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PERSONAL AUTONOMY IN SOCIETY

People are socially situated amid complex relations with other people and are bound by interpersonal frameworks having significant influence upon their lives. These facts have implications for their autonomy. Challenging many of the currently accepted conceptions of autonomy and of how autonomy is valued, Oshana develops a 'social-relational' account of autonomy, or self-governance, as a condition of persons that is largely constituted by a person's relations with other people and by the absence of certain social relations. She denies that command over one's motives and the freedom to realize one's will are sufficient to secure the kind of command over one's life that autonomy requires, and argues against psychological, procedural, and content neutral accounts of autonomy.

Oshana embraces the idea that her account is 'perfectionist' in a sense, and argues that ultimately our commitment to autonomy is defeasible, but she maintains that a social-relational account best captures what we value about autonomy and best serves the various ends for which the concept of autonomy is employed.

Preface

The concept of autonomy has occupied a principal place in moral, legal, and political debate for centuries, particularly in the west. The idea that competent adult persons are entitled to govern themselves is the ideal around which debate about the appropriate configuration of social, political, and legal institutions and practices occurs. As early as ancient Rome and reaching fevered pitch in the writings of persons such as Charles-Louis de Secondat (Baron de Montesquieu), John Locke, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson, the ideal of autonomy served as the compass by which political argument about the status of colonists in America and the rights of the propertyless was oriented. More generally and, perhaps, more centrally with respect to the task of this book, the concept of autonomy has figured importantly within philosophical discussions of agency.

An autonomous person is an agent—one who directs or determines the course of her own life and who is positioned to assume the costs and the benefits of her choices. Autonomy thus establishes the descriptive standard for what is assumed distinctive of human beings. But autonomy serves as a prescriptive standard as well, for it sets norms for the proper treatment of persons. One who is able to decide the direction of her life is to be respected for this ability. It is prima facie impermissible to interfere with an individual's right of autonomy where the individual is respectful of that right in others. Someone who is self-governing faces minimal interference in the formation and execution of her actions and choices, and it is proper that interferences be kept to a minimum.

The past twenty-five years have witnessed an increased interest in the concept of personal autonomy. Within the recognized categories of autonomy as a political, a moral, and a personal ideal attempts have been made to come to terms with the distinct ideas of autonomous agents, autonomous lives, autonomous action, autonomous desires, and autonomous choice. This, in turn, has spawned debate about various qualities claimed as central to an adequate understanding of autonomy—qualities such as rationality, self-control, authenticity, and identification—as well as a focused exploration of the skills required for living in step with one's authentic self. Given the multifaceted nature of the concept of autonomy and the difficulties this raises for analysis of the concept, no one has (to my knowledge, at any rate) attempted to produce a precise taxonomy of autonomy in its many guises. That task would be daunting, and probably futile. Certainly, I have no intention of embarking on such an enterprise in this book. I intend to follow other writers who have offered analyses of autonomy that acknowledge the complexity of the concept. Such efforts to shed light on the concept of autonomy have borne fruit.

The most recent conceptual analyses break new ground in a number of ways. Most obviously, recent interest does not limit focus to the conception of autonomy

central to Kantian moral philosophy. Rather, the model of autonomy operating at the heart of current theoretical debate is for the most part broadly neo-Humean. The central idea of the neo-Humean approach is personal autonomy is a function of the relation a person stands in with respect to those of her desires or pro-attitudes that bear on how she wants to live. There is, of course, considerable debate about just what a neo-Humean model of autonomy requires and what it captures about the autonomous personality that Kantian models have overlooked. In Chapter 2 some of these disagreements will present themselves. But there is agreement, too. It is undeniable that, once detached from the narrowly tailored focus on rationality and morality proper to Kant's work, the concept of autonomy reveals a rich, multifaceted, if not perspicuous character. Arguably, too, autonomy loses its otherworldly character and takes on a more naturalistic cast once it is set free from its Kantian trappings.

The task of this book is to offer a decidedly worldly, naturalistic interpretation of personal autonomy. However, the approach I shall take will not follow the path of the neo-Humean. The theory of autonomy advanced in this book is significantly different from both neo-Humean and Kantian models. My interest is in the concept of autonomy as a practical ideal. By this I mean I am concerned to bring to light the nature and function of autonomy, and the conditions of its existence, within the daily lives of its subjects. I think neither neo-Humean nor Kantian models can do this, but I will not argue directly against these models. I will, however, argue that recent attempts to unveil autonomy—particularly attempts that are neo-Humean in character—are misguided in two important respects.

The first and most pressing problem of such accounts is that they too readily construe autonomy as a phenomenon predicated on the etiology and occurrent state of a person's affective and conative psychology. As a result, insufficient attention is paid to autonomy as a state constituted by social and relational phenomena. While there have been gestures in the direction of illuminating the role played by environmental factors in facilitating the psychology of potentially autonomous agents, the possibility that environmental factors—things external to the agent—play an essential compositional role in autonomous agency has not been taken seriously. The focus remains on personal psychology as the locus of philosophical concern about autonomous agency. The second error or, better, trend with which I take issue is that the concept of autonomy is too readily and, often, uncritically paired with the concept of responsible agency. Increasing attention has turned to the central role played by autonomy in compatibilist analyses of moral responsibility. The result is that questions in philosophy about agent responsibility—for example, can moral responsibility coexist with an absence of alternate possibilities?—are taken to inform us of what would be true of autonomous persons as well. While autonomy may well play a central role in explanations of free, responsible agency, the phenomena are distinct and the conditions for each differ. Chapters 6 and 7 pick up these issues.

Chapter 1 begins with a look at what we are aiming at: a proposal consisting of general, arguably non-controversial thoughts about what it means to be personally autonomous. I think these intuitions will be accepted by those who propose quite different accounts of autonomy from my own, and I will employ them throughout

this paper. The working definition of autonomy supplied by these intuitions will be refined by examining the distinction between the capacity for personal autonomy and the condition of personal autonomy. The concept will be crystallized to a still greater degree by contrasting personal or agent autonomy with the phenomena of moral autonomy and political autonomy. The level of discussion will be quite general. The aim of Chapter 1 is to familiarize the reader with the idea of autonomy by briefly surveying the philosophical legacy of that idea.

The approach to autonomy at the forefront of recent discussion is largely neo-Humean, but to avoid association with a particular historical figure and ideology they are better called "psychological authenticity accounts," or "proceduralist" accounts. Variants of this view, which are examined in Chapter 2, share the conviction that autonomy is a state of persons that is preserved within, and in virtue of, what has been metaphorically described as the inner citadel. The metaphor of an inner fortress is intended to characterize a center of agency that is authentic of the individual, a center in virtue of which the individual's agency is manifest and by whose lights the individual's sovereignty and integrity are protected against assault by entities that oppose, endanger, or threaten to compromise it. At times the metaphor is intended to describe some aspect of the individual such as the "authentic self" in virtue of which this guarantee is forthcoming.

There is certainly disagreement among those who tout autonomy as a psychological phenomenon. Some, for example, claim autonomy to be an ahistorical concept while others locate the nucleus of autonomy in the psychic etiology of the individual. But there is more agreement. One organizing theme of such theories is that the sort of freedom or independence lies at the heart of autonomous agency is *procedural* rather than *substantive*. These terms are technical and will be explored in Chapter 2. Briefly, the idea is that autonomy is entirely a function of ensuring that the principles, preferences, and values by which a person's choices and actions are governed have been authenticated or adopted by the person under suitably reflective conditions as her own. According to psychological authenticity accounts, it is not necessary that the principles, preferences, and values, chosen social roles and experiences of a person originate within specific content-laden contexts rather than others if the person is to be self-governing. The alleged advantage of psychological authenticity accounts is their value-neutrality. By importing no requirements about the choices, desires, social roles and social arrangements suitable for autonomy, psychologistic accounts are said to be better equipped to comport with a multiplicity of life-styles. The exegetical portions of Chapter 2 will be familiar ground to those who have followed debates about autonomy, free agency, and responsible agency that have mushroomed in the wake of work by Harry Frankfurt and by Gerald Dworkin. Because their work has been so much the topic of discussion, sections of Chapter 2 will be familiar to many readers. However, I hope the critical comments I provide regarding their analyses of autonomy and the plethora of analyses spawned in their wake will be fresh enough to capture the interest of even the well-acquainted reader.

In Chapter 3 I offer an alternative to these approaches. My objective is to defend a social-relational conception of personal autonomy or self-governance. A social-relational conception construes autonomy as a condition of persons constituted by the social relations people find themselves in or the absence of certain social relations.[1] According to psychologistic theories, people who share the same psychology and same psychological history are, *ipso facto*, equally autonomous (or nonautonomous). By contrast, an social-relational theory such as I offer denies that personal autonomy is a condition that supervenes on occurrent dispositional states, psychological states, and pro-attitudes of the individual, or the history of these states, alone. The emphasis of the discussion is on what, generally, constitutes being an autonomous person and on what, generally, autonomous living calls for as opposed to what constitutes autonomous preference and choice. Chapter 3 introduces the social-relational account with a series of case studies. Chapter 4 fine-tunes the model by exploring in some detail the conditions the model mandates and by introducing the implications of these conditions for the philosophical debate and for social science.

The account I advance has not been met without challenge. The task of Chapter 5 is to consider, and answer, the more pressing objections. Among these is the concern that the account I advance is inappropriately perfectionist, with the effect of denying too many competent adults the prerogative of autonomous agency. Particular attention is paid to the charge that the social-relational account of autonomy readily invites paternalism. Critics charge that the requirements of social-relational accounts are excessive and that as a consequence autonomy is robbed of practical effect as well as of its claim to value neutrality. Moreover, it is alleged that the account limits the class of person we call autonomous and subsequently diminishes the equal moral and political standing of adult persons so essential to liberal ideology. I do not think these criticisms stand. To deny personal autonomy of an adult is not to deny a capacity for or a right to moral or political self-government, nor for fair moral and political representation. Not every constraint curtails autonomy, nor does every perfectionist project constitute an impermissible encroachment of autonomy. Moreover, autonomy is not the sole and overarching value. Our commitment to autonomy is at best a defeasible commitment.

Chapter 6 turns to a consideration of autonomy's value. I examine the kind of value autonomy is believed to have and how this value fares when confronted with the challenge of meeting competing and, on occasion, incompatible goods. I note that there are different ways of valuing autonomy—autonomy may be prized for its usefulness as a means to achieving other desired goods such as respect, or it may be

1 The fact that autonomy is a phenomenon that is best understood relationally does not mean that a person can only be autonomous in an interpersonal context. People can, of course, oversee their choices and direct their lives when distant from others; a Robinson Crusoe, for example, who has never interacted with others could be described as autonomous. But Crusoe's autonomy would still be a matter of his not being irremediably subservient, and the like. The unfortunate Friday, by contrast, lacks autonomy. See Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 2001).

valued because it is an elemental component of the developed human personality. Autonomy can have different value for different individuals or cultures. I deny that autonomy is of agent-relative value only, or even primarily, while conceding that the question of when autonomy should be defended and when its absence give us little cause for lament may be one that depends upon the value perspective of the agent, or one for which no decisive answer can be given.

Chapter 7 turns to metaphysics, and addresses the kind of freedom autonomy requires. A space is carved between autonomy and other "freedom" concepts such as negative and positive liberty, self-creation, and free will. I argue that autonomy is essentially agnostic with respect to the thorny issues of causal determinism and human free agency. Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of the discussion, focusing attention on the nexus between personal autonomy and moral responsibility.

My interest in this topic began with the PhD thesis I wrote, many moons ago, at the University of California at Davis. I owe my greatest intellectual debt to my dissertation supervisor, John Martin Fischer, whose critical eye and encouragement never flagged. John continues to influence my work, and I am grateful for his friendship and unabated intellectual generosity. James Stacey Taylor somehow found the time in his busy life to read carefully a first draft of the entire manuscript, and offered a wealth of helpful comments. I am much indebted to him. David Copp patiently read through the portions of the manuscript I found most dissatisfying and the editorial suggestions he made helped immeasurably. I have also benefited from discussion with him over the years on my concerns about autonomy. A number of people read chapters or sections of the book in their various incarnations. I thank Paul Benson, Michael Bratman, John Christman, Ishtiyaque Haji, Don Hubin, Ellen Frankel Paul, Tony Roy, Stephen Darwall, Kirk Ludwig, John Santiago, Michael Wedin, Gene Witmer, the late Richard Wollheim, Sara Worley, audiences at the conference on Reasonably Autonomous Persons: Rationality, Neutrality, and the Self, at the University of Missouri, St. Louis in March, 1999; at the conference on Autonomy sponsored by the Social Philosophy and Policy Center at Bowling Green State University in April, 2002; at the University of Minnesota, Morris; members of the Ohio Reading Group in Ethics; participants at the Third Conference on Moral Philosophy and Practical Reason, June 2003, Geneva, Switzerland (especially Stephen Darwall, who commented on a version of Chapter 6); and members of the University of Florida philosophy discussion group (Gator PhED). Needless to say, none bears responsibility for whatever problems persist herein.

On a personal level, I owe much to my cats (Négro and Anaximander of late, V.I. Warshawski, Levi Stubbs, and Bob of present) for their unfaltering companionship. They give me boundless joy and bring the importance of philosophical scholarship into perspective. I owe most to David Copp. He has helped make my life a rich and happy one, marked by ample autonomy and ample support.

M.O.
Gainesville, Florida, U.S.A.

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Contents

Chapter 1

The Concept of Autonomy

Introduction

The overarching task of this chapter is to assemble a set of considered intuitions about personal autonomy. By doing this, we will have at our disposal a yardstick of sorts against which the success or failure of this book in accomplishing its task can be measured. That task is one of providing an account of autonomy that best captures the concept the term is used to express. This concept is concerned with a status an individual can have—the status of being personally autonomous—that is crucial to anyone who is a member of or a participant in a social and political milieu having potentially significant coercive or manipulative influence upon her life. The concept of autonomy has been employed in a variety of other contexts, both theoretical and applied. I will not be addressing the very rich realm of applied usage. There is an abundance of literature, much of it new and quite engaging, on the subject of autonomy in the realms of medicine, consumer rights, privacy, law enforcement, and so forth.[1] But one central theoretical task is the conceptual task of providing an account of autonomy, where autonomy is a key status of persons, particularly adult persons, who are interpersonally bound by political, cultural, and moral frameworks. Such an account will be judged by its success in explaining autonomy in light of a realistic view of persons as socially situated. Of the many issues concerning autonomy, this is the one with which this book is concerned.

A Commonplace Notion of Personal Autonomy

The word "autonomy" derives from the Greek *auto* ("self") and *nomos* ("rule" or "law"). Taking etymology seriously, to be autonomous is to act within a framework of rules one sets for oneself; that is, it is to have a kind of authority over oneself as well as the power to act on that authority. While a person's behavior and motivations can be traced to a variety of factors, to describe a person as autonomous is to claim

1 For example, see Thomas May, *Bioethics in a Liberal Society: The Political Framework of Bioethics Decision Making* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Tom L. Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 5th edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); John Kleinig, *The Ethics of Policing* (Cambridge, 1996); Allan Buchanan and Dan Brock, *Deciding for Others: The Ethics of Surrogate Decision Making* (Cambridge, 1989); Gerald Dworkin, "Autonomy and Informed Consent," reprinted in Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 100–120.

that the person is self-directed in this way. A theory of autonomy must explain what kind of authority and power is involved.

Personal autonomy might be construed in a local, or occurrent, sense as a property of a person's acts or desires or choices considered individually, and pertaining to the manner in which a person conducts herself in particular situations. This localized construal seems to be especially apparent in judgments of responsible agency, as when we say of the thief, "No one made her steal. She acted autonomously; she did it of her own free will." For the better part of this discussion, however, autonomy will be treated as a global or dispositional phenomenon, the property of a person having *de facto* power and authority over choices and actions significant to the direction of her life.[2] The account of autonomy developed in the pages that follow will be an account of what it means to be this kind of agent as opposed to an account of what is involved in making a certain kind of choice. Unless stated otherwise, let us understand global autonomy of this kind as the intended sense of the term "personal autonomy."

The difference between the local and global notions is evident in the fact that a person's degree of global autonomy is not fully determined by facts about how autonomous or nonautonomous the person is *vis à vis* particular choices. A person is autonomous in the global sense, the sense that is our concern here, only if she manages her life. We correctly attribute global autonomy to a person when we have evidence of a person with *de facto* power and authority to manage matters of fundamental importance to her life within a framework of rules (or values, principles, beliefs, pro-attitudes) that she has set for herself. These matters are general and commonplace. They concern, for example, intimate relationships, access to and control over information about oneself, and the phenomena—education, employment, health

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2 A global or dispositional conception of autonomy is developed in my "Personal Autonomy and Society," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29/1 (Spring, 1998): 81–102. Also see Robert Young in *Personal Autonomy: Beyond Negative and Positive Liberty* (New York, 1986); Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*; Paul Benson, "Autonomy and Oppressive Socialization," *Social Theory and Practice* 17 (1991): 385–408; and Paul Benson, "Free Agency and Self-Worth," *Journal of Philosophy* 91/12 (1994): 650–68. Diana Meyers treats the distinction between local and global autonomy as one between episodic and programmatic autonomy: "Autonomous episodic self-direction occurs when a person confronts a situation, asks what he or she can do with respect to it … and what he or she really wants to do with respect to it, and then executes the decision this deliberation yields. Autonomous programmatic self-direction has a broad sweep. Instead of posing the question 'What do I really want to do now?' this form of autonomy addresses a question like 'How do I really want to live my life?' To answer this latter question, people must consider what qualities they want to have, what sorts of interpersonal relationships they want to be involved in, what talents they want to develop, what interests they want to pursue, what goals they want to achieve, and so forth. Their decisions about these matters together with their ideas about how to effect these results add up to a life plan." Diana T. Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice* (New York, 1989), p. 48.

care, and family life, for example—that impart a distinctive configuration to a person's life.

Now let us suppose that a person is locally autonomous with respect to given choices and actions when they proceed from springs of action that typify her deepest, critically rendered and freely held values. Assume that this person's motives for action have not been induced in the person by the undesirable or surreptitious machinations of others. As episodes of autonomous activity increase in number and in range in her life, does her degree of global autonomy increase accordingly? Not necessarily. One reason global or dispositional autonomy is not necessarily increased by an increasing sum of episodes of self-governance is that the latter can be highly localized and restrictive—they might concern only a very narrow range of matters—or they might concern matters of little consequence to a person. But even in the case where a person is self-directed over a generous range of matters that are of significance to her, the person's success might not be due to her own efforts. The person might be permitted to act in a self-directed fashion only because others who are in a position to exert a governing influence over her choose to stay their hand. Or the person's displays of will might be coincidental, contingent on the presence of certain idiosyncratic patterns in her social environment or her psychology that favor bursts of self-governed activity. In these instances episodes of autonomy transpire despite the person's inability to manage her environment or despite the fact that others have the ability to hijack capriciously the person's efforts at self-management. A person does not manage her life when she is subject to the arbitrary will of another or when her ability to realize her values is incumbent on good fortune rather than on her labors. In such cases, she does not have full global autonomy.

The following is a very brief sketch of intuitive ideas about the kind of power and authority required for autonomy. I think these ideas are not controversial and I will say more about them, with elaboration and adjustment, in Chapter 3.

1. Power: Autonomous persons are beings in *actual* control of their own choices, actions, and goals. By this I mean the person is in possession of the *de facto* power to govern herself. Here we find the familiar idea that a self-determining person faces minimal interference in her actions and choices. Interference can be brought about by social or psychological or physical means such as coercion and manipulation, neurosis, weakness of will, or bodily impulse. The autonomous individual is not forced to do the will of another. Of course the autonomous person might share goals with others and pursue these goals in concert with others, and she might rely on the advice and judgment of others regarding the merit of these goals. But in the end the reasons for which the autonomous agent acts are her own.

Implicit in the idea of actual control over one's life is the idea of self-control. Two things are true of self-controlled people. One is that they are significantly motivated "to conduct themselves as they judge best," not succumbing to impulsive behavior antithetical to their interests. Another is that they have "a robust capacity" to do

this "in the face of (actual or anticipated) competing motivations."[3] Self-governing persons must generally be moved to control themselves in the face of temptation to do otherwise.

2. Authority: Autonomous persons are in a kind of *authoritative* control of their own choices, actions, and goals. To have authoritative control is to "own" the management of one's choices, actions, and goals.[4] Presumably, even nonautonomous people have a moral right to control their own choices, actions, and goals, and even nonautonomous people might exhibit episodes of activity over which they exert power or control. But since an autonomous person is "an independent source of activity in the world,"[5] in command of the overall direction of her life, autonomy must involve some further variety of control. That is, the autonomous person must not only have *de jure* control of her choices, actions, and goals but must enjoy a status against other persons or institutions that might attempt to deprive her of her authority to command these choices, actions, and goals. Having the relevant kind of authority guarantees that a person's life is free of the domination of others.

In short, personal autonomy is a property of a person who manages matters of fundamental consequence to her agency and to the direction of her life. Autonomy calls for agential power in the form of psychological freedom—mastery of one's will—as well as power and authority within certain fundamental social roles and arrangements. So described, global autonomy is intended to capture commonplace, pretheoretical ideas about self-governance. They are ideas held, at a more or less developed level, by laypersons and academic philosophers alike.

Autonomy Naturalized

To understand personal autonomy in this manner is to view personal autonomy as a naturalized phenomenon. What does this mean? A naturalized view of personal autonomy is a view according to which autonomy is a natural property of persons, possession of which can be established *a posteriori* on the basis of natural facts. Judgments about whether or not a person is autonomous are judgments about how that person is in the world, and the property of being autonomous is an empirical, natural property.

By contrast, a non-naturalized account will make at least some of the conditions for autonomy ones that a person cannot be known *a posteriori* to satisfy. Non-

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3 Alfred Mele, *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy* (New York, 1995), p. 6; Mele, "Autonomy, Self-Control, and Weakness of Will," in Robert Kane (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (New York, 2002), pp. 529–48.

4 The language of ownership is borrowed from Paul Benson, who claims that autonomy requires the agent to recognize herself as one who takes or "seizes" ownership or as one who has the authority to answer for herself. See his "Taking Ownership: Authority and Voice in Autonomous Agency," in John Christman and Joel Anderson, eds, *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism: New Essays* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 101–26.

5 Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (New York, 1998), p. 206.

naturalized theories all require something to be true of autonomous persons that cannot be known empirically. Immanuel Kant's notion of autonomy is non-naturalistic in so far as it links autonomy with a state of metaphysical freedom unobtainable in the empirical world. A theory of autonomy which views persons as self-governing only if they have "freedom from the world" or "triumph over socialization" or "liberation from others" is arguably non-naturalistic. Even if we could figure out what would count as success in these respects, these do not appear to be empirical conditions. Equally non-naturalistic is a conception of autonomy that requires that a person's character be "self-made," such that the person fashions himself *ex nihilo* and alone bears responsibility for his personality.[6] Each of these conceptions is arguably non-naturalistic since each treats autonomy as a type of freedom the possession of which could not be verified empirically.

A naturalized conception of autonomy must satisfy two conditions, or so I think. The first condition is a consequence of the general account of naturalism that I have been explaining. This is that the properties which constitute autonomy must be natural properties, verifiable through the senses or by introspection (or must supervene on natural properties). But I believe "naturalism" has a broader meaning in light of the view that a naturalized theory is one that takes realistic account of general empirical facts. There is, I believe, a second condition for a naturalized conception of autonomy. It is an empirical fact that persons are socially situated amid complex relations with other people, and because of this individuals are not self-governing unless they have a status that guarantees them freedom from interferences that are "external" in nature and origin. Hence I would say that a completely naturalized account must treat autonomy as, in part, a function of a person's status and relations that are extrinsic to facts about her psychological history and occurrent psychological state.

A conception of autonomy is not a naturalized one because it lends itself to investigation from an external point of view—because it can be scrutinized from a point of view external to that of the agent whose autonomy is in question. Naturalism is not a theory about who has access to the objects of investigation; it is not a theory about the knower, but a theory about the thing known and about the conditions of its knowability. Nor does naturalism claim that every object of study be approached from a perspective of facts about the social environment. A theory of mind that reduces mental states to states of the brain is clearly naturalistic, but does not call for an analysis from a perspective of facts about the social environment. The point is that certain necessary conditions of autonomy are themselves external to and independent of the individual's internal character. As a result, we cannot adequately investigate claims to autonomy without evidence that these conditions have been met in the natural world. Few theories of autonomy are naturalistic in the sense that they satisfy this second condition. Of course, not every naturalistic theory of autonomy will be a good theory of autonomy. But a tenable account of autonomy—a tenable account of self-government as a

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6 Among contemporary philosophers, Susan Wolf takes autonomy to mean that a person is undetermined and "self-creating," and she rejects autonomy as a plausible condition for moral responsibility on this basis. See Wolf, *Freedom Within Reason* (New York, 1992).

condition that would be undermined in coercive or interfering moral, social, and political settings—must satisfy the two conditions of naturalism.

The conception of autonomy discussed above is a pretheoretic ideal that provides a gauge against which the plausibility of models of autonomy is assessed. The critical and the constructive tasks to which this essay aspires are to evaluate competing models of autonomy against the pretheoretic ideal and to provide a naturalized model of the ideal.

The Capacity—Condition Distinction

The theory of autonomy developed in this book concerns the state or condition of being personally autonomous—the state I have called global autonomy. My argument is premised, in part, on the idea that the state of being autonomous is primarily a function of the external situation a person finds himself in rather than being predominately a function of a person's psychological state or practical skills. The argument requires that the condition of being autonomous be distinguished from the capacity for autonomy and from the exercise of that capacity. A capacity for autonomy consists of the minimum of qualities a person must possess in order to lead a self-directed life. The need for a distinction between capacity and condition is pressing in light of the fact that the more familiar approaches define autonomy as a (primarily) psychological capacity of persons to rule themselves: a person is autonomous if she has the ability to evaluate, endorse, and revise her motives for action, or they define autonomy as the successful exercise of this capacity, understood as an array of coordinated skills.[7]

Differentiating among the capacity for self-government, the exercise of the capacity, and the condition of self-government enables us to distinguish persons who are self-governing from, first, persons who lack the psychological equipment needed to be self-determining (victims of profound psychological manipulation, for example) and, second, from persons who are equipped with the psychological and practical skills essential to self-government but who nevertheless are not self-governing. The latter preserve a capacity for autonomy even when they are subject to circumstances that deprive them from ability to act on their choices and actively be autonomous. It is imperative to draw the capacity/condition distinction in order to make plain that one can have the readiness for autonomy while lacking the opportunity to exercise this readiness.

Joseph Raz, for example, maintains that the capacity for autonomy is "the condition of a person who has a certain ability" that may or may not translate

7 See, for example, Richard Arneson, "Autonomy and Preference Formation," in Jules Coleman and Allen Buchanan (eds), *In Harm's Way: Essays in Honor of Joel Feinberg*, (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 42–73; Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*; John Christman, "Autonomy and Personal History," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 20/1 (March 1991): 1–24; Bernard Berofsky, *Liberation from Self: A Theory of Personal Autonomy* (New York, 1995); Diana Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice*.