strive to cultivate the characteristics of “self-control, generosity, love of fellow humans, love for God, and a desire to build the kingdom of God.” See http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/basic/doctrines/consecration/law_eom.htm

⁷ Everything includes the members of the FLDS Church, in the sense that the Prophet owns members bodily and can direct them as he sees fit. This includes commanding members to marry, taking away a member’s family or children or ejecting a member from the community outright if the Prophet receives a revelation from God.

⁸ The United Effort Plan, which is estimated to hold 100 million in assets, is the financial wing of the FLDS. Currently, there is a class action lawsuit against the FLDS by former polygamist wives from the Colorado City, Hildale and Bountiful B.C. sects, to be compensated for their time and efforts in the communities.

the ages as Section 132 of The Doctrine and Covenants...”⁹ Section 132 in the Doctrine and Covenants contains several endorsements of the practice of polygamy as a matter of faith. For example, the historical background of polygamy is established by noting instances of Old Testament figures who engaged in polygamy:

38 David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

Moreover, there are passages in Section 132, which deny that men are committing adultery by the practice of plural marriage. On line 61 and line 62 of the D&C:

61 And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

62 And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

However, this passage also contains a warning to women who do not obey their husbands or reject the practice of plural marriages. On line 54:

54 And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

⁹ Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, Doubleday Publishing: New York, 2003, p. 8. The Doctrine and Covenants is primarily a book of important revelations with respect to principles of church governance and doctrinal matters of faith by early LDS Church leaders, including Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The original Doctrine and Covenants (henceforth D&C), which was introduced to the LDS in 1835, rejected polygamy in section 101, although several of the revelations contained in this original document were challenged by LDS members. However, in 1876, section 101 in the D&C was rescinded and replaced with doctrine 132, which advocates the doctrine of plural marriage.

The D&C reinforces this admonition further in the Section:

63 But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed; for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfill the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified.

64 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law.

65 Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, because she did not believe and administer unto him according to my word; and she then becomes the transgressor; and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife.¹⁰

These passages indicate clearly that a woman must be obedient to her husband and be deferential to his teachings, or else risk damnation by God as a violator of His divine laws. It is important to note that line 63 also provides the theological foundation for an edict that female members of the FLDS to bear as many children as possible. As the scripture indicates, women are gifts for men, given by God, in accordance with his commandment that believers must “multiply and replenish the earth.”

The members of the FLDS Church refer to the practice of polygamy as living according to “The Principle” and believe that it is essential to achieve salvation. For men, plural marriage is necessary to ascend to the highest level of the celestial realm, where he

¹⁰ All passages from the Doctrine and Covenants were downloaded from <http://scriptures.lds.org/dc/132>. Accessed on April 11, 2006.

might become a god. For women, plural marriage is necessary for women enter heaven only by invitation from their husband. Yet, even entering a plural marriage does not guarantee a woman's entrance into heaven.¹¹ It in order to gain her husband's favour, a wife must cater to him as well as remain obedient to his commands, in order to win his approval and thus the invitation to the celestial realm. For the FLDS, the decision by the LDS to renounce plural marriage was a grave error and the FLDS believes that by practicing plural marriage, it is the true Mormon Church.

The Issues behind the FLDS Church for the Liberal State

Though the religious tenets and beliefs of the FLDS serve to set it apart from the mainstream LDS Church and certainly from other major religions practiced in Canada and the United States, this difference alone is not worthy of concern. Differences in religious or philosophical beliefs is a natural outcome of a liberal democratic state, where individual citizens are both permitted and encouraged to determine their conception of the good, without interference from the state or from other citizens. Some will maintain that if the members of the FLDS, like any religious adherents, choose to live according to this particular faith, then the liberal state must respect and protect this choice. Yet, as mentioned, the FLDS Church in Canada and the U.S. receives considerable criticism from many sides.¹² In this section, I want to consider the grounds from which this

¹¹ This is based on a claim made by Flora Jessop, a former polygamist wife in Colorado City, in personal correspondence. She also notes this lack of guarantee causes much jealousy and competition among "sister" wives, which in turn creates psychologically difficult situations for the women.

¹² Both feminists and other religious groups oppose the practice of polygamy, though each provides a different rationale for this claim. Interestingly, there was a recent study by three law professors at Queen's University, who argued that women in polygamist unions are harmed by the criminalization of the practice, rather than the practice itself. Because of this, they recommended that the federal government consider legalizing polygamy, in order to ensure that women in such unions have their economic and legal interests protected. See http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/pubspr/0662420683/200511_0662420683_e.pdf

criticism may stem. In other words, I want to bring to light the features of the FLDS that many find problematic. First, I will take into account those issues that are unrelated to the focus of my project.

Some critics of Bountiful maintain that the community and the practice of polygamy violate community standards and values. This criticism usually comes from other religious groups, and in particular Christian fundamentalist groups, who believe marriage is permissible only between one man and one woman.¹³ Polygamist unions naturally transgress this conception of marriage and thus are opposed on this ground. However, the court of public opinion in a liberal state, even if supported by traditional religious or philosophical beliefs held by the majority, cannot dictate to members in a minority that their practices or beliefs are wrong. As Mill states in On Liberty:

Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling, against the tendency of society to impose, by means other than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them.¹⁴

Thus, if there is an issue with the FLDS in Bountiful, it cannot rest on the claim that it affronts the morals or ideals of a particular religious or secular group. The liberal state is responsible only for determining the limits of liberty and not enforcing morality.

Next, for the purposes of this project, I do not intend to consider the question of the legality of polygamy. Currently, the practice of polygamy is illegal in Canada and the U.S., but the members of the FLDS are not committing polygamy. The first marriage

¹³ Of course, the vast majority of individuals and groups that fight for a “traditional” conception of marriage are against same-sex marriages primarily. Often, polygamist unions are raised as a “slippery slope” examples in arguments for retaining a “traditional” definition of marriage. That is, they claim that, if same-sex marriage was legalized, it is a slippery slope to legalizing polygamist unions, among others.

¹⁴ John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1956, p. 7.

between a male and a female FLDS member is legal, in the sense that the government performs and recognizes it legally. FLDS members refer to any subsequent marriages as “celestial marriages,” which are performed by the Prophet of the community and thus these marriages are neither legally binding nor recognized as such. In the eyes of the state, FLDS members are committing adultery, which is not a crime, rather than polygamy. Though an interesting question, it is not my intention to debate whether polygamy should be legal.

Of course, at this time, much of the interest by the liberal state in the FLDS Church is legal. The Attorney General’s Office in both Arizona and Utah, as well as the R.C.M.P in Canada are investigating the FLDS Church, due to allegations of child abuse, unlawful sexual conduct with minors, and incest. Certainly, we want to say that minors, if they are abused in some way, require the protection of the state whether they live in a polygamist community or otherwise. Yet, beyond this, one might ask why the liberal state has any interest in the FLDS from a philosophical perspective. By outlining these general issues, I hope to illuminate better the more specific tensions between the FLDS Church and the principles that ground liberal state.

There are several general issues that relate to this project. The first issue concerns freedom of conscience within the larger context of freedom of the individual and the limits on the liberal state with respect to its capacity to interfere with this freedom. Second and related to the issue of individual freedom is the issue of harm to an individual. Though the liberal state’s coercive power is limited, the state is justified in interfering with one’s individual freedom, in order to protect citizens from harm that may

arise from the exercise of individual freedom. However, we must establish what constitutes harm, in order to determine when state interference is warranted.

The third issue we will consider rests on feminist concerns, which brings to light a difficult tension that is not easily resolved. On the one hand, some feminists will argue that state intervention is paternalistic. That is, should the liberal state interfere, this interference reflects a patriarchal assumption that women need (male) protection from their choices. Conversely, other feminists will argue that the certain cultural or religious practices are such that they render women unable to protect their interests, in the sense that the women are subject to oppressive socialization. This socialization, in turn, renders women incapable of making choices that serve their interests. Given this, the state has a compelling reason to interfere in communities that observe such practices.

This leads to the fourth issue for the liberal state. This issue relates to the notion of personal autonomy, which is the underlying concern with respect to each of the issues that I have outlined. Within the liberal tradition, a fundamental precept states that the individual is free to direct her life, according to what she believes to be valuable, in spite of the approval (or disapproval) of others. Jeremy Waldron states that the liberal state is such that it “does not ask dissenters to closet themselves smoldering in some cautiously constructed private realm; on the contrary, it expects dissent to blaze out in public to challenge and disconcert those who are taking things on faith or fashion.”¹⁵ Yet, in order for this to happen, it is the case that individuals need to be autonomous; in other words, individuals must be capable of determining for themselves how they want to live, even if (or perhaps especially if) others disapprove based on faith or fashion.

¹⁵ Jeremy Waldron, “Liberal Rights: Two Sides of the Coin,” Liberal Rights: Collected Papers, 1981-1991, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 2.

Let us turn to the first issue raised by the Bountiful case, namely that of individual freedom of conscience. Within the liberal tradition, the freedom of the individual is a fundamental ideal in a liberal state, in the sense that an individual is free to act, to believe, and to decide according to what she determines is valuable through critical reflection and without excessive, unthinking deference to tradition. Within a liberal state, individual freedom is so revered that neither the state nor other citizens can interfere with an individual's freedom, except in cases of harm. As Waldron notes, in the liberal state, "social and political power [must] justify itself at the tribunal of people's interests as they themselves conceive them."¹⁶ The emergence of liberalism and the liberal state replaced the state's previous interests of empire building or advancement of a particular faith. Now, the state exists to serve the individual and her interests and to affirm its existence for this purpose.¹⁷ The interests of individuals within a liberal state include securing a range of freedoms, in order that individuals thrive and flourish; such freedoms, in turn, would be protected and promoted by the state because of their value to human flourishing and development.

Central among these interests was the freedom to pursue one's religion (or one's comprehensive doctrine, more broadly construed) without interference from the state or from other individuals. After the Glorious Revolution in 1688, the liberal state emerged in England, along with the acceptance of the Bill of Rights in Parliament, which specified civil liberties held by citizens and which prohibited absolutist governments. More importantly, the Glorious Revolution "marked the final victory for representative self-

¹⁶ Jeremy Waldron, "Liberal Rights: Two Sides of the Coin," p. 1.

¹⁷ I use only the male pronoun here since the state did not recognize women and women's interests apart or different from her husband's or father's interests.

government and religious pluralism in England.”¹⁸ Each of these measures entail that the state’s power is limited, while simultaneously working to promote individual freedom and to protect the individual from arbitrary and oppressive power. Individual freedom is, in principle, unlimited, which means that the state cannot interfere with the affairs of the individual, unless harm is a factor.

One necessary and favorable outcome of the restraint of state power was that the state could not legitimately impose a particular religion on its citizens. Religious debates and controversies had embroiled Europe, most notably between the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church, since the Reformation in 1517. After centuries of religious wars, which were costly in terms of both human lives and material resources, England sought a political arrangement satisfactory for all, which would ensure that one could practice his/her religion without persecution. The liberal state offered the best framework in which to protect individual freedoms, even in the case of disagreement. The toleration of diverse religious beliefs and of religious pluralism was important outcomes in the emergence of the liberal state.

So, on the one hand, the liberal state’s authority is limited with respect to matters of faith and cannot interfere in the practice of religion. This means it cannot compel religious belief from citizens nor can the state force its citizens to reject their beliefs. As Locke argued in A Letter Concerning Toleration, the state’s interests extend only as far as civil matters, such as “life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things.”¹⁹ The state’s authority neither extends to “the salvation of souls” nor

¹⁸ Richard S. Dunn, The Age of Religious Wars, 1559-1715, Second Edition, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979, p.195.

¹⁹ John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1959, p.17

to inducing religious belief in its citizens. Instead, the liberal state has a responsibility only to protect an individual's ability to practice her religious beliefs. The state cannot justify interference on the grounds that some find one's beliefs objectionable, unless there is a concern that harm is occurring. Thus, though the liberal state's authority is limited, its authority extends to protecting citizens from harming others.

Traditionally, John Stuart Mill argued that when action is harmful,²⁰ it "affects prejudicially the interests of others, in which case ...society has jurisdiction over it."²¹ Harmful action occurs, "whenever, in short, there is a definite damage, or a definite risk of damage, either to an individual or to the public;" in this case, the action is "taken out of the province of liberty and placed in that of morality or law."²² Mill sought to balance individual freedom, on the one hand, and to define the limits of this freedom on the other hand. This limit is individual harm and it is in this instance that the liberal state is justified in interfering with individual freedom. Yet, such harm must be direct in order to provide justification for state interference.

With respect to society in general, it is difficult to see that the members of Bountiful do harm. The members of the FLDS do not force individuals in wider society to adhere to its beliefs in the sense of a Taliban-like enforcement. Moreover, most members claim they prefer to be "left alone" to pursue their faith, as their faith dictates. Clearly, there is no direct harm to the public. However, the possibility that the FLDS is harming its members as individuals exists and if this were to occur, the state would have an interest in intervening a community such as Bountiful.

²⁰ For Mill, only actions and not opinions can be harmful to others.

²¹ J.S. Mill, On Liberty, p.92.

²² J.S. Mill, On Liberty, p. 100.

What are the possible harms that the FLDS may be inflicting on its individual members? A potential harm of the FLDS Church might consist in oppressive socialization of its members and in particular its female members. By this term, I mean a process of socialization where individuals are taught false beliefs or norms, which in turn supplant or prevent autonomous action on the part of individuals.²³ Oppressive socialization may occur when an individual is inculcated with a set of contestable beliefs about her worth, her role in society, her capabilities and her capacity to change or challenge these beliefs.

Within the Bountiful community, all members of the FLDS Church are taught that the Prophet's authority is supreme and are subject to his commands in all areas of their lives. Moreover, women of the FLDS are taught that their role is limited strictly to marriage and motherhood and that total obedience to her husband is required. Given that these beliefs cannot be challenged or altered, one might argue that the women of Bountiful are operating on a set of harmful beliefs since these beliefs may influence or compromise their ability to act autonomously. This is one way the FLDS Church may be harming its individual members, which in turn would be cause for state intervention.

The question of oppressive socialization and the harm this may engender emerges in a second way when we consider the community life itself. The members of Bountiful live in strict observance of religious beliefs, which entails two things. First, all members of the community receive limited education (usually ending in grades 7-9) in schools

²³ This definition comes from Marilyn Friedman in Autonomy, Gender, Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.19.

owned by the FLDS church and a member of the community teaches the students.²⁴

Second, the members of Bountiful live in relative isolation, ostensibly to protect its members from what they regard as negative influences from mainstream society.²⁵ From these considerations, one might argue that the FLDS Church harms its members because it provides limited education. In turn, this will likely entail that members cannot live successfully in mainstream society, should they want to leave the community. Related to this, we might ask whether members are free to leave the FLDS Church in the first place, since there are reports from ex-members that attempts to leave are met with physical violence and confinement. While physical violence might be a more obvious example of harm, the notion that not being prepared to live outside the community is harmful to individuals is less clear.

Another consideration with respect to the question of harm involves considering whether individuals might be harming themselves by choosing to live in Bountiful. This concern relates to feminist worries with respect to the Bountiful community. In August 2004, several female members of the Bountiful community held a press conference, in order to dispel claims of sexual abuse and exploitation of women and children, forced

²⁴ It is worth noting that the schools in Bountiful are funded by the Provincial Government of British Columbia, which of course means that it is funded by tax money. This funding arrangement is the result of the Independent School Act, which funds schools that are privately owned, if they follow the curriculum as determined by the province of British Columbia. The Bountiful schools would receive half of the cost per student that results in the operation of the school. A report in *The Economist* (*The Economist*, London: July 10, 2004, vol. 372, Issue 8383, p. 49) claims that the provincial government provides \$600 000 per year to the Bountiful schools. It is not clear the degree to which the government enforces the requirement that Bountiful schools follow provincial curriculum.

²⁵ Debbie Palmer, an ex-FLDS member and polygamist wife, escaped from the Bountiful sect and notes that questioning or resisting the dictates of the Prophet is met with warnings of eternal damnation and hellfire. FLDS members are inculcated with the message that outsiders (whom they refer to as "Gentiles"), apostates and even those in the FLDS who question the Church's doctrines are spiritually weak and thus are easily susceptible to Satan's influence. As such, FLDS members must limited their contact with outsiders or avoid it altogether. For more insider insight into the Bountiful community, see Debbie Palmer, Keep Sweet: Children of Polygamy, Lister, BC.: Dave's Press, 2004.

marriages and confinement of members. One member, Marlene Palmer, maintained, “We enjoy our lifestyle. It’s what we believe, and it’s what we love.”²⁶ On the one hand, the liberal state is committed to respecting the decisions of the female members in this community as individuals who are determining how they want to live. On the other hand, the isolation of the community, the possibility of oppressive socialization, and limited education, raises questions as to whether their decisions are truly informed and authentic choices. If the women in Bountiful are making choices that are uninformed, is it the place of the liberal state to intervene?

This brings us to the third issue that Bountiful raises for the liberal state. Some feminists have considerable concerns with respect to the issue of state intervention, even if (and perhaps especially so) the state would do so to prevent harm or to protect the interests of the women in the FLDS church. In the west, women’s participation in the political sphere has been limited, on the basis that women were ill-equipped to deal with the rigors of public life. On this basis, the liberal state denied women suffrage or the right of active political participation. Moreover, women have traditionally been deemed incapable of pursuing many goals or determining their lives autonomously (e.g. acquiring an education, living independently from male authority, choosing to have children). Reference to women’s weaker nature, whether rationally, spiritually, or physically, served to justify their exclusion from the public sphere. What is critical here is that the state has often acted in ways that limit women’s autonomy or that determine women’s

²⁶ Cited from a news report on www.CBC.ca, posted August 5, 2004. Accessed on January 27, 2006 from http://www.cbc.ca/story/print/bc_commune20040805. It is interesting to note that the women who spoke in favour of the polygamist community are linked in some way to the most powerful members in Bountiful. For example, Marlene Palmer is the sister of Winston Blackmore, who is a Prophet in Bountiful. Two other wives who defended polygamy publicly, Marsha Chatwin and her sister Zelpha, are married to Blackmore.

interests, based on erroneous assumptions about what constitutes women's best interests or role in life.²⁷

Given this, some feminists would challenge any sort of interference in the Bountiful community by the liberal state on paternalist grounds. Why, they would ask, do women in the Bountiful community (or any woman in a liberal state) require the protection of a government that has in the past worked against women's interests? Feminists have fought to challenge and to abolish the patronizing belief that women need guidance or intervention to protect them from their choices. In addition, some feminists would question what would constitute "protection," should we determine that the government should interfere. Taken to an extreme, protection may involve physically removing women (and children) from the community. Yet, some feminists maintain that if the women in the FLDS Church choose to practice this faith and remain in such communities, then the state should not interfere or question this choice. If women in Bountiful (and in the FLDS Church generally) protest that they are satisfied with their choices and do not require state interference. Thus, it becomes very difficult to justify any state action.

Clearly, many are uncomfortable with claims that women need state intervention to protect them from their choices. However, other feminists will respond by asking whether the women in Bountiful are making free choices in the first place. These feminists argue that, on an intuitive level, there is something odd in claiming that a

²⁷ For example, when women in Canada fought for suffrage, many male politicians spoke out against it. In 1914, Manitoba Premier Sir Rodmond Roblin spoke out against female suffrage: "Will anyone say that she would be better as a wife and mother because she could go and talk on the streets about local or dominion politics? I disagree. The mother that is worthy of the name and of the good affection of a good man has a hundredfold more influence in molding and shaping public opinion round her dinner table than she would have in the marketplace, hurling her eloquent phrases to the multitude. It is in the home that her influence is exercised and felt." Accessed from <http://library.usask.ca/herstory/suffer.html> on April 14, 2006.

choice was autonomous if it was made under certain conditions. Along the same lines, these feminists maintain that there is something peculiar in autonomously choosing a life of servility and subordination. In light of these feminist worries, it is pertinent to examine some of the factors of the Bountiful community, which may compromise the ability of its members to be autonomous.

The issue of personal autonomy is perhaps the most difficult for the liberal state, since there is disagreement over what the concept of autonomy entails, what commitment to autonomy requires for the liberal state, and the political implications of such a commitment. Yet, in the context of this project, autonomy is the fundamental issue, for it underlies each of the concerns for the liberal state I have raised thus far. For the purposes of this project, I take autonomy to be a character ideal. Generally speaking, autonomy entails determining one's life and one's projects, including defining one's conception of the good life, according to how one best understands what it means to live the good life. If an individual is autonomous, then she has the capacity to self-determine her goals, preferences and actions, without coercion or manipulation from external sources. These external sources may include one's family, peer group, religious authorities, or spouses. An autonomous individual, then, freely chooses her life's course. In relation to liberalism, individual autonomy is a fundamental ideal. Yet, there are questions surrounding how the liberal state ought to respect individual autonomy. If autonomy involves an individual directing her own life based on what she takes to be a valuable way to live, should the content of her choices matter to the liberal state?

Some critics argue that content is irrelevant and an individual is autonomous regardless of what one chooses. Philosophers refer to this as a procedural account of

autonomy, where an individual needs only to meet certain procedural conditions in order to be autonomous. This understanding of autonomy is particularly attractive to those feminists concerned with paternalism and respecting differences among women. That is, they would argue that the women of Bountiful make choices in light of what they take to be their best interests and the liberal state has no right to interfere. Moreover, even if others find such a choice objectionable, we ought to respect, rather than contest, different conceptions of the good.

On the other hand, some critics charge that the content of one's choice does matter for autonomy, for some choices are simply incompatible with the notion of autonomy. This is known as a substantive account of autonomy, which claims that specific normative constraints must obtain, along with certain procedural conditions, in order to deem an individual autonomous. In this way, the women of Bountiful are not autonomous with respect to their choice, since they are "choosing" a life of subordination. Of course, one must specify the content of this normative constraint and offer an argument with respect to its importance for the ideal of autonomy.

In any case, the Bountiful community raises the issue of autonomy for the liberal state, since it is not clear that the female members are autonomous with respect to their choices. What motivates this project, then, is my contention that the means by which the FLDS Church inculcates and maintains religious belief is problematic, since it does not allow its members to realize the ideal of autonomy. We can premise this claim on a number of points. Bountiful members are subject to oppressive socialization; they receive limited education; and they are taught to fear outsiders and the outside world. In addition, Bountiful members are not exposed to different conceptions of the good in a fair manner,

in the sense that they are taught that competing conceptions are blasphemous. These facts raise concerns over whether the individual autonomy of the members of Bountiful is compromised because each of these things serves to weaken one's ability to be autonomous. This of course raises the further issue with respect to whether government interference is warranted.

In light of the concerns we raise for the liberal state with respect to Bountiful, my project will focus upon three general questions, for which Bountiful will provide a touchstone to clarify the discussion. First, how ought we understand the notion of autonomy? Second and related to this, what reasons do we have as feminists to think that autonomy is important? Third, if it is important, then is it important enough that the liberal state ought to interfere in minority communities that fail to foster or to promote the ideal of autonomy in its members?

In what follows, I intend to defend three claims in light of these questions. That is, I will argue that autonomy is a character ideal, which involves a normative constraint, along with certain procedural conditions. I take this constraint to be self-respect. Next, I will argue that autonomy requires particular social conditions, in order to be realized. This is an important claim from a feminist perspective, for feminists have argued that autonomy is problematic because it necessitates the rejection of particular social conditions. On this basis, feminists argue that we ought to reject the ideal of the state promote autonomy because it is antithetical to feminist aims and to women's interests. In contrast, I argue that autonomy is valuable for feminist aims and for women interests in general because of its liberatory potential. Lastly, I will consider an argument made by the political liberal, with respect the question of state interference in citizens' lives. The

political liberal argues that it is not the province of the liberal state to interfere in citizens' non-political lives with respect to their conceptions of the good, in the interests of respecting individual freedom and maintaining the legitimacy of the liberal state. In the fourth chapter, I respond to this claim, by arguing that political liberalism interferes in the non-political lives of its citizens, though surreptitiously, by requiring a particular sort of education for future citizens.

In this chapter, I have set up the issues and questions that I will focus upon in this project. In particular, I have sought to highlight the tension between the importance of individual autonomy within the liberal state and the question of how we ought to understand the conception of autonomy. In the next chapter, I begin my discussion by considering the ideal of autonomy and its conditions.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CONCEPT OF AUTONOMY

In this chapter, I discuss the concept of autonomy. What does it mean to say that an individual is autonomous or that one is able to make an autonomous choice? In the first section, I will present an account of autonomy, which details the constitutive elements required if we are to consider an agent to be autonomous. In my discussion, I argue that to be autonomous, an individual must possess certain traits, skills, and capacities, which one exercises in an effective way in the course of acting and choosing. In addition, certain external conditions obtain for an individual to realize autonomy.

For the purposes of this project, I will begin the first section with the account of personal autonomy described by Steven Wall in Liberalism, Perfectionism, and Restraint. Wall's account centers on the claim that personal autonomy is a character ideal of individuals deciding the course of their lives on the basis of what is important to them. I use Wall's description of personal autonomy as the basis for my own account because it provides an adequate framework from which to begin thinking about the concept of autonomy. That is, it provides insightful considerations for thinking about the constitutive conditions needed to realize the ideal of autonomy.

However, I contend that Wall's account suffers from an odd inconsistency, in that it is possible for an individual to meet all four conditions and yet we would resist identifying that individual as autonomous. That is, we would resist calling an individual autonomous if she made a choice that would undermine her capacity to make decisions or

utilize her decision-making skills. In the second section, I consider the case of the women of Bountiful to show how this is possible. In light of this possibility, I argue that Wall's account of the ideal of autonomy is lacking. In particular, I argue that Wall's account suffers because it fails to include self-respect as a necessary condition for the ideal of autonomy.

Self-respect is paramount for an individual to make plans and take on projects, but also to have confidence in his abilities to carry out these goals. More importantly, self-respect is necessary because it serves to ensure that individuals do not set goals or make plans that render him non-autonomous, for to do so is inconsistent with the value of the ideal of autonomy. Thus, in the third section, I will offer a brief analysis of the concept of self-respect before turning to my argument for why self-respect is necessary for the ideal of autonomy. First, I take it to be necessary for without self-respect, an individual is likely to have beliefs, desires, and preferences render her non-autonomous. In turn, such beliefs, desires, and preferences serve to belie an individual's moral worth and dignity, which is contrary to the value of autonomy. In addition, I argue that it is necessary because it enables us to explain what we refer to as the "feminist intuition," which asserts that an individual's beliefs, desires, and preferences are not autonomous if they are the product of oppressive socialization and gender norms.

Given that my account of personal autonomy requires that individuals possess self-respect to be autonomous, it follows that it cannot be a purely procedural account of autonomy. Wall's account of autonomy is procedural, in the sense that what matters for autonomy is that an individual meets all four of the conditions he sets forth. On this view, the content of an individual's choices and actions do not matter. However, in the last

section, I defend the claim that the account of personal autonomy I have presented here is weakly substantive. A weakly substantive account requires that an individual have self-respect or a sense of her own worth as an active agent in the world, along with meeting certain procedural conditions, such as those set out by Wall. A weakly substantive account of autonomy does not call for strict limitations on the content of an individual's beliefs, desires, or preferences in the same way that a strongly substantive account requires. However, a weakly substantive account necessitates that an individual regard herself in a certain way, namely that she respects herself. In making this argument, I will draw the differences between a weakly substantive account of autonomy and a strongly substantive account. I turn now to the first section and Wall's account of autonomy that serves to frame my own discussion. I begin with my presentation of autonomy with some background claims.

The Concept of Autonomy

A brief review of the literature on autonomy reveals a variety of understandings of the concept. In its most general sense, autonomy is the idea of self-governance. For the purposes of this project, I will focus on personal autonomy. Thus, I will not consider Kantian autonomy, which concerns the rational will giving itself the moral law, as it might relate to political morality.²⁸ Neither will I focus my discussion on autonomy as it

²⁸ However, this is not to imply that Kantian autonomy does not or cannot relate to political morality. For a discussion of this, see Jeremy Waldron, "Moral Autonomy and Personal Autonomy," Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism, John Christman and Joel Anderson, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 307-330; Stephen Darwall, "The Value of Autonomy and Autonomy of the Will," *Ethics* 116, January 2006: 263-284.

relates to metaphysical issues around the problem of free will.²⁹ Instead, my aim is to specify the constitutive conditions that define the ideal of personal autonomy as it relates to a socially situated individual.³⁰ To this end, I look to Wall's account, which centres on the claim that autonomy "is best described character ideal."³¹

To hold that autonomy as a character ideal is to say that there are certain character traits, such as rationality, self-possession, integrity, and independence, which are necessary to achieve autonomy. Of course, one must elucidate such virtues carefully, in order to determine the degree to which an individual requires these.³² To depict autonomy as a character ideal is to "describe a character type genuinely worth of admiration and emulation in the modern world." In saying that autonomy is a character ideal, which consists in possessing certain character traits and that is worthy of respect and imitation, one seeks to offer a necessary condition for human excellence and flourishing. Let us now turn to Wall's account.

What are the Conditions that Ground the Ideal of Autonomy?

As mentioned, Wall begins by noting that since autonomy is a character ideal, it is something that applies to individuals only. Put another way, the ideal of autonomy is "the

²⁹ For an excellent discussion of this issue, see David J. Velleman, "The Self as Narrator," Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism, John Christman and Joel Anderson, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.56-77.

³⁰ My reference to the situated location of an individual stems from feminist critiques of traditional concepts of personal autonomy, which tended to ignore the fact that individuals are socially embedded, not isolated social units that are self-sufficient and independent. That is, some feminists argue that we ought to hold that personal autonomy develops in the context of social relations, rather than claiming that social relations present a threat to the development of autonomy. I expand on this claim in the second section of this chapter. See Marilyn Friedman, "Concepts of Autonomy," The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Philosophy, Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 205-224.

³¹ Steven Wall, Liberalism, Perfectionism, and Restraint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.128, henceforth LPR.

³² This is a point made by Joel Feinberg in "Autonomy," The Inner Citadel: Essays on Individual Autonomy, John Christman, ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 45.

ideal of free and conscious self-creation.”³³ That is, the idea of personal autonomy is the ideal of individuals “charting their own course through life, fashioning their character by taking up commitments from a wide range of eligible alternatives, and making something out of their lives according to their own understanding of what is valuable and worth doing.”³⁴ To realize this conception of personal autonomy, Wall claims that there are four conditions the individual must meet. For Wall, these conditions are necessary, but I will argue that they are not sufficient.

Nevertheless, we note that the first condition states that an individual requires certain rational capacities, cognitive skills and abilities, in order to facilitate this conscious self-creation. Of particular importance is the ability to determine one’s comprehensive goals and commitments. A comprehensive goal is one that is “fundamental or central to our sense of identity,” such as opting for a particular career, starting a family, or devoting oneself to a religious faith.³⁵ The second condition states that an individual requires sufficient independence in order to develop her understanding of what are worthwhile goals to pursue. She derives this understanding from her own deliberations about what is valuable and is not the result of external pressure, such as coercion or manipulation.³⁶ The third condition demands that an individual must participate actively in the management of her life. Lastly, the fourth condition claims that it is necessary for an individual to have an adequate range of options in which to pursue

³³ Joseph Raz, The Morality of Freedom, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 390, henceforth MF.

³⁴ Wall, LPR, p. 128.

³⁵ Wall, LPR, p. 140.

³⁶ Determining what counts as genuine coercion or manipulation, especially by the liberal state, is a complex subject, which I do not address here in any depth. It is important to note that Joseph Raz maintains the state sometimes has a legitimate interest in coercing citizens for the purpose of enhancing autonomy. For example, the state may limit those options that may impair autonomy, e.g. drug use. See Raz, MF, p. 410-419. However, Raz remains alert to the fact that “governments can and often do, pose a threat to individual autonomy,” MF, p. 10.

her comprehensive goals. For Wall, meeting these conditions constitute the ideal of autonomy.³⁷ I turn to an examination of the first condition.

The Cognitive Condition

In Wall's account, an autonomous individual is one who has the capacity to develop comprehensive goals, relationships, and commitments. This capacity requires a rational faculty, a minimal degree of rationality and certain cognitive abilities as well as what Wall calls the "virtue of independent-mindedness." A minimal degree of rationality provides one with the ability to develop comprehensive goals and to determine an appropriate course of action with the aim of fulfilling this goal. Thus, an individual with a debilitating mental incapacity, such as long-term amnesia, might lack the requisite ability to carry out successful plans to meet his goals or to even devise goals in the first place, since this incapacity compromises his cognitive abilities. Though autonomy requires conscious deliberation, autonomous agents are not simply individuals capable of deliberating between options. If this were the case, we could imagine some sort of computer, programmed to reflect and to choose among a variety of options. Clearly, we do not want to say that a computer is autonomous in the same way humans are autonomous.

Along the same lines, the capacity to alter a course of action, should one recognize the need for this, is necessary when determining one's comprehensive goals. Thus, the capacity for imagination is important in order to envision possible outcomes for a potential course of action. Of course, a computer could possess the capacity for imagination, if programmed correctly. However, unlike a computer, an individual's

³⁷ Wall, *LPR*, p. 132.

imagination has a certain sort of intentionality, which means that an individual exerts a measure of creative control over her imaginative capacities in a way that a computer cannot. This serves to render an individual's imagination as distinct from that of a computer's "imagination." This distinct imagination allows an individual to set unique ends (as opposed to having one's ends programmed) and, along with one's rational faculties, allows an individual to give reasons for one's decisions. An individual's imagination is valuable since "he must be capable of understanding how various choices will have considerable and lasting impact on his life."³⁸ Given that some choices one makes will have more impact than others, one must be able to give reasons, whether to oneself or to others, for adopting these choices as worthwhile to pursue.

It is important for the autonomous individual that she acts in accordance with her best interests, even if others disapprove. That an autonomous individual will have a certain level of resolve in the face of opposition or conflict is important especially when setting one's comprehensive goals. In fact, Wall believes that "the strength of character necessary to sustain commitments is an important virtue for the autonomous person."³⁹ For Wall, certain things, such as cultural traditions, should not prevent an individual from acting in ways that are important to him. This means "to be autonomous a person must display a distinctive virtue...of *independent-mindedness*."⁴⁰

According to Wall, the virtue of independent-mindedness is related to the concept of authenticity.⁴¹ Joel Feinberg points out that "a person is authentic to the extent that...he can and does subject his opinions and tastes to rational scrutiny...[and] he can

³⁸ Raz, *MF*, p. 371.

³⁹ Wall, *LPR*, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Wall, *LPR*, p. 136, emphasis his.

⁴¹ Wall, *LPR*, P. 137.

and does alter his convictions for reasons of his own, and does this without guilt or anxiety.”⁴² Thus, an individual possess the virtue of independent-mindedness when he is able to choose and to act “for reasons of his own.” However, this virtue entails neither that an autonomous individual is wholly free from external influences nor does it follow that one ought to shun or devalue social relations. To be independently-minded does not require that one reject the authority of others, for example, when “they are experts in the matter in question.”⁴³ Independently-minded individuals are not committed to discarding their cultural traditions or values and are able to live their life according to these customs “for reasons of their own.”⁴⁴ Independent-mindedness, then, is the capacity to determine what one holds as valuable and to live according to what one’s judges to be meaningful. However, Wall maintains that this does not require excessive individualism or a radically self-reliant individual.

The Coercion Condition

For one to be independently minded, there must be an absence of coercion and manipulation as well. Yet, as Wall points out, it is difficult to determine how much an independently-minded individual must be free from coercion or manipulation in order to remain autonomous because all persons realize a different degree of independent-mindedness.⁴⁵ However, generally speaking, an autonomous individual must be sufficiently independent from coercion or manipulation. This is Wall’s second condition that constitutes the ideal of autonomy.

⁴² Joel Feinberg, “Autonomy,” *The Inner Citadel: Essays on Individual Autonomy*, John Christman, ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 32.

⁴³ Wall, *LPR*, p. 137.

⁴⁴ Wall, *LPR*, p. 138.

⁴⁵ Wall, *LPR*, p. 138.

Coercion and manipulation are external influences that interfere with an agent's autonomy. Coercion interferes with autonomy because it "prevents its victims from engaging in projects that they want to engage in."⁴⁶ In other words, coercion has the effect of altering an individual's option set, since coercion entails making an offer that one cannot refuse. Similarly, manipulation by external forces impedes personal autonomy, since "it prevents a person from acting on the basis of his own reasons and wants."⁴⁷ Coercion, manipulation, and deception are factors that work to ensure an individual acts according to the desires or values of another, rather than his own or that one's will is impeded by another.

To subject another to one's will through coercion or manipulation compromises the ability of an individual to attain the ideal of autonomy since this treats one as "an animal, a baby, or an imbecile."⁴⁸ For Wall, coercion is especially egregious, since it may have a deleterious effect on an individual's sense of self-worth. That is, a coerced individual will know that "her will had been obstructed not by random chance, but by the deliberate, intentional actions of another person."⁴⁹ This knowledge will likely serve to harm an individual's self-worth, since she may believe that she is inept or unworthy in determining her life according to her own lights.

The Self-Directedness and Vigour Condition

This brings us to Wall's third condition that must obtain for one to realize the ideal of autonomy. Wall claims that an autonomous individual is one who possesses "the

⁴⁶ Wall, *LPR*, p. 134.

⁴⁷ Wall, *LPR*, p.136.

⁴⁸ Raz, *MF*, p. 156.

⁴⁹ Wall, *LPR*, p. 135.

vigor and self-consciousness necessary for self-directed action.”⁵⁰ The condition of self-consciousness or self-awareness means that autonomous individuals understand themselves to be active planners who make plans, set goals, and develop projects as well as courses of action to initiate these. Moreover, autonomous individuals consider their options to be genuine, rather than the result of some spin of the wheel. For Wall, these two elements are what are minimally required for self-consciousness or self-awareness, rather than some process of higher-order self-reflection on one’s wants and aims.

Of course, Wall does not reject self-reflection entirely in his account. Instead, his requirements for self-reflection are more modest. Wall rejects higher-order reflection as an unnecessary and cumbersome step for the attainment of autonomy. That is, he claims that most individuals lack the skills required to engage in “hyper-rational activities of self-examination.”⁵¹ Wall acknowledges that some philosophers might be capable of this sort of in-depth reflection and examination,⁵² but it is excessive to ask that an account of autonomy require all individuals to engage in this. Wall judges that individuals are able to determine their goals and aims without hyper self-reflection and attain the ideal of autonomy.

Autonomous individuals also require a degree of vigour. In addition to the knowledge that they are capable of self-directed action, it is necessary that autonomous individuals possess the energy and the desire to actively plan their lives. As Wall notes, self-direction requires vigour in that autonomous individuals “neither drift through life, aimlessly moving from one object of desire, nor adopt projects and pursuits wholesale

⁵⁰ Wall, *LPR*, p. 138.

⁵¹ Wall, *LPR*, p. 139.

⁵² Even this I am not so sure about.

from others.”⁵³ Thus, autonomous individuals must possess a degree of drive to form their beliefs and to complete their projects. Similar to the first condition of minimal cognitive skills, the vigour condition requires that individual are not debilitated by mental illness or other psychological compulsions.

The Option Condition

So far, we have considered three of Wall’s conditions that comprise the ideal of autonomy. First, we have noted that autonomy requires that individuals have a minimal degree of rationality and decision-making skills needed to set goals and develop projects. Next, we saw that the ideal of autonomy requires absence of coercion and manipulation. Third, for an individual to achieve the ideal of autonomy, he must be capable of taking control of his life, which means that he takes charge actively and with energy. This brings us to the last component in Wall’s account of personal autonomy. That is, he argues that an individual must have a suitable range of options from which to choose, with particular emphasis on a range of comprehensive pursuits. Wall’s range requirement for the ideal of autonomy is both understandable and contentious. On the one hand, it seems plain that unless individuals have a variety of significant options to choose from, then “‘choices’ will not be choices at all.”⁵⁴ On the other hand, this condition is contentious since we must establish what a suitable range entails and we must define in what a suitable option consists.

Wall argues that an autonomous individual has suitable range of options by having comprehensive options to pursue which are “those that are fundamental or central

⁵³ Wall, *LPR*, p. 128.

⁵⁴ Wall, *LPR*, p. 140.

to our sense of identity.”⁵⁵ Of course, individuals have less central options from which to choose from, which Wall terms peripheral options, but I will not be discussing these. In any case, Wall maintains that the social forms of one’s society most often determine one’s comprehensive options available. The social forms include social practices and cultural traditions, the economic system, “established moral codes and ‘the shared beliefs, folklore, high culture, collectively shared metaphors and imagination’ found in a society.”⁵⁶ Thus, the social forms of any society will determine what, if any, religious faith one is able to pursue or which career one is able to choose as well as determining any peripheral options.⁵⁷ A significant range of comprehensive options ensures that an individual will be able to choose among options that most resonate with what he believes to be important and valuable.

However, an individual need not have an infinite amount of choices available since this may hinder his ability to choose at all. What is important for a range from Wall’s point of view is that it consists in distinct options, since to have a set of similar options reduces the significance of choosing. In addition, a range of option should be such that they interest an individual. If each of the significant options of being a philosophy teacher, an undertaker, or an opera singer fails to appeal to an individual, “then he does not have a sufficiently wide range to be autonomous.”⁵⁸ However, an

⁵⁵ Wall, *LPR*, p.140. Also, see Raz, *MF*, p.309.

⁵⁶ Wall, *LPR*, p. 165. Here, Wall cites Raz, *MF*, p. 311.

⁵⁷ Wall and Raz also agree that comprehensive pursuits emerge, largely, from the social forms of a given society. However, this is a contentious claim for David McCabe, who argues it need not be the case that comprehensive goals that bear on individual well-being need not depend on social forms. See McCabe, “Joseph Raz and the Contextual Argument for Liberal Perfectionism,” *Ethics* 111 (April 2001): 493-522, p.501-508.

⁵⁸ Wall, *LPR*, p. 142.

individual's option set should not contain only options that require an individual to act immorally.

In addition to an adequate range, Wall argue that suitable options for any individual consist in those that allow for the development of one's "talents and capacities."⁵⁹ If an individual has a natural talent for mathematics, then she requires options that allow her to develop this talent and perhaps enter a career that fosters her skills as a mathematician. Wall distinguishes one's talents and capacities from one's "ambitions and desires." For instance, an individual may desire to be a top surgeon. However, if this individual does not possess the necessary talent to be a surgeon, then his autonomy is not limited or comprised in a meaningful way.⁶⁰ Of course, ensuring that all individuals in a society have suitable options available to develop their talents and capacities is difficult to accomplish, which Wall concedes. On the other hand, he points out that, "for most people a satisfying life is bound up with projects and goals that draw on their capacities and talents."⁶¹ Given this, Wall maintains that the ideal of autonomy requires that individuals have suitable options that enable the development of their talents and capacities, although the extent to which a society permits this will be a matter of degree. However, Wall believes that we can reasonably maintain that whether individuals realize their talents and capacities can be a matter of degree, rather than require individuals realize them to a maximal degree.⁶²

In this section, I have been concerned with explaining the four conditions that Wall takes to be necessary to achieve the ideal of autonomy. We have seen that an

⁵⁹ Wall, LPR, p. 142.

⁶⁰ Wall, LPR, p. 142.

⁶¹ Wall, LPR, p. 142, fn. 25.

⁶² Wall, LPR, p. 143.

autonomous individual requires a minimal degree of rationality and cognitive skills. Wall's second condition requires that an autonomous individual must be free from coercion and manipulation and must demonstrate what he refers to as "independent-mindedness." This entails that on the one hand, autonomous individuals acknowledge the social influences on one's values, beliefs and preferences while being capable of acting for reasons of one's own. Third, autonomous individuals must be self-conscious and enthusiastically direct the course of their lives. The last condition that Wall claims is necessary for the ideal of autonomy concerns an adequate range of options. That is, an autonomous individual requires a range of options that allow him to develop his talents and capacities as well as allow him to pursue comprehensive goals that truly matter to him.

For the purposes of this project, I accept Wall's four conditions as necessary but not sufficient for the ideal of autonomy. That is, while Wall takes his set of conditions to be necessary and sufficient, I argue that Wall's account is missing a necessary condition for it seems possible that an individual meets all four of the conditions that Wall sets out and yet not be autonomous. Given this possibility, I argue that we must add another condition, namely the self-respect condition. For without self-respect, an individual does not regard herself as a fundamentally worthy and equally valuable person that is a valid source of authority in the world. Moreover, without self-respect, an individual will be more likely to submit to oppressive conditions. In other words, without self-respect, an individual cannot attain the ideal of autonomy because she would submit to treatment that runs against our intuitions of what would constitute an autonomous individual. I will consider these claims in the third section.

Self-Respect as a Necessary Condition for Autonomy

Let us recap what we have seen so far in this chapter. I began with a presentation of Wall's account of personal autonomy, which he argues is a character ideal. For individuals to achieve this ideal, Wall postulated four necessary conditions. In this section, I want to turn to my claim that Wall's account of the ideal of autonomy falls short, in that it is to be missing a necessary condition. In particular, I argue that for an individual to realize the ideal of autonomy, she needs individual self-respect. For without self-respect, it is possible that one meets all four of Wall's conditions and yet not be autonomous with respect to her actions, goals, and preferences.

This section will develop in the following manner. First, I will show how it is possible that an individual meet Wall's four conditions and not be autonomous. Here, I argue that this is possible because an individual lacks self-respect. Since this is a possibility, it follows that Wall's conditions are necessary but not sufficient. I take it we can remedy this shortcoming with the addition of a fifth necessary condition, namely that individuals must possess self-respect in order to attain the ideal of personal autonomy. Let us focus on the first claim, that an individual can meet Wall's four conditions and yet we would not call her autonomous.

Meeting the Four Conditions for Autonomy

In order to illustrate the possibility that an individual meet Wall's four conditions yet not be autonomous, let us return the case study of the Bountiful colony. Recall that this is a fundamentalist religious group that lives in a closed community, in the sense that they limit drastically any contact with the outside world. Moreover, this community is highly patriarchal, which means that traditional gender roles are in place. Men expect

women to be subservient to male authority, which is sovereign in the Bountiful community. As well, the FLDS church teaches women to believe their only roles in life are that of marriage and motherhood. The members of the FLDS church consider gender roles divinely ordained and fulfilling these roles is essential to God's plan and for social harmony. In contrast to broader society, the Bountiful community rejects feminist ideas concerning equal gender roles or democratic arrangements within the private sphere.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, several women⁶³ that live in the colony have spoken out in response to considerable media attention around Bountiful. They have claimed in press conferences that they prefer to live in polygamist relationships and that they make this choice autonomously. The women maintain that no one compels them to remain in Bountiful against their wills but that they choose to reside there because of deep religious conviction. In light of protestations from some women in Bountiful that they choose autonomously to remain in the colony, it is relevant to ask whether they are autonomous, given Wall's four conditions. I argue it is possible to claim that the women of Bountiful meet these four conditions, but we are hesitant to regard them as autonomous. From this, two points follow. First, it shows that Wall's four conditions for the ideal of autonomy are necessary but not sufficient. Next, I suggest that individual self-respect is a necessary condition of the ideal of personal autonomy.

Let us consider initially the claim that the women of Bountiful meet Wall's four conditions for autonomy. Recall that Wall's first condition that must obtain concerns rational skills and abilities. That is, an autonomous agent must have a minimal degree of

⁶³ As mentioned previously, not all women within the colony have come forth to profess their desire to stay. In addition, the women that have spoken out are connected in some way to the most powerful member of Bountiful, namely Winston Blackmore, who is the community's Prophet.

cognitive skills and freedom from mental impairment, in order to formulate comprehensive goals and to devise plans to fulfill these goals. Next, an autonomous individual is one who is free from coercion and manipulation and who possesses what Wall describes as a degree of “independent-mindedness.” Third, an autonomous individual is one who has the self-consciousness and vigour to determine and to pursue one’s goals in an active fashion. Lastly, Wall’s fourth condition holds that autonomous individuals must have a suitable range of options from which to select from, especially in pursuit of their comprehensive goals.

With respect to the first condition, the women of Bountiful might claim that they possess the minimal degree of rational capacities required to establish and to pursue their projects. Of course, the women in Bountiful will concede that they do not have as many projects relative to an individual who lives outside the colony. However, what matters is that the women in Bountiful are capable of conceiving of courses of action with respect to simpler goals, such as determining what sort of vegetables to grow in their gardens or how to manage their households best. As well, it is conceivable that the women of Bountiful may argue that they determine that their life project is to remain in the colony and serve the will of God.

Moreover, the women of Bountiful may argue that they are autonomous with respect to this decision and that they are not subject to coercion or manipulation. Recall that coercion involves forcing an individual to perform an action against her will. Put another way, coercion prevents an individual from engaging in self-direction, since she is subject to the will of other. The women of Bountiful might argue that no one coerces them, since no one forcibly prevents them from engaging in other life pursuits outside of

the colony. Moreover, no one holds the women against their will physically. The women of Bountiful will claim that they are fully aware that people live very different lives in mainstream society, but they maintain these sorts of lives do not appeal to them. In other words, the women of Bountiful would protest that they are not coerced because they are not obstructed from pursuing their project to live according to God's will.

One might challenge the claim made by the women of Bountiful that they are not coerced. For example, there are individuals, mainly women, who have left the Bountiful community (as well as other FLDS communities in the United States). These individuals claim that the elders of the community, or often, their husband, coerced the members into staying. This coercion was usually in the form of physical violence or threats concerning children or other family members.

However, many current members of the Bountiful community (and the FLDS Church in general) report that such incidences have never happened to them and that they are content with their lives and lifestyle. In response to this challenge, it seems that we must take the claims of the women of Bountiful as genuine statements of what they want to do. Otherwise, to claim that the women of Bountiful are mistaken with respect to their choice is problematic from a feminist perspective, since taking women's perspectives seriously is a fundamental feminist commitment.

This is the case with respect to manipulation as well. Wall argues that manipulation "operates on the very wants and desires of the victim," in that it "implants or stimulates desires in him in order to get him to do what the manipulator wants."⁶⁴ On the one hand, it is the case that all residents of Bountiful submit to the direction of the

⁶⁴ Wall, LPR, p. 136.

Prophet, who determines such things as the daily management of the colony's farms and businesses and even the marital arrangements of its residents. On the other hand, the women of Bountiful might argue that this does not constitute manipulation on the part of the Prophet, since their wants and desires are not compromised. That is, they will claim that their wants and desires revolve around obedience to the Prophet's directions, since this represents the will of God. As Wall points out, manipulation involves altering an individual's wants and desires. However, the women of Bountiful will respond that their wants and desires are not altered, since they desire to follow the Prophet's commands.

One might step in at this point and claim that while it is possible that the women of Bountiful could possess the minimal degree of cognitive skills needed for autonomy and are neither coerced nor manipulated, they cannot claim that they possess a degree of independent-mindedness. That is, one might argue that the women of Bountiful do not have the social or cultural resources necessary to form judgments about how they ought to live. Given that all residents of Bountiful receive a limited education and live in relative isolation from broader society, one might argue that they cannot truly form their own opinions concerning how they ought to live, for they lack the requisite information.

Yet, the women of Bountiful might respond that they are aware of the world outside of the colony. That is, they are aware of their options. Perhaps books and women's magazines have been smuggled into Bountiful, which detail how individuals live in the outside world. Alternatively, it could be the case that if the women of Bountiful leave the colony to shop at the local stores, they are keen observers with respect to how other individuals live. The point here is that the women of Bountiful could possess a minimal set of cultural resources needed to form judgments on how they want

to live. There is nothing inconsistent with the virtue of independent-mindedness should one choose to live within a fundamentalist community. Indeed, Wall notes that this virtue “does not require a general distrust of custom or tradition,” and that “for reasons of their own, people can and often do choose to live according to the customs and traditions of their time and place.”⁶⁵ Given this, we can say that the women of Bountiful possess a degree of independent-mindedness.

Surely, one might argue that the women of Bountiful lack the self-consciousness and vigour that is necessary for the ideal of autonomy. After all, the women of Bountiful do not make life-determining choices, such as whom to marry or how many children to bear. Instead, the Prophet of the community makes these decisions for them. However, the women of Bountiful might respond that they regard themselves as capable of making choices and setting plans. In other words, they *could* make life-determining choice, but they prefer to not exercise this capability and instead defer such life-determining decisions to the Prophet. Of course, the women of Bountiful pursue other projects and goals, such as household management and child-rearing, with great vigour and enthusiasm. What is important here is that the women of Bountiful do not regard themselves as passive pawns moved around by forces outside of their control.

Lastly, it is possible that the women of Bountiful would maintain that they have a suitable range of options from which to select in determining their life projects. As we have seen, the women of Bountiful might argue that they are aware of their options and that they simply choose to remain within the polygamist sect, rather than pursuing a wider range of options. For an individual to be autonomous, it is not the number of

⁶⁵ Wall, LPR, p. 138.

options which she has available to her. Instead, what matters is whether the range of options is appealing to her and whether the content of the options within the range is different. In fact, Wall would point out that the autonomy of the women in Bountiful would be compromised if their option set did not include options that they wanted sincerely to engage in. The point here is that what matters with respect to range is whether the option set appeals to an individual, rather than society at large. In light of this, the women of Bountiful may claim that they know they have a suitable range of options, but choose to exercise the option that appeals most to them, namely living as a polygamist wife.

Thus, we can conclude that it is possible to consider the women of Bountiful autonomous, if only minimally, since they met all four of Wall's conditions. However, this conclusion is problematic, in that there is a tension between respecting women's choices and challenging some choices as oppressive. On the one hand, as feminists, we are committed to taking women's perspectives and claims seriously, in the sense that we want to believe the women of Bountiful express authentic beliefs, desires, and preferences. On the other hand, we are hesitant to call the women of Bountiful autonomous, since this flies in the face of what Natalie Stoljar calls "the feminist intuition." This intuition holds that "preferences influenced by oppressive norms of femininity cannot be autonomous."⁶⁶ In the case of Bountiful, the oppressive norms of femininity that characterize this community are grounded on strict religious beliefs,

⁶⁶ Natalie Stoljar, "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition," Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self, Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 95. Stoljar argues that this feminist intuition entails that we must endorse a strong substantive account of autonomy. I disagree with this claim and instead argue, in concurrence with Paul Benson, that it is possible to adopt a weakly substantive account of autonomy in order to explain this intuition. I address this claim in the last section of this chapter.

which deny that women have equal moral or spiritual status relative to men and strict deference to male authority is compulsory for all women. Females are taught to be obedient and to “keep sweet,” which is castigation to keep silent to those women who complain or seek to assert their own needs.

I argue that the preferences of the women of Bountiful to remain in a patriarchal, polygamist sect, where they have no social or political power and where the members of Bountiful strictly observe oppressive gender roles, are not autonomous. They are not autonomous because they lack individual self-respect, which I take to be necessary for the ideal of personal autonomy. Before I argue for the latter claim, I begin the next section by offering a brief analysis of the concept of self-respect, in order to determine what is involved when one is a self-respecting individual. In light of this understanding, I go on to argue that the women of Bountiful are not self-respecting persons because of their acquiesce to a position of servility and subordination.

What is Self-Respect?

Self-respect is a difficult concept to pin down. As one theorist notes, “the first problem concerning self-respect is that of its category: what kind of thing is it?”⁶⁷ To have self-respect means that one is able to “stand up” for oneself. This ability stems from the recognition of one's worth and that one's worth demands respect from others. Another theorist contends that self-respect is a complex concept, which involves a “constellation of attitudes, beliefs, desires, dispositions, commitments, expectations, actions and

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Telfer, “Self-Respect,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 18 (1968), 114-21.

emotions that express or constitute one's sense of one's worth."⁶⁸ Defined in this way, we see that self-respect is not simply a mental state or a belief that one holds about oneself. Instead, self-respect is an elaborate conception, which permeates all aspects of an individual's life. This means that one reveals her self-respect through her actions, beliefs, desires, preferences and goals.

Philosophers tend to identify two kinds of self-respect, namely recognitional and evaluative self-respect. Recognitional self-respect is an individual's acknowledgment of her fundamental worth as a person and behaving in accordance with this worth. In contrast, evaluative self-respect concerns how an individual evaluates her moral character and merits as an individual. For the purposes of this project, I will focus only on recognitional self-respect, because this sense of self-respect is more broadly conceived. As Robin Dillon points out, "recognitional self-respect is something to which all persons are entitled, which all can have equally, and which each of us ought to have, simply because we are persons."⁶⁹ She goes on to add that recognitional self-respect is necessary for "a secure sense of one's fundamental worth, [which] would seem to be a prerequisite for being able to develop and maintain [evaluative] self-respect."⁷⁰ Thus, when I use the term 'self-respect,' I mean only recognitional self-respect, while keeping in mind that there is at least one other kind of self-respect.

Dillon argues that recognitional self-respect is connected with dignity, in that to have this sort of self-respect is to recognize one's inherent dignity. Dignity itself is

⁶⁸ Cynthia A. Stark, (1998). "Self-respect." In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. Retrieved April 25, 2006, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/article/L092SECT1>

⁶⁹ Robin Dillon, "Toward a Feminist Conception of Self-Respect," *Dignity, Character, and Respect*, Robin S. Dillon, ed., New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 293.

⁷⁰ Robin Dillon, "Toward a Feminist Conception of Self-Respect," p. 294.

grounded in three related notions, namely agency, individuality, and equality.⁷¹ With respect to equality, an individual recognizes and accepts that all human beings have moral worth and that this worth ensures their standing as a moral equal in a community of moral equals. More importantly, this means that an individual must treat others in those ways that respect this equal moral standing. In terms of agency, an individual recognizes her ability to act in such a way to uphold and preserve her dignity as a moral agent. This means that she will form beliefs and act in ways that reflect this dignity and not form beliefs or act in ways that belies this dignity. Lastly, with respect to individuality, one will believe that one's individuality is something special and worth protecting and developing.⁷² We can conclude that a self-respecting person is an individual who acknowledges and who acts to respect her dignity.

A self-respecting individual who recognizes and acts in accordance with her dignity will tend to avoid behaviour, beliefs, goals, and preferences that fly in the face of this self-respect. That is, if an individual recognizes her moral worth as an individual, then it is doubtful that she believe that she cannot make informed decisions. Put another way, it is unlikely that she will believe herself to be unworthy of making claims, as a member of the community, on the cultural, social or economic resources within the community. Instead, to have self-respect is to view oneself as a legitimate source of authority in the world, and one who has the "authority to raise and defend claims as a person with equal standing."⁷³ A self-respecting individual will realize that she is entitled

⁷¹ Robin Dillon, "Self-Respect: Moral, Emotion, Political," *Ethics* 107, (January 1997): p226-249. p. 229.

⁷² Robin Dillon, "Self-Respect: Moral, Emotion, Political," p. 229-230.

⁷³ Joel Anderson and Axel Honneth, "Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice," *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism*, John Christman and Joel Anderson, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 132.

to declare her needs as a person, rather than forsake them for someone or something else. An individual with self-respect knows that she is a moral equal in a community of equals and thus it is unlikely that she will believe herself to be inferior in contrast to other members of the community.

Similarly, self-respect allows an individual to conceive of herself as a capable deliberator, who can set worthwhile goals and refuses to engage in base projects. Together, both of these actions reflect her understanding that she is a valuable individual. One might argue that a life of servility is just such a base project, since it fails to honour an individual's inherent dignity as a human being. An individual with self-respect is one who will not believe that she is fit only for a life of subordination, since she acknowledges that she possesses equal dignity and moral worth, relative to other members in the moral community. An individual with self-respect will adopt goals that reflect her belief that, as a human being, she possesses value and importance. An individual with self-respect will never choose a goal, such as a life of servility and obedience, which corrupts this value. The choice to live a servile life is contrary to valuing oneself as a person with special moral status. Moreover, a self-respecting individual will realize that such a life will eliminate her ability to attain the ideal of autonomy.

However, it is possible a self-respecting individual will form beliefs and set goals that render her less autonomous. For example, an individual may decide to have a child. This decision serves to limit an individual's autonomy because having a small infant alters one's options. Similarly, an individual might hold the belief that she cannot appear in public without cosmetics. Such a decision limits her autonomy, in that oppressive

social norms determine her actions, rather than what she believes to be the case. In either case, these individuals' autonomy is limited in some way; but, in general terms, these individuals retain their autonomy over large portions of their lives and they make their decisions with self-respect. For to have a child or to wear cosmetics are decisions consistent with the belief that one is a valuable person with special moral status. Moreover, such decisions do not entail that one is non-autonomous, in the sense that one cannot determine her life at all.

In offering these brief remarks concerning self-respect, we can see that the women of Bountiful do not possess self-respect. This is the case for the following reasons. To begin, we cannot say that the women of Bountiful make claims on the community in their own right, since they must defer to the authority of the Prophet or male relatives (who, of course, take their directions from the Prophet). In addition, the women in Bountiful regard another to be a more capable deliberator than they are, since they are raised to believe that only the Prophet can make decisions with respect to daily maintenance or general direction of the community. As I have argued, self-respect requires that one regard oneself as a source of authority in the world, who is capable of making claims within the community. To view oneself as lacking the status as a legitimate maker of claims is to not have self-respect. Perhaps more troubling is to have institutional arrangements based on religious or social tradition, which prevent one from making claims on the community in the first place.

In accepting religious beliefs that women are not the moral equals of the men in the community, it follows that the women in Bountiful do not appreciate their own worth as persons in their own right. By not appreciating their worth as human beings, the

women of Bountiful fail to claim their equal standing in their community, and instead acquiesce to a social order that is grounded on the belief that women are inherently unequal, both morally and spiritually. More to the point, self-respect necessitates that individuals know their status as moral equals with dignity and that they demand others respect this status. Thus, in choosing a life of submission to male authority, the women of Bountiful fail to be autonomous in any robust sense because they lack self-respect for themselves as human beings with inherent dignity and moral worth.

The women of Bountiful might respond to my claim, by arguing that they along with other members of the community recognize their worth. This worth, the women of Bountiful will respond, is grounded on the fact that they serve the will of God by living in a polygamist community and bearing as many children as possible. However, I would respond that this sense of worth misconstrues what we mean by worth when we discuss self-respect. The kind of worth that the women of Bountiful have is only instrumental, in the sense that they allow the community to continue by bearing many children. Compare this sort of worth with moral worth, which one possess simply in virtue of being human. It does not depend on one's contribution to the community. Given this, I would resist any claims of worth made by the women of Bountiful, since this worth is predicated on highly questionable understandings of where a woman's worth lies.

Why is Self-Respect Necessary for Autonomy?

So far, I have discussed the concept of self-respect, in order to illuminate what this concept comprises. I then argued that the women of Bountiful do not possess self-respect because they willingly acquiesce to a life of subordination and servility. In this section, I want to consider why self-respect is a necessary condition for the ideal of

autonomy. I argue that this is the case because without self-respect, one fails to recognize her status as moral equal with inherent dignity. Because of this failure, an individual will likely form beliefs, desires, and preferences that serve to demean her status as a moral equal with dignity. One way to demean one's status as a moral equal with dignity is to deny that one is a legitimate source of authority, who is capable of making claims in the world. This act of demeaning oneself in such a manner is contrary to the concept of autonomy itself because conceptually, autonomy involves the capacity of an individual to make claims in the world, in light of what one deems to be valuable. Therefore, self-respect is necessary for autonomy.

In addition, I take self-respect to be necessary for the ideal of autonomy, in order to explain the feminist intuition. Recall that the feminist intuition states that an individual who forms beliefs, desires, and preferences on the basis of oppressive norms is not autonomous. I argue that we can explain our intuition that such an individual is not autonomous with respect to these because she lacks self-respect. Thus, the addition of the necessary condition of self-respect helps to explain the claim that Wall's account suffers from an odd inconsistency, in that individuals can be autonomous but choose to undermine their status as legitimate claim makers. After considering each of these claims, I will end this section by showing that the women of Bountiful are not autonomous with respect to their decision to live within that community.

So, let us first consider the question of why is self-respect a necessary condition for the ideal of autonomy. In order to answer this, recall my claim that the women of Bountiful might argue that they meet Wall's four conditions for the ideal of autonomy. Yet, I responded to this by claiming that we hesitate to deem them autonomous. The

women of Bountiful may choose their lives of servility to honour the will of God, but I argued that we question whether this choice is autonomous because they lack self-respect. The women lack self-respect because they do not regard themselves as legitimate makers of claims on the world and because they turn over this source of authority to the Prophet of the community. The women of Bountiful fail to recognize their status as moral equals with inherent dignity and thus, they act in ways that demean this status. This act of demeaning oneself is contrary to autonomy on a conceptual level.

As stated previously, in its most general terms, autonomy is self-governance. More specifically, I have argued that autonomy is a character ideal of an individual determining her life as she sees fit, according to what she understands is valuable in life. We cannot, on the one hand, claim that autonomy is the ideal of an individual, as a legitimate maker of claims, determining her own life and also maintain that an autonomous individual need neither to preserve her status as a legitimate maker of claims nor to determine her life. Conceptually, these two claims are inconsistent. If we are to regard an individual as autonomous, then that individual will have to determine her own life and regard herself as a legitimate claim maker. In this case, it seems that autonomy requires that one respect herself as a legitimate source of authority in the world. In other words, autonomy requires that an individual respect herself as an individual.

Moreover, if an individual has self-respect, then she demands particular treatment from others. In other words, to respect oneself as a legitimate maker of claims in the world entails that an individual not only recognizes this status but also requires others treat her with due respect for her status as a moral equal. Because of her intrinsic moral status as a human being, an individual will regard herself as undeserving of certain kinds

of behaviour and treatment from others. Moreover, an individual who recognizes her status as a legitimate maker of claims would never permit others to treat her poorly because such treatment might threaten this status. Thus, this status as a legitimate maker of claims necessitates that one takes seriously her own beliefs, desires, and preferences and that she expects others do so as well. In other words, autonomy requires self-respect.

If so, then the women of Bountiful are not autonomous, even if they meet Wall's four conditions, because they lack individual self-respect. We see this revealed by the fact that they choose to live as submissive and obedient wives within a highly patriarchal and religious fundamentalist community. The failure on the part of the women of Bountiful to respect their status as human beings and to demand others respects this; the acceptance of their submissive roles; and their failure to choose projects that reflect their inherent dignity and moral status entail that the women of Bountiful are not self-respecting. Given that they lack individual self-respect, we cannot claim that the women of Bountiful are autonomous.

An implication, then, of requiring self-respect as necessary for autonomy is that individuals cannot set beliefs, desires and preferences that compromise one's status as a legitimate maker of claims. In other words, our account of autonomy contains a degree of normative content, in that individual's beliefs, desires, and preferences are constrained in some way. If this is the case, then the addition of the necessary condition of self-respect forces us to abandon a purely procedural account of autonomy. This means that we are adopting a weakly substantive account of autonomy, which holds that along with certain procedural conditions, autonomy requires the condition of self-respect.

Lastly, to require self-respect as a necessary condition for the ideal of autonomy better enables us to explain the feminist intuition. That is, we are able to make clear our intuition that choices informed by oppressive norms are not autonomous by introducing the condition of self-respect. For without self-respect, an individual does not attain the ideal of autonomy because she may opt for beliefs, desires, and preferences that fail to preserve her moral status and dignity. It is not the case, as some theorists claim, that we can explain this intuition on the grounds that individuals are not autonomous because they are incapable of appreciating the value of autonomy. Rather, we can understand the feminist intuition by reference to self-respect, in that individuals are not autonomous because they lack self-respect.

However, some will argue that the appeal to self-respect fails to account for the feminist intuition. These theorists claim that unless we appeal to the value of autonomy itself, we cannot explain the feminist intuition properly. In other words, these theorists argue that individuals are not autonomous if they do not form beliefs, desires, and preferences that accord with valuing autonomy. This means that one must have the “capacity to formulate desires and preferences and endorse values, with specific contents.”⁷⁴ Philosophers refer to such accounts as strongly substantive accounts of autonomy. In the next section, I will consider these claims and argue against a version of such an account. Instead, we can accept a weakly substantive account of autonomy, rather than a strong account. This is important because a strongly substantive account of autonomy is too stringent in its requirements for the ideal of autonomy. In turn, this is

⁷⁴ Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, “Autonomy Refigured,” Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self, Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 20.

problematic from a feminist point of view, since I take it to be a feminist aim to make autonomy as attractive to women as possible. By raising the standards for autonomy may serve to alienate women from the ideal of autonomy, which is politically problematic, from a feminist point of view.

A Weakly Substantive Account of Autonomy

In the last section of this chapter, I turn now to explaining why the account I have presented for the ideal of autonomy is weakly substantive. In order to show this, I will explain first why my account is not strongly substantive. On a strongly substantive account, both the means by which an individual arrived at her beliefs, desires, and preferences and the content of these is relevant for the ideal of autonomy. Some feminists, for example Natalie Stoljar, have argued that we ought to endorse a strongly substantive account of autonomy, for in doing so, we are better able to explain the ‘feminist intuition.’ Recall that this intuition claims that women’s choices, if informed by oppressive feminine norms, are not autonomous.⁷⁵

However, it is my contention, along with that of Paul Benson’s, that we need not adopt a strongly substantive account of autonomy. It need not be the case that we accept such an account of autonomy because I contend that such an account is too rigorous in its demands for autonomy. That is, if we accept a strongly substantive account to explain the feminist intuition, then I argue that hardly anyone will be autonomous because most women form their beliefs, desires, and preferences on the basis of oppressive norms of femininity. However, it cannot be the case that few women are autonomous; thus, there

⁷⁵ Stoljar, “Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition,” p. 95.

must be a better way to explain the feminist intuition. Instead, I believe that we can accept a weakly substantive account, such as the one that I have presented in this project, in order to shed some light on the feminist intuition.

In this section, I will begin with an argument raised by an advocate of the strongly substantive account of autonomy. This states that only a strongly substantive account of autonomy can explain properly the feminist intuition that beliefs, desires, and preferences influenced by oppressive norms are not autonomous. I respond to this challenge, by arguing that such an account fails to explain the intuition because it asks too much for autonomy. However, we must be cautious in that we cannot lower the bar for autonomy too low. I take it that purely procedural accounts of autonomy suffer from this issue, which I will detail below. Lastly, I discuss a possible middle ground between strongly substantive and procedural accounts of autonomy. It is in this middle space that my account of autonomy is situated.

Must We Accept a Strongly Substantive Account of Autonomy?

As I have argued in this project, it is possible for individuals to meet Wall's four conditions and yet, we would hesitate to call them autonomous. In the case of the women of Bountiful, I argued that although they meet all four conditions, they are not autonomous because they lack self-respect. In light of this claim, I have shown that self-respect is necessary for autonomy because conceptually, autonomy requires that an individual cannot set ends that compromise her status as a legitimate maker of claims or which compromise her ability to determine her life. Such ends, of course, would include choosing a life of servility and subordination. Since I maintain that an individual must meet Wall's four conditions and have self-respect, I am advocating a weakly substantive

account of autonomy. Moreover, such an account enables us to explain the feminist intuition by appeal to individual self-respect. That is, beliefs, desires, and preferences influenced by oppressive norms are not autonomous if an individual without self-respect forms or acts upon them.

However, Natalie Stoljar might challenge my claims and argue that the appeal to self-respect cannot explain properly the intuition that the desires of the women of Bountiful to live servile lives are not autonomous. In support of this claim, Stoljar would argue that we must appeal directly to a strongly substantive account of autonomy to explain the feminist intuition best. Recall that a strongly substantive account of autonomy states that an individual must arrive at her beliefs, desires, and preferences in a particular way. But, what matters also for a strongly substantive autonomy is that the things she chooses “accord with the value of autonomy itself, or, at least, choose so as not to undermine that value.”⁷⁶ This means that an individual cannot form her beliefs, desires, and preferences on the basis of oppressive norms. Furthermore, on a strongly substantive account, an individual who chooses a life of servility or believes that such a life is worthy of pursuit chooses in such a way that undercuts the value of autonomy.

Thus, in the case of the women of Bountiful, a strong substantivist like Stoljar would justify the feminist intuition in the following way. First, the women of Bountiful are not autonomous because they have internalized false norms of feminine gender roles. Moreover, this internalization of false norms, coupled with the fact that such norms are false, serves to render the women of Bountiful less capable of criticizing such norms “and

⁷⁶ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 19.

thereby [they] lose the capacity to discover [they are] incorrect.”⁷⁷ Thus, for Stoljar this internalization and inability to criticize the falseness of the norm entails that the women of Bountiful fail to be autonomous with respect to their decision.⁷⁸

However, is this requirement for autonomy too rigorous? A strongly substantive account is too demanding from a feminist point of view because such accounts may be too severe with respect to what is required for autonomy. If the litmus test for determining autonomy is whether one has escaped the influence of oppressive norms of femininity, then one might reasonably point out that most, if not all individuals are subject to oppressive socialization. In addition, with respect to women, most if not all have beliefs, desires, and preferences that feminists would classify as oppressive or at least, as potentially detrimental to women’s interests. If this were the case, then we would have to admit that almost no women are autonomous with respect to their beliefs, desires, and preferences. But, this seems too strong.

In order to determine if this is the case, we can refer to another feminist intuition. Paul Benson points out that Stoljar’s argument is problematic because it supposes that all feminists will share the strong intuition that women cannot be autonomous if their beliefs, desires, and preferences are influenced by oppressive norms. Instead, Benson suggest that feminists might hold another intuition, namely that, in some instances, women are autonomous with respect to their beliefs, desires, and preferences, even if these are

⁷⁷ Mackenzie and Stoljar, “Autonomy Refigured,” p. 20. See also Stoljar, “Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition,” p. 108.

⁷⁸ Stoljar, “Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition,” p. 108.

influenced by oppressive norms of femininity.⁷⁹ Let us refer to this as the Revised Feminist Intuition, which we can justify by appeal to self-respect.

For example, I might choose to wear make-up because I feel more self-assured when I wear it and I cannot deny that this desire (like all of my desires) is the result of socialization. Moreover, one could argue quite reasonably that my choice to wear make-up is the result of oppressive socialization. Yet, my decision to wear make-up is, on some level, less pernicious than choosing a life of servility and endless childbearing. This is not to say that wearing make-up is entirely harmless, for this decision could become detrimental psychologically if I believe that I never look good enough. Nevertheless, there is an important distinction between wearing make-up and living a servile life because the latter is a decision made by women without self-respect.

My choice to wear make-up is less harmful than a choice to live a servile life, because I make this choice with a sense of my self-respect. Recall that to have self-respect entails that one knows that she is a moral equal with inherent dignity and that furthermore, she will not form beliefs or act in ways that undermine this status. Because I have self-respect, I have not lost sight of my authority as an individual, who is capable of making claims on the world and who is competent in determining her desires, even those desires informed by oppressive feminine norms. Because I have self-respect, I do not make choices or form preferences that compromise my ability to attain the ideal of autonomy. My decision to wear make-up, even if I make this decision under the influence of oppressive gender norms, does not contradict my understanding that I am a person, i.e. as an individual with moral status and inherent dignity.

⁷⁹ Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy," *Personal Autonomy*, James Stacy Taylor, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 124-142, p. 128.

My choice to wear make-up does not undermine my status as a moral equal with inherent dignity because it does not preclude me from valuing and protecting this status. On the contrary, the choice to live a servile life is direct evidence that the women of Bountiful fail to value themselves as moral equals. To decide to live a servile life rules out the possibility that one is able to regard herself as a moral equal with inherent dignity because, conceptually, one cannot believe oneself to be inferior and have a sense of self-respect at the same time. Because the women of Bountiful have failed to retain a sense of self-respect, they cannot autonomously endorse the oppressive norms that inform their beliefs, desires, and preferences. Therefore, the decision by the women of Bountiful to live servile lives is different from my decision to wear make-up.

Moreover, my choice to wear make-up is a choice that minimally affects my overall autonomy. In contrast, the choice by the women of Bountiful to live servile lives maximally affects their overall autonomy. Although the choice to make-up compromises my autonomy, in the sense that oppressive norms inform my action, this choice affects only a small part of my life. It remains the case that I exercise autonomy in most other areas of my life. Conversely, the choice by the women of Bountiful to be subordinate affects great portions of their lives. In other words, the choice of a servile life is more far-reaching with respect to how it affects autonomy.

Thus, the central problem with a strongly substantive view of autonomy is that such an account cannot identify subtle differences between those beliefs, desires, and preferences that lessen autonomy and those restrict autonomy entirely. For the strong substantivist, the distinction between autonomous and non-autonomous choices rests on the notion that an individual who makes an autonomous choice is one who has escaped

from the forces of socialization. The strong substantivist seems to require the impossible task that one has escaped from the forces of socialization, in order to be considered autonomous with respect to one's beliefs, desires and preferences. In contrast, we need not consider this distinction to rest on such a strict autonomous/non-autonomous dichotomy because there are some choices that fall in between, such as the choice to wear make-up. There is an important difference between these decisions, namely that to live a servile life is a decision made without self-respect. In light of this, we should resist accepting a substantive view because such accounts of autonomy are too stringent.

Along the same lines, Paul Benson notes that if we were to accept a strongly substantive account of autonomy, this acceptance would lead to "far-reaching scepticism about our ordinary prospects for autonomy."⁸⁰ That is, strong substantive accounts fail to appreciate human fallibility. Individuals do not always get it right when forming their beliefs, desires, and preferences. In this way, Benson cautions conflating autonomy with "orthonomy," where the former is "the power to *take ownership* of one's actions," and the latter is "the power to *get things right*, or the ability to adopt the preferences and values one ought to have."⁸¹ To be autonomous is consistent with the endorsement of beliefs, desires, and preferences that are informed by oppressive or misogynist norms, but only in those instances in which an individual has a sense of self-respect.

Without self-respect, one cannot endorse beliefs, desires, and preferences based on oppressive norms because one cedes her status as a legitimate source of authority in the world. There is room for autonomy and autonomous action, even when women endorse oppressive norms. But, there are some norms, such as religious fundamentalist

⁸⁰ Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy," p. 131.

⁸¹ Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy," p. 132.

beliefs in women's inherent inferiority and incapability of acting as legitimate moral agents, that interfere with women's self-respect to such a degree that they cannot be deemed autonomous in any meaningful sense.

However, we should not conclude from this claim that we ought to accept a purely procedural account. As stated previously, a proceduralist account of autonomy claims that the content of an individual's beliefs, desires, and preferences is irrelevant in deciding whether one is autonomous with respect to these. Instead, what matters is that an individual arrive at her beliefs, desires, and preferences in the right way. Usually, philosophers who accept this view argue that the proper way involves some measure of second-order reflection and endorsement on one's beliefs, etc., in order that an individual identify these as truly her own.

Yet, one significant disadvantage of such an account is that an individual may hold beliefs, desires, or preferences that are inconsistent with the value of autonomy. Wall's account of the ideal of autonomy, which comprises four conditions, is just this sort of account. Wall does not impose any restrictions on individuals seeking to attain the ideal of autonomy. In other words, if they meet the four conditions, even if only minimally, then we can regard them as having attained the ideal of autonomy.

Given this, it seems that procedural accounts permit almost anyone to be autonomous. That is, if an individual has subjected her beliefs, desires, and preferences to the right sort of critical reflection and evaluation, then a proceduralist would maintain that she is autonomous with respect to these. However, as I have shown, there are some choices made by women that we want to deem as non-autonomous, such as the desire of the women of Bountiful to live a life of servility. If one were a pure proceduralist, then

the women of Bountiful would be autonomous. Moreover, the pure proceduralist would maintain that we must respect women's choices as autonomous, regardless if whether they accord with the value of autonomy.

Thus, there is a tension between a proceduralist account of autonomy and the content of women's choices. On the one hand, we want to respect women's choices, in the sense that we believe that it is important to pay attention to their perspective. On the other hand and contrary to the pure proceduralist, it is a mistake to equate respect with wholesale acceptance of women's choices and to decide that we ought to label choices as autonomous if formed by the right procedure, regardless of the content of these choices. In an effort to be accommodating and inclusive, we miss opportunities to criticize those beliefs, desires, and preferences held by women that are detrimental to their interests. This is unacceptable because sometimes, these beliefs, desires, and preferences appear to be misguided, imprudent, or simply mistaken. In this way, procedural accounts of autonomy are too lax, in that just about anyone is autonomous with respect to their beliefs, desires, and preferences if they have subjected them to the right sort of scrutiny, under the right conditions.

Thus, on the one hand, procedural accounts permit too much with respect to what counts as autonomous. On the other hand, strongly substantive accounts are too rigorous, as we could judge very few as autonomous on this account. Since a strongly substantive account is too stringent and a procedural account is too lenient, we should look to the middle ground between these two accounts. Paul Benson argues that it is possible to offer a weakly substantive account, which claims that an individual must adhere to certain procedural steps (e.g. Wall's four conditions) but also she must hold certain attitudes

toward herself. In fact, Benson observes that philosophers tend to focus on either purely procedural accounts or strongly substantive accounts, while ignoring the fact that “a wide theoretical space lies between” such accounts.⁸² To this end, I take the account of the ideal of autonomy that I have argued for as located in this intermediate space.

By requiring self-respect as a necessary condition for the ideal of autonomy, I am incorporating a degree of what Benson refers to as “normative substance.” However, this substance does not demand that individuals choose from a narrowly prescribed range of options, all of which accord with a strict understanding of the value of autonomy. As we have seen, this is the case with a strongly substantive account, which constrains directly an individual’s beliefs, desires, and preferences. This means that minimally, on a strongly substantive account, “there must be some things that autonomous agents cannot prefer or value without sacrificing some autonomy.”⁸³

Rather, this substance in a weakly substantive account is in the form of an individual’s attitude towards herself, namely self-respect. Clearly, to introduce self-respect as a necessary component of personal autonomy is to introduce a specific value into my account. However, the introduction of the condition of self-respect does not serve to limit directly the beliefs, desires, and preferences that individuals are able to form. This allows for a greater range of beliefs, desires, and preferences that individuals may adopt and still be considered autonomous.

Thus, one advantage of a weakly substantive account is that it is a less rigorous account, in the sense that there is less restriction on the content of women’s choices. We are able to deem women autonomous, even if they form beliefs, desires, and preferences

⁸² Benson, “Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy,” p. 133.

⁸³ Benson, “Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy,” p. 133.

that render them less autonomous. For example, on a weakly substantive account, women remain capable of choosing to be mothers or primary caregivers. As well, women remain autonomous in some instances even if they choose to act on desires that are informed by oppressive practices, such as wearing make-up or high heels. What matters on a weakly substantive account of autonomy is that women have due regard for who they are as persons (and meeting Wall's four conditions of course). In other words, what makes a difference for autonomy is that women respect themselves as individuals when making their decisions and forming their beliefs, even if these things make a woman less autonomous. Therefore, a weakly substantive account permits that women can make choices to be less autonomous.

However, this account does not permit women to choose to be non-autonomous. This is the limiting factor for a weakly substantive account. In this way, a weakly substantive account permits us to explain why an individual would choose to live a life of servility is not autonomous. Even if one should desire such a life, individuals do not deserve second-class status or poor treatment at the hands of others. To endorse this sort of treatment or status does not illustrate autonomous action by an individual; instead, it reveals a profound lack of self-respect on the part of that individual. If an individual lacks self-respect, then she fails to hold herself in proper regard as a person with inherent dignity and moral status. An individual who chooses a life of servility is not autonomous because she does not respect herself as a person.

In this chapter, we have seen that Wall's four conditions for the ideal of autonomy are necessary but not sufficient. This is the case because it is possible for an individual to meet Wall's four conditions, yet we would hesitate to call her autonomous.

Thus, I modified Wall's account with the addition of self-respect as a necessary condition for the ideal of autonomy. For without self-respect, it is possible for individuals to form beliefs, desires, and preferences that render her non-autonomous, which is inconsistent with the concept of autonomy itself. With the addition of self-respect as a necessary condition, it follows that I am offering a weakly substantive account of autonomy. Such an account holds that, in addition to satisfying certain procedural conditions, an individual must have self-respect in order that we deem her autonomous.

However, each of these five conditions requires a particular social context in which to develop and to thrive. Thus, in the next chapter, I will discuss the social conditions needed in order that all five of the necessary conditions obtain. Wall does not deny in his account of autonomy that the social conditions are important, but I take his discussion of them to be inadequate. The importance of emphasizing the social conditions is especially relevant from a feminist perspective since certain social conditions, usually those associated with women, have traditionally been conceived as antithetical to the attainment of autonomy. Instead, I shall argue in the next chapter that certain social conditions must obtain for the ideal of autonomy.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS FOR AUTONOMY

In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of the social context for realizing the ideal of autonomy. In his discussion, Wall fails to emphasize sufficiently the social context involved in attaining the ideal of autonomy. Of course, Wall does not deny this point outright. He remarks that all individuals live within communities, which enable the formation of one's beliefs, values, and preferences and that it is an "absurd demand that people be free from all social influences."⁸⁴ However, it is important to call attention to the certain social conditions that must be in place for any individual to realize the four conditions that constitute the ideal of autonomy, as set out by Wall, as well as to realize self-respect.

To this end, I offer a friendly amendment to Wall's account by introducing an aspect of Marilyn Friedman's account of autonomy, namely that a particular kind of social context is necessary for an individual to achieve autonomy. Although Friedman presents her account from different angle than Wall's, it illuminates the importance of the social context in the development of personal autonomy. Adding Friedman's key insight into the social nature of autonomy does not change Wall's account of what autonomy is, but rather only provides some depth to Wall's account by explaining the kinds of social conditions that foster and nourish the relevant capacities.

⁸⁴ Wall, LPR, p. 137.

Thus, in this chapter, I present a case for the necessary social context for autonomy. By arguing for the social dimension of autonomy, I am responding to feminist challenges that the ideal of autonomy is an unappealing character ideal for women and for feminists in general because it requires that autonomous agents be radically independent and free from social relations of dependence. In reply, I maintain that it is possible to develop an account of autonomy that both answers to this feminist concern and is attractive for feminist aims and for women in general. I argue that autonomy is important because of its liberatory potential for women and for feminists in general. This is important from a feminist perspective since traditional accounts of autonomy regarded certain social conditions as inimical to achieving autonomy, which led some feminists to reject the ideal of autonomy outright. In the next section, I want to consider and to respond to these feminist concerns as well as detail the essential social conditions needed for one to achieve the ideal of autonomy.

The Social Context of Autonomy

In this section, I argue that an acceptable account of personal autonomy must acknowledge that a certain social context is fundamental for achieving personal autonomy. The social conditions that one requires in order to realize the ideal of autonomy are those conditions that we can observe from a third-person perspective. In other words, we ought to be able to examine a given society or community and observe that certain conditions obtain. This means that we must acknowledge that the skills, abilities, and capacities required for the ideal of autonomy must be acquired within a particular social context. Likewise, an autonomous individual can only be autonomous within a social setting. It would make no sense to say that an individual is autonomous if

he exists alone in a small room. In other words, individuals realize the ideal of autonomy within a particular social context.

However, many traditional accounts of personal autonomy overlook or downplay the importance of the social in attaining autonomy and instead insist that autonomy requires individualism and self-sufficiency. While it would be mistaken to think that autonomy does not require these things, feminist critics noted that traditional conceptions required them excessively. For example, some feminists claim that such conceptions of autonomy conceived of humans as “asocial atoms, ignore[d] the importance of the social relationships, and promote[d] the sort of independence that involves disconnection from close interpersonal involvement with others.”⁸⁵ These feminists have contested the notion of autonomy as a “masculine” ideal that is both unappealing and unfeasible for women.

In particular, they argue that the character ideal of the autonomous agent is a masculine ideal that has been overly valued in western philosophy and in western culture in general.⁸⁶ Others charge that the conception of autonomy is inherently anti-female, since the achievement of the autonomous life traditionally requires the exclusion of “female” traits and characteristics.⁸⁷ Feminists contend that this valorization of autonomy and the autonomous life is antithetical to women’s interests and experiences, as well as feminist aims to revalue those traits traditionally associated with women. Thus, according to some feminists, the central problem behind this traditional conception was that it represented something that women could not or did not want to achieve, for women’s

⁸⁵ Marilyn Friedman, Autonomy, Gender, Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 81, henceforth *AGP*.

⁸⁶ See Lorraine Code, What Can She Know: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

⁸⁷ See Genevieve Lloyd, The Man of Reason: ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ in Western Philosophy, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

lives have traditionally revolved around close interpersonal relationships within the private sphere. In light of this, some feminist critics rejected the ideal of autonomy as something attractive and attainable for women.

This section will unfold as follows. To begin with, I want to expand further upon the feminist criticisms that traditional accounts often malign the importance of the social aspect in realizing the ideal of autonomy. I respond to these criticisms and I argue that feminist critics need not reject the ideal of autonomy outright. Instead, I will argue that an acceptable account of personal autonomy must acknowledge the social conditions involved in realizing the ideal of autonomy. I will offer a brief outline of the social conditions that are necessary. In doing so, I maintain that the ideal of autonomy is not antithetical to feminist aims or women's lived experiences, since one must not repudiate close relationships, but rely on these in order to realize autonomy. Lastly, I will also discuss why it is especially important that feminists do not abandon the ideal of autonomy, since I believe it is instrumental in achieving feminist aims and for improving women's lives in general.

A Brief History of Autonomy

Some feminists maintain that, historically, philosophers in the west have conceived of the autonomous individual as excessively individualistic. This individual seeks only to fulfill his desires and interests and lead an independent and self-sufficient life, typically at the expense of close, interpersonal relationships. For example, some feminists argue that the autonomous Kantian agent is "a discrete atom," and one who

must put personal relationships aside should they conflict with one's moral duty.⁸⁸ In a similar vein, feminist critics charge that utilitarianism conceives of agents as “interchangeable units of moral action, benefit, judgment, and decision making...[which] is based on a strong impartiality requirement that everyone must act to produce the greatest possible general utility.”⁸⁹ The utilitarian agent is one who must disregard his relationships or harm others should a utility calculus determine that it would promote general utility. For feminist critics, to deny personal relationships as a means to achieve autonomy or to regard them as a threat to autonomy is contrary to those women who center their lives on such relationships.

In the same way, popular culture glorifies this radically individual, autonomous man in movies, television shows, magazine advertisements, and comic books. This version of the autonomous man is one who strays from the beaten path, who usually defies authority or the law, who has no family or dependents, who is self-willed, aggressive, and independent. Popular cultural representations depict men as “standing up” for themselves, whereas women are taught to “stand by” their men.⁹⁰ Whether in popular culture or within philosophy, the autonomous agent is one who is radically independent from others and who must fight against those things, even close interpersonal relationships, which threaten his ability to act autonomously. As one theorist notes, “the ideal of the autonomous man [is] conceived as nature's highest

⁸⁸ Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*, p. 76.

⁸⁹ Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*, p. 77.

⁹⁰ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 99. While feminists are challenging cultural representations of gender and such representations are shifting, I maintain that, predominately, women are depicted more often as concerned for someone else's interests, rather than their own.

achievement” in the western philosophic tradition as well as in popular culture.⁹¹ Thus, many feminists argue that the traditional conception of the autonomous individual is a problematic ideal for two reasons.

First, because theorists have praised the autonomous life over any other kind of life as the most valuable to pursue, feminists argue that this focus has denigrated other lives and values in the process. In ranking the autonomous life as the most valuable kind of life to lead, western culture has valued autonomy over all other values, “particularly over those arising from relations of interdependence, such as trust, loyalty, friendship, caring, and responsibility.”⁹² This is problematic for women because the over-valuing of the autonomous life has meant that other ways of living and character traits are belittled, which more often than not, are those culturally associated with women. This means that our culture regards women’s lives and character traits as less socially valuable or as less valuable ways of living.

In addition, since social traditions have served to deny women the opportunity for an autonomous life, this in turn serves to shape women’s personal expectations. In the past, autonomy was conceived as a valuable quality for men, and the capacity for autonomous choice was important and admirable, within both cultural and political contexts. Conversely, the autonomous life for women was not something that has been culturally valuable or regarded as important or even viable for women to achieve. At present, “women are more prominent as public agents today than they used to be and in a

⁹¹ Lorraine Code, What Can She Know: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 72.

⁹² Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, “Autonomy Reconfigured,” in Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self, Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.6.

greater variety of social roles.”⁹³ In other words, social expectations of women are changing, which means that the autonomous life is something that many cultures sanction as suitable for women. Yet, some feminists argue that the traditional understanding of the autonomous life of independence and self-sufficiency is not something that women find attractive, since it may entail they renounce those roles, such as mothers or primary caregivers for another person, which they find valuable and rewarding.

Indeed, many women claim that their roles as mothers entail that the autonomous life of self-sufficiency and independence is difficult to achieve, since they exist in a radically asymmetrical relation of dependence with others. Women’s social roles may be expanding and changing, but it nevertheless remains the case that women are usually primary caregivers for children and for other dependents. What this means is that while the option of the autonomous life is available to women, many cannot exercise this option due to social expectations. Seen in this light, some feminists argue that the autonomous life is something that is not appealing to women, since it is out of their reach to obtain. Marilyn Friedman sums the concern well noting that, “feminists, and many women in general, may worry that the cultural idealization of autonomy will threaten precisely those relationships on which many depend in crucial ways.”⁹⁴ Taken together, these criticisms lead feminist theorists to reject the ideal of autonomy as a ‘masculine’ ideal that is unattractive as well as an unattainable ideal for women in light of women’s lived experiences.

⁹³ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 100.

⁹⁴ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 109.

A Response to Feminist Challenges

I have offered a brief sketch of feminist criticisms of the traditional account of autonomy. How might we respond to the feminist assertions that autonomy is a masculine ideal that is unattractive to women and antithetical to women's lived experiences? Is it the case that we cannot rehabilitate the notion of autonomy in order to make it more palatable for women and for feminists? I believe that this feminist condemnation of autonomy is misguided. In particular, I want to argue that while we must reject the traditional conception of autonomy that requires excessive self-sufficiency and the denial of close interpersonal relationships, we can refigure the ideal of autonomy to acknowledge the importance of certain social conditions for autonomy.

First, consider the traditional conception of autonomy itself. Does this conception represent a viable and attainable ideal for anyone? To claim that the autonomous life is a life of radical independence, free from any encumbrances that hinder achieving one's goals and personal development is unattainable for most. If conceptions of the autonomous agent, as traditionally conceived, reflected an unattainable ideal for women, this ideal is unfeasible for men as well. All humans begin life in a radically dependent relationship with others and remain so for at least eighteen years. Even as adults, the majority of individuals remain in close relationships with others and often have asymmetrical relations of dependence with their children. For most individuals, if not all, close relationships and interpersonal dependence characterize their lives. Thus, the traditional conception of autonomy is an ideal that is impossible for most to reach.

Next, if women feel alienated by the ideal of autonomy because it fails to resonate with their lived experiences as women, a more proper response might be for women to question why they feel this way in the first place, rather than reject it as a viable ideal. If

women are uneasy with developing certain capacities or traits, this unease is likely the result of socialization and cultural expectations. The socialization process for girls remains markedly different from that for boys, which means that girls and boys are taught to desire different goals, to hold different projects as worthwhile and to have different expectations. This difference in and of itself is not the issue; rather, what is at issue is that women are socialized to value autonomy less than men and than men are given greater social rewards for exercising autonomous capabilities.⁹⁵ Given this, women might question why it is that they are taught that some character traits or capacities are undesirable for women, rather than rejecting autonomy as something incompatible with female gender roles. If women resist autonomy as a valuable ideal because it fails to resonate with their lived experiences, perhaps women need to challenge the socialization process that de-emphasizes this ideal for women.

So, on the one hand, feminist critics are right to claim that the traditional concept of autonomy is problematic since it neglects the reality of how women (and men) live their lives. Yet, on the other hand, we need not reject the ideal of autonomy outright, since this is too hasty. In light of this, some feminists argue that we ought to re-conceptualize the notion of autonomy to make it more realistic in light of how individuals in fact live their lives. Linda Barclay rightly observes that, “autonomous agency does not imply that one mysteriously escapes altogether from social influence but rather that one is able to fashion a certain response to it.”⁹⁶ To live the autonomous life need not entail that

⁹⁵ Diana T. Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 136.

⁹⁶ Linda Barclay, “Autonomy and the Social Self,” *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 54.

one is isolated from or exist apart from meaningful relationships or relationships of dependence. We need not conceive of autonomous individuals as “social atoms who realize autonomy through independent self-sufficiency and self-creation in selfish detachment from human connection.”⁹⁷ Joel Feinberg adds further that “the human world does not and cannot consist of millions of separate sovereign ‘islands’ each exercising his own autonomous choice...each capable of surviving and flourishing...in total independence from all the others, each free of any *need* for the others.”⁹⁸ In the next section, I move to considerations of what social conditions must occur for an individual to realize the ideal of autonomy.

The Social Conditions for Autonomy

Recall the four conditions that Wall argues are necessary for the ideal of autonomy. These conditions included minimal rational capacities and cognitive skills; freedom from coercion and manipulation as well as a degree of “independent-mindedness”; an adequate degree of self-consciousness and vigour in pursuing one’s projects; and lastly, a suitable range of options that permit an individual to pursue what is worthy to him. In addition, I argued that self-respect is a necessary condition for an individual to realize autonomy. For the sake of simplicity, we can refer to these five necessary conditions for autonomy as the FNA conditions.

What is common among all five of the FNA conditions is that each requires a social context for its realization. That is, unless one teaches an individual the skills and capacities needed for autonomy, then he does not learn them. We can offer a useful

⁹⁷ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 82.

⁹⁸ Joel Feinberg, “Autonomy,” *The Inner Citadel: Essays on Individual Autonomy*, John Christman, ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 45, emphasis his.

analogy here by considering language acquisition. Unless capable adults teach young children how to speak, they do not learn to become competent speakers of a language. Similarly, it is a mistake to believe that individuals are “born” autonomous, in the sense that an infant possesses all the requisite skills and abilities and enters society as an adult with these already intact.

Instead, all individuals are born into and raised by a human community, and tend to remain there for the duration of their lives. No individual develops in isolation from others and the vast majority of people do not live in radical isolation apart from others.⁹⁹ The fact that humans are born and raised in a community means that individuals are, to a large degree, products of socialization and are not self-sufficient, isolated atoms. It is within this setting that human beings learn the skills, capacities and traits needed for the ideal of autonomy. The fact that we are raised in human communities does not hinder the capacity for autonomy, but rather is required for individuals to develop this capacity.

To this end, there must be an autonomy-fostering environment in place for the FNA conditions to obtain. Marilyn Friedman maintains that in this environment, there will exist certain state of affairs to foster the development of these conditions.¹⁰⁰ First, children receive a certain kind of education, which develops and encourages the skills and capacities needed for the ideal of autonomy. In addition, this means that individuals must live within a community of other individuals who possess the requisite skills and capacities needed for autonomy, in order that teach other individuals. As well, an

⁹⁹ Of course, one may leave society, for example, as Henry David Thoreau did, which is detailed in Walden, or Life in the Woods. However, as Marilyn Friedman points out, even this sort of life of extreme individualism and isolation requires others first raise such an individual to have the skills and abilities needed for autonomy. See AGP, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ See Friedman, AGP, p. 14-16.

autonomy-fostering community must not use coercion or manipulation to ensure that its residents act in certain ways and not in others. Rather, an autonomy-fostering community is such that it permits different ways of living among its inhabitants. This kind of community is such that it provides for a suitable range of options for individuals to choose among in their pursuit of comprehensive goals. Lastly, though Friedman does not raise this claim, an autonomy-fostering community will provide an environment in which individual self-respect can flourish, since I argued that self-respect is a necessary condition for autonomy. Let us consider each of these states of affairs.

First among these state of affairs that are essential for the FNA conditions to obtain is that children have a certain sort of education. In particular, children need to learn means-ends reasoning as well as the capacity for abstract thought and the ability to be creative for each of these ways of thinking are needed for imaging different courses of actions and their possible outcomes. Moreover, children need to learn how to learn from their mistakes should they opt for a course of action that fails. Related to this, a proper education must give children “the mental resolve to make decisions and the strength of character to stick to them once they have been made.”¹⁰¹ These are some of things are necessary in order to children develop particular cognitive skills and reasoning abilities.

The second FNA condition also reflects the importance of a particular social context for the ideal of autonomy. Remember that this condition required that individuals must be free from coercion or manipulation and must display a degree of “independent-mindedness” in order to attain the ideal of autonomy. What his means is that social conditions require that individuals do not live within a community that is, for example, a

¹⁰¹ Wall, LPR, p. 133.

strict authoritarian state, where individuals are imprisoned or killed for trying to fashion their own lives, contrary to the dictates of others. Similarly, one individual must not manipulate another in some way to impede one's desired course of action, for example, by hypnotism or drugs. In other words, an individual must live in a community that has certain values and social practices in order to realize the ideal of autonomy. It must value openness and be tolerant of different ways of life. More controversially, such a community must value the individual, in the sense that a community must not inhibit the individual in developing her own identity apart from her cultural or ethnic identity.

As well, consider the third FNA condition for the ideal of autonomy. This states that individuals must possess a degree of self-consciousness and vigour. This means that autonomous individuals regard themselves as active choosers, who choose among a variety of genuine options. For children to come to see themselves in this light, they require the right sort of education that allows them to realize gradually that they are capable of making choices and of being able to take action to satisfy these choices.

With respect to the fourth FNA condition, which stated that individuals need a suitable range of options, it is clear that this requires a certain social context. That is, one who lives in a closed and isolated community will have a radically different option set relative to an individual living in a major city. This different option set entails that one's ability to attain the ideal of autonomy is limited. For if an individual is presented with only one choice (i.e. to live only within one closed community for life), then it seems clear that he is not choosing this life in the robust sense of "choosing."

Lastly, the FNA condition of self-respect requires a particular social context to develop and flourish. One's self-respect will not thrive in an atmosphere in which one is

not taught that she is a valuable person that has intrinsic worth. Similarly, one's dignity, which is a crucial aspect of self-respect, cannot develop unless one is in an environment that allows one to recognize and appreciate this dignity. An environment in which children are taught to respect themselves as persons with moral status and dignity and to respect this status in others is crucial for the self-respect condition for autonomy.

For each of the five FNA conditions, children will learn these only through the guidance and observation of others who are able to reason and to react in these ways. More precisely, children must learn these things from adults whom they trust to guide them and whom they believe (if only implicitly) have their best interests in mind. In other words, children learn these cognitive skills and personal worth from adults with whom they have a close, trust-based relationship. This person may be one's teacher but more often, one's parents instruct children to learn and to develop these skills and sense of worth. This point is important, since feminist critics often note that traditional conceptions of autonomy ignore the fact that early socialization plays a major role in one's later aptitude for the skills involved in realizing autonomy.¹⁰² Whatever the degree an autonomous individual possesses intellectual and rational resources as well as the extent to which one respects himself will depend on the resources of those around him and how well others have taught him to employ these in his day-to-day life.

From the fact that the ideal of autonomy requires a particular social context in order to be realized, two points follow. First, the social aspect of autonomy is something that has been overlooked or downplayed in traditional accounts of autonomy. This is problematic, since it serves to overlook the role that parents and teachers play in the

¹⁰² Friedman, *AGP*, p. 102.

socialization process involved in raising a child to attain the ideal of autonomy. For without the valuable contribution of early socialization, adult humans would not have the skills, capacities, and sense of personal worth necessary to realize autonomy.

Second, to explain the particular social context needed to meet the five FNA conditions serves to make clear why feminists need not reject the ideal of autonomy. Feminists can take comfort in the fact that the ideal of autonomy is not something that is antithetical to women's lived experiences. To illustrate that autonomy requires particular social conditions shows that women are able to foster and to remain in close, interpersonal relationships and yet still be capable of achieving autonomy. In addition, the FNA conditions for the ideal of autonomy reveal that we must value those traits typically associated with the feminine, such as trust, loyalty, friendship, caring, and responsibility. For it is the possession of these traits that allow for the transmission of the skills and abilities needed to attain autonomy.

Given this, the FNA account of autonomy provides an account of autonomy that is both attractive to women and consistent with feminist aims. The account of autonomy presented here does not require autonomous individuals to be radically unencumbered from social relations, but rather sees social relations as necessary for the ideal to be realized. One does not realize the rational capacities and sense of personal worth required for autonomy except by learning them from others who possess them. This conception does not require an individual to repudiate close social relationships in order to realize the ideal of autonomy. To be a parent or a primary caregiver for an elderly parent, both of which entail asymmetrical dependence, are not social roles that are inconsistent with the ideal of autonomy. An autonomous individual may meet all of the conditions as set forth

in the FNA account and live a life that is not maximally autonomous because of the demands of a social relationship.

If this is the case, then autonomy is not a genuinely ‘male’ or ‘masculine’ value that is inaccessible for women, contrary to some feminist challenges. In fact, we should resist classifying the concept of ‘autonomy’ as masculine, since this implies a form of essentialism. The concept of essentialism refers to the tendency to attribute a fixed essence or “the existence of fixed characteristics, given attributes, and ahistorical functions.”¹⁰³ In this case, to claim that autonomy is a ‘masculine’ trait is to claim that men’s essence naturally possesses the character traits required for autonomy. To claim this is dangerous from a feminist point of view, as it implies that only men are able to achieve autonomy, which is clearly untrue. Moreover, it wrongly implies that neither men nor women can change since one cannot alter one’s ‘biological’ nature. Essentialism elides over the fact that gender roles are socially and culturally determined and not biologically based.

Of course, we must concede that historically the autonomous life may have been promoted only for certain individuals to attain. However, it does not follow from this historical fact that it is a ‘masculine’ value or something that remains (or should remain) untenable for all others. To hold that there are ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ values and character traits distinct from one another only serves to reinforce gender stereotypes that are damaging for both men and women. The ideal of autonomy is not something strictly reserved for males, any more than the ability to form deep connections with others is something only women can accomplish. To criticize the practice of esteeming only

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Grosz, “Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism,” The Essential Difference, Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, eds., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 84.

'masculine' virtues at the expense of 'feminine' virtues is to overlook the important point that these concepts are socially and not biologically determined. In light of this, the ideal of autonomy is not something that either feminists or women can afford to abandon. In the following section, I consider a further reason why it is important for women to strive to attain this ideal.

Why Be Autonomous?

We have seen that a revised conception of autonomy is possible. This modified conception does not require that an individual be free from social relationships in order to achieve autonomy. Instead, the ideal of autonomy is something that requires a social context in order to be realized. The last question I want to address in this section concerns the reasons for women to seek the ideal of autonomy. We best understand these reasons if we return to consider the importance of the social context in realizing autonomy.

On the one hand, we have seen that a social context and close relationships are not incompatible with the ideal of autonomy. In particular, I have shown that the FNA account of autonomy requires a certain social context for developing the requisite skills, capacities, and sense of personal worth needed for the ideal. We are mistaken to believe, as Hobbes did, that humans spring like mushrooms from the ground and "come to full maturity, without all kind of engagement to each other."¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, we must admit that social practices, norms and close relationships with others sometimes impede the development of autonomy. Socialization and cultural practices may be such that an individual lacks the desire or lacks access to the necessary cultural resources to develop

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Hobbes, "Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society," in The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, W. Molesworth, ed., London: J. Bohn, 1839-1845; Aalen: Scientia, 1966, p. 109.

one's capacities for autonomy. Traditionally, women have not been socialized to desire the autonomous life and have not been educated to develop autonomous traits or capacities. Even now, though gender roles and expectations are shifting, it remains the case that women are socialized to fulfill roles that are incompatible with traditional understandings of autonomy.

For example, girls are still socialized "to put others' interests ahead of their own, but also they are taught to judge themselves by others' approbation."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, one's parental or peer relationships might hamper one's ability to live autonomously, if they expect that one live according to cultural traditions or norms. This is a particularly difficult situation for women, since women are usually "expected to make the preservation of certain interpersonal relationships such as those of family their highest concern regardless of the cost to themselves."¹⁰⁶ It is a complex and paradoxical position, in that we must acknowledge that social practices and close relationships are things necessary for the development of autonomy, yet they can also hinder the development of autonomy. This is the case with respect to the women of Bountiful, who are subject to cultural and religious practices that thwart their opportunity to attain the ideal of autonomy.

Thus, for the women of Bountiful, the ideal of autonomy is both valuable and potentially disruptive. On the one hand, the women of Bountiful might benefit from attaining the ideal, in terms of their overall well-being and in terms of providing the means by which to contest oppressive norms of femininity within their community. This is valuable because the gender norms and expectations within Bountiful often serve to the

¹⁰⁵ Diana T. Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁶ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 110.

detriment, rather than the benefit, of the women and girls. Conversely, the religious and social values that characterize Bountiful serve to protect and to enhance the power of the male elites within that community. For the females within this community, the ideal of autonomy may serve to challenge the power structures that fail to benefit them, whether socially, religiously, or economically.

On the other hand, the ideal of autonomy within the context of Bountiful will likely interfere with the religious, social, and gender hierarchies that characterize this community. Because of the possibility of disruption, some women in Bountiful may resist autonomy as a valuable ideal for them to strive toward. In fact, many women of Bountiful, particularly older females, may resist the ideal of autonomy outright as something inconsistent with their religious and cultural beliefs. They might add further that they resist any change because they are satisfied with their roles as submissive wives and mothers.

The extent to which the women of Bountiful should become autonomous, if at all, is a divisive issue that I cannot settle here. However, there are some points worth raising, which should be considered more comprehensively elsewhere. For the older women of Bountiful, the ideal of autonomy may not be worthwhile for them to attain. As Susan Moller Okin points out, “it is not easy to question cultural constraints that have had a major impact on one’s whole life.”¹⁰⁷ Of course, this is the case for women in Bountiful as well as women outside of this community. Yet, the cost of questioning or even rejecting belief systems is more costly for the older women of Bountiful, since they have fewer choices and avenues for prospects outside of the community. The older women of

¹⁰⁷ Susan Moller Okin, “Reply,” *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum, eds. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 126.

Bountiful have their personal identities inextricably linked to their roles within the community, which makes it more difficult to challenge or to sever such roles entirely.

Yet, to question one's relationships or one's cultural norms or to distance oneself from these things "is not equivalent to, nor need it betoken, wholesale social detachment."¹⁰⁸ The ability to challenge cultural norms and expectations or to question the benefit of certain interpersonal relationships highlights the importance of individual autonomy. In fact, the ability to challenge oppressive or unjust cultural norms is something that is particularly beneficial for women, who more often than not are subject to such practices or norms. Friedman notes, "a traditional source of autonomy's appeal is the potential it offers for breaking with tradition and convention, for social nonconformity."¹⁰⁹ Women have benefited from those who have questioned social norms that precluded women from getting an education, being able to vote, to have custodial rights in the event of a divorce or challenged gender roles as restrictive and repressive. The ability to contest cultural traditions, especially those that are oppressive for a group of individuals, is crucial for their overall betterment. To have the capacity for autonomous choice allows individuals to reflect on, to challenge, and perhaps repudiate oppressive social conditions. That autonomy has such potential to prompt change is a vital reason for feminists and for women in general to not exclude it as a worthwhile ideal to attain.

In light of these considerations, the younger women and girls of Bountiful may benefit from attaining the ideal of autonomy. To attain the ideal of autonomy will put them in a better place in which to evaluate the religious and cultural norms that

¹⁰⁸ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁹ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 60.

characterize Bountiful. Of course, it may be the case that the elders of the community need not worry because the younger women of Bountiful attain the ideal of autonomy either. It is possible that, as autonomous individuals, the younger women may evaluate the gender norms under which they live in a positive light. In fact, such evaluation and critical reflection “might lead [them] to appreciate in a new light the worth of her relationships or the people to whom [they are] socially attached and enrich [their] commitment to them.”¹¹⁰ In this way, the ideal of autonomy is conducive to social cohesiveness within a community.

Of course, to attain the ideal of autonomy might lead some of the younger females in Bountiful to challenge or to reject entirely the value system under which they were raised. In this case, they ought to be granted the right to exit by the elders within the community. Thus, the ideal of autonomy is often antithetical to social cohesion. Such disruption, however, may serve to benefit those have the most to lose under a particular value system, which in the case of Bountiful, is the women who live under oppressive gender norms and expectations. Whatever the result, the younger female members of Bountiful ought to have the resources necessary in order that they decide for themselves whether their allegiance lies with the FLDS church or whether it lies elsewhere. The extent to which the liberal state ought to ensure that the young women of Bountiful attain the ideal of autonomy is the issue that I will address in chapter four.

Though the traditional conception of autonomy is problematic, autonomy is important for feminists and for women in general to challenge social roles and stereotypes that impede women’s freedom. Of course, few feminist theorists advocate a

¹¹⁰ Friedman, *AGP*, p. 106.

wholesale rejection of autonomy because “struggles for autonomy have been central to feminists theory and action.”¹¹¹ While it is important to critique traditional conceptions of autonomy, it remains crucial that autonomy plays a central role in feminist theory and action and that it serves as an ideal for women. In light of this, the FNA account provides a conception of autonomy that resonates better with women’s deeper commitments and presents a more realistic understanding of what it means to be autonomous. Though feminists have rightly pointed out that traditional conceptions of autonomy are unfeasible, this “does not show that autonomy *properly understood* is male biased or antifemale.”¹¹² The emancipatory promise of autonomy is too great to dismiss autonomy as a masculine ideal that is unattractive or unattainable for women.

¹¹¹ Code, What Can She Know: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge, p. 73

¹¹² Friedman, AGP, p.103, emphasis hers.

CHAPTER FOUR: AUTONOMY AND POLITICAL LIBERALISM

In the preceding chapter, I discussed the importance of a particular social context for attaining the ideal of autonomy. The account of autonomy that I have presented in this project postulates five necessary conditions, which must obtain in order that an individual realizes the ideal. Steven Wall's conception of autonomy as an ideal forms the basis of my account. However, I argued that Wall's account of the ideal of autonomy is lacking in that it fails to incorporate self-respect as a necessary condition. This is necessary in order that individuals do not choose in ways that are contrary to the value of autonomy, such as choosing a life of servility. Moreover, I noted that Wall's account does not emphasize sufficiently the social context that is needed for individuals to realized autonomy.

My inclusion of the condition of self-respect as necessary for the ideal of autonomy entails that my account is weakly substantive. I argued that this type of account is preferable, in contrast to those accounts that are either strongly substantive or purely procedural, because it does not serve to constrain an individual's beliefs, desires, and preferences directly. Rather, weakly substantive accounts of autonomy allow for greater latitude with respect to what is considered autonomous, while retaining some degree of normative substance, which I have argued is individual self-respect.

In this chapter, I want to shift the focus slightly, while still drawing on my previous discussion of autonomy. In particular, I want to consider the account of autonomy offered by the political liberal. It is my contention that the conception of

autonomy within political liberalism is problematic for the political liberal because it presupposes a conception of personal autonomy that I set forth in the second chapter. This is a controversial claim for two reasons. First, the political liberal denies that his political conception of justice affirms any understanding of personal autonomy for citizens. In addition, this is a contentious claim because the political liberal maintains a policy of neutrality, in the sense that, within political liberalism, state intervention is prohibited in the interest of promoting a comprehensive conception of the good like personal autonomy.

Political liberalism is a liberal theory of neutrality, in the sense that it holds that the liberal state ought to be neutral with respect to (reasonable) comprehensive views. In essence, political liberals assert that the state is not justified, whether through its basic institutions or its public policies, in endorsing a given comprehensive view, or intervening in the lives of its citizens to promote such a view. A political liberal would resist the ideal of personal autonomy as something that the state could endorse, since it is derived from a comprehensive view. To endorse or to promote such a view would entail that the liberal state is perfectionist, which means that the state would actively endorse and promote a certain ideal, in order to promote flourishing or excellence for all citizens.

However, the political liberal regards perfectionist intervention by the state as a misuse of its coercive power, for it is likely the case that many citizens within a liberal society do not endorse a given ideal. Because of this, argues the political liberal, the state ought to be neutral and refrain from intervening in citizen's lives to impose comprehensive views, such as the ideal of personal autonomy. This is not to say that, for the political liberal, there are no ideas of the good contained within a political liberalism.

Instead, the political liberal seeks only to introduce political ideas of the good, to which citizens ought to aspire and endorse as citizens.

The fourth chapter will unfold as follows. To begin, I will explain the three conceptions of autonomy, as distinguished by the political liberal, which are full, rational, and ethical autonomy. Next, I want to raise an objection against the political liberal with respect to his conception of full autonomy. I claim that full autonomy must presuppose a conception of personal autonomy in order to get off the ground. That is, I will argue that one needs to be personally autonomous if one is to be a fully autonomous citizen, since the duties of a citizen cannot be accomplished without a degree of personal autonomy. In making this objection, I hope to draw out some implications for political liberalism with respect to its educational requirements for future citizens. I turn first to an explanation of the conceptions of autonomy as set forth by the political liberal. For the purposes of this project, I will draw on John Rawls and his ideas in Political Liberalism.

Autonomy in Political Liberalism

In his discussion of political liberalism, Rawls introduces several kinds of autonomy. He distinguishes between rational, full, and ethical autonomy, all of which citizens are capable of achieving, at least in principle. Rational autonomy is a concept of autonomy that Rawls consider “artificial” and not “political.” It is artificial because it is simply a description of how parties deliberate in the original position. Rawls claims that rational autonomy is revealed through a “person’s intellectual and moral powers,” by conceiving of and reflecting upon a conception of the good, along with one’s ability to

“enter into an agreement with others.”¹¹³ Because citizens understand themselves to be “self-authenticating sources” of claims, who are free to form conceptions of the good and who are responsible for the ends they set, then they are both rationally and fully autonomous. How does Rawls see citizens exercising their rational autonomy?

Citizens are rationally autonomous in two ways. First, citizens are represented by parties in the original position as free to pursue their permissible conception of the good. A conception of the good is that understanding one has concerning what is valuable in life. For Rawls, conceptions of the good are permissible only if they do not undermine the political conception of justice that regulates society. Next, a citizen is rationally autonomous in that they are “motivated to secure their higher-order interests associated with their moral powers.”¹¹⁴ Rawls understands a citizen’s moral powers to be a capacity to form a conception of the good and the capacity for a sense of justice. A citizen has “higher-order interests” in ensuring that these moral powers are developed and exercised.

However, Rawls cautions that we must not confuse rational autonomy with full autonomy. That is, citizens have rational autonomy, but Rawls does not regard it as a political ideal as such. Instead, rational autonomy is only one element of a person as conceived by parties in the original position and a constitutive part of full autonomy. As Rawls notes, rational autonomy is “but a way to model the idea of the rational (versus the reasonable) in the original position.”¹¹⁵ For the purposes of this project, I set aside any further considerations of rational autonomy, since I am not contesting here Rawls’s claims concerning how parties deliberate in the original position.

¹¹³ John Rawls, Political Liberalism, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 72, henceforth PL.

¹¹⁴ Rawls, PL, p. 74.

¹¹⁵ Rawls, PL, p. 28.

In contrast to rational autonomy, Rawls introduces the notion of full autonomy, which is “a political ideal and part of a more complete ideal of a well-ordered society.”¹¹⁶ Full autonomy is something that citizens achieve in a well-ordered society when they recognize publicly and act according to the principles of justice that parties would determine in the original position, freely and equally situated. As Rawls states, “full autonomy includes not only [our] capacity to be rational but also the capacity to advance our conception of the good in ways consistent with honoring the fair terms of social cooperation.”¹¹⁷ In addition to this public recognition of political principles of justice, Rawls maintains that a citizen must “enjoy the protections of basic rights and liberties,” as well as participate in public life in order to achieve full autonomy.

Full autonomy for the political liberal, however, is a narrow understanding of autonomy. Rawlsian full autonomy is a political value derived from the shared political culture of a society and specifies something valuable for citizens in political life. Full autonomy concerns only the citizen as he is situated in the public, political forum and is guaranteed for all citizens only within the context of this forum. The political liberal regards full autonomy as a political conception and value; it is not a moral or personal understanding of autonomy nor is it derived from such understandings.

In light of this, Rawls argues that full autonomy is a value contained within a political conception of justice, which is to regulate the basic structure of society, rather than a value derived from a comprehensive conception of the good. The basic structure of a society is its “main political, social, and economic institutions, and how they fit

¹¹⁶ Rawls, PL, p. 28

¹¹⁷ Rawls, PL, p. 306.

together into one unified system of social cooperation.”¹¹⁸ A political conception of justice, according to Rawls, provides an account of political principles and values that specify the fair terms of social cooperation for citizens within the basic structure. That a political conception of justice will regulate the basic structure is important since the truth of comprehensive doctrines tend to deeply divide citizens, yet we want to ensure that social stability and unity is possible. For Rawls, this stability is possible by asking citizens to endorse a political conception of justice, rather than a given comprehensive doctrine.

Rawls defines a comprehensive doctrine as a moral, religious, or philosophical doctrine that is broad in scope, in that it “includes what is of value in human life, as well as ideals of personal virtue and character, that are to inform much of our nonpolitical conduct (in the limit our life as a whole).”¹¹⁹ Put another way, a comprehensive doctrine specifies “what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendships and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct.”¹²⁰ Any understanding of personal autonomy is derived from a comprehensive doctrine, is broader in scope and will likely contain non-political values.

In order to expand on the difference between these conceptions of autonomy, Rawls contrasts the political value of full autonomy with a conception of personal autonomy, which is an ethical value found in a Millian or a Kantian comprehensive liberalism. A comprehensive liberalism is a robust political position, which relates liberal principles to “some vision or conception of what matters in life and of the human person

¹¹⁸ Rawls, PL, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ Rawls, PL, p. 175.

¹²⁰ Rawls, PL, p. 13.

and its place in the world.”¹²¹ In other words, a comprehensive liberalism grounds its principles and ideals on a particular understanding of what gives meaning to human life. In the case of Kant’s or Mill’s liberalisms, each contains conceptions of personal autonomy as an ideal that gives meaning and value to human life overall. This is what Rawls means when he claims that ethical conceptions of personal autonomy contained within a comprehensive liberalism “may apply to the whole of life,”¹²² in the sense that such a liberalism would call for an individual to be autonomous in all aspects of her life.

Why is Rawls so concerned with making this distinction between full autonomy and personal autonomy? As a political liberal, Rawls is opposed to the inclusion of any comprehensive doctrines or conceptions of the good (like the good of personal autonomy) as political ideals within political liberalism because of the “fact of reasonable pluralism.” That is, in a liberal society, it is inevitable (through the free use of reason and the existence of democratic institutions) that citizens endorse different and often incompatible comprehensive doctrines. Moreover, Rawls takes the fact of reasonable pluralism to be “a permanent feature of a democratic society.”¹²³ Given this fact, two things follow.

First, Rawls argues that it would be unreasonable for us to expect that all citizens endorse the same comprehensive doctrine or moral authority, given the fact of reasonable pluralism. The political liberal rejects a conception of social unity based on widespread consensus of a comprehensive doctrine as “no longer a political possibility for those who

¹²¹ Jeremy Waldron, “Liberalism, Political and Comprehensive,” Handbook of Political Theory, Gerald Gaus and Chandran Kukathas, eds., London: Sage Publications, 2004, p. 91.

¹²² Rawls, PL, p. 78.

¹²³ Rawls, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement: A Restatement, Erin Kelly, ed., Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 40, henceforth, JAF.

accept the constraints of liberty and toleration of democratic institutions.”¹²⁴ In addition to this, we cannot expect, claims the political liberal, to use the coercive power of the liberal state to compel all citizens to adhere to the same comprehensive doctrine. This is the case because within a liberal state, all citizens share coercive political power over each other equally; as such, citizens cannot compel others to adhere to a particular doctrine for this would be an illegitimate use of political power.¹²⁵ Given these two concerns, we cannot introduce a comprehensive doctrine, no matter how reasonable, as a political value that all citizens must endorse.

Given the potential for strife should the liberal state require that its citizens endorse a comprehensive doctrine, even in the name of political stability, the political liberal argues that we must look elsewhere for values that will regulate society. As Rawls observes, “a constitutional regime does not require an agreement on a comprehensive doctrine: the basis of its social unity lies elsewhere.”¹²⁶ Clearly, Rawls premises his resistance to the introduction of controversial comprehensive doctrines, such as the ideal of personal autonomy, on the dual concerns of inclusivity and legitimacy. With respect to legitimacy, Rawls is concerned with the ‘liberal principle of legitimacy,’ for a liberal political system and its constitution is only legitimate if all citizens endorse it in light of principles and ideals on which it is based.¹²⁷ In other words, a liberal regime would not be legitimate if groups of citizens did not endorse its principles and ideals. Since many citizens do not endorse particular philosophical or moral values, then we cannot count them among the principles and ideals that justify the state.

¹²⁴ Rawls, PL, p. 201.

¹²⁵ Rawls, PL, p. 292.

¹²⁶ Rawls, PL, p. 63.

¹²⁷ Rawls, PL, p. 137.

With respect to inclusivity, John Exdell argues that Rawls is specifically appealing to religious conservatives, in that political liberalism does not “demand conformity to liberal values in their religious associations and in family life.”¹²⁸ This means that by requiring autonomy only for the *citizen* in his public life, rather than a *person* in his non-public life, Rawls seeks to include those that reject liberal principles because they fly in the face of traditional religious convictions. For example, if Bill is a fundamentalist Christian, the political liberal does not require John to endorse moral or philosophical values like personal autonomy in his non-political life. As Exdell notes, Rawls’s political liberalism “would limit the application of its principles to the public or political realm, allowing conservatives and fundamentalists to reject them in private associations and in family life.”¹²⁹ This limited application of principles serves the drive for inclusivity, for social and religious conservatives are able to maintain their belief systems while at the same time endorse political values.

However, in his public or political life, Rawls would argue that Bill has the duty to endorse certain political values for all citizens. For example, the political liberal expects that citizens in their public lives will endorse the political value of full autonomy (among a range of political values). This expectation rests on the claim that citizens within a political liberalism will agree upon the principles, values, and ideals that justifies and regulates the basic structure of society, in the interests of fairness and stability. Political values, argues Rawls, “are very great values and hence not easily overridden.”¹³⁰ In our case of Bill the Christian fundamentalist, Rawls would say that Bill is being

¹²⁸ John Exdell, “Feminism, Fundamentalism, and Liberal Legitimacy,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 24, No. 3, September 1994, pp-441-464, p. 452.

¹²⁹ Exdell, “Feminism, Fundamentalism, and Liberal Legitimacy,” p. 442.

¹³⁰ Rawls, *PL*, p. 139.

unreasonable if he fails to endorse a political value like full autonomy, but only if this failure occurs in Bill's political life. What is important here for our purposes is to note that full autonomy is a political value contained within a political conception of justice and not within a comprehensive doctrine. Given this, Rawls maintains that it is reasonable to expect that citizens endorse full autonomy as a political ideal and that a reasonable political conception of justice will affirm full autonomy for all.

Now, Rawls does not claim that full autonomy is the only way in which citizens within political liberalism are autonomous. It is possible (and indeed likely) that citizens achieve personal or moral autonomy in their non-public lives. Personal autonomy, as I have defined it in this project, is a character ideal of living the self-directed life and this in turn requires certain necessary conditions in order that one realizes this ideal. However, Rawls claims that whether a citizen achieves this sort of autonomy falls outside the scope of political liberalism and instead it is "decided by citizens severally in light of their comprehensive doctrines."¹³¹ That is, whether a citizen achieves personal or moral autonomy is something that is determined by whatever comprehensive doctrine one endorses. For Rawls, the liberal state has no interest in compelling its citizens to endorse a comprehensive conception of the good like personal autonomy because this would be an illegitimate use of the coercive power of the state.

Moreover, whether a citizen achieves personal autonomy is something that occurs within the non-political sphere, or what Rawls refers to as the 'background culture' of a politically liberal society. This background culture is "the culture of the social, not of the political" and it is within this sphere that comprehensive doctrines are, as it were, located

¹³¹ Rawls, PL, p. 78.

and endorsed by citizens in their non-political life. Put another way, the background culture is civic society, which is not “guided by any one central idea or principle, whether political or religious.”¹³² The liberal state is not responsible in ensuring that citizens achieve personal autonomy, because this falls outside the liberal state’s legitimate sphere of interest. In contrast, one legitimate interest of the liberal state within political liberalism is to ensure that all citizens attain full autonomy. This interest stems in making certain that citizens are equipped with the necessary skills, habits, and character traits to be successful as citizens in the political sphere. In the next section, I turn to considering how citizens achieve this kind of autonomy in their public lives.

Full Autonomy

So far, I have described Rawls’s distinctions between three conceptions of autonomy. I have explained that only full autonomy is that which the concerns the political liberal in two respects. First, full autonomy is a political value included in the set of values within a political conception of justice. Second, full autonomy is the only type of autonomy that political liberalism can affirm for all, since it concerns a citizen’s autonomy within the political sphere. Since political liberalism affirms full autonomy for all, it is what we refer to as a “a non-excludable good.”¹³³ In contrast, Rawls argues that personal or moral autonomy is something outside of the scope of a politically liberal state, since it is part of a comprehensive doctrine. As such, the liberal state, claims Rawls, cannot support a particular comprehensive doctrine nor can it compel citizens to endorse it without coercion. In this section, I want to examine more closely what a citizen must do

¹³² Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” p. 576.

¹³³ Wall, LPR, p. 119.

to acquire full autonomy. I suggest that a more careful reading of the requirements for full autonomy will allow us to see that Rawlsian full autonomy is not as narrowly conceived as Rawls would like it to be.

Recall that a citizen realizes full autonomy based on three conditions. First, a citizen must recognize and affirm publicly the principles of justice that parties would give themselves in the original position. Next, to achieve full autonomy, a citizen must “enjoy the protections of the basic rights and liberties” within a liberal, democratic regime. Lastly, a citizen should participate in civic society in some capacity, in order to play a role in its “collective self-determination over time.”¹³⁴ In a different passage, Rawls sums up full autonomy in the following way, noting that citizens realize full autonomy “by acting from the political conception of justice guided by its public reason, and in their pursuit of the good in public and nonpublic life.”¹³⁵ Since Rawls does not unpack any of these terms for realizing full autonomy, I would like to examine each of them. In doing so, my aim is to show what a citizen must do in order to realize Rawlsian full autonomy.

Let us begin with Rawls’s claim that a citizen must publicly affirm the principles of justice that parties would give themselves in the original position. These principles of justice will regulate the basic structure under which all citizens live. By public affirmation, I take Rawls to be saying that citizens must comply with and act in accordance with the principles of justice in their political life.¹³⁶ Clearly, when Rawls claims this, it does not involve something as overt as a public declaration to other citizens when one reaches the age of majority. Instead, what Rawls intends by this claim is that

¹³⁴ Rawls, *PL*, p. 78

¹³⁵ Rawls, *PL*, p. 79.

¹³⁶ Rawls, *PL*, p. 77.

citizens act “from the political conception of justice guided by its public reason, and in their pursuit of the good in public and nonpublic life.”¹³⁷ The first half of this claim means that citizens act and interact with one another in the public political forum according to the dictates of public reason. Briefly, Rawls takes public reason to be “the form of reasoning appropriate to equal citizens”¹³⁸ when citizens debate political issues in the public forum. For example, citizens will debate in the public political forum such things as who is eligible to vote or whether to permit same-sex marriages. Irrespective of how one views these issues as a person in his non-political life, it is necessary that a citizen offer public reasons for his point of view within the political sphere. That is, a citizen must offer reasons that all other citizens can reasonably endorse.

From this, it follows that the political liberal excludes comprehensive doctrines as eligible for public reasons, since we cannot expect that all citizens will endorse and accept the same comprehensive doctrine. Any public reasons that a citizen offers will “fall under the political values expressed by a political conception of justice.”¹³⁹ Thus, when the citizen offers public reasons, these reasons will be consistent with political values such as equal and political civil liberty, fair-mindedness, reasonableness and the adherence to critical reasoning skills involved in judgment, inference and evidence.¹⁴⁰

With respect to the latter half of the claim concerning what is involved in public affirmation, Rawls argues that citizens must act in accordance with the principles of justice in their pursuit of the good. What this means is that citizens cannot endorse a conception of the good that is inconsistent with the “fair terms of social cooperation; that

¹³⁷ Rawls, PL, p. 79.

¹³⁸ Rawls, IAF, p. 92.

¹³⁹ Rawls, IAF, p. 91.

¹⁴⁰ Rawls, IAF, p. 92.

is, the principles of justice.”¹⁴¹ What is important here is the process behind achieving full autonomy involves, in part, endorsing a conception of the good and its concomitant comprehensive doctrine that is consistent with a political conception of justice.

So far, I have explained what is entailed for a citizen if he endorses publicly Rawls’s principles of justice, in order to achieve full autonomy. Now, I want to shift the focus to Rawls’s second and third requirements to achieve full autonomy, in order to reflect on what these involve. With respect to enjoying the basic rights and liberties afforded in political liberalism, a citizen enjoys a basic liberty when, for example, he is able to speak freely in the political forum without fear of reprisal or censure. Likewise, this likely entails that a citizen is free to endorse whatever reasonable comprehensive doctrine one chooses in one’s non-political life. In a similar vein with respect to the third requirement, a citizen participates in a society’s public affairs when she votes in a municipal election or when she attends a town-hall meeting to debate the viability of a city’s transportation strategy. Of course, these represent only a handful of instances from a wide range of instances that might illustrate how a citizen achieves full autonomy by meeting these conditions.

In offering this brief overview of the process behind affirming and acting upon principles of justice, we can see that Rawlsian full autonomy is a robust conception that requires citizens possess general knowledge about human nature and knowledge concerning different comprehensive doctrines as well as detailed historical knowledge of one’s social and political institutions. Moreover, citizens require a set of cognitive and social skills, in order to interact fairly and civilly in the political forum. These skills are

¹⁴¹ Rawls, PL, p. 306.

also necessary, so that one may know what counts as public reasons when debating matters of basic justice in the political forum. A citizen must be well informed with respect to his rights and liberties as a citizen and must be capable of reacting in the appropriate manner when these are threatened in some way. Clearly, these are rigorous requirements for any citizen to achieve full autonomy. With this in mind, I turn to an objection against Rawls. In particular, I pose the following question to the political liberal: given that the route behind a citizen achieving full autonomy is so comprehensive, how does one become a citizen in the first place? I believe that in showing part of the process behind becoming a citizen, namely the education required by the political liberal, we are able to make the argument that Rawlsian full autonomy requires citizens to be personally autonomous.

An Objection to Rawlsian Full Autonomy

To recap: We have looked at the various distinctions the political liberal makes with respect to conceptions of autonomy, paying close attention to full autonomy. Full autonomy is what citizens in political liberalism achieve when they affirm publicly and act upon the principles of justice contained within a political conception of justice. As mentioned, it is possible and indeed likely that citizens will also realize personal or moral autonomy, in light of the comprehensive doctrine they endorse in their non-public life. However, within political liberalism, the state cannot play a part in ensuring that citizens achieve personal or moral autonomy because it is a controversial ethical value that some citizens may not endorse. A political liberal like Rawls argues that a just society is one whose basic structure does not favour one comprehensive doctrine over another. The upshot of this theoretical commitment is that a political liberal cannot promote personal

autonomy or any other conception of the good. However, a political liberalism is a liberal state in which full autonomy is “affirmed for all,”¹⁴² because it is a valuable political ideal that contributes to the stability and the maintenance of society.

In this section, I want to raise an objection against Rawls with respect to his conception of full autonomy. That is, while I do not dispute the value of full autonomy or the necessity for citizens to realize it, I want to examine the process by which citizens become citizens in the first place. As we have seen, Rawls defines full autonomy and explains what is involved in achieving this. Yet, one might wonder if Rawls has paid enough attention to the background work involved in creating a citizen. Now, Rawls is anxious to remove any sort of metaphysical underpinnings or understandings of human nature (e.g. that humans have immaterial souls) from his notion of a citizen. His citizen is strictly a political conception of a person, as “worked up from the way citizens are regarded in the public political culture of a democratic society.”¹⁴³ Yet, citizens do not simply appear in the public political culture, ready to act upon and to affirm publicly the principles of justice as well as to enjoy their basic rights and liberties.

On this point, Rawls agrees. Citizens do not have, as it were, a pre-social identity before entering democratic society. He notes that, “it is not as if we came from somewhere but rather we find ourselves growing up in this society.” To this, Rawls adds that citizens “are not seen as joining the society at the age of reason, as we might join an association, but as being born into society where we will lead a complete life.”¹⁴⁴

However, though we are born into a democratic society, in which citizens will interact in

¹⁴² Rawls, PL, p. 78.

¹⁴³ Rawls, JAF, p. 19.

¹⁴⁴ Rawls, PL, p. 41.

the public political forum, it seems reasonable to assume that citizens are raised within a social world or in the background culture of society. Recall that Rawls defines the background culture as “the culture of daily life, [which contains] its many associations: churches and universities, learned and scientific societies, and clubs and teams to mention a few.”¹⁴⁵

Again, Rawls agrees, maintaining that it is within the social world that we form “our character and our conception of ourselves as persons, as well as our comprehensive views and their conceptions of the good.”¹⁴⁶ In other words, there is a social world in which we grow up and it is in this social world that provides us with the chance “to become free and equal citizens in the first place, and to understand our role as persons with that status.”¹⁴⁷ So, Rawls draws a distinction here. That is, we learn what it is to be a person in the background social world. One aspect involved in being a person is being a citizen in the political forum.

However, to return to the question at hand: how does one learn to become a citizen? To this question, Rawls answers that a particular sort of education is required. This education will serve to inform children of the political conception of justice that regulates the society in which they live. That is, the education that Rawls is advocating will impart to children:

Knowledge of their constitutional and civic rights so that, for example, they know that liberty of conscience exists in their society and that apostasy is not a legal crime, all this to insure that their continued membership when they come of age is not based simply on ignorance of their basic rights or fear of punishment for offenses that do not exist. Moreover, their education should also prepare them to be fully

¹⁴⁵ Rawls, PL, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Rawls, PL, p. 41.

¹⁴⁷ Rawls, PL, p. 41.

cooperating members of society and enable them to be self-supporting; it should also encourage the political virtues so that they want to honor the fair terms of social cooperation in their relations with the rest of society.¹⁴⁸

Rawls maintains that the aims involved in this education within political liberalism are different from those educational aims within a Millian or Kantian comprehensive liberalism. That is to say, the educational requirements for a comprehensive liberal education intends to teach children to live by and to value the ideal of personal autonomy, whereas a political liberal education does not seek to inculcate this ideal. To do so, argues Rawls, would be to use the state's power to favour a particular comprehensive doctrine, which political liberalism does not permit. Instead, Rawls insists that the education of children in a political liberalism concerns only "their role as future citizens," and not to teach or to endorse comprehensive conceptions of the good.¹⁴⁹

However, is it the case that the education for citizens required by the political liberal has the (perhaps unintended) consequence of inculcating the ideal of personal autonomy? To answer this question, consider what is involved in Rawls's educational requirements. Let us take his example that an education within political liberalism will ensure that children know that freedom of conscience exists for all citizens. To learn this suggests a numbers of things. First, children will come to know that there exists a wide range of comprehensive doctrines in the background social world. Moreover, they will come to know that there is widespread disagreement among citizens concerning the truth of these doctrines. Given this, children must learn to weigh the evidence and to evaluate claims contained in any comprehensive doctrine, in order to understand differences and to affirm (or to disconfirm) their allegiance to the comprehensive doctrine under which

¹⁴⁸ Rawls, PL, p. 199.

¹⁴⁹ Rawls, PL, p. 200.

they were raised. Children must learn to determine for themselves which comprehensive doctrine they wish to follow, apart from familial pressure or cultural tradition, for reasons of their own. In this process, children learn that they are capable of making their own decisions and choices and there exists a range of options from which to choose.

Furthermore, to understand and to know what freedom of conscience involves requires instilling in future citizens the importance of developing their own point of view that is not informed solely by one's family, religious group, or peers. For example, a future citizen must learn that whatever comprehensive doctrine she affirms ought to be affirmed because she decides it is valuable in its own right and not simply because she was told it was valuable. Thus, citizens need to be independent to a degree in order to determine what they believe to be valuable ends in life. Moreover, it requires that future citizens will have confidence in their own cognitive skills and decision-making abilities to decide whether a religious or philosophical comprehensive doctrine is reasonable or worthy of their loyalty in the first place. For if one's comprehensive doctrine is unreasonable, the political liberal holds that citizens are responsible for altering their commitments, in order to honour the fair terms of social cooperation.¹⁵⁰ In the case that a citizen has to revise her conception of the good, she must be aware of her options and she must know which options are worth pursuing.

In addition to understanding what freedom of conscience means, a citizen must conduct herself in certain ways in support of this freedom. In other words, a citizen must act with toleration towards other citizens who happen to hold competing conceptions of the good. Thus, a citizen must not expect the state to impose one comprehensive doctrine

¹⁵⁰ Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," p. 609.

for all citizens, but instead must accept the fact that other citizens can reasonably disagree over the ultimate ends of life. Moreover, a citizen must act with mutual respect towards those citizens with whom she disagrees with over the ends of life. That is, a citizen must respect those that disagree with her and regard others as rational beings, who as legitimate makers of claims in the world, have the right to disagree with her concerning philosophical or religious beliefs.

In considering the requirements necessary for a future citizen to understand freedom of conscience, we can see that this sort of education has far-reaching consequences beyond the political sphere. A future citizen's education will require that she must have certain habits, skills, and character traits, in order that she is successful as a citizen. However, these skills and character traits required to be a successful citizen are just those skills that one requires to be personally autonomous. That is, a citizen must necessarily be capable of shaping her life according to her own lights upon deciding what is important to her. She must be able to determine a conception of the good that is reasonable and to adopt projects and commitments that reflect her understanding of what is valuable. Finally, she must regard herself as a legitimate maker of claims, who is valuable simply in virtue of being human. This is precisely the conception of personal autonomy as developed in chapter two. Furthermore, it is just the sort of autonomy required by future citizens in order that they are successful in their role as citizens. Thus, the educational requirements set forth by the political liberal entail that children will learn to be personally autonomous in the process of learning to be a citizen. For without personal autonomy, one cannot fulfill the expectations of a citizen within a political liberalism.

Furthermore, if we bear in mind Rawls's definition of a comprehensive conception of the good, like that of personal autonomy, we can see that political liberalism requires this good, even if unintentionally. Recall that Rawls's definition of a comprehensive conception of good, such as personal autonomy, was that it was an ideal that applied to "the whole of life." This sort of ideal, derived from a comprehensive doctrine like Kantian or Millian liberalisms, is something for an individual to realize in all aspects of her life. Given what the political liberal expects of the citizen in her public life, such expectations cannot be accomplished without serious efforts in the background culture or in the non-political sphere on the part of the future citizen, her parents, her teachers, and the state's education system to train her properly for the role of citizen. Such efforts toward successful citizenship training will necessarily permeate into the whole of an individual's life because so much of this success depends what happens in the non-political sphere.

In other words, the habits, skills, and traits that one develops for successful citizenship are just those that "inform much of our nonpolitical conduct"¹⁵¹ as well. Since the political liberal conceives of the political sphere so narrowly, citizens within this domain address only certain things, such as "questions of basic constitutional essentials". Anything else, such as affirming or revising one's comprehensive doctrine, must occur in the non-public sphere. However, in each case, one needs the same habits, skills, and traits to do either successfully.

So, there are two important implications for political liberalism. First, Rawls is guilty of introducing a comprehensive conception of autonomy into political liberalism,

¹⁵¹ Rawls, PL, p. 175.

even if only covertly or unintentionally. Of course, Rawls admits that the educational requirements for future citizens may have the unfortunate effect of instilling a comprehensive conception of the good like the ideal of personal autonomy in children. He notes “the unavoidable consequences of reasonable requirements for children’s education may have to be accepted, often with regret.”¹⁵² Nevertheless, the political liberal is reasonable in children’s educational requirements needed to become a normal and fully cooperating citizen and that, additionally, such requirements fall within a political conception of justice.

Rawls would add further that the state’s interest in producing particular sort of citizens is very different from “the state’s advancing a particular comprehensive doctrine in its own name,”¹⁵³ such as the account of personal autonomy that I have presented. There will likely be some overlap between political virtues and ideals that a citizen must attain and the non-political virtues required by the individual in her non-public life.¹⁵⁴ However, political virtues and ideals, even if similar to or identical with non-political virtues and ideals, must necessarily be promoted by the state and inculcated in future citizens. Political liberalism has a significant interest in ensuring that its citizens are capable of thoughtful, active participation, in the interests of legitimacy and stability. Rawls reinforces this point by stating that, “admitting these virtues into a political conception does not lead to the perfectionist state of a comprehensive doctrine.”¹⁵⁵ Here, Rawls is concerned to draw a distinction between political liberalism and perfectionism,

¹⁵² Rawls, PL, p. 200.

¹⁵³ Rawls, PL, p. 195.

¹⁵⁴ Rawls makes this point in PL, p. 195, fn. 29.

¹⁵⁵ Rawls, PL, p. 194.

which is a theory that claims the state ought to take an active role in encouraging certain values or ideals in order to promote human flourishing.¹⁵⁶

In response, I would argue that the admitting of these virtues does not lead to a perfectionist state in name; however, the inclusion of such virtues leads to a perfectionist state in practice. Though the political liberal justifies his policies in a different way than the perfectionist, it is nevertheless the case that the policies of the political liberal will have the same effect as the policies of the perfectionist. In other words, the policies of the political liberal and of the perfectionist promote a particular conception of the good, namely the ideal of personal autonomy, though on different grounds and through different means. For the perfectionist, the value in promoting personal autonomy for human flourishing justifies state intervention. For the political liberal, personal autonomy is justified, though inadvertently and unintentionally, because it serves to ensure that citizens will be thoughtful, active participants who support democratic institutions. However Rawls intends to limit the scope of the policies of political liberalism, it remains the case that such policies will have a profound effect on how individuals live in all aspects of their lives and not simply in their roles as citizens in the political sphere. Thus, the first issue that Rawls must face is the fact that a politically liberal state is concerned a comprehensive conception of the good like personal autonomy, even if only unintentionally.

A second implication of the liberal education requirements in the interests of educating good citizens is that some ways of life will be incompatible with good citizenship. As we have seen, what occurs in the political realm is dependent in important

¹⁵⁶ For a defense of a perfectionist account of liberalism, see Joseph Raz, MF; Steven Wall, LPR.

ways on what occurs in the non-political realm. We can understand this claim if we return to the case of Bountiful and argue that their religious beliefs are incompatible with being a good citizen. Recall Rawls's claim that future citizens need to receive a certain kind of education that prepares them "to be fully cooperating members of society and enables them to be self-supporting; it should also encourage the political virtues so that they want to honour the fair terms of social cooperation in their relations with the rest of society."¹⁵⁷

However, as Exdell points out, the demands of being a good citizen are simply inconsistent with certain religious fundamentalist beliefs grounded on patriarchal understandings of unequal sexual difference and the properness of male dominance. For example, if a liberal education teaches females to be "self-supporting," this flies in the face of patriarchal beliefs that women must refrain from working outside the home and must be economically dependent on their husbands. For religious fundamentalists, female economic independence is especially problematic, since it is potentially "corrosive to the gendered division of labour in the traditional marriage."¹⁵⁸ In a similar vein, for males to "honour the fair terms of social cooperation," it must be the case that they must be raised to believe that all individuals are equal, including women, as well as be prepared to treat others on egalitarian terms. Thus, the political liberal's requirements for future citizen's education will serve to render some religious or cultural beliefs antagonistic to the demands of good citizenship.

However, one might respond to this claim by arguing that political liberalism allows for the members of Bountiful to draw a distinction between their public beliefs and their private beliefs. Should the members of Bountiful believe that sexual equality is

¹⁵⁷ Rawls, *PL*, p. 199.

¹⁵⁸ Exdell, "Feminism, Fundamentalism, and Liberal Legitimacy," p. 453.

not viable within the context of their community and religious commitments, they can nevertheless believe that the concept of sexual equality is part of the basis of good citizenship. In other words, political liberalism might hold that the members of Bountiful can draw a distinction between their political selves and their non-political selves, in order to ensure that the integrity of either “self” remains intact.

We can respond to this claim made by the political liberal in several ways. On a psychological level, to ask that one make this separation is odd, since it asks an individual to be two distinct persons with dissimilar belief sets. This is the weaker response. A stronger response refers to the conceptual issue behind asking one to draw a distinction between her political and non-political selves. That is, it seems that it would be difficult for an individual to reconcile her different belief sets with each other. Moreover, it would be difficult to reconcile a belief set, which denies sexual equality, with a political conception of justice that holds fundamentally that all persons are free and equal citizens. As Susan Moller Okin points out, “it is exceedingly difficult to see how one could both hold and practice...[in one’s non-political life] the belief that women or blacks, say, are naturally inferior, without its seriously affecting one’s capacity to relate (politically) to such people as citizens ‘free and equal’ with oneself.”¹⁵⁹ Let us refer to this as the congruence problem.

In other words, there would be a lack of congruence between one’s comprehensive doctrine and the political conception of justice that regulated the basic structure of society. This is the case with the FLDS members and the liberal principles that characterize Canadian society. This raises two questions for the political liberal.

¹⁵⁹ Susan Moller Okin, “*Political Liberalism, Justice and Gender*,” *Ethics* 105 (October 1994): 23-43, p. 29, fn. 16.

First, with respect to the claims of religious freedom made by the members of Bountiful, the political liberal must admit that some conceptions of the good cannot survive within political liberalism. On the one hand, we want individuals within political liberalism to have freedom of conscience to pursue whatever comprehensive religious doctrine they choose. On the other hand, unless that that doctrine is reasonable in that it is congruent with the principles of justice, political liberalism will maintain that the state has no obligation to respect its adherents claims or to ensure that it is protected from state encroachment.

However, it is not clear that the political liberal laments this outcome as much as we would expect. Rawls notes that, “no society can include within itself all forms of life,” particularly those that conflict with the political principles of justice.¹⁶⁰ For the political liberal, to uphold the norms of equality and equal treatment are valuable political ideals that are fundamental to any political conception of justice, in the interests of social and political stability as well as that of toleration. However, these norms and ideals cannot be upheld absolutely. As we have seen with the case of the FLDS church, some individuals or groups do not deserve equal treatment because they do not recognize equal treatment for all individuals.

In addition, given there is a lack of congruence between the comprehensive doctrine endorsed by the members of Bountiful and between the political conception of justice, we might ask the political liberal what he would do to remedy this situation. On the one hand, we want political liberalism to be acceptable to as many citizens as possible, even those that are religious fundamentalists and social conservatives. Given

¹⁶⁰ Rawls, PL, p. 197

this goal, we want to offer them the opportunity to adjust their comprehensive doctrines, in order to ensure they are compatible with the political conception of justice. This opportunity would likely be in the form of a liberal education. Thus, it seems that the political liberal must consent to interference within the Bountiful community. This is done to ensure that its members receive an education to prepare them for citizenship and to give the members the resources to reshape their comprehensive commitments, in order to avoid conflict with a political conception of justice.

Thus, political liberalism cannot tolerate a comprehensive conception of the good that does not respect a political conception of justice. For Rawls, such a conception of the good would be unreasonable because it overrides the reasonable political values espoused by political liberalism.¹⁶¹ In the case of unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, like that of the FLDS, political liberalism expects that its adherents will revise the doctrine in order that it recognizes the political conception of justice. Should the members of the FLDS church refuse to revise their claims and therefore reject the political principles of justice that regulate society, then “within political liberalism, nothing more need be said” to the adherents of a politically unreasonable doctrine.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered an important issue for the political liberal with respect to the ideal of autonomy. Rawls argues that the liberal state cannot endorse the ideal of personal autonomy because it is part of a comprehensive conception of the good. Given the diversity of modern, liberal democracies, the political liberal claims that we

¹⁶¹ John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” p. 609.

cannot expect all citizens within such societies to agree on the goodness or the value of one ideal. On this basis, the liberal state must refrain from endorsing a given conception of the good, no matter how reasonable.

On the one hand, Rawls sought to exclude any conceptions of personal autonomy from his political conception of justice, in order to ensure overlapping consensus and thus to ensure social stability. The reasoning behind this was that those who did not agree with these conceptions could still endorse the political conception of justice. On the other hand, Rawls included the conception of full autonomy as that which all citizens must endorse within political liberalism. That is, citizens could affirm full autonomy for all since it is a distinctly political and not moral value. Yet, as I have argued, in order to achieve full autonomy, citizens must be educated to be citizens and in the process of this education, children are taught to be personally autonomous in order that they are normal and fully cooperating citizens

Thus, the political liberal introduces a conception of the good into his political conception of justice, namely personal autonomy. This introduction occurs through the educational requirements that the political liberal sets forth for future citizens. Moreover, the introduction of the ideal of personal autonomy, though inadvertent, is necessary for future citizens to be successful in their political as well as non-political roles. There are two conclusions we can draw from this discussion. First, it seems that comprehensive conceptions of the good are not so beyond the reach of the political liberal and his justifications for principles that underlie the liberal state. Second, the political liberal will concede that the liberal state interferes, though indirectly, in the lives of its citizens to a greater degree than once believed.

CONCLUSION

In this project, I sought to clarify the ideal of personal autonomy and the commitment to this ideal on the part of the liberal state, in light of the controversial polygamist Mormon sect in Bountiful, British Columbia. In this conclusion, I will reprise my claims from each chapter, in order to highlight possible areas of concern for my account. In addition, I want to suggest some possible considerations for future papers.

I began my project with an analysis of the concept of autonomy. Drawing on Steven Wall's discussion, I argued that autonomy is the character ideal of living the self-directed life, according to what one determines is worthwhile to pursue. According to Wall, there are four necessary conditions that characterize the ideal of autonomy. However, I argued that Wall's conditions are necessary, but not sufficient, because he fails to include self-respect as a necessary condition. I argued that this was necessary in order that individuals do not choose in ways that are inconsistent with the concept of autonomy. Moreover, the condition of self-respect is necessary to explain the feminist intuition that choices made under the influence of oppressive socialization are not autonomous. Given that I take self-respect to be a necessary condition for autonomy, it follows that I endorse a weakly substantive account of autonomy. This entails that there is some degree of normative content, which in turn serves to indirectly constrain an individual's choices. Moreover, the inclusion of self-respect allows us to understand our resistance to classifying the choices of the women of Bountiful as autonomous, even if they met Wall's four conditions.

However, the argument that the women of Bountiful might be autonomous on Wall's account, which would later serve my argument for the necessary condition of self-respect, is an argument that I would like to revisit in the future. Even if one should accept my claim that the women of Bountiful are (minimally) autonomous, there remains hesitation to accept this claim. This hesitation may show that I have not established that the women of Bountiful are autonomous, particularly with respect to the coercion condition and the self-consciousness and vigour condition. Conversely, this hesitation may reflect a deeper problem with procedural accounts of autonomy. That is, given that procedural accounts have such minimal standards for autonomy, we may ask whether such accounts are robust enough to capture what we believe is important about autonomy in the first place.

For a future project, I would like to consider whether the account of autonomy I have presented here is intrinsically valuable. To argue that any moral ideal is intrinsically valuable, or something valuable for its own sake, is a challenging task. One reason for this is that many arguments for the intrinsic value of autonomy rest on appeal to shared intuition. Clearly, these arguments are weakened should one individual disagree with this intuition. As we have seen in this project, the widespread disagreement with respect to the truth of ideals led Rawls to endeavor to restrict the inclusion of such ideals from the political arena. Yet, the ideal of autonomy is so important that its justification as an intrinsic ideal seems significant. However, it is unclear to me, at this point, that anything but the appeal to intuition will serve to justify the intrinsic value of autonomy.

Another area that I would like to revisit in the future concerns what Benson referred to as the "wide theoretical space," with respect to exploring weakly substantive

accounts of autonomy. I think it would have been beneficial for my project to examine the implications of such an account from a feminist perspective, with particular focus on women's choices to act upon oppressive norms of femininity. In this respect, I believe that weakly substantive accounts will be extremely useful for feminist theorists seeking to explain why women choose to wear make-up, high heels, or why women choose to have cosmetic surgery.

In the third chapter, I argued that Wall failed to emphasize sufficiently the social conditions needed for individuals to realize autonomy. Such conditions are important for the individual because one cannot attain this ideal without the right kind of human interaction and guidance. More importantly, the acknowledgment of the social conditions needed for autonomy are important for feminists, who have argued that autonomy is an unattractive ideal for women because traditional accounts of autonomy have denigrated certain social conditions as unfavorable for autonomy. As Marilyn Friedman points out, feminists see traditional accounts of autonomy as representative of "a masculine-style preoccupation with self-sufficiency and self-realization at the expense of human connection."¹⁶² Clearly, such an ideal would be unattractive to women, who have traditionally centered their lives on establishing and maintaining human connection.

Yet, as I have shown, the concept of autonomy need not be discarded entirely as a 'masculine' ideal that is more harmful than helpful to women. In particular, I have argued that autonomy can be rehabilitated to coincide with women's lived experiences and with feminist aims. In my project, I would have liked to explore the notion of relational autonomy, which feminists have developed in response to difficulties in explaining how

¹⁶² Friedman, *AGP*, p. 98.

autonomy is compromised by oppressive socialization. As Mackenzie and Stoljar note, relational accounts of autonomy offer a richer and more complex sense of the individual, in the sense that individuals are regarded as rational, emotional, and embodied agents, who are differentially situated with respect to gender, race, and class.¹⁶³ Relational accounts also seek to analyze the social norms under which individuals make choices and form beliefs and preferences. Such an account will likely aid in producing a better understanding of the wide theoretical space that weakly substantive accounts occupy.

A possible concern that one may raise concerns the autonomy-fostering environment needed for the five conditions of autonomy to obtain. In particular, I take it that my discussion of the conditions might lead one to ask whether the Bountiful community offers such an autonomy-fostering environment. One can make the argument that the community does not provide such an environment, especially with respect to developing a sense of personal worth, which might serve to challenge my argument that the women of Bountiful are autonomous according to Wall's standards. Given this, I think that I could consider what the minimal standards of an autonomy-fostering environment comprise in greater detail. In other words, a more clearly defined set of minimal standards required of an autonomy-fostering environment could support my argument that the women of Bountiful are autonomous on Wall's account. Alternatively, I may have to develop another argument to support my claim that the conditions that Wall sets out in his account are necessary but not sufficient.

Lastly, in the fourth chapter, I consider the concept of autonomy from the perspective of political liberalism. John Rawls argued that political liberalism is a

¹⁶³ Mackenzie and Stoljar, "Autonomy Refigured," p. 22.

political conception of justice, which was to govern and to regulate the basic structure of society. Rawls conceived this political conception of justice as that which all members of a constitutional regime could endorse, even though they remained divided with respect to the comprehensive doctrines to which they adhered. For the political liberal, the ideal of personal autonomy was a controversial idea of the good, in that it was derived from a comprehensive conception of the good like Kantian liberalism. Given that it was likely that some members in society would not sanction its value, Rawls sought to eliminate comprehensive ideas of the good from the political conception of justice. Moreover, Rawls maintained that, in the interest of legitimacy, the liberal state could not endorse controversial ideas of the good nor could it compel citizens to endorse it as a value that was to guide their lives.

In response to these claims, I argued that the political liberal requires that citizens attain the ideal of personal autonomy, in order that they fulfill successfully the duties and expectations as a citizen in the political sphere. Of course, such a requirement is not stated explicitly by Rawls; yet, I argue that this is an implication of the liberal education Rawls states that children need in order to be thoughtful, active citizens. Though I agree with Rawls that requiring citizens to have a particular education is reasonable, it is nevertheless the case that such an education will have consequences beyond the political sphere. In the fourth chapter, I have highlighted some of these, such as the fact that political liberalism may not be as neutral as it claims to be. Moreover, political liberalism might have less room to accommodate different ways of life and competing comprehensive doctrine.

In other words, there are questions raised for the political liberal with respect to how neutral political liberalism is, especially with respect to fundamentalist religions and social conservatives in general. The extent to which political liberalism can accommodate these groups would be an interesting project to pursue, especially in light of the rise of membership in fundamentalist religions in both North America and the rest of the world. I have doubts around the political liberal's claim that state neutrality protects citizens from the coercive power of the state to impose comprehensive views, since political liberalism has the effect of endorsing the ideal of personal autonomy, even if only inadvertently. In turn, this endorsement has the effect of ruling out certain comprehensive doctrines as reasonable.

In any event, I hope that this project has shed some light on the complexities of the existence of a religious group like the FLDS Church within the liberal state. While the liberal state must work to protect the freedom of the individual to pursue his or her conception of the good, this cannot entail that the liberal state accommodate those that deny others the opportunity to develop their own as well.

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