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The Morality of Freedom

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Autonomy and Pluralism

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Abstract and Keywords

Autonomy is an ideal of self-creation, or self-authorship; it consists in an agent's successful pursuit of willingly embraced, valuable options, where the agent's activities are not dominated by worries about mere survival. Autonomy in its primary sense is to be understood as the actual living of an autonomous life; autonomy in its secondary sense is to be understood as the capacity to live autonomously. To be autonomous, agents have to meet three conditions: they must possess certain mental capacities, they must have an adequate range of valuable options, and they must enjoy independence from coercion and manipulation. Autonomy should be distinguished from self-realization, as autonomous persons may choose not to realize their capacities. Autonomy itself, in an environment that supports autonomy, is not similarly optional, as living autonomously is the only way of flourishing within an autonomy-supporting environment.

Keywords: autonomy, capacity, coercion, manipulation, self-realization

1. Personal Autonomy

1.1 *The relation between autonomy and the capacity for it.* The fact that our self-interest, and more generally, what counts towards our well-being, is to a considerable extent determined by our own actions, does not presuppose free or deliberate choice of options. To be sure our well-being is not served by projects we are coerced into unless we come willingly to embrace them. But not everything we willingly embrace is something we have freely or deliberately chosen from among various alternatives open to us. The relationship between children and their parents is an obvious example. Notwithstanding the fact that it can, and sometimes does, go badly wrong, it is a relationship most people willingly embrace but do not freely choose. It is a relationship people are committed to and care deeply about. But it is not one which most of them have ever confronted in their own minds as an object of choice.

In western industrial societies a particular conception of individual well-being has acquired considerable popularity. It is the ideal of personal autonomy. It transcends the conceptual point that personal well-being is partly determined by success in willingly endorsed pursuits and holds the free choice of goals and relations as an essential ingredient of individual well-being. The ruling idea behind the ideal of personal autonomy is that people should make their own lives. The autonomous person is a (part) author of his own life. The ideal of personal autonomy is the vision of people controlling, to some degree, their own destiny, fashioning it through successive decisions throughout their lives.

It is an ideal particularly suited to the conditions of the industrial age and its aftermath with their fast changing technologies and free movement of labour. They call for an ability to cope with changing technological, economic and **(p. 370)** social conditions, for an ability to adjust, to acquire new skills, to move from one subculture to another, to come to terms with new scientific and moral views.¹ Its suitability for our conditions and the deep roots it has by now acquired in our culture contribute to a powerful case for this ideal. But it would be wrong to identify the ideal with the ability to cope with the shifting dunes of modern society. Autonomy is an ideal of self-creation. There were autonomous people in many

past periods, whether or not they themselves or others around them thought of this as an ideal way of being.²

The autonomous person is part author of his life. The image this metaphor is meant to conjure up is not that of the regimented, compulsive person who decides when young what life to have and spends the rest of it living it out according to plan. In the words of J. L. Mackie 'there is not one goal but indefinitely many diverse goals, and . . . they are the objects of progressive (not once-for-all or conclusive) choices.'³ As Mackie's comment reminds us, the ideal of personal autonomy is not to be identified with the ideal of giving one's life a unity. An autonomous person's well-being consists in the successful pursuits of self-chosen goals and relationships. Like all people's, his will also be nested goals, with the more comprehensive ones being, other things being equal, the more important ones. None of this tells us anything which is specific to the ideal of autonomy. It does not **(p.371)** require an attempt to impose any special unity on one's life. The autonomous life may consist of diverse and heterogeneous pursuits. And a person who frequently changes his tastes can be as autonomous as one who never shakes off his adolescent preferences.

Autonomy is opposed to a life of coerced choices. It contrasts with a life of no choices, or of drifting through life without ever exercising one's capacity to choose. Evidently the autonomous life calls for a certain degree of self-awareness. To choose one must be aware of one's options. If these are to include changes in pervasive aspects of one's life, as they must if the person is to count as an autonomous person, then the autonomous person must be aware of his life as stretching over time. He must be capable of understanding how various choices will have considerable and lasting impact on his life. He may always prefer to avoid long-term commitments. But he must be aware of their availability. This has led to some over-intellectualized conceptions of personal autonomy. I know of nothing wrong with the intellectual life, just as I know of nothing wrong with people who consciously endow their lives with great unity. But the ideal of personal autonomy is meant to be wider and compatible with other styles of life, including those which are very unintellectual.

I have spoken of the ideal of autonomy as a life freely chosen. It is a life which is here primarily judged as autonomous or not, and it is so judged by its history. As was noted before¹ the autonomous life is discerned not by what there is in it but by how it came to be. It is discerned, if you like, by what it might have been and by why it is not other than what it is. But autonomy is often conceived as the condition of a person who has a certain ability. E. Beardsley, for example, characterizes it as the power to determine which acts to perform and which experiences to have. She regards the power as including the power to choose and the power to bring about what one has chosen.²

(p.372) There is no doubt that one needs certain abilities to lead an autonomous life. The question is whether the possession of these abilities is valuable because they are necessary for the autonomous life, which is the source of their value, or whether what matters ultimately from the moral point of view is the possession of the abilities as such.

It is hard to conceive of an argument that possession of a capacity is valuable even though its exercise is devoid of value. Ascetic and disciplinarian moralities are an example. They value the possession of power because of the value of giving up its exercise, or for the discipline and will-power that doing so instils. Barring such extreme moralities or exceptional circumstances belief in the value of a capacity commits one to the value of some cases of its exercise. The opposite view, i.e. that it is valuable to possess an ability even though none of its uses is valuable, is too far fetched. It seems very implausible, however, to suppose that while whenever one possesses an ability some of its possible uses are valuable, this is entirely coincidental. The only reasonable supposition is that either its use makes its possession valuable or the other way round. But as one can have an ability without exercising it, if its possession is the root of value then there is no reason for it to affect the value of its exercise. On the other hand, one cannot exercise an ability one does not possess. If the value of one is the ground for the value of the other it must, therefore, be the value of the exercise which endows the capacity with what it is worth.

The ideal of autonomy is that of the autonomous life. The capacity for autonomy is a secondary sense of 'autonomy'. I am using 'capacity' in a very wide sense. Perhaps it is better

called the 'conditions of autonomy'. I will use both expressions on occasion. The conditions of autonomy are complex and consist of three distinct components: appropriate mental abilities, an adequate range of options, and independence.

If a person is to be maker or author of his own life then he must have the mental abilities to form intentions of a sufficiently complex kind, and plan their execution. These **(p. 373)** include minimum rationality, the ability to comprehend the means required to realize his goals, the mental faculties necessary to plan actions, etc. For a person to enjoy an autonomous life he must actually use these faculties to choose what life to have. There must in other words be adequate options available for him to choose from. Finally, his choice must be free from coercion and manipulation by others, he must be independent. All three conditions, mental abilities, adequacy of options, and independence admit of degree. Autonomy in both its primary and secondary senses is a matter of degree. One's life may be more or less autonomous. I will say a little more on these conditions below before turning in the next section to examine the normative character of the autonomous life.

1.2 *The Adequacy of Options* No one can control all aspects of his life. How much control is required for the life to be autonomous, and what counts as an adequate exercise of control (as opposed to being forced by circumstances, or deceived by one's own ignorance, or governed by one's weaknesses) is an enormously difficult problem. Fortunately for us, though its solution is required in order to formulate policies to implement the autonomy-based doctrine of political freedom to be developed in the next chapter, it is not required in order to appreciate the structure of the ideal of toleration, which is our sole concern. All that has to be accepted is that to be autonomous a person must not only be given a choice but he must be given an adequate range of choices. A person whose every decision is extracted from him by coercion is not an autonomous person. Nor is a person autonomous if he is paralysed and therefore cannot take advantage of the options which are offered to him. We will need to examine some of the criteria of adequacy for available options. But we do not require for the purposes of the present argument a general doctrine of the adequacy of options.

Consider the following two imaginary cases:

The Man in the Pit. A person falls down a pit and remains there for the rest of his life, unable to climb out or to summon help. There is just enough ready food to keep him alive without (after he gets used to it) any suffering. He can do nothing much, not even **(p.374)** move much. His choices are confined to whether to eat now or a little later, whether to sleep now or a little later, whether to scratch his left ear or not.

The Hounded Woman. A person finds herself on a small desert island. She shares the island with a fierce carnivorous animal which perpetually hunts for her. Her mental stamina, her intellectual ingenuity, her will power and her physical resources are taxed to their limits by her struggle to remain alive. She never has a chance to do or even to think of anything other than how to escape from the beast.

Neither the Man in the Pit nor the Hounded Woman enjoys an autonomous life. The reason is that though they both have choices neither has an adequate range of options to choose from. They present two extremes of failure of adequacy of choice. The one has only trivial options to choose from. His options are all short-term and negligible in their significance and effects. The other person's predicament is the opposite one. All her choices are potentially horrendous in their consequences. If she ever puts one foot wrong she will be devoured by the beast.

The criteria of the adequacy of the options available to a person must meet several distinct concerns. They should include options with long term pervasive consequences as well as short term options of little consequence, and a fair spread in between. We should be able both to choose long term commitments or projects and to develop lasting relationships and be able to develop and pursue them by means which we choose from time to time. It is intolerable that we should have no influence over the choice of our occupation or of our friends. But it is equally unacceptable that we should not be able to decide on trivia such as when to wash or when to comb our hair. This aspect of the requirement of adequate choice is necessary to make sure that our control extends to all aspects of our lives. This is clearly required by the basic idea of being the author of one's life.¹

(p.375) Another consideration concerning adequacy relates to the variety of options available. Clearly not number but variety matters. A choice between hundreds of identical and identically situated houses is no choice, compared with a choice between a town flat and a suburban house, for example. Some of the capacities with which the human species is genetically endowed come coupled with innate drives for their use. We have innate drives to move around, to exercise our bodies, to stimulate our senses, to engage our imagination and our affection, to occupy our mind. To a considerable degree culture and civilization consist in training and channelling these innate drives. To be autonomous and to have an autonomous life, a person must have options which enable him to sustain throughout his life activities which, taken together, exercise all the capacities human beings have an innate drive to exercise, as well as to decline to develop any of them.

This formulation, far too abstract to serve as a direct guide to social policy, needs further elaboration. It needs, for example, to be cashed in terms of the options available in a particular society. It is however a virtue of the formulated test that it is not culture-bound. It points to the way in which the options available in different cultures can be evaluated and compared.

The test of variety helps draw the line between autonomy and another ideal it is often confused with: self-realization. Self-realization consists in the development to their full extent of all, or all the valuable capacities a person possesses. The autonomous person is the one who makes his own life and he may choose the path of self-realization or reject it. Nor is autonomy a precondition of self-realization, for one can stumble into a life of self-realization or be manipulated into it or reach it in some other way which is inconsistent with autonomy. One cannot deny this last claim on the ground that one of the capacities one has to develop is that of choosing one's own life. For this and any other capacity **(p.376)** can be developed by simulation and deceit, i.e. by misleading the person to believe that he controls his destiny. In any case autonomy is at best one of many elements which contribute to self-realization and it does not enjoy any special importance compared with many of the others. The autonomous person must have options which will enable him to develop all his

abilities, as well as to concentrate on some of them. One is not autonomous if one cannot choose a life of self-realization, nor is one autonomous if one cannot reject this ideal.

The Hounded Woman has to a considerable extent adequate variety. We can further develop her story to provide her with medium and long-term options all dominated by her one overpowering need and desire to escape being devoured by the beast. It is true that even so she does not fully meet our conditions because she cannot avoid using all her faculties. She has no option to develop into an unimaginative athlete, nor to become a physically weak but very imaginative person. But we say that she does not have this choice because a choice between survival and death is no choice from our perspective (and we need not deny that she may be very grateful that at least she was left this choice). An adequate range of options must therefore meet an additional separate condition. For most of the time the choice should not be dominated by the need to protect the life one has. A choice is dominated by that need if all options except one will make the continuation of the life one has rather unlikely.

We are now in a position better to understand this obscure description, and I shall briefly recapitulate some of the points made before (especially in Chapter Six). Since people's well-being depends to a considerable extent on the projects and relationships around which their lives revolve, frustrating their successful pursuit undermines people's well-being. To the extent that much of a person's life depends on one comprehensive goal, forcing him into a choice where all but one option would involve sacrificing this goal is an attempt to coerce him. His choice is dominated by the need to preserve the life he has. He may freely choose to sacrifice that life and that may be the only right choice open to him. But whenever one is forced into a coerced choice, even if **(p.377)** yielding to it is not justified it is excused by the fact that the agent's life is put in the balance. This was the point of the example in which a pianist is threatened that his fingers will be crushed unless he complies with instructions. The explanation we now have of the dependence of people's well-being on their goals explains the metaphorical sense of 'the life one has or has embarked upon'. Like all aspects of well-being the notion is

fuzzy for well-being admits many degrees, which are mirrored in degrees of damage to it.

But the general dependence of people's well-being on their projects does not in itself justify the normative claims made about coercion in Chapter Six. Since a person may survive the loss of the life he embarked upon and find an alternative life in which he may thrive (and the successful breakdown of many marriages is a case in point), should not that factor be taken into account? It would show that coercing a person need not be as bad as was stated. Sometimes he can resist the coercion, pay the consequences, and start on another successful project. Nor would one always be excused in succumbing to a threat which is dominated by the need to protect the life one has. The normative principles put forward in Chapter Six relied on the value of personal autonomy. They presupposed that the success of a person's life is judged not only by the success of his projects but also by how he came to have them. The contribution of autonomy to a person's life explains why coercion is the evil it is, and why it provides an excuse to those who yield to it.

1.3 Independence. Coercion diminishes a person's options. It is sometimes supposed that that provides a full explanation of why it invades autonomy. It reduces the coerced person's options below adequacy. But it need not. One may be coerced not to pursue one option while being left with plenty of others to choose from. Furthermore, loss of options through coercion is deemed to be a greater loss of autonomy than a similar loss brought about by other means. That is why slaves are thought to lack autonomy even if they enjoy a range of options which, were they free, would have been deemed sufficient. Manipulation, unlike coercion, does not interfere with a person's options. Instead it perverts the way that person reaches decisions, forms preferences or adopts **(p.378)** goals. It too is an invasion of autonomy whose severity exceeds the importance of the distortion it causes.

Coercion and manipulation draw our attention to a separate dimension of the conditions of personal autonomy: independence. It cannot be reduced to any of the others. It attests to the fact that autonomy is in part a social ideal. It designates one aspect of the proper relations between people. Coercion and manipulation subject the will of one person to that of another. That violates his independence and is

inconsistent with his autonomy. This explains why coercion and manipulation are intentional actions: they would not amount to a subjecting of the will of another person if they were not. The invasions of autonomy which they mark are not due only to their consequences. They violate autonomy because of the kind of treatment of others that they are.

It is commonplace to say that by coercing or manipulating a person one treats him as an object rather than as an autonomous person. But how can that be so even if the consequences of one's coercion are negligible? Our discussion in the previous two chapters points to the answer. The natural fact that coercion and manipulation reduce options or distort normal processes of decision and the formation of preferences has become the basis of a social convention loading them with meaning regardless of their actual consequences. They have acquired a symbolic meaning expressing disregard or even contempt for the coerced or manipulated people. As we saw in our earlier discussion in Chapter Six, such conventions are not exceptionless. There is nothing wrong with coercion used to stop one from stepping into the road and under a car. Such exceptions only reinforce the argument for the conventional and symbolic or expressive character of the prohibition against coercion and manipulation, at least to the extent that it transcends the severity of the actual consequences of these actions.

2. Autonomy and Value

2.1 Aiming At The good. Autonomy requires that many morally acceptable options be available to a person. 'Our conception of Freedom', rightly observe Benn and Weinstein, **(p.379)** 'is bounded by our notions of what might be worthwhile.'¹ This is an additional aspect of the test of adequacy of the available options. It is of great importance to the connection between autonomy and freedom.

I shall use a rather artificial and extreme example to bring out the point. Imagine a person who can pursue an occupation of his choice but at the price of committing murder for each option he rejects. First he has to choose whether to become an electrician. He can refuse provided he kills one person. Then he is offered a career in dentistry, which again he is free to refuse if he kills another person, and so on. Like the person facing the proverbial gunman demanding 'your money or your life', who is acting freely if he defies the threat and risks his life, the person in our dilemma is acting freely if he agrees to murder in order to become a dentist, rather than an electrician. If he does so then his choice does not tend to show that his life is not autonomous. But if he chooses the right way and agrees to be an electrician in order to avoid becoming a murderer then his choice is forced.

I think it will be generally agreed that in this case the life of the person in my example is not autonomous and that his choice and the nature of his options are enough to show that he is not. That is, our judgment that he is not autonomous is unaffected even if the example is developed to show that his predicament is a result of a series of bizarre accidents and coincidences resulting from the breakdown and freak behaviour of several computers in some futuristic society. Autonomy requires a choice of goods. A choice between good and evil is not enough. (Remember that it is personal, not moral, autonomy we are concerned with. No doubt is cast on the fact that the person in the example is a moral agent and fully responsible for his actions. So are the inmates of concentration camps. But they do not have personal autonomy.)

Autonomy cannot be achieved by a person whose every action and thought must be bent to the task of survival, a person who will die if ever he puts a foot wrong. Similarly it cannot be obtained by a person who is constantly fighting **(p.380)** for

moral survival. If he is to be moral then he has no choice, just as the person struggling for physical survival has no choice if he is to stay alive.

This point raises an issue of great importance to the understanding of the relation between autonomy and other moral values. No one would deny that autonomy should be used for the good. The question is, has autonomy any value *qua* autonomy when it is abused? Is the autonomous wrongdoer a morally better person than the non-autonomous wrongdoer? Our intuitions rebel against such a view. It is surely the other way round. The wrongdoing casts a darker shadow on its perpetrator if it is autonomously done by him. A murderer who was led to his deed by the foreseen inner logic of his autonomously chosen career is morally worse than one who murders because he momentarily succumbs to the prospect of an easy gain. Nor are these considerations confined to gross breaches of duties. Demeaning, or narrow-minded, or ungenerous, or insensitive behaviour is worse when autonomously chosen and indulged in.

A second question presents itself now. Could it be that it is valuable to make evil and repugnant options available so that people should freely avoid them? Is the person who rejected a life of mindless idleness, for example, better than one who never had the chance of choosing it? Three reasons are often produced in support of this view. First, people must be tested and prove themselves by choosing good rather than evil. Second, the need to choose refines one's moral judgment and discrimination. Third, the presence of evil provides the occasion for developing certain moral virtues. Whatever sound sense there is in all three considerations derives from the thought that the morally good not only manages his life morally, but would have done so even if circumstances were less favourable or presented more temptations or pressures for evil.

Opportunities for the immoral and the repugnant cannot be eliminated from our world. It may be possible to develop a new form of tape that will make the copying of music from tape in breach of copyright impossible. One opportunity for immorality, let us assume, would thereby disappear. But the vice that it displayed, the vice of, let us say, dishonest dealing, **(p.381)** will still have lots of opportunities to be practised. There may be some specialized vices opportunities for which

can, at least in principle, be eliminated. But then in a world from which they were well and truly eradicated the corresponding specialist moral ability, that of being good in avoiding that vice, would not be one absence of which is a moral weakness or blemish. The morally good, in other words, are those who would have led a moral life even if the circumstances of their life were less favourable, but only in the sense of being able to cope with the temptations and pressures normal in their society.

For the most part the opportunities for dishonesty, indolence, insensitivity to the feelings of others, cruelty, pettiness and the other vices and moral weaknesses are logically inseparable from the conditions of a human life which can have any moral merit. Given their prevalence one cannot object to the elimination of opportunities for evil on the three grounds cited above. The same kind of considerations show that only very rarely will the non-availability of morally repugnant options reduce a person's choice sufficiently to affect his autonomy. Therefore, the availability of such options is not a requirement of respect for autonomy.

Autonomy is valuable only if exercised in pursuit of the good. The ideal of autonomy requires only the availability of morally acceptable options. This may sound a very rigoristic moral view, which it is not. A moral theory which recognizes the value of autonomy inevitably upholds a pluralistic view. It admits the value of a large number of greatly differing pursuits among which individuals are free to choose.

2.2 Integrity. Since the conditions of autonomy include both opportunity and the ability to use it, can a person who enjoys the conditions of autonomy nevertheless fail to lead an autonomous life? One can in fact fritter away one's opportunities, and fail to use (some of) one's abilities. To avail oneself of one's opportunities and abilities one has to be aware of them and make choices among them. This does not mean premeditation or a very deliberative style of life, nor does it necessitate any high degree of self-awareness or rationality. All it requires is the awareness of one's options (**p.382**) and the knowledge that one's actions amount to charting a course which could have been otherwise.

As with the conditions of autonomy, so this awareness is a matter of degree. All one can say in the abstract is that one who drifts through life unawares is not leading an autonomous life. Simple ignorance of this kind is unlikely. But its more complex manifestations are common enough. Self-deception is pervasive. It disguises one's true situation from oneself. It is often a way of avoiding decisions, and an attempt to shirk responsibility. The self-deceiving has a way of 'surprising' himself. Only when it is too late to do anything about it does he discover where he has brought himself, excusing himself by saying 'I did not realize that all that was involved. I did not understand the situation. I did not mean to choose that, etc.' Self-deception prevents a person from being aware of his character and motivation. It may lead to repression of one's deeply felt aims, or to the pursuit of goals one is not aware of pursuing through means which are not one's conscious choice.

Various forms and degrees of self-deception are involved in other ways in which one may fail to be autonomous when the conditions for autonomy are met. An autonomous person is aware of his options and chooses between them rather than drifting along until they are lost, and his decision is made for him. He is also a person of integrity. There are two aspects to the connection between autonomy and integrity. To be autonomous one must identify with one's choices, and one must be loyal to them.¹

A person who feels driven by forces which he disowns but cannot control, who hates or detests the desires which motivate him or the aims that he is pursuing, does not lead an autonomous life. The life he has is not his own. He is thoroughly alienated from it. The condition of alienation which I have in mind is not to be contrasted with smug satisfaction with oneself. Nor is it a state free from guilt and self-reproach. Though alienation is commonly accompanied by rejection of the alienated self it need not be. One can feel estranged from one's achievements. One may feel incapable (p.383) of taking pride and pleasure in one's doings because one does not feel that they are one's own. In their more extreme manifestations these feelings border on the pathological. But in one degree or another they are part of the life of many.

Identification with one's life is a condition, or a pre-condition, of integrity, but it is not the whole of it. Another condition is loyalty to oneself, through loyalty to one's projects and

relationships. In the last chapter I have emphasized how our projects and relationships depend on the form they acquire through social conventions. This means, as we saw, that they depend on complex patterns of expectations, on the symbolic significance of various actions, and in general on remaining loyal, within the recognized limits set for improvisation and change, to their basic shape. Failure to do so is failure to succeed, or even to engage, in the pursuits one has set oneself to make the content of one's life.

These failures are all too often dismissed as of no significance, as no more than simple cases of changing one's mind. The nature of a project or relationship may well be defined by social conventions. But these are, to borrow Searle's phrase,¹ constitutive rules. They define the activity. If by not following them you fail to engage in one activity this just means that you engage in another. You are playing chequers and not chess. How can that matter? It matters in part because of the expectations which one may have induced in others who may have adjusted their behaviour as a result. But it usually matters much more because it is a failure of the agent himself to do what he has decided upon. This failure is destructive of relationships because it involves letting down others. Beyond that it turns one's life into a life with failure in it. (Where one abandons a project because one comes to believe that it is worthless or morally wrong further considerations must be brought into play. But they do not change the basic account.) The more failures one accumulates in one's important pursuits the more of a failure one's life becomes.

Throughout this chapter I repeatedly sound the alarm to warn against confusing various valid ideas with apparently related but really distinct ideas. Here another warning may **(p.384)** be in place against thinking that the previous remarks embrace a rigid, planned life, lacking spontaneity and hostile to the possibility of changing one's mind and dropping one pursuit to embrace another. Nothing is further from the truth. While some pursuits, e.g. various forms of monastic life, involve complete advance commitment to a very regimented and routine style of living, most are not of this kind. They allow for variations, encourage spontaneity, and some of the conventions governing their form delineate the (often plentiful) circumstances and reasons which are legitimate occasions for changing one's mind and abandoning the pursuit, without any whiff of failure in the air. An autonomous

person is free to choose pursuits which are more short-term, less comprehensive in nature, and which maximize opportunities for change and variety.

Once all that has been taken as read it remains the case that every pursuit has its form, according to which certain modes of behaviour are disloyal to it, incompatible with dedication to it. These are the ones which signify more than a change of heart. They may come of that but they are, if persisted in, the marks of failure. Integrity consists, in part, in loyalty to one's projects and relationships. Compromising one's integrity exacts in these ways its own price. But what has it to do with autonomy? Surely an autonomous life can be a failure. Hence the failure which lack of integrity implies does not show any special connection with autonomy.

The connection is in the kind of failure it is. It is a failure of fidelity which sometimes raises doubt whether the agent was ever truly committed to the project. I do not wish to suggest that the doubt is always justified. If lack of integrity were always due to lack of initial commitment it would be a different failure. It would be a failure to commit oneself, an inability really to choose what one is superficially attracted to, and is trying to choose. The common cases are of a subsequent failure of fidelity, which follows an initial real commitment. That kind of failure is consistent with autonomy. But the other case also exists. The failure to make choices through lack of initial commitment disguised under the flurry of an initial infatuation, does diminish the autonomy of the agent's life. It resembles self-deception. It is a **(p.385)** case where the opportunity to choose is missed by the agent thinking that he has made a choice and that he has committed himself, whereas in fact he failed to do so.

2.3 Creating Value. An autonomous life is neither necessarily planned nor is it necessarily unified. There is, however, a grain of truth in the view that autonomy gives life a unity. The autonomous person has or is gradually developing a conception of himself, and his actions are sensitive to his past. A person who has projects is sensitive to his past in at least two respects. He must be aware of having the pursuits he has, and he must be aware of his progress in them. Normally one needs to know of one's progress with one's projects in order to know how to proceed with them (and unless one tries to pursue them rationally then they are not one's projects any

more). If I aim to teach a student Kant's moral philosophy I have to know where we have got to, in order to know how to proceed. I still pursue this goal even if I am often mistaken in my judgment. I am no longer pursuing it if I decide at random what to talk to him about or what to ask him to do next.

Even if my project in life is never to have the same experience twice, I will be sensitive to my past. I may decide at random what to do next, but I will be choosing from a pool of options from which the ones I have chosen before are excluded.

Suppose I do talk to my student about Kant at random, because I believe that that is a good way of teaching Kant. I would still want to know whether I have been talking at random in the past in order to judge my student's progress. If he makes no progress I will have to change my plans for him. The same is true if my goal has been to have a random life. If I discover that I have not lived randomly until now it will be clear that I have failed in achieving my goal and there is no more point in proceeding with it. I may adopt for a second time the goal of having a random life from now on. But this would be a fresh start. It is not to continue the pursuit of my old goal.

People do reach decisions which are insensitive to success in performance hitherto. Imagine that on New Year's Eve 1980 Joan decides to support her local charity as often as she can. A year later she suddenly recalls her decision, realizing **(p.386)** with some embarrassment that it slipped out of her mind and she did nothing about it for a whole year. Does it matter? There is still as much reason for her now as there ever was to help the charity as often as possible. Her failure to do so in 1980 is no more reason not to do so in 1981 than was the fact that she did not help her charity in 1979 a reason for her not to decide to help it on New Year's Eve 1980. Nevertheless two changes have occurred. First, Joan has failed. Having decided to help her charity turns the fact that she did not into a failure which her not helping it before her decision was not. (If she had a moral duty to help the charity then not having done so in 1979 was a failure to do one's moral duty. But then her conduct in 1980 is a double failure: she failed to do her moral duty, and she failed to do as she resolved.) Second, the failure to behave as she decided in 1980 makes it impossible to start

carrying out that decision now. All she can do now is decide again to help the charity.

The first of these facts is particularly important. Though the general reasons for helping the charity are now much as they were, Joan's failure to carry out her resolution to help the charity turns her conduct during 1980 into a failure, which but for her resolution it would not have been. This means that her resolution changed her reasons for action. Her commitment to a particular course of action created for her new reasons which she did not have before. This is a general feature of human life. It does not attach to deliberate or reasoned decisions only.¹ It is common to all cases in which one is committed to a project, a relationship or any pursuit, regardless of the way one came to be so committed. Our goals create for us new possibilities of success as well as of failure. Winning a prize, or winning the esteem of others for achievements in what one cares about and is committed to, is unlike winning a prize for something one happened to achieve almost accidentally while not really caring one way or another. Suppose someone entirely free from any literary aspirations won a prize for something scribbled in his boredom. **(p.387)** It may put ideas into his head. But while indicating possibilities of future success, it is not a mark of any past success, as it would have been had the piece of writing which won the prize been the outcome of a committed engagement in writing.

Our life comprises the pursuit of various goals, and that means that it is sensitive to our past. Having embraced certain goals and commitments we create new ways of succeeding and new ways of failing. In embracing goals and commitments, in coming to care about one thing or another, one progressively gives shape to one's life, determines what would count as a successful life and what would be a failure. One creates values, generates, through one's developing commitments and pursuits, reasons which transcend the reasons one had for undertaking one's commitments and pursuits. In that way a person's life is (in part) of his own making. It is a normative creation, a creation of new values and reasons. It is the way our past forms the reasons which apply to us at present. But it is not like the change of reasons which is occasioned by loss of strength through age, or the absence of money due to past extravagances. Rather it is like the change occasioned by promising: a creation, in that case, of a duty one did not have

before. For, whatever reasons one had to make the promise, its making transforms one's reasons, creating a new reason not previously there.¹ Similarly, the fact that one embraced goals and pursuits and has come to care about certain relationships and projects is a change not in the physical or mental circumstance in which one finds oneself, but in one's normative situation. It is the creation of one's life through the creation of reasons.

Some philosophical traditions emphasize self-creation.² Sometimes this has been exaggerated into a doctrine of arbitrary self-creation based on the belief that all value derives from choice which is itself not guided by value and is therefore **(p.388)** free, i.e. arbitrary. The views explained above neither derive from nor support any such conception. On the contrary, they presuppose independently existing values which are transformed and added to by the development of one's projects and commitments. But, one may wonder, can one transform wrong into right simply by embracing it? If so what meaning is there to the assertion that embracing a project is done for a reason? Once one realizes that by embracing a project one makes its pursuit legitimate one would have no reason to care what antecedent reasons there are for embracing and pursuing it. The embracing cancels them out. If however embracing a project cannot turn it from wrong to right, what meaning is there to the claim that embracing it adds to its value for that person? Is it not always the case that he ought to pursue it only if he ought to have pursued it anyway, for reasons independent of his adoption of the goal?

I would claim, though I will not stop to illustrate the point at length, that sometimes one's choice does make it right for one to pursue a goal which but for one's commitment to it would have been a wrong goal to pursue. The analogy with promising can serve here as well. It may have been wrong to promise to give my son fireworks, for they are too dangerous. But having made the promise it may now be my duty to give him the fireworks. Of course if the danger is grave I should break my promise and seek to compensate him in some other way. It is not my contention that embracing a project can always tilt the balance of reasons the other way, only that sometimes it does so. Nor is it my claim that the typical function of commitments is to reverse the balance of reasons. Their typical, though not

exclusive, function is to make indeterminate situations determined. In this lies also the answer to the second question above.

The previous chapter expanded on the prevalence of significant incommensurabilities. Choice between incommensurables is undetermined by reason. When we choose we choose for a reason. Whichever option we adopt we do so because of the factors which make it attractive. But those are not outweighed, given the disadvantages of the option, by the reasons for its alternative. Many of our decisions, **(p.389)** in matters small and large, are undetermined by reason. The typical role of our decisions and choices, of having come to care about one thing rather than another, is to settle what was, prior to our commitment, unsettled. It makes the pursuit of the embraced option the right pursuit for us.

The emerging picture is of interplay between impersonal, i.e. choice-independent reasons which guide the choice, which then itself changes the balance of reasons and determines the contours of that person's well-being by creating new reasons which were not there before. This interplay of independent value and the self-creation of value by one's actions and one's past provides the clue to the role of the will in practical reasoning. Previously I have argued that wanting something is not a reason for doing it.¹ We can see now that, while fundamentally right, in one respect that claim was exaggerated. Saying 'I want to . . . ' can be a way of indicating that one is committed to a project, that one has embraced a certain pursuit, cares about a relationship. It is, in the way explained, part of a valid reason for action, once the initial commitment has been made. To that extent talk of what one wants is relevant to practical reasoning. In this usage it does not signify the existence of a particular mental state, a desire. It signifies a commitment, deep or shallow, to a pursuit, which may be limited or lasting and comprehensive. There are other ways in which we talk of what people want, and the brief comment above is not meant in any way to be exhaustive. It does, however, capture the main practical relevance of wants.

Self-creation and the creation of values discussed here are not uniquely connected with the ideal of personal autonomy. They represent a necessary feature of practical reasoning. Their discussion adds to and complements the argument of the last

two chapters. There is however a special connection between self-creation and the creation of values on the one hand and personal autonomy on the other. The ideal of autonomy picks on these features and demands that they be expanded. It requires that self-creation must proceed, in part, through choice among an adequate range of options; **(p.390)** that the agent must be aware of his options and of the meaning of his choices; and that he must be independent of coercion and manipulation by others. The ideal of autonomy, if you like, makes a virtue out of necessity. It picks on the necessary features we discussed in this subsection and by developing them in certain directions turns them into an ideal. Personal autonomy is the ideal of free and conscious self-creation. One must remember, though, that this remark does not explain the ideal of personal autonomy, for our notion of freedom is defined by personal autonomy and not vice versa.

3. The Value of Autonomy

Is personal autonomy valuable? Its description in the first two sections above may make it appear an appealing ideal. But does its value derive from the fact that many people desire to be autonomous? Is it valuable for those who do not want to have it? The general drift of the argument hitherto suggests that it cannot be valuable just because it is wanted. On the contrary, those who desire it do so because they believe that it is valuable, and only on condition that it is valuable. What then is its value? And is it just one option among several that one can choose or leave alone, or is it an essential ingredient of the good life so that anyone's well-being suffers if his autonomy is incomplete?

There are powerful reasons telling in favour of the view that personal autonomy is only one valuable style of life, valuable to those who choose it, but that those who reject it are none the worse for that. Their refutation is important to gain a proper understanding of the special features of autonomy which distinguish it from ordinary valuable options, such as playing golf, or becoming a nurse.

First, there is always the slow-acting poison of the thesis of the transparency of values. If a person does not want to be autonomous then how can being autonomous contribute to his well-being, since he does not think that it does? I will say nothing more on that issue. Second, it is tempting to apply autonomy to itself. The life of the autonomous person consists of pursuits freely chosen from various alternatives **(p.391)** which were open to him. Is not autonomy one of them? Does not its value in his life depend on its being freely chosen against a life without it? Finally, there is the most serious puzzle: the conditions of the well-being of a person, it was argued, are largely determined by his pursuits and goals. If he chooses to be autonomous then it becomes one of his goals and can contribute to his well-being. But it seems incapable of doing him any good if it is not wanted by him.

The last two arguments depend on assimilating autonomy to the goals and pursuits a person may have. Their refutation consists in showing that autonomy is not one project, or goal. As explained in the preceding sections a person lives autonomously if he conducts himself in a certain way (does not drift through life, is aware of his options, etc.) and lives in a certain environment, an environment which respects the

condition of independence, and furnishes him with an adequate range of options. The autonomous life depends not on the availability of one option of freedom of choice. It depends on the general character of one's environment and culture. For those who live in an autonomy-supporting environment there is no choice but to be autonomous: there is no other way to prosper in such a society. Before defending this proposition let it be qualified by the reminder that autonomy is a matter of degree. Even for those who live in an autonomy-enhancing culture it is not always best to maximize the degree of their autonomy. All I am claiming is that their well-being depends on their ability to find their place in their environment which includes having what is basically an autonomous life.

Since our well-being depends on our goals, and our ability to pursue goals is limited by the social forms of our societies it is easy to see that an autonomy-enhancing culture may well be tilted in favour of the autonomous life. It may well make it much more difficult for one to avoid the lure of the autonomous life. But, one may wonder, does it follow that there are no possibilities of a successful non-autonomous life in such a society? After all the autonomous person is marked not by what he is but by how he came to be what he is. But his life prospers if he succeeds in what he is, regardless of how he became what he is. Therefore, autonomy cannot **(p.392)** affect the well-being of those who do not pursue it as their goal except instrumentally. The mistake in this argument is the hidden assumption that while an environment supports autonomy through providing adequate opportunities to individuals, that fact does not affect the nature of the opportunities it provides. There are more of them, but they are themselves the same as the opportunities which can be available in a traditional society in which each person's course in life (occupation, marriage, place of residence) are determined by tradition or by his superiors. The opposite is the case. An autonomy-supporting culture offers its members opportunities which cannot be had in a non-autonomous environment, and lacks most of the opportunities available in the latter. This is yet again a matter of degree. Very few opportunities cannot exist at all outside an autonomy-supporting environment, and very few others cannot exist in it. The difference between the two types of environment is in the

preponderance of one kind of opportunities in the one and of different kinds of opportunities in the other.

Consider the change in the Western attitude to marriage which accompanied the change from pre-arranged marriages being the norm, to the general convention that the married should choose each other. The change has gone so far that any action by a parent which might be seen as an attempt to influence the choice of a spouse is frowned upon, however innocent it may be. Parents have to be very careful before introducing to their children anyone who is of suitable age and status to be a candidate for marriage. The move away from pre-arranged marriages affects in a profound way the nature of the marriage bond. The free choice of partners is a major element determining the expectations spouses have of each other and the conventions which determine what is expected of their relations. The change to marriage as a self-chosen partnership increased personal autonomy. But it did so not by superimposing an external ideal of free choice on an otherwise unchanged relationship. It did so by substituting a relationship which allows much greater room for individual choice in determining the character of the relationship for one which restricted its scope.

(p.393) More recent changes and tendencies in many countries legitimate not only choice of partner in marriage, but also choice whether to marry at all, cohabit without marriage, etc. These changes are uncertain and incomplete. Some tendencies, e.g. to communal families, or open marriages, may wither away. Others, e.g. homosexual families, may be here to stay. It is too early to have a clear view of the consequences of these developments. But one thing can be said with certainty. They will not be confined to adding new options to the familiar heterosexual monogamous family. They will change the character of that family. If these changes take root in our culture then the familiar marriage relations will disappear. They will not disappear suddenly. Rather they will be transformed into a somewhat different social form, which responds to the fact that it is one of several forms of bonding, and that bonding itself is much more easily and commonly dissoluble. All these factors are already working their way into the constitutive conventions which determine what is

appropriate and expected within a conventional marriage and transforming its significance.

In a similar way, even though the skills and technology involved in certain crafts and professions may be identical in two societies, the significance of pursuing any of them differs greatly in a society in which everyone follows in his parents' footsteps from one in which there is free mobility of labour. Attitudes to work, expectations from it, and conceptions of its role in one's life generally are inescapably bound up with whether the different occupations are freely chosen or not. Therefore the very nature and value of these occupations depends on whether they exist in an autonomy-supporting environment or not.

The relations between parents and their children are an example of a relationship which is not based on choice of partners. It shows that an environment can be supportive of autonomy and yet include forms not based on choice (quite apart from the fact that no one has choice over which opportunities are available in his environment). It has to be admitted though that even here choice has tended to creep more and more into the relations. Parents have greater control over whether and when to have children, and to a certain **(p. 394)** extent over which children to have. The widespread use of contraception, abortion, adoption, *in vitro* fertilization and similar measures has increased choice but also affected the relations between parents and their children. The impact of the increased choice on the character of the family is only beginning to be felt.

It would be a mistake to think that those who believe, as I do, in the value of personal autonomy necessarily desire the extension of personal choice in all relationships and pursuits. They may consistently with their belief in personal autonomy wish to see an end to this process, or even its reversal. The value of personal autonomy is a fact of life. Since we live in a society whose social forms are to a considerable extent based on individual choice, and since our options are limited by what is available in our society, we can prosper in it only if we can be successfully autonomous. We may do so to various degrees. Some people may base more of their lives on those aspects, such as parenthood, where choice is more limited. Others may improvise in their own lives and vary common forms to

minimize the degree of choice in them. But ultimately those who live in an autonomy-enhancing culture can prosper only by being autonomous.

The value of autonomy does not depend on choice, except to the very limited extent indicated. Throughout the preceding remarks I was assuming, of course, that it is generally agreed that an autonomous life is not inherently and necessarily evil or worthless. If it is, one cannot prosper by being autonomous. But my argument was aimed at those who regard autonomy as valuable, but as merely one option among many. Their mistake is in disregarding the degree to which the conditions of autonomy concern a central aspect of the whole system of values of a society, which affects its general character. The conditions of autonomy do not add an independent element to the social forms of a society. They are a central aspect in the character of the bulk of its social forms.

We can now see more clearly the strength and the ultimate failure of the revisionist challenge to the ideal of personal freedom. Taking autonomy as the concrete form of freedom (the next chapter will deal with political freedom and will **(p. 395)** include a further discussion of the relations between freedom and autonomy) the strength of the challenge is all too evident. Does not our analysis reinforce the view that freedom is not an independent separate ideal, that freedom consists in the pursuit of valuable forms of life, and that its value derives from the value of that pursuit? Our analysis certainly shows that autonomy is bound up with the availability of valuable options. But it concentrates on certain aspects of those options, those we identified as constituting the conditions of autonomy, those which are, as we saw in the present section, bound up with them. But the inseparability of autonomy does not mean that it is not a distinct ideal. Its distinctness is evidenced by the fact that it was described without commitment to the substance of the valuable forms of life with which it is bound up.

Autonomy is a distinct ideal, and it can be pursued in different societies which vary considerably in the other aspects of the pursuits and opportunities which they afford their members. Autonomy is, to be sure, inconsistent with various alternative forms of valuable lives. It cannot be obtained within societies which support social forms which do not leave enough room for individual choice. But it is compatible with any valuable set

of social forms which conforms with the general conditions specified above. In that lies the distinctiveness of the ideal as a separate ideal, though one which cannot be obtained just in any environment.

4. Value Pluralism

Moral pluralism is the view that there are various forms and styles of life which exemplify different virtues and which are incompatible. Forms or styles of life are incompatible if, given reasonable assumptions about human nature, they cannot normally be exemplified in the same life. There is nothing to stop a person from being both an ideal teacher and an ideal family person. But a person cannot normally lead the life both of action and of contemplation, to use one of the traditionally recognized contrasts, nor can one person possess all the virtues of a nun and of a mother.

To establish moral or value-pluralism, however, the existence **(p.396)** of a plurality of incompatible but morally acceptable forms of life is not enough. Moral pluralism claims not merely that incompatible forms of life are morally acceptable but that they display distinct virtues, each capable of being pursued for its own sake. If the active and contemplative lives are not merely incompatible but also display distinctive virtues then complete moral perfection is unattainable. Whichever form of life one is pursuing there are virtues which elude one because they are available only to people pursuing alternative and incompatible forms of life.

Such descriptions of moral pluralism are often viewed with suspicion, at least in part because of the elusiveness of the notion of a form of life. How much must one life differ from another in order to be an instance of a different form of life? The question seems unanswerable because we lack a suitable test of relevance. Indeed there is no test of relevance which would be suitable for all the purposes for which the expression 'a form of life' was or may be used. But this does not matter as the test of relevance we require is plain. For the purpose of understanding moral or value-pluralism, forms of life differ in their moral features.

Two lives must differ in the virtues they display, or in the degree that they display them, if they are to count as belonging to different forms of life. A form of life is maximal if, under normal circumstances, a person whose life is of that

kind cannot improve it by acquiring additional virtues, nor by enhancing the degree to which he possesses any virtue, without sacrificing another virtue he possesses or the degree to which it is present in his life. Belief in value-pluralism is the belief that there are several maximal forms of life.

Moral pluralism thus defined is weak moral pluralism. It can be strengthened by the addition of one or more of the following three claims (and there are further ways of refining and subdividing them). *First*, the incompatible virtues are not completely ranked relative to each individual. That is, it is not the case that for each person all the incompatible virtues can be strictly ordered according to their moral worth, so that he ought to pursue the one which for him has the highest worth, and his failure to do so disfigures him **(p.397)** with a moral blemish, regardless of his success in pursuing other, incompatible, moral virtues.

Second, the incompatible virtues are not completely ranked by some impersonal criteria of moral worth. Even if the first condition obtains it is still possible to claim that, though there is no moral blemish on me if I am a soldier and excel in courage because I am made of bronze, excellence in dialectics, which is incompatible with courage and is open only to those made of gold, is a superior excellence by some moral standards which are not relative to the character or conditions of life of individuals. The second thesis denies that such impersonal strict ordering of incompatible virtues is possible.

Third, the incompatible virtues exemplify diverse fundamental concerns. They do not derive from a common source, or from common ultimate principles. Some forms of two-level and indirect utilitarianism are morally pluralistic in the weak sense, and may also accept the first two strong forms of moral pluralism. But they are incompatible with the third.

There is yet another sense in which the value-pluralism explained above is weak. 'Moral' is here employed in a wide sense in which it encompasses the complete art of the good life, as Mill might have said.¹ It is in fact used in a sense which encompasses all values. The point of keeping the expression 'moral value', rather than talking simply of values, is to avoid two possible misunderstandings. First, 'value' is sometimes used in a relativized sense, to indicate not what is of value but what is held to be so by some person, group, culture, etc.

Secondly, some people hold that some kinds of values, e.g. aesthetic ones, provide no reasons for action: that they are relevant merely to appreciation. In this chapter 'value' is non-relativized and is understood to constitute or imply the existence of reasons for action.

(p.398) The argument of the last chapter supports strong pluralism, combining all the features we mentioned. Incommensurability supports the first two senses of strong pluralism and renders the third one very plausible. The dependence of value on social forms in itself supports all three conditions of strong pluralism. The existence of certain social forms is a contingent matter likely to frustrate any attempt at comprehensive ranking from any point of view, and making the existence of any underlying unifying concern most unlikely.

If valuing autonomy commits one to the creation of value which in turn presupposes strong pluralism, then assuming the value of autonomy one can prove strong value-pluralism. I shall not pursue this argument here any further. Instead I shall suggest, by a different route, that valuing autonomy commits one to weak value pluralism (and henceforth by 'value-pluralism' I will refer to the weak variety). Autonomy is exercised through choice, and choice requires a variety of options to choose from. To satisfy the conditions of the adequacy of the range of options the options available must differ in respects which may rationally affect choice. If all the choices in a life are like the choice between two identical-looking cherries from a fruit bowl, then that life is not autonomous. Choices are guided by reasons and to present the chooser with an adequate variety there must be a difference between the reasons for the different options.

Furthermore, as was argued above, the options must include a variety of morally acceptable options. So the morally acceptable options must themselves vary in the reasons which speak in favour of each of them. There are, in other words, more valuable options than can be chosen, and they must be significantly different or else the requirements of variety which is a precondition of the adequacy of options will not be met.

The upshot of the above is that autonomy presupposes a variety of conflicting considerations. It presupposes choices involving trade-offs, which require relinquishing one good for

the sake of another. Excellence in the pursuit of goods involves possession of the appropriate virtues. Where the goods are varied in character, so that they display varied **(p.399)** merits or advantages, their successful pursuit requires different virtues. The existence of more goods than can be chosen by one person, which are of widely differing character, speaks of the existence of more virtues than can be perfected by one person. It tells of the existence of incompatible virtues, that is of value-pluralism. A person may have an autonomous life without attaining any virtue to any high degree. However, he inhabits a world where the pursuit of many virtues was open to him, but where he would not have been able to achieve them all, at least not to their highest degree. To put it more precisely, if autonomy is an ideal then we are committed to such a view of morality: valuing autonomy leads to the endorsement of moral pluralism.

Notes:

(1) D. Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, New York, 1950

(2) Personal autonomy, which is a particular ideal of individual well-being should not be confused with the only very indirectly related notion of moral autonomy. The latter originates with Kantian idea that morality consists of self-enacted principles: 'The will is therefore not merely subject to the law, but is so subject that it must be considered as also making the law for itself and precisely on this account as first of all subject of the law (of which it can regard itself as the author).' (Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals, tr. H. J. Paton, London, 1956, pp. 98-9.) In Kant's though not in all other versions, authorship reduced itself to a vanishing point as it allowed only one set of principles which people can rationally legislate and they are the same for all. Nobody can escape their rule simply by being irrational and refusing to accept them. Personal autonomy, by contrast, is essentially about the freedom of persons to choose their own lives. Moral autonomy both in the Kantian and in other versions is a doctrine about the nature of morality. Personal autonomy is no more than one specific moral ideal which, if valid, is one element in a moral doctrine.

(3) J. L. Mackie, 'Can There Be a Right-Based Moral Theory?', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 3 (1978), 354-5

(1) See Ch. 7 above.

(2) E. L. Beardsley, 'Privacy: Autonomy and Selective Disclosure' *Nomos XIII: Privacy*, ed. J. R. Pennock and J. W. Chapman, 1971, p. 57. I found S. I. Benn's distinction between autonomy and autarchy particularly valuable. See his 'Freedom, Autonomy and the Concept of a Person', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1976), 116.

(1) One other aspect of the problem of adequacy of options has to be noted here in order to avoid a common misunderstanding. People usually control their lives not by deciding once and for all what to do for the rest of their lives. Rather they take successive decisions, with the later ones sometimes reversing earlier decisions, sometimes further implementing them, and often dealing with matters unaffected by the earlier decisions. The question arises, to what extent does autonomy require the continuous possibility of choice throughout one's life. Given that every decision, at least once implemented, closes options previously open to one (it may also open up new options) the question of whether, and when, one's own decisions may limit one's autonomy raises tricky issues.

(1) S. I. Benn and W. L. Weinstein, 'Being Free to Act and being a Free Man', *Mind*, 80 (1971), 195

(1) The importance of identification with one's projects was emphasized and explored by H. Frankfurt.

(1) J. Searle, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge, 1969

(1) Therefore the explanation here given is independent of the explanation I gave in previous publications of the normative force of decisions. See 'Reasons for Action, Decisions and Norms', *Mind* 84 (1977), also in J. Raz (ed.) *Practical Reasoning*, Oxford 1978.

(1) 'Promises and Obligations' in P. M. S. Hacker and J. Raz (eds.), *Law, Morality and Society*, Oxford, 1977

(2) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 3 (1978)

(1) Especially in Chs. 5 and 9.

(1) This use of 'moral' is compatible with the one described in Chapter Twelve. There we noted that from the perspective of an agent certain reasons are not normally regarded as moral. Here we note that when considering practical reason generally, without being in the position of any agent in particular, all values and reasons are moral. Those which are personal rather than moral reasons to one agent, e.g. his concern for the welfare of his child, are moral reasons to impartial by-standers.



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