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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

HORIZONS OF THE SELF:

AN ESSAY IN THE SOCIO-SEMIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

BOUNDARIES OF PRACTICAL AUTONOMY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

JOHN L. DUNCAN

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HORIZONS OF THE SELF:
AN ESSAY IN THE SOCIO-SEMIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the members of my committee for their endurance and patience in helping me to complete this work. Chairman Ed Sankowski has guided my readings for the past several years and revealed the problem of autonomy as one that is both interesting and challenging. Professor Zev Trachtenberg raised a question during my defense of the general exams about how the media might shape human behavior. Many of my points in the present study are about that issue. Professor Ken Merrill has been a great influence throughout my long history at the University of Oklahoma. It was during an evening conversation that he brought up the issue of minimal rationality, which also became a theme in this study. Professor Wayne Riggs has been very patient in helping me navigate the waters of epistemology and without his help that part of the argument might still be unclear. And Professor Don Maletz has provided encouragement throughout the long and tiresome process of putting this work together. Finally, but not least, I would like to thank my wife, Marjy, who has tolerated my passion for reading and talking about philosophy. Without the help of these individuals, I would not have been able to complete the present study.

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(ABSTRACT: The practice of personal autonomy is a dynamic event that consists of

a vital interplay between the self, socio-cultural reality, meaning, and being

epistemically responsible. Autonomy is not static, something that we simply possess

by virtue of a status as 'rational beings'. Therefore, in this dissertation, I examine the

traditional notion of autonomy as it has been developed by Kant and subsequently

influenced the surrent debate between 'liberals' and 'communitarians'. Primarily from

the standpoint of the critiques developed by Charles Taylor, I argue that the

fundamental disagreement between these two camps is over the concept of the self.

While this landscape stands divided, some middle ground can be found in the work of

Joseph Raz, who postulated the need for a combination of individual abilities and an

autonomy-supporting environment as necessary conditions for practicing personal

autonomy. His characterization of 'personal autonomy', distinct from Kantian

autonomy, forms the underlying paradigm for this work (although I argue that it must

be expanded greatly). I provisionally define personal autonomy as 'self-directing',

which leads to an analysis of the self, beginning with Taylor's critique of 'disengaged

agency' and arguing hat the self, by its very nature, can only be understood in relation

to a world, which, to a great degree, constitutes it. Because semiotics has strongly

influenced the study of cultural reality, I adopt its perspective by arguing that

language, in the broad sense, constitutes the meaningful structure articulating the

human landscape. However, because of the impact of media, technology, and images

upon our interpretation of who we are and what we need, I examine the theories of

Baudrillard and McLuhan, who each represent varying degrees of a social critique of

the modern world. What emerges is a picture of the individual swept up in a universe

of misleading and often superficial imagery, which is used to define the self, its desires, and its needs. Such a strong external influence has a tremendous impact upon the ability to live autonomously. Self-interpretation shapes self-direction. But the responsibility for self direction lies with the individual, as an accomplishment. I therefore describe the various individual abilities (such as minimal rationality, self-identity, time-consciousness, objectivity, and emotional intelligence) necessary for the practice of autonomy. However, even an individual possessing all of these abilities may not achieve much autonomy. The idea of 'epistemic responsibility', as introduced by Code, lays out the components of having a responsible practice of gathering and evaluating information. This practice, coupled with living in an 'epistemically-responsible community' expand Raz's notion of individual abilities and an 'autonomy-supporting environment'. The practice of personal autonomy therefore is seen as a dynamic interplay of individual abilities, a supportive environment of others who provide accurate information, and a responsible practice of gathering and evaluating information and using it in defining the self. Finally, by contrasting a society that provides minimal support for personal autonomy with one that provides optimal conditions, I argue that personal autonomy is indeed a valuable thing. What emerges is a call for a new ethics of responsibilism for self and community, where a maximization of personal autonomy creates the potential for a better society.)

Preface

"What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man.
You cannot say, or guess. for you know only
A heap of broken images. where the sun beats.
And the dead tree gives no shelter. the cricket no relief.
And the dry stone no sound of water."

The Waste Land. T.S. Eliot

The present study is the result of my intense desire to have my cake and also

eat it. For a significant part of my adult life, I have been inclined to view the self as

a pinnacle of subjectivity. over and against the objective world. Influenced by the

tradition of thinkers spanning from Descartes. Hume, Kant. Hegel. and Husserl. I

have believed that reason is the key to understanding the self. and that the external

world (whether mechanistic, noumenal. or phenomenal) only had 'meaning'

because it was imposed by a rational agent. Consequently, I have viewed morality

as highly intertwined with autonomy, and impressed with the views held by the

tradition of thinkers broadly referred to as 'liberals': Berlin, Rawls. and Dworkin

have all made sense to me, given my preoccupation with a certain epistemological

orientation.

However, beginning with my concerns about the problems of

intersubjectivity and historicity faced by Husserl toward the end of his life and

expressed in The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,

I have wrestled for over twenty years with the relationship between the self, others,

and the life-world. Also, influenced by what has been known as the 'analytic

tradition', I have appreciated problems associated with language, particularly

notions of 'sense' and 'reference' (Frege) and the interesting yet often baffling

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Wittgenstenian concept of 'language games'. Wittgenstein, Austin, Putnam, and Kripke presented me with many difficulties, especially regarding the transcendental aspects of Husserlian phenomenology. I also had problems making sense out of the critiques of modern subjectivity evinced in the writings of such thinkers as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Ricoeur, and Foucault.

All of this, along with a renewed interest in ethics and political philosophy, led me to consider some of the writings from the 'communitarian' camp. Sandel's criticism of Rawls, MacIntyre's concept of 'narrative unity', Walzer's 'spheres of justice', and most importantly Charles Taylor's analyses of modern identity have impressed me with the necessity of understanding the self, not as 'disengaged rationality', but as integrated within a constitutive world. This means that my earlier commitments to transcendental philosophy needed to be reconsidered. How can I salvage some semblance of my earlier notions about the rational nature of the self, and the resultant importance that I have placed upon autonomy as the cornerstone of morality, while, at the same time, paying heed to the compelling arguments of the communitarians?

The result of my quandary is the present work. What I hope to argue is that many of the positions I have held for a significant part of my life are not quite right (I hesitate to say wrong!) and must be rethought. I have listened closely to Taylor's criticisms of those who see the self as disengaged, and I have carefully followed his arguments about the emergence of the modern paradigmatic concept of the self. This has led me to believe that a wider (or, in Sandel's language, a 'thicker') description of the self is needed. And I believe that Taylor is correct in stating that we are caught within an 'inescapable framework' that plugs us into our world. On the other hand, I disagree with many of his articulations of these frameworks. A

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more comprehensive perspective is needed, so part of my views here have to do with my readings of thinkers grouped under the 'postmodern' label, such as Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Guattari, and especially Baudrillard.

In the philosophical community, it is often the case that reading 'postmodernsim' is much like riding a mo-ped. It is fun to do, but you don't want your colleagues to see you do it. But I think that some (though not all) of their perspectives are illuminating. While many --Foucault, Derrida, and Loytard-- critique the foundation of logic that is present throughout the Western philosophical tradition, Jean Baudrillard tackles the world of technology, image, fashion, and media in an extremely insightful way. I think that any theory of the self and autonomy that fails to consider his views is missing an important perspective on the modern world that should not be overlooked: Certainly the proliferation of images heaped upon one another in our fragmented universe has a deep impact upon our ability to live autonomously. Further, it has a profound effect upon the constitution of the meaning of the self and its world.

With this cacophony of philosophical background, I have set out, in this study, to try to figure out how to salvage some semblance of the rational self as I understand it, to retain a central place for some version of autonomy, and to reconstruct my own thinking about the relative importance of transcendental thinking. I believe that I have been able to articulate the problem and show that its answer is critical for the future of social and political philosophy. Of course, I have relied upon the roads traveled by many major figures. In some ways, I see this work less as a piece of original thought, than as a montage of views rearranged in a novel manner. It is the attempt to turn cacophony into symphony.

My thesis is that the theory of 'personal autonomy' surfaced by Joseph Raz in The Morality of Freedom is basically on the right track, providing a mid-point between the extremes of liberal and communitarian thought. While retaining broad features of the Kantian tradition, Raz incorporates a concept of the 'autonomy supporting environment' as a critical part of his overall theory. Further, the detailed arguments of Charles Taylor, cautioning against founding autonomy upon a view of the self as disengaged rationality, are, in my view, mostly correct. If he is right, a clearer understanding of the self as something that is constituted, at least in part, by the cultural world, is integral to his notion of personal autonomy. I argue that there are many thinkers who have given us information about how this works. Husserl's *lebenswelt* is a starting point; however, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, in their concepts of 'being-in-the-world and *lebensform*, have presented a challenge that detached reason is a perspective which can be partially attained only by an individual who is, by essential nature, engaged in world-context.

Semiotics, taken broadly as in the context of Umberto Eco, can, through examining the cultural world as a system of signs, serve as a valuable tool for analyzing this world-contextuality and how it, as a source of meaning, creates conditions for self-interpretation. So envisioned, self-interpretation impacts self-determination, especially in how the individual perceives himself, his needs, and his wants. I carry this argument to the works of Jean Baudrillard, who argues that the commodification of the world has led to our being enclosed within what he calls 'hyperreality', a world of pure images that have lost reference to reality. Although I don't believe that Baudrillard's position, in the extreme, is tenable, I do think that if taken even in a weak sense, he shows that arriving at an 'autonomy supporting environment' may be harder than Raz supposes. This fact leads me to consider how

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we come to believe in certain things, especially in certain views of the self, its needs, and its overall goals in life.

Shifting gears toward the individual, I then examine the nature of belief, along with views (Freud, Lacan, Skinner) of unconscious motivation and operant conditioning, showing how these things can fit into the Baudrillardian universe. And finally, as an attempt to save the notion of autonomy from being lost forever within an inundating ocean, I examine the requisite mental abilities for the practice of autonomy and turn to the ideas of doxastic responsibility and epistemic responsibilism found in the writings of Goodman, Rorty, Code, and Montmarquet. I argue that in the absence of a self which stands over and above its world, and because of the problems faced by foundationalism and coherentism in epistemology, the pragmatic solution is to adopt (at least provisionally until absolute knowledge is discovered) a responsibilist orientation toward practical reasoning. This perspective affects the ability of an individual to achieve personal autonomy, because of the necessity of deliberation within the boundaries of human finitude.

Finally, I bring all of these elements into play, arguing that any notion of autonomy must include a more developed 'supportive environment' than that envisaged by Raz. This environment must not only maintain tolerance of diverse life-styles, plurality of goods, and independence, but also adopt an epistemically responsible stance toward the ways in which the world is articulated by the media, government, and society. The autonomy-supporting environment must not only support the kinds of individual education and development that increase the potential for individual autonomy, but also place the media, technology, and the market within its purview —we must have an ethics of 'responsibilism' that applies to the social world. I then turn to the individual, whose potential for practicing

personal autonomy will lie along a gradient axis corresponding to (1) the nature of the autonomy supporting environment, and (2) facility with the tools of autonomy: minimal rationality, doxastic responsibility, and the practice of epistemic virtue.

I conclude by arguing why I think that autonomous individuals living within a supportive environment have a greater potential for actualizing genuine morality than those living within either a utilitarian or autonomy-limiting environment. Morality itself does not necessarily follow autonomy; however, individuals who actually choose their lives are more responsible for their choices. I believe that responsibility is a cornerstone of morality.

I realize that this argument is complex, not necessarily in what I am saying, but certainly in the route that I have picked to say it. Because I have taken so much from so many different thinkers, I have tried to help myself and the reader by organizing the chapters under certain headings, corresponding to major points in the overall argument.

The first section, "Toward a Definition of Personal Autonomy," is an attempt to lay out the basic problems associated with arriving at a description of 'personal autonomy'. In Chapter 1, I trace the concepts that have led up to the articulation of autonomy presented by Kant in the Critique of Practical Reason. This includes Aristotle's arguments about 'voluntary and involuntary actions' and Aquinas' discussions of free will. I then present an overview of the Kantian view that autonomy is acting according to the categorical imperative. In Chapter 2, I bring into focus the contemporary debate between the 'liberal' tradition (thinkers who are more in line with Kant) and the 'communitarian' tradition (thinkers who believe that morality is rooted in the relationship between the self and the world). I end this Section with a detailed presentation of Joseph Raz's conception of

'personal autonomy' and its correlative 'autonomy supporting environment'. which I think is a more pragmatic approach than that taken by Kant. and which I will argue for as a starting point for a more fully developed version.

In Part Two, I show various kinds of arguments that the self is intrinsically connected to and partially constituted by its world. explaining how this affects the notion of personal autonomy. Chapters in this section articulate just how the concept of the self as 'disengaged reason' emerged and how it influences the corresponding view of autonomy. I rely upon many developments spelled out in Charles Taylor's Sources of the Self and Philosophical Arguments to show this development and argue that his appeal to 'inescapable frameworks' is. in principle, mostly correct. I then present an analysis of Rawls' theory of moral development in A Theory of Justice. showing that there is an implicit communitarian infrastructure which is necessary for having the free. equal. and rational individuals who derive the principles of justice from behind the 'veil of ignorance'. Because of this. I argue that Rawls has perhaps been subject to overly harsh criticisms by Sandel and others. Finally. I examine many alternative perspectives. presented by Husserl. and Schutz (*lebenswelt*). Heidegger (*Befindlichkeit*). and Wittgenstein (*lebensform*). showing that the move away from foundationalism requires a different understanding of the connection of the self to its world, which is, in turn. critical in developing a workable theory of autonomy.

In Part Three, I examine a different aspect of the correlation between self and the constitutive world. This view relies upon developments in semiotics. which, if they are right, describe a new way of understanding how we understand both self and world. As a precursor to 'postmodernism', semantic theories of Saussure, Levi-Strauss, and Eco, among others are traced, mainly to show how it is possible to

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understand the human world as a semiotic horizon. I then examine Foucalut's critique of modern subjectivity and show his fatalistic vision (which I do not wholly agree with) of the individual enclosed in a relativistic universe of discourse which is continually being manipulated by those who are in power. I finally discuss the positions held by Jean Baudrillard and Marshall McLuhan, arguing that the commodification of reality, the pervasive background of media, and our preoccupation with images can have a drastic impact upon our understanding of our self. In this context, I talk about 'manufactured needs', conformity, and deception – pointing out that, if left unchecked, they contaminate the autonomy-supporting environment.

In Part Four I take up the issues of psychology and epistemology. Starting with a general inventory of the mental abilities (e.g. minimal rationality, emotional balance, conception of the self as a narrative unity, etc.) necessary for personal autonomy. I move into an analysis of three major psychological barriers to autonomy. Freud's theory of 'unconscious motivation', Lacan's semiotic interpretation, and Skinner's 'operant conditioning' are seen as paradigmatic of the view that what we believe, want, and how we behave, may be founded on something beyond our rational control. I also examine Goleman's appeal to 'emotional intelligence' as a further individual ability necessary to maximize the potential for personal autonomy. I further argue that belief, as Hume supposed, is, in fact, a disposition and not a mental act; yet, following Montmarquet, I show that there is some room for us to shape higher-order beliefs through cognitive virtue, and there is definitely a way of being responsible about setting up good epistemic conditions leading to responsible beliefs . Since doxastic responsibility is contingent upon responsible cognitive practice, I will examine epistemic

responsibilism as advocated by Code and Montmarquet as the paradigm for practical reasoning and as a practice that. if followed. will contribute toward a greater degree of personal autonomy.

Finally, in Part Five. I conclude that there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and its world that determines the degree of personal autonomy. Autonomy. for its part, will be shown not as static. but as a dynamic process that contains a plenum of variation from minimal to optimal. I reconsider Raz's 'autonomy-supporting environment', supplementing it with the findings from the inquiry into media and technology, and then lay out basic guidelines for making it more conducive to the practice of personal autonomy by articulating an ethics of responsibilism in the social world. I then turn back to the individual. arguing that only through the practice of epistemic responsibility can personal autonomy be optimized.

In this final chapter. I present my full-blown picture of practical autonomy as something that occurs between the self and the world. I further argue that an increase in autonomy is a good thing, which will make it possible for society to live at a higher level of morality, without abandoning reason, science, technology. or the complex and often fragmented world of images that surround us. I hope to convince the reader that the communitarian position, modified, as I have done in this work. is not anti-rational and certainly not irrational. Then, I present my vision of the autonomy-supporting environment as fostering a new sense of creativity, both for the self and cultural world.

My final point is this: The complex horizons of the self –historicity, semiotic insertion, cultural reality— combined with the style of cognitive life make autonomy possible. I then stretch the argument into a social critique, arguing that

any moral society must necessarily value individual autonomy as a condition for morality in general. And because of the necessary connection between morality and autonomy it is imperative that a moral society be autonomy-supporting. This kind of social world would need to create the external conditions –plurality of goods, tolerance of diversity, legal protection of human rights, epistemic responsibility, and normative realism -- as well as the internal conditions –intelligence, doxastic responsibility, and epistemic responsibility-- necessary to establish the context for morality and a truly autonomy-supporting environment.

This study is somewhat preliminary in scope, i.e., it cannot delve into the restructuring of the entire social reality, nor can it become fixated upon the validity of the claims made be the postmodernists (which I think are in need of assessment at a more basic level), nor can it completely take up the arguments of doxastic responsibilism or epistemic virtue and the psychology of belief. What I can accomplish in this work is the orchestration of a host of varied concepts into a symphonic statement about the role of the individual in a fragmented world, a "heap of broken images." How do we find ourselves in this myriad of pieces, where the market continually reinterprets humanity in terms of profit and fashion? Hopefully, this work provides a signpost for a possible answer, one that will roughly sketch how the world should be in order to allow individuals to flourish to their greatest extent and become true moral beings.

PART ONE

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF PRACTICAL AUTONOMY

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

The concept of autonomy is by no means consistent in its use throughout the history of ideas; in fact, it has been used so diversely that there may be little in common from theory to theory.[1] However, because any theory of autonomy must begin with an examination of the role autonomy has played in the work of Kant, who articulated its most famous rendering, I begin by giving a <u>short</u> summary of the Kantian thesis, followed by some problems that are inherent to his view. I then examine the differences between the 'liberal' and 'communitarian' perspectives regarding autonomy. Finally, in this chapter, a concept of autonomy is developed that, while consistent with previous thinkers, will hopefully begin to bridge the gap between 'liberal' and 'communitarian' camps. I argue that autonomy is not synonymous with freedom, even though many thinkers have used the terms interchangeably; rather, it is more of an individual accomplishment that presupposes a certain amount of metaphysical freedom, individual ability, and community support. It is not univocal --instead, it may be found along a continuous scale of more or less. Far from being a Kantian rationalist abstraction, autonomy is vitally connected to the socio-cultural world with its sedimentation of values, beliefs, and justifications. Finally, autonomy is not a thing, but a way of life: it requires continual vigilance, cognitive virtue, and social reinforcement in order to thrive.

KANTIAN AUTONOMY

While it is far beyond the present study to give a comprehensive analysis of the Kantian theory of autonomy, it is clear that much of what shapes contemporary discussion about the subject finds strong roots there. This is particularly true in the camp of thinkers broadly described as 'liberals', including Rawls. Berlin. Scanlon. Ronald Dworkin. and others who hold the general position that abstract reason is the necessary condition for individual autonomy. Because of the influential nature of Kant's theory. it is useful to present a general summary and draw out the lines of argument that constitute a basic criticism of the position.

In The Critique of Pure Reason. Kant lays bare his famous 'Copernican Revolution'. arguing that the nature of mind intrinsically limits theoretical reason. Because of the structuring functions of mind. human beings can never perceive the 'thing in itself' and are condemned to live and reason within a world of 'phenomenal' objects. Simply. because we are unable to see the thing as it is. we are limited to see and reason about the thing as it appears to us. Raw. unformed sense impressions are brought to the mind. which. by its very nature, can only make sense of objects within the space and time it intuits as a palette, finally being structured by the categories of understanding into useful and cognitively friendly objects. But this process, if true, means that all reasoning about the world is dealing with 'constituted' phenomena, not the things themselves. Throughout the Critique, Kant argues that theoretical reasoning about the world is limited by its necessary reliance upon underlying cognitive structures.

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[1] A good summary of the various contemporary uses of the term 'autonomy' can be found in Gerald Dworkin, The Theory and Practice of Autonomy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. Pp. 3-7.

Because of the limits of theoretical reason. Kant. in the first <u>Critique</u>. traces several 'antinomies' of pure reason. An 'antimony' is a pair of conflicting metaphysical claims that can both be proved equally well by theoretical reasoning. Kant's 'Third Antimony' shows that theoretical reasoning is at an impasse over the conflicting positions of free will and determinism. Allison correctly observes. regarding the Third Antinomy. that "it is only because the resolution of this antimony leaves a conceptual space for an incompatibilst conception of freedom that it is possible to give the claims of practical reason a hearing."[2] However. the concept of freedom is perhaps the most central feature of Kantian thought. By offering an analysis of 'practical reason', Kant hopes to ground the metaphysics of morality within his theory of human action. For this reason. it will be useful to briefly examine two theories of action that are instrumental in Kant's intellectual development. First. I will examine Aristotle's view. which emphasizes 'voluntary action' and then the view of 'human action' developed by St. Thomas Aquinas, who focused upon the components of 'free will' and 'rationality' as necessary conditions.

Aristotle on Voluntary and Involuntary Actions

Aristotle thought that such affections as perception and desire are common to the psyche. This occurrence is the most fundamental aspect of the Aristotelian theory of action, since without desire. according to Aristotle. action would never occur. Thus, from this view, desire is the motivating principle of all human action. In other words, if a person had no desires, then that person would have no need of practical reason, deliberation, and would remain static. However, the idea of a purely static person is not compatible with the nature of living things, which take

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[2] Allison, Henry E. <u>Kant's Theory of Freedom</u>. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1990. P. 11.

nourishment, reproduce, and, at least in the view of Aristotle, strive to flourish according to their natural function.

Since virtue is concerned with desires and actions, Aristotle distinguishes between 'voluntary', 'involuntary' and 'mixed' actions. He argues in the third book of Nichomachean Ethics that people are held blameworthy and praiseworthy for voluntary actions and pardoned for involuntary ones. Actions are involuntary when they are done because one is forced to do them, or one is ignorant of not doing them. He considers compulsion and ignorance sources of involuntary action.

However, not all actions can be classified as either voluntary or involuntary. For instance, a ship's captain who throws his cargo overboard during a storm because he thinks that it is the only way to save the ship has not destroyed the cargo voluntarily; rather, he is opting for the lesser of two evils: loss of the goods instead of loss of the crew and the goods. Aristotle refers to this kind of action as a 'mixed' action.

Many of Aristotle's contemporaries argued that all actions are done from compulsion, and so are involuntary. Some who support this position believe that every action is performed for the sake of pleasure (in either base or noble forms). Aristotle disagrees with this position, arguing that action, although motivated by desire, is within the control of the agent. All action that is not due to 'compulsion' or 'ignorance' is voluntary. This means that Aristotle considers all actions that are either calculated or done in passion under the heading of voluntary actions.

The discussion of voluntary actions leads Aristotle, in Book III, section 2 of the Nichomachean Ethics, to discuss the problem of choice. He says that, at first blush, all voluntary acts seem to be choices. However, he argues that the universe of voluntary acts encompasses yet is not exhausted by the universe of choice. To be

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a choice, an act must be neither appetite, anger, wish, nor opinion –these can all be qualities of 'lower' creatures. On the contrary, choice is something, according to Aristotle, that is strictly human. It is more like a wish, but still different: neither is it an opinion. Choice involves a rational principle and thought.

Aristotle speaks of choice and deliberation in Book III, section 3. He enumerates three aspects of deliberation: (1) deliberation about what can be done, (2) about what is in our power to do, and (3) about means rather than ends. If I employ each of these aspects of deliberation, then I am able to act from choice. Aristotle, therefore, defines 'choice' as "deliberate desire of things in our power" (NE, III 3a 11-12). Clearly, in Aristotle's writings, there is a relationship between underlying desires and how we live our lives. Action arises only from desire, which points us toward the final goal of activity. Choice comes into play as the way in which we act, based upon deliberations about things that are within our grasp. For the present study, this is the beginning point of a theory of understanding how contamination of the desire process, especially in light of the distortions of reality within the image-creation process of the marketplace, can limit the degree of 'voluntariness' in life.

Aquinas on 'Human Action'

St. Thomas Aquinas wanted to weld Christianity to Aristotelianism; however, this means blending morality with the most basic form of human life, activity. Therefore, for Aquinas, human actions are, necessarily, moral actions. But, clearly, not every single human act is moral, for then raising my hand, coughing, and bodily functions would be moral. Aquinas sidesteps this issue by distinguishing between those acts that are 'human acts' and those that are 'acts of a

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human being".[3] Only the former are acts that could be done only by a human *qua* human. This distinction separates actions performed by human beings from those involuntary or insignificant acts along with those of irrational creatures. Aquinas writes: "Human beings differ from irrational creatures in this, that they have dominion over their actions. That is why only those actions over which a human being has dominion are called human. But it is thanks to reason and will that human beings have dominion over their acts: free will is said to be the faculty of reason and will."[4]

Further, human acts are always done for an end. There is a *reason* for every human act, according to Aquinas. So, when a person acts, he first must *intend* to do something in particular. This focus upon intention is necessary for Aquinas to argue for the intentional features of Christianity. It is what you were thinking at the time that determines whether your action is a sin or not.

Kant was deeply influenced by these features of Aquinas' thought. The idea that reason is a vital component of human action spurred Kant to include it in his grasp of attaining the moral law, which also relies heavily upon the notion of proper intending.

Kant's Theory of Autonomy

The Critique of Practical Reason, along with his other ethical writings, constitute what Kant viewed as a logical step from the Third Antimony. He was attempting to show that we can have a certain kind of metaphysical knowledge; that while theoretical reason is blind to the thing in itself, practical reason, concerned with human action and responsibility, demands metaphysical freedom. This kind of

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[3] See Ralph McInerny, "Ethics," in Kretzman and Stump, The Cambridge companion to Aquinas, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. P. 196.
[4] Aquinas, St. Thomas. Summa Theologica. IaIIae.1.4.

freedom must be present in the universe, according to Kant, for there to be the slightest possibility of morality. Granted this argument is hypothetical (i.e. if there is morality, there must be freedom), Kant believed that he was continuing the project set forth in the first Critique.

Throughout the corpus of his writings, Kant relied strongly upon this notion of freedom. Not only does it ground morality, but it also overcomes, in a sense, the inability of pure reason to attain connections with 'external' objectivity. Through the arguments of the first Critique, Kant has painted himself into a transcendental corner from which the only escape is the metaphysical necessity of absolute human freedom. This position, along with the conception of space and time as ideal forms, has been the chief source of criticisms of Kant.[5] This line of criticism is further exacerbated by the multiplicity of ways that Kant uses the concept of freedom. For example, Lewis White Beck has distinguished five different ways that Kant uses the term.[6] This list could, according to Allison, be easily expanded, which leads him to wonder whether Kant can be said to have had a theory of freedom at all.

For Kant, 'autonomy' is closely associated with metaphysical freedom. It is important to realize that while autonomy, in this context, refers to a way that human beings realize metaphysical freedom, it is not that freedom itself. In the Groundwork, Kant stresses that the Greeks correctly divided the sciences into three distinct areas: physics, ethics, and logic.[7] While maintaining this distinction within his own philosophical corpus, Kant was compelled to find a moral philosophy that

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[5] Ibid. P.1.
[6] Beck, Lewis White. "Five Concepts of Freedom in Kant," Philosophical Analysis and Reconstruction, a Festschrift to Stephan Korner, J.T.J. Srzednick, ed. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987, Pp. 35-51.
[7] Kant, Immanuel. Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals. Tr. Lewis White Beck. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1959. P. 3.

was completely independent of the empirical world.[8] This became the primary

mission of the Groundwork.

Kant's begins to formulate his theory of autonomy through an examination

of action. Following Aristotle, Kant holds that without desire there would be no

action whatsoever; consequently, he is inclined to begin by stating that that which

we seek is pleasure, while that which we avoid is pain[9] (or displeasure. Cf. Pr.R. 58-

59. Anthr. 230-31). We desire that which promises pleasure and fulfillment and

avoid that which stands in the way of our desires and causes pain or discomfort. In

fact, having everything the way we want it is, according to Kant, our "greatest, in

fact our whole, desire in life."[10] Kant calls the faculty of mind that is concerned

with fulfilling our desires 'prudential reasoning'.

Prudential reasoning employs general rules, or 'maxims', which have been

learned through experience, to get us what we want.[11] These rules have evolved

because they are effective. Kant believes that these maxims are instrumental in our

desires, for, according to his position, anyone who wills something also wills the

means of getting that thing.[12] Insofar as we have a loose body of maxims designed

to achieve practical ends, Kant believes that acting upon the basis of these kinds of

maxims is acting in accordance with 'hypothetical imperatives'. By this he means

that they are valuable if, and only if, one values the fulfillment of a certain related

desire. This position has been characterized by Sullivan in the following way: "If

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[8] Ibid. P. 5.

[9] Kant used the terms 'lust' and 'unlust' or 'schmerz', Cf. Critique of Practical Reason (op.cit.), Pp. 58-59 and Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, tr. Mary J. Gregor, Pp. 230-31.

[10] Kant, Immanuel. The Metaphysics of Morals. Tr. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp. 480, 482.

[11] Cf. Groundwork, Pp. 38n, 413n; Critique of Practical Reason, Pp. 20-21, 28, 68; and The Metaphysics of Morals, P. 225.

[12] Groundwork. P. 45.

you happen to count such and such as part of what will make you happy. then many people have found this is a good rule to follow."[13]

Kant characterizes acting upon hypothetical imperatives as a form of 'heteronomy'. By this he means that the desire is based upon some empirical thing that one wants, and therefore is not something generated purely within the will. For this reason. Kant holds that prudential reasoning is incapable of grounding morality. Instead. Kant wants to find a moral source that is beyond the vicissitudes of empirical experience. He is looking for a grounding of morality beyond simple happiness. This foundation is discovered by unpacking the concept of the good will. Kant holds that morality cannot be grounded upon or drawn from experience.[14]

The solution for Kant lies in the 'categorical imperative'. In contrast to hypothetical imperatives that obligate us conditionally, the moral law can be found only through acting upon imperatives that obligate us unconditionally. Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative states: "I should never act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should become a universal law."[15] Kant expressed the categorical imperative in three basic forms. having to do with (1) the formula for autonomy, (2) the formula of respect for the dignity of persons. and (3) the formula of legislation for a moral community.[16] Without delving into the complexities of Kant's three formulations of the categorical imperative. it is important to notice that he calls it the law of autonomy.

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[13] Sullivan, Roger J. Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989. P. 37.
[14] The Metaphysics of Morals, Pp. 215, 405.
[15] Groundwork. Op. Cit. P. 18/402.
[16] Sullivan. Pp. 149-50. It is interesting to notice that Sullivan catalogs no less than twenty one variations of the 'formula of autonomy' within the Kantian corpus (Cf. P. 346n). The point here is that Kant equates autonomy with acting according to a moral law. This differs from the idea that

For Kant, therefore, autonomy is acting in accordance with the categorical imperative. This is radically different from the simple view that autonomy, coming from the Greek 'autos' (self) and 'nomos' (rule), is choosing what one wants in life. In Kant's theory there is an absolute dictum that a person is not autonomous unless he behaves in a certain way. We are self-governing, according to Kant, only insofar as we conform to his vision of deontological morality. Any rational agent has the ability to live autonomously, regardless of the conditions of his world, simply by employing the categorical imperative.

Problems With the Kantian Position

It is clear from the preceding discussion that Kant held that autonomy was a property intrinsic to all rational beings who act in accordance with the categorical imperative. If moral principles could be grounded in the contingencies of human desires and interests, and if autonomy resided in this realm, one could just as well act autonomously while rejecting morality, which, for Kant was unacceptable. This means that if one follows moral rules because of some instrumental reason (e.g. to gain God's approval), one's actions lack moral worth. Instead, Kant believes that the source of moral worth lies in the fact that the principle for action originates independently of external sources; it emanates from the nature of the good will itself, with no reference to the world of experience. In this way, Kant believes that he has arrived at a notion of autonomy that, while binding one to follow the moral law, is still the highest form of self-governance.

Hegel began a tradition of Kantian criticism. In particular, he held that Kant's 'empty formalism' was an abstraction and that the concept of the categorical

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autonomy is not tied to an objective principle (Cf. Robert Paul Wolff, In Defense of Anarchism. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. P. 14).

imperative is inadequate to handle specific moral problems.[17] This line of criticism

is spelled out more fully in the complaint that Kant had an inadequate and

unrealistic conception of the self. He appears to describe the isolated rational agent

deliberating about the moral worth of a particular circumstance without the benefit

of a supportive environment filled with rich cultural, historical, and scientific

information.[18] As Berofsky writes,

> the relocation of the deliberating subject in a space
> which acknowledges the individual's essential
> participation in a community meets with profoundly
> different responses. If individual identities cannot be
> extricated from the social meanings which shape
> them, perhaps moral deliberation is viable only
> against a background of shared commitments, shaped
> by a common tradition.[19]

This hint of the communitarian critique will be developed more fully throughout this work.

Another point of contention with Kant's theory is the equation of an

autonomous agent with a moral agent. Many thinkers, attempting to follow Kant,

have tried to derive morality from rationality. Notable among these is David

Gauther, who is finally forced to conclude that if reason is initially instrumental and

used to fulfill desires, it will continually remain such.[20] His Rawlsian argument is

complex, but essentially he views morality as arising out of agreements made

between rational agents who have recognized that unfettered self-interest is, in the

long run, counterproductive. This is necessary because in this Hobbsian state of

nature, with individuals pursuing only self-interest, a point will come where these

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[17] Hegel, G.W.F. Science of Logic. Tr. By A.V. Miller. New York: Humanities Press. 1969. Pp. 133ff.; also Cf. Hegel. G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. Tr. By A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1977. Chapter 6, section C.)
[18] At least this is the position characterized by many communitarians and recounted by Bernard Berofsky in Liberation from Self: A Theory of Personal Autonomy, P. 6.
[19] Ibid. P. 6.
[20] Cf. Gauther, David. Morals By Agreement. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1986. Also, see the interesting efforts at the derivation of morality from rationality in Thomas Nagel, The Possibility of Altruism; Kurt Baier, The Moral Point of View, and Alan Gerwith, Reason and Morality.

individuals. in order to survive, are forced to make agreements that benefit everyone. which. in turn. further self-interest. Therefore. as the principles of morality are determined by this process. morality itself is derived from rationality.

But thinkers such as Nozick and Crocker challenge the relevance of rationality itself to autonomy.[21] According to this view. if a person were to achieve the ideal of perfect autonomy, he would be bound by nothing. certainly not the "demands of rationality." Berofsky argues against this strong position. saying "an ideally autonomous agent might require the power to reject reason: but the idea of such an agent is anyway incoherent."[22] In the weak sense. however. the claim that a perfectly rational being is commensurately perfectly autonomous and. therefore. perfectly moral seems to be a hyperbole. since there are no perfectly rational beings.

It has been suggested that the general term 'rationality' is itself too vague to fully satisfy the requirements of a theory of mental activity necessary to ground morality. Berofsky and others have argued that Kant's narrow conception of rationality lacks the robustness to fully capture the scope of rational life.[23] In a subtle way. this line of criticism parallels that advanced by the communitarians; namely. that the Kantian conception of the rational person as a unity fails to present an adequate description of a person, whom they believe is much more influenced by culture. history, language, and the institution of human knowledge than can be

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[21] Cf. Robert Nozick, Philosophical Explanations, P. 354; and L. Crocker. Positive Liberty, Pp. 36-43.

[22] Berofsky, Op. Cit. P. 10.

[23] Berofsky, P. 10; also Cf. Christopher Cherniak, Minimal Rationality. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986.

captured by a detached cogitator.[24] This has led, in contemporary political

philosophy, to a broad division between 'liberals' and 'communitarians'.

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[24] This is the general import of Charles Taylor, <u>Sources of the Self</u>, in which it is argued that these facets are so instrumental to the constitution of the self that to leave them aside is to eliminate the very notion of the self as we understand it. Cf. Especially Pp. 7988, 355-385, 411.

Liberals Versus Communitarians: A Different View of the Self

The landscape of modern political philosophy has been divided into two major camps: liberals and communitarians. But this division itself can be misleading. because each of the individual thinkers grouped under one of these headings has a particular view that may be closer or farther from one end of the spectrum. However. in the most general sense. thinkers who have been called 'liberals' tend to focus upon the individual, particularly regarding the individual's 'inalienable rights'. Because of their focus upon the individual, over and against the society, a group of thinkers has emerged who criticize this preoccupation with individuality, contending that the notion of 'community' plays a vital role in the establishment of 'deeper' meanings (i.e.. those with profound cultural significance). which are themselves necessary for the good life. However. this particular appeal to community does not imply a return to utilitarianism.

The rise of liberalism can be traced back to Kant's moral philosophy. According to his view. empirical principles. such as utility, are inadequate to ground morality. Utilitarianism ignores the rights and freedoms of the individual. As Sandel observes. "If enough cheering Romans pack the Coliseum to watch the lion devour the Christian, the collective pleasure of the Romans will surely outweigh the pain of the Christian, intense though it be."[25] However, there is something that seems intuitively wrong with a morality that will justify such behavior. Human life has an intrinsic value.

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[25] Sandel, Michael J. (ed). <u>Liberalism and Its Critics</u>. New York: New York University Press, 1984. P. 2.

This underlying picture of individual sanctity, over and against the many, has led contemporary liberals to focus more on 'rights' over 'goods'. According to this view, no pursuit of the good justifies violating certain basic rights and liberties of individuals. Sandel explains: "For Kantian liberals, then, the right is prior to the good, and in two senses. First, individual rights cannot be sacrificed for the sake of the general good, and second, the principles of justice that specify these rights cannot be premised on any particular vision of the good life."[26] Society should, according to this view, exemplify a general structure that is equally fair to all individuals, who can then, by choosing their own values and goals, seek their own definition of the good.

Rawls

The landmark of contemporary liberal theory appeared in 1971 with the publication of John Rawls' A Theory of Justice. He was concerned with getting beyond 'meta-ethics', back into the arena where political philosophy actually said something about how we should live. He was also concerned with overcoming utilitarianism. But Rawls' solution was to assert first the primacy of certain rights, and then set out a theory of justice which reflected this view of the individual and, at the same time, was fair. In order to accomplish this goal, Rawls modeled his conception of the self largely upon that of Kant. However, there are many great differences between his view and Kantianism.

Briefly, and according to Rawls, free and equal rational subjects can perform an operation of detaching their concerns from everyday life, nullifying their prejudices of a certain view of the good, and not considering their particular location within the social order. He calls this bracketing the 'veil of ignorance'. By making

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[26] Ibid. P. 4.

basic choices behind the veil of ignorance, these individuals would agree on certain

principles for the ordering of a just society. These principles are: (1) "Each person

is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties

compatible with a similar system of liberty for all"; and (2) "Social and economic

inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the

least advantaged. and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under

conditions of fair equality of opportunity."[27]

The appearance of A Theory of Justice naturally excited great controversy

within the philosophical community. Utilitarians came out in force against it,

defending their territory, and libertarian thinkers, such as Nozick, held that Rawls

was too restrictive, that the fundamental imperative of individual freedom could not

be realized within the Rawlsian universe. However, beginning in the 1980s,

thinkers who have come to be known as ˙communitarians˙ contended that Rawls has

introduced an untenable notion of the individual, that it is impossible to abstract

from the self as it stands within the community. Further, these thinkers broadly

contend that the sense of what constitutes a good life can be found only from within

the context of the cultural meanings within which we are inextricably bound.[28]

MacIntyre

Going back to Aristotle's doctrine that justice is deeply enmeshed in "a

community whose primary bond is a shared understanding both of the good for man

and the good of that community," Alasdair MacIntyre in After Virtue attacks the

very premise of Rawls' procedural reasoning as a way to derive the principles of

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[27] Rawls, John. A Theory of Justice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971. P. 302.
[28] In a later chapter I will argue that this interpretation of Rawls is not quite correct; that he maintained a sense of the social genealogy of the self as evidenced in his theory of moral development.

justice.[29] According to MacIntyre, one can understand one's life only by its reference to a certain 'narrative unity', or a story through time. But an individual's narrative does not occur within a vacuum, it converges with other people's narratives and vice versa. Thus, for MacIntyre, the individual can understand himself only within this complex, or community.[30]

MacIntyre attacks 'emotivism', by which he means the idea that moral discussions (as reflected particularly in the modern world) are attempts to persuade others to one's own preferences and values. According to his view, the notion of the self found in Rawls' A Theory of Justice provides a grounding for emotivism. This is because all of the grounding for morality in Rawls' universe emanates from the individual who is isolated from his original context with others. As Mulhall and Swift point out, "It seems clear that, for MacIntyre, contemporary forms of liberalism are simply further symptoms of the emotivist disease that he is attempting to diagnose and cure; the Rawlsian self is a version of the emotivist self."[31]

This rise of emotivism, in MacIntyre's view, is a direct result of the failure of efforts during the Enlightenment to provide a rational justification for morality.[32] His take on this failure is that the rationalists were trying to ground certain moral principles in reason, without reference to the historical and cultural origins of the concepts. Taken in abstraction, the concepts could not be justified by reason alone. This is because the development of moral principles has an evolutionary character, i.e., they are the products of generations of individuals, each whose life was a

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[29] MacIntyre, Alasdair. After Virtue, London: Duckworth, 1981. Pp. 232-3.
[30] It is interesting to notice that MacIntyre only sees this community context as part of a family, social group, tribe, or neighborhood. He does not think that it actually occurs in the state. Furthermore, morality is found within these intertwined narratives, and is something that the state cannot contain.
[31] Mulhall, Stephen and Swift, Adam. Liberals & Communitarians. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. P. 77.
[32] Ibid. P. 77.

narrative unity, converging with and diverging from other narrative unities. It is the internal dialectics of the interplay between individuals through time that hones the moral sense and solidifies moral principles.[33]

This conception of moral development is teleological. There is a human telos that works through history as the interplay between individuals. dialogue. disagreement. and consensus. that leads us to an understanding of moral principles. They are not something that can be grasped through a detached rational perspective. This means that Rawls, insofar as MacIntyre reads him as subscribing to this view. is wrong-headed about how to ground the principle of justice. He writes: "It is rooted in the forms of social life to which the theorists of the classical [Greek] tradition give expression. For according to that tradition to be a man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point or purposes: member of a family. citizen. soldier, philosopher, servant of God. It is only when man is thought of as an individual prior to and apart from all roles that 'man' ceases to be a functional concept."[34]

Human identity, from this perspective, is determined. to a great extent, as a social role. But MacIntyre points out that Aristotle loosens the concept of social role, making it a part of the 'function' of being human.[35] MacIntyre calls this inclusion into the social process a 'practice'. He thus defines a 'practice' as : ". . . any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to

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[33] See, MacIntyre, After Virtue, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 53ff.
[34] Ibid., P. 56.
[35] Ibid. P. 40.

achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended."[36] A 'practice', therefore, is organized around a system of internal goods. It is a way of life for a group of individuals that is organized according to community shared commitments, alongside patterns of virtuous behavior.

Like a chess game, the 'practice' forms a context of rules which govern activities occurring within it. It serves as a foundation for claims about values, and prescribes what kinds of actions are virtuous. MacIntyre believes that, by grounding morality in a 'practice', which has itself been refined through generations by the historical culture, we can avoid emotivism.

MacIntyre, therefore, disagrees with Rawls' account of the self. Instead of the 'emotivist self', subjective individuality, he sees the self as a narrative unity, amalgamated with other narrative selves, bound together in a community of shared beliefs evinced through a common practice. Against the charge of being an anti-rationalist, MacIntyre would respond that it is only through the developments of history, the morphology of the communities' paradigms, that we have honed reason to the level that it is currently able to attain. Rather than being some detached thing, reason itself is sharpened and employed through tradition.[37] It is the tradition that supplies the individual with resources to deliberate well about rational choices in life. They cannot, as Rawls suggested, be obfuscated by a 'veil of ignorance'.

Sandel

Michael Sandel has been one of the most outspoken and direct critics of Rawls. In 1982, he published <u>Liberalism and the Limits of Justice</u>, which contains a

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[36] Ibid. P. 175.
[37] Cf. MacIntyre, <u>After Virtue</u>, Pp. 204-5.

detailed analysis and critical appraisal of Rawls' A Theory of Justice. In this work.

Sandel's main attack has to do with what he sees as Rawls' conception of a person. which he sees as metaphysically flawed. However. he also criticizes Rawls for espousing 'asocial individualism', moral subjectivism, neutrality regarding the conception of the good. and being implicitly self-contradictory by relying upon a communitarian conception of the self in some areas of the work.[38]

According to Sandel, Rawls' reliance upon the detached. autonomous rational agent commits him to a certain metaphysical view of the self which places moral priority on the subject over and above its ends. As Mulhall and Swift point out. this view means that "what most fundamentally deserves respect in human beings is their capacity to choose their aims and ends rather than the specific choices they make."[39] According to Sandel, moral priority implies metaphysical priority, since the identity of the self lies beyond its ends. Rawls' suggestion. according to Sandel. is that a person's autonomy is more than just one good among many. but rather the most fundamental value for human life.

If this view of the self is correct, Sandel argues. then Rawls is painting a picture of a certain kind of 'monadology', where individuals are initially distinct from each other and then engage in intersubjective activities. This means that intersubjective relations are not constitutive of the self. If the 'I' is metaphysically prior to history, culture, and society, then the values learned from these entities cannot play a part in the constitution of the self. But, according to Sandel, they do in fact have a great influence upon the constitution of what human beings are. According to Sandel's criticism, Rawls has a very 'thin' conception of the self,

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[38] Mulhall and Swift, Liberals & Communitarians. Op. Cit. P. 41.
[39] Ibid. P. 45.

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whereas we need a 'thick' view, which includes the socio-historical context (i.e., the community).

Sandel's critique of Rawls is paradigmatic of the communitarian position. The major flaw in Rawls, and in most liberal and libertarian perspectives, is that the self is conceived as something that bears little resemblance to human beings. Instead of detached rational agents that are metaphysically distinct from and prior to the intersubjective world, we are actually constituted, to a great extent, by the community of others. This means that any theory of justice (and, for this study, of autonomy), must look for a grounding in a self that is more akin to what actually exists.

Walzer

The criticism leveled against Rawls by Michael Walzer in Spheres of Justice comes from a different angle; rather than mounting an attack upon the concept of the self, Walzer focuses upon the conception of goods and the logic of their organization. However, his position still falls under the rubric of 'communitarianism' because he alleges that the meaning of goods, and their corresponding values, can only be discovered from within a system. In a rough sense, Walzer is presenting something akin to Wittgenstein's 'language-games', except described more in the vein of moral philosophy.[40]

In Spheres of Justice, Walzer contends that "different social goods should be distributed for different reasons, in accordance with different procedures, by different agents; all of these differences derive from different understandings of the social goods themselves –the inevitable product of historical and cultural

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[40] The reason that I said a 'rough' correlation is that Walzer makes no reference to Wittgenstein in Spheres of Justice; however, I believe that there are some very general similarities that can enable a

particularism."[41] This means that various 'groupings' of related goods. according to Walzer. contain their own internal logic of distribution. and create a universe in which a certain range of values appear. Furthermore. he contends that the emergence of these 'loci' is itself historical and relative to a particular culture.

One feature of the 'spheres' is that certain goods should be distributed according to certain principles while others should be distributed according to different principles. So, for example, the sphere of goods which contains health care should be distributed apart from the sphere containing money. Only by understanding how the goods themselves are constituted, Walzer thinks. can we find the proper way in which these goods should be fit in to a well-ordered society.

According to this view. justice is something that is specific to a particular culture. This means that justice is. for Walzer. culturally relative. Of course. this notion flies in the face of any universalist. including Rawls. Walzer writes: "My argument is radically particularist. I don't claim to have achieved any great distance from the social world in which I live. One way to begin the philosophical enterprise . . . is to walk out of the cave. leave the city, climb the mountain, fashion for oneself . . . an objective and universal standpoint. Then one describes the terrain of everyday life from far away, so that it loses its particular contours and takes on a general shape. But I mean to stand in the cave, in the city, on the ground."[42]

This means that Walzer believes that Rawls' abstraction of the self from everyday structures is not the right method to follow. Instead, the philosopher, in order to discover the true nature of the world, must look at it from within, inside the context. It is in this context that the ordering of various related goods tends to find

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reader familiar with Wittgenstein's thought to immediately get a sense of what Walzer is trying to do.
[41] Walzer, Michael. Spheres of Justice. USA: Basic Books, 1983. P. 6.

containment in what Walzer calls 'spheres'. But there are many spheres, each

having its own internal logic and each capable of being constituted with the correct

equilibrium. Walzer's position has a relativistic strand, particularly in his claim that

"justice is relative to social meanings."[43]

Taylor

Finally, Charles Taylor, especially in <u>Sources of the Self</u>, presents a criticism

of Rawls on the basis of the nature of the self. However, Taylor does not

completely reject all of the tenets of liberalism. This is true especially of concepts

such as autonomy. But they are useful, according to Taylor, only after they have

been freed from a misconstrued notion of the self. According to Taylor, human

beings are self-interpreting animals. Our very sense of identity is always in

question, always undergoing a development in interpretation.

Of course, if Taylor is right, then any notion of the self that is static, such as

his view of the Rawlsian notion of a disengaged agency, is inadequate to explain the

fullness of the human condition. Furthermore, it is precisely this focus upon the

notion of the self as a form of ideal spectator that Taylor thinks contributes to a

crisis in modern identity. Instead, he holds, we are oriented, in a prearticulated

sense and because of our form of life, within the world. It is this original orientation

that gives sense to everything else, especially qualitative aspects of the human

landscape.

This original orientation toward the world, according to Taylor, is revealed

through underling sentiments, or moral intuitions. He takes these underlying

intuitions to be pointing toward a complete evaluative framework, from which we

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[42] Ibid. P. xiv.
[43] Ibid. P. 9.

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interpret ourselves and out of which we can never escape. The human world is pre-shaped by inarticulate moral responses. As these responses receive articulation through the social world. we devise a ranking of goods and a social hierarchy. Goods are organized by their reference to 'hypergoods', which are the things that we value most in life. An exhaustive description of the self requires an understanding of how that self is interconnected to and constituted by its related community and how the array of hypergoods are structured.

Summary and Conclusions

The modern landscape in political philosophy stands divided into two general camps: (1) those who prize individuality over the community. and (2) those who refuse to 'abstract' the individual from some sort of context. Rawls. at least as he is most frequently interpreted, tends to be associated with the former: while MacIntyre. Sandel. Walzer. and Taylor are generally associated with the latter. It is important to remember. however. that all of these thinkers. even though they are characterized in this way. have alternative interpretations of how this comes about. But. despite the differences, it all comes down to the way in which we understand the individual.

If. on the one hand, individuality is more philosophically important than the group; if individual rights are understandable without any 'contaminants' of worldliness, if reason is our tool and can carve out all we need to know to establish the correct world-order –then Rawls is definitely right. But. as I will argue later, it may be the case that even Rawls cannot escape some concern with the way in which the world influences the individual's ability to even reach this rational perspective.

On the other hand, if human beings are understandable only against the background of some intertwined narrative community, 'sphere' of related values, or

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original qualitative ontological prearticulation of the self, then MacIntyre, Sandel, Walzer, and Taylor are more correct in their analyses of the modern condition. But this view leads us to the problem of relativism. If they are right, then can there be any truth?

Are we caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of false ideality and relativism? In other words, are we at an point of either losing our sense of community, on the one hand, or, losing our sense of self, on the other? What is needed is some mid-point, one that maintains the valuable contributions to human rights and individual autonomy as developed in the liberal tradition while, at the same time, respecting the constitutive nature of the community environment.

I believe that the middle ground is best. I do not see how the cries of the communitarians can be silenced, but I do not want to give up individual rights, especially evinced by the notion of autonomy. Joseph Raz has laid out a preliminary cartography of this land, which is neither liberal nor communitarian. I will argue throughout this work that his theory of 'personal autonomy' gives us a pragmatic solution for the problems associated with a more idealistic Kantian notion: his articulation of the 'autonomy-supporting environment' mends the fence between two disparate camps. Raz's theory, which is the subject of the next chapter, forms the preliminary paradigmatic view for the rest of this inquiry. What I hope to do, therefore, is to use Raz in a general way, to get started in understanding how we can maximize autonomy, which is inherently limited and constrained by individuals trapped within a world that teaches them how to behave, how to think, and what to need. I appeal to his theories as a starting point only, for I will, throughout this work, expand, reshape, and modify his view into what I consider to

be the only way to preserve rationality in ethics while recognizing relativistic

tremors.

TOWARD A SOLUTION: RAZ'S NOTION OF 'PERSONAL AUTONOMY'

In The Morality of Freedom. Joseph Raz develops a view of autonomy that

can be characterized as somewhat between the strict liberal and strict

communitarian traditions.[44]   He wants to hang onto the major notions of liberalism

(individual rights, political freedom. and personal autonomy) while. at the same

time paying homage to the role that the community plays in the ability to actually

have these things. This position, although not quite consistent with the

'communitarian' model, is none the less radical for the 'liberals'. However. in order

to realize this goal, Raz initially must distinguish his version of autonomy from the

paradigm view for most liberal theory, which is expressed most forcefully in the

ethical writings of Kant.

The only way for Raz to accomplish this distancing, is to broaden his notion

of autonomy to include what Kant would call 'heteronomous' influences. He does

this by distinguishing what he calls 'personal autonomy' from the more rigid

Kantian autonomy. Explaining how his version of 'personal autonomy' differs from

that found in the Kantian tradition, he writes:

> 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
> . . .(i.e, Kant) . . .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 (Raz, P. 370 ftn.).

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[44] Raz, Joseph. The Morality of Freedom. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. Especially
Chapters 14 and 15.

This view of autonomy differs greatly from that of Kant, who would certainly dismiss it as 'heteronomous', and thus contaminated with empirical conditions. This point is expressed succinctly by Mulhall and Swift. "In contrast to that strain of liberalism that holds that there are good reasons, of whatever kind, why we should exclude from politics reasons that quite properly apply to us as individuals. Raz argues that it is legitimate for the state to seek to promote the well-being of citizens in a way that involves it in the business of judging the value of particular ways of life."[45] Of course, the most valuable way of life, for Raz, turns out to be the one that creates the most personal autonomy.

Through the introduction of this much broader picture of autonomy and the relation between it and a state that is friendly to it, Raz is trying to show that there is an intrinsic connection "between autonomy and the capacity for it (Raz. P. 369)." So, while, in the strictest sense, 'autonomy' might be lodged within a certain capacity of the individual. Raz realizes that it requires the proper political and social landscape to ever actually come into play.

This recognition leads Raz to explore the constitution of the social world, specifically concerning the personal well-being of individuals within a social group. He describes the political process as the mechanism by which individuals have the ability to shape, to some degree, their own destiny. "The doctrine of political liberty consists in principles of political morality which require governments to protect and promote individual freedom." But, he adds: "The question of political liberty does not arise unless the existence of political authorities is justifiable."[46] This means

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[45] Mulhall and Swift, Liberals Communitarians, *Op. Cit.* P. 249.
[46] Raz, The Morality of Freedom, *Op. Cit.* P. 21.

that there must be a 'legitimate state' with 'legitimate authority' before this theory even attaches to social life.

As for the individual in such an environment, embracing this ideal does not require one to live according to a master plan (e.g., social determinism); rather, the autonomous person will be faced with many diverse paths throughout his life and must continually make decisions about which path is most fructifying. This means that there is no evidence of a greater degree of autonomy for a person who devises a major direction in life and pursues it than in the life of a person who flutters back and forth from activity to activity, never actually accomplishing anything. Success in life is distinct from personal autonomy. On the other hand, Raz believes that it is the business of the state to enhance 'valuable' options and repudiate repugnant ones.[47] Consequently, as we can see, Raz, unlike Rawls, envisages the state as committed to a certain conception of the good, that is, the conception of the good that holds personal autonomy as the most important good among others. Further, the state can, and should, promote the kinds of valuable choices in life that enhance personal autonomy.

But, according to Raz, this conception of autonomy and state does not imply strict coercion by the state. He writes: "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." This means that there are at least three major aspects of personal autonomy: (1) awareness of available options, (2) awareness of one's life as a unified temporal process, and (3) an awareness of how one's choices impact the quality of life.[48] Raz contends, therefore, that personal

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[47] Ibid. P. 417.
[48] Raz, P. 371. It is important to note that Raz cautions against an over-intellectualization of the requirements for self-awareness. He writes: "I know of nothing wrong with the intellectual life, just

autonomy. in order to exist. requires certain individual abilities welded to certain environmental conditions that are conducive to a greater degree of autonomy. He catalogs these 'conditions of autonomy'. which are enumerated as (1) appropriate mental abilities. (2) adequate range of choices. and (3) independence (Raz. P. 372).

Appropriate Mental Abilities

In order for a person to be able to live meaningfully, she must possess and exercise certain mental abilities. First. and in some ways similar to the point made by MacIntyre, it is imperative that the individual has an awareness of life as a narrative unity, so that the future can be related to the present. According to Raz and MacIntyre, a person who cannot see life as extended through time is forever caught up in immediate gratification and thus 'imprisoned' within the moment and not really autonomous. This means that the person must have a concept of 'self' that goes beyond immediate gratification and the ability to defer these immediate desires for future gains.

To be autonomous. a person must possess 'minimal rationality'. i.e.. although they are not required to meet the rigid standards of 'pure practical reason' set forth by Kant. personal autonomy can only be reached by a person who has the ability to comprehend long term goals and has a minimal level of rationality so that she can understand the means to achieve them. But, since autonomy, for Raz, is a practice, it is not adequate for a person just to have this ability; rather, in order to have an autonomous life, she must exercise these abilities.

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as I know 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."

An Adequate Range of Options

Even if an individual has the abilities necessary to enjoy an autonomous life and is inclined to exercise them, there must still be the right kinds of opportunity for these choices to be implemented. Raz refers to this necessity as having an 'adequate range of choices' (Raz, P. 373). He cites the famous example of a man in a pit: Suppose that a man who has all of the requisite abilities for living autonomously has accidentally fallen into and is trapped in a pit. Unable to climb out, this individual remains trapped, and therefore has very few meaningful choices in life. In another example, Raz describes what he calls the 'hounded woman': A woman who is isolated on a desert island is relentlessly pursued by a carnivorous beast. Every moment of her life she is on guard and must continually remain vigilant and flee from the beast. She has no options except to flee or die.

Supposing that while both the man in the pit and the hounded woman have the individual capacity to be autonomous, neither, because of their circumstantial location, has an adequate range of options. While the man in the pit has only a few meaningless options to choose from, the hounded woman can only make choices that ensure her survival. Both, according to Raz, exemplify the two extremes of the lack of adequate options (Raz, P. 374).

In contrast, for there to be an adequate range of options, an individual must be able to choose both short-term and long-term goals that are neither meaningless nor strictly a matter of survival. These should include, but are not limited to, my associates, my projects, my relationships, and how I want to live my life. Furthermore, in order for there to be personal autonomy, a person must have more than a large number of choices (quality, rather than quantity, is most important); it is important that they also have a variety of valuable options available. As Raz

explains: "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 (Raz, P.375)." In addition, the range of possible options must include choice among a variety of goods and not just between good and bad. A choice between a favorable outcome and an unfavorable one is really no choice at all (Raz. P. 376).

Partly in response to the rise in 'autonomy theory' in popular psychology, Raz cautions the reader about conflating the concept of self-realization with autonomy (Raz. P. 375). Accordingly, self-realization, which has been confused with autonomy by some psychologists, is the development of a person's capacities to their fullest extent. On the other hand, "the autonomous person is the one who makes his own life and he may choose the path of self-realization or reject it (Raz. P. 375)." From this it is also clear that autonomy is not a necessary condition for self-realization, since the later could be attained in a world in which the individual had few, if any, choices.

Independence

A person must have a certain degree of independence (or, in Berlin's terminology, 'negative freedom') in order to be able to live autonomously. Someone who is coerced into making certain decisions or living in a particular way is not autonomous.[49] Coercion is a way of limiting a person's range of options. In fact, coercion is particularly damaging to autonomy, having the capability to 'cancel out' a wide range of viable options. As Raz puts it: ". . . loss of options through coercion is deemed to be a greater loss of autonomy than a similar loss brought

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[49] I am very interested in this point and will take it up again in section four, where I will argue that media, technology, and the play of images can, and most often does, constitute a form of coercion.

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 (Raz, P. 377)." Unlike coercion, manipulation does not interfere with a person's options; rather, it interferes with the manner in which a person reaches decisions (Raz, P.377). Having independence from coercion and manipulation is thus a vital part of autonomy, and forms the underlying basis of a social ideal –it tells us how people should be toward one another and also what kinds of things that the state should minimize. Both coercion and manipulation are ways of subjecting one person's will to that of another, thereby damaging autonomy.

Autonomy and Value

For Raz, it is not enough to have a great range of options, even if they are valuable; rather, autonomy depends upon a plurality of morally acceptable options. He is, in this argument, introducing the idea that an individual's moral sense (which can co-exist in a society of moral pluralism), if stifled, can be a form of constraint upon autonomy. To illustrate this point, Raz cites the example of a person who is free to pursue an occupation of his choice but must commit a murder (which is morally offensive to him) for every option that he rejects. So, when given the option to become an electrician, this person must either pursue that life or kill someone. This condition shapes each successive option presented to the individual. Clearly this person has no real choice; therefore, according to Raz ". . . autonomy requires a choice of goods. A choice between good and evil is not enough (Raz, P. 381)." As a component of a larger moral theory, autonomy is valuable only insofar as it is used to pursue the good. But Raz holds that an autonomy supporting environment is pluralistic, having many diverse forms of the good.

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Integrity

A person who wants to enjoy autonomy must possess a degree of personal integrity. By 'integrity' what Raz seems to be talking about is being true to a reasonable goal that we set for ourselves. It is vaguely reminiscent of what Sartre called 'authenticity', the realistic assessment of self-identity, desires, goals, and values within life. The similarities to Sartre's 'authenticity' is heightened when Raz talks about the damage that self-deception can cause for a person trying to lead an autonomous life. He remarks that self-deception ". . . disguises one's true situation from oneself. It is often a way of avoiding decisions, and an attempt to shirk responsibility. . . To be autonomous one must identify with one's choices, and one must be loyal to them (Raz. P. 382)."

Being honest in choosing goals --or, at least not being self-deceptive-- is therefore important for autonomy. A person who cannot accurately place himself in context cannot chart a viable course of action. This opens up the range of all kinds of psychological aspects necessary to maximize personal autonomy. For instance, unconscious motivations, conditioned behavior, and fixations, insofar as they might be unconscious motivations, could interfere with a person's ability to be autonomous. Mental illnesses, such as paranoid-schizophrenia, also impinge upon autonomy.[50]

Self-Unification

The practice of autonomy leads to what Raz calls 'self-unification'. Living the autonomous lifestyle, wherein one identifies with and makes choices that are constitutive of a deliberate life, also promotes a sense of unity within life itself. For

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[50] The theme of psychological limitations of autonomy will be dealt with extensively in a later chapter.

example, by deciding from among many possibilities what I want to do, setting my sights, so to speak, and then taking active steps to achieve that thing. I have an overall conception of my self as a unity through time, and I identify with the significance of my choice about the way that it helps constitute who and what I am. Raz writes: "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* [emphasis mine]."[51]

The Autonomy-Supporting Environment

Perhaps the most important concept brought into play by Raz is that of the 'autonomy-supporting environment'. This is also the strongest connection that Raz has with the 'communitarian' tradition. He rightly concludes that personal autonomy is not just something that an individual has or does not have; it is rather an interplay between the individual, who has greater or lesser abilities, and the society, which provides more or less support . This support appears in several different ways. For example, and most importantly, the autonomy-supporting environment must offer its participants a plurality of goods as viable options. It must also offer the kinds of services, education, minimal welfare, and the proper infrastructure that will support a community of autonomous individuals.

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[51] Raz, P. 387. This point will be instrumental in the present argument and constitute a great deal of what I argue in Part II "Self and World" –there, I will try to show that any notion of self governance implies a certain kind of concept of the self, more akin to that described by Charles Taylor in Sources of the Self, which contains implications about is necessary for the nature of the socio-political world.

Raz describes this framework:

> 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 (P.
> 391).

The autonomy-supporting environment is inherently pluralistic, forming the

underlying social fabric that contains diverse conceptions of the good life, each

opening up a range of varying opportunities. Because this feature is essential for

the actualization of autonomy, Raz call for a social order founded upon `moral

pluralism`, claiming that incompatible forms of life are, in fact, morally acceptable,

with each displaying distinct virtues that are worthy of pursuit for their own sake,

without the need for justification (Raz, P. 396).

Summary: The Paradigm View of Autonomy

Raz has made an important shift from the liberal tradition to by taking many

of the most serious claims of the communitarians and working them into a

comprehensive theory. Although it is clear that he does not go as far as most

communitarians would like, his view is an attractive one, which begins to formulate

a way in which the most important aspects of liberal theory –rights, individual,

autonomy—might be able to survive within the landscape of cultural relativism.

His picture is still very rigid. What he sees is a self connected to a world,

but, in some ways, still very detached from it. His distinction between individual

abilities (positive freedoms) and social constraints (negative freedoms) is one in

which the individual, fundamentally outside, needs a certain social world within

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This argument also contends with Berofsky's attempt to liberate the notion of autonomy from that of
the self.

which to actualize autonomy. Although he raises the issue, Raz does not develop the concepts of coercion and manipulation as fully as he should. Specifically, he focuses upon the role of the state and does not consider the ways in which media, advertising, and fashion actually shape a person's understanding of herself, leading to a 'false picture' of needs, desires and the definition of the good life. Although Raz sees the 'autonomy supporting environment' as critical to the realization of an autonomous life, he neglects the constitutive nature of that environment.

But, by and large, it is Raz's conception of the autonomous individual relating to the supportive environment that will become the 'paradigm view' for the remainder of this work. It will therefore be useful to present his basic structure, which will, of course, be stretched, clipped, and reshaped to fit the conception of autonomy and world that will emerge throughout this study.

Broadly, for Raz, autonomy is realizable only within the interplay between the self and the social world. Leaving aside problems of naturalistic limitations, Raz shows that autonomy is not a thing, but rather a relationship. So, both aspects of this relationship: self and world, are necessary for autonomy to exist. This relationship is a symbiotic one, in which there are both optimum and minimum conditions that determine how much autonomy is realized. This means that autonomy is a dynamic concept, continually changing upon the basis of the individual and the surrounding environment.

From the perspective of the self, Raz sees several components that must work in unison with each other. And, just as in the symbiosis between self and world, the interplay between the components of the individual must work together to either increase or decrease autonomy.

First, the individual must possess 'minimal rationality'. But what exactly is 'minimal rationality'? For Raz, it is a basic ability to have a self image that is of a unity through time, an understanding of the process of planning and deliberating, an ability to select one path from among many, the ability to envision goals and map the path toward their achievement, and the ability to critically evaluate the information necessary for this process to occur. Therefore, what we are required to have is not some post-doctoral awareness of modal logic and possible-world semantics, but rather a pragmatic handle on being able to evaluate and choose options.

The individual must also possess the ability to see beyond immediate gratification and open up a range of possibilities that require self-sacrifice. However, this requirement may be misleading, since an autonomous individual, who possesses this ability and is aware of long-term options, may elect, for example, to live a life of 'sensual epicureanism', delighting exclusively in the pleasures of the moment. What is important for autonomy, therefore, is not that the individual act upon the basis of deferring immediate gratification, but that she can do so if she so wants.

The autonomous individual must also have an ability to avoid self-deception. Raz calls this 'integrity' and means that a person has to be able to recognize realistic goals and align these with an honest conception of the self. In Sartrian terms, the autonomous person should be as 'authentic' as possible. The greater the self-deception, the less ability there is to act autonomously.

With the self so constituted, there must be a suitable environment within which these things can occur. And like the symbioses described earlier, the

individual elements that comprise the autonomy supporting environment must also interrelate with each other to form more optimal conditions for autonomy.

First, the autonomy-supporting environment must be one in which autonomy is the highest value (according to Raz, or, at least one of the highest values, in a more communitarian reading). Each individual's goals and values, therefore, must be respected —so long as they do not interfere any more than is absolutely necessary with the autonomy of others. In an almost utilitarian calculus, the environment has to be such that it maximizes individual autonomy across the board. An ideal autonomy-supporting environment will not permit one class to have a greater range of autonomy than another. Of course, this does not mean that if individual abilities differ. these individuals should be stifled or held back. Rather. the environment should offer possibilities for living an autonomous life to everyone equally.

The autonomy supporting environment should also contain a range of goods that are open to the individual. It is more than a matter of a large quantity of options, but the 'adequate range of options' should include diverse 'qualitative' options. For this condition to exist would require that there be a minimal welfare within the environment, so that everyone had at least some valuable options and was not caught up in the pure imperative of survival. This means that there has to be some form of state, which regulates and, to a minimal extent, provides basic needs.

Politically, the state must ensure enough independence for individuals to act autonomously. Even with a range of adequate options, supply of basic needs, and a qualitatively pluralistic orientation, for an individual constrained by imposed limitations, the lack of independence blocks the exercise of autonomy.

And finally, from the perspective of the autonomy supporting environment, there must be underlying viable choices that are morally acceptable. If an individual

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is constrained from acting because the range of choices are morally reprehensible. she cannot live an autonomous life. But this does not mean that practices such as cannibalism and animal sacrifice should be permitted by the state. There is a difference between anarchy and moral permissiveness. Raz believes that the supportive environment should be guided by sound moral principles. while. at the same time. allowing for the greatest amount of moral pluralism. Of course. this will create a tension. balancing moral diversity with certain invariant moral premises.[52]

Clearly. from this analysis, the most important aspect of Raz's theory of personal autonomy is the way in which he recognizes the need for some kind of environment that is conducive to the actual practice of autonomy. He characterizes this environment primarily in terms of the state. with regulative authority to impose a certain social order. And he sees autonomy as an ideal that can be realized only in part. contingent upon the proper interplay between three complicated areas: (1) the multi-faceted components of the self, which need to work together in a certain way; (2) the various components of the autonomy supporting environment. which also must work together to optimize the conditions for autonomy; and (3) the harmonious interplay between the self and the supportive environment. Each of these three features admits of varying degrees of success or failure. not only within themselves, but also in unison. And, if the picture is not complicated enough by these variables, there is no single way of being autonomous. Unlike Kantian autonomy, where it is a rigid form of acting in accordance with the moral law, 'personal autonomy', as conceived by Raz, admits of infinite variability.

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[52] This is a major problem that I am not sure Raz has worked out. What he wants to do is retain a sense of intrinsic moral orientation, e.g., value life, individual sanctity, rights, autonomy, while, at the same time, opening the landscape for competing moral views. Obviously, the limiting factor for these views is when they interfere with the 'core' values.

Autonomy, thus conceived, is highly dynamic. It is not simple, which means that a detailed analysis of it will require some work. In the following pages I will attempt such a task, primarily by dividing it up into three major areas: (1) the relationship between the self and the world, (2) the ways in which certain features of the world shape self-understanding and either enhance or interfere with autonomy, and (3) the psychological aspects of the individual that comports one toward or blocks one from achieving greater autonomy. After I examine each of these areas in depth, I will stretch the model set forth by Raz, refitting it to what I believe is a more accurate picture of personal autonomy.

PART TWO

THE SELF AND ITS WORLD

PART TWO

INTRODUCTION

Bernard Berofsky, in <u>Liberation from Self: A Theory of Personal Autonomy</u>, argues for a version of autonomy that is independent from any notion of the self.[53] In fact, his theory of autonomy is itself a 'liberation' process from being tied down to any theory of the self. However, a close examination of his theory reveals that he is devising a theory of autonomy that is not attached to <u>certain ideas of the self</u>. These are primarily (1) the Aristotelian view of the self (flourishing), (2) the idea of a self caught up in a theory of morality (e.g., Christian conception of the self as the 'soul'), and (3) the idea of the self as some form of expressive thing (contemporary psychological view).[54] Furthermore, the Berofsky thesis does, in fact, paint a picture of the self. For example, he writes: ". . . once we equip our <u>independent, rational, and integrated agent</u> with freedom and knowledge, her key tools, we will find no convincing argument that she must go on to embody other, distinct ideals."[55] I will argue in this section that 'independent, rational, and integrated agents' are, in fact 'selves'. And I believe that what Berofsky sees as liberation from is a wrong view of the self; and, that he is correct in leaving these antiquated, misleading versions of the self behind. But my main interest in this section is not Berofsky's argument, but to show the reader that there are many very compelling reasons to include a carefully crafted view of the 'self' in any theory of 'self governing' or 'self-directing'.

Like Berofsky, I am against seeing the self as some kind of 'thing' that can be examined under a microscope and which will simply disappear if the radically

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[53] Berofsky, Bernard. <u>Liberation from self: A theory of personal autonomy</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
[54] Ibid. P. 11.

reductionistic theories of cognitive psychology replace such concepts as

'intentionality' with neurophysiological processes. But thinkers such as the

Churchlands are a long way from convincing me that they can explain the depths of

consciousness and meaning in terms of a computer model. Likewise. I do not

believe that the self is something that is 'disengaged' from the world. for which the

world is a mechanistic object. to be examined through the 'rational faculties' of the

mind.

I believe that an examination of the concept of 'autonomy' is perhaps the

best tool for understanding the true nature of the self. And the converse is also true.

that if we examine the nature of the self. we will be closer to understanding the

nature of autonomy. If our provisional alignment with the theory of personal

autonomy put forth by Raz is correct. autonomy, like the self. cannot be understood

in abstraction from the world which it inhabits and from which it articulates the

range of all possibilities. This is the view of the self that I want to demonstrate.

But if the Cartesian view of the self as a disengaged rational agent is wrong.

and if the self is an interaction with a world-context, then what are the ways that this

context shapes our understanding of ourselves? And if we understand ourselves

only within a certain context. how does this context affect our perceptions of our

desires, goals, and self-direction? When we open up the idea of the self to being a

construct, whether ontological or cultural, we risk the danger of letting certain

'heteronomous' motives prod us into conformity, blind allegiance, and misdirection

of our self in terms of illusory goals. We are walking on a tightrope. balancing

ourselves between a concept of our self as a 'narrative unity' which is directed

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[55] Ibid. P. 11.

toward something that we freely chose, and being mere puppets, drowning in a sea of deterministic influences.

Certainly we all have natural boundaries. Right now, it is unlikely that I can run a three minute mile, or flap my arms and fly, or visit the rings of Saturn by mental transportation. But human beings have learned to use technology to extend their grasp, and new technology is continually creating new possibilities (a theme that will be extensively covered in section four). But what interests us at this preliminary juncture is simply the relationship between the self and its world-context. In fact, the leading question of this section will be, "how must we understand the self as something that only makes sense within a world-context?" This is the question that I will try to answer.

My answer will, necessarily only be provisional, and based upon careful scholarship of thinkers who have, in my view, contributed to this kind of understanding of the self. However, at the same time, it is important to remember that the central theme of this work is autonomy, and every feature of the self will play an integral role in determining what that theory of autonomy will look like fully fleshed.

Therefore the progress of this section will be as follows: First, I will examine Taylor's analysis of the emergence of Descartes' notion of the cogito, which led to a certain view of the self as an agent disengaged from the world, which becomes a mechanism for scientific dissection. His scholarship regarding the emergence of this conception of the self from the Platonic 'ontic logos' is impeccable and is one of the most exciting features of the monumental Sources of the Self. It will provide the essential context for the remainder of the discussion.

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Second, and paying homage to my long history of reading 'continental thought', I will examine a post-Cartesian movement in the history of ideas that begins with Edmund Husserl's *lebenswelt*. What I will show is that Husserl wanted to keep something like the cogito but, at the same time, show the *lebenswelt* as a horizonal structure that is essential for any act of consciousness. If Husserl's 'transcendental ego' were a deity, Schutz's characterization of the life-world would be a secular equivalent. Schutz's view is more of a careful phenomenological description of the components of the self lodged within a context of the life-world. Then I will briefly look at Heidegger's notion of 'being-in-the-world'. I will present a basic view, and then show how Taylor argues that Heidegger is pointing to something more fundamental than Husserl, to something that is prearticulated in the very logic of Being itself. After this position is articulated, I will look at how Wittgenstein developed a similar problem. Through a careful reading of the major lines of interpretation regarding *lebensform* and *sprachspeil*. I will rely upon Taylor's views that this position also promotes a view of 'engaged agency', which is critical to the success of the present study.

After this sojourn into the mysterious thinkers, I will return to a more modern predicament. I will argue that Sandel's criticism of Rawls' <u>A Theory of Justice</u>, specifically in that Rawls' conception of the self is too 'thin' does not necessarily hold. I will do this through a careful and detailed analysis of Rawls' arguments about moral development, finally showing that implicit in his appeal to free, equal, and rational individuals assuming the 'original position' is an underlying reliance upon the community to create such persons. This process of creating certain kinds of individuals who are capable of attaining a vision of the 'well

ordered society' shows that the world-context is vital for autonomy and, for Rawls, in order to find 'justice as fairness'.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I will lay out Taylor's arguments found in the first part of Sources of the Self, where he presents his strongest arguments for a 'connected self'. I will explain what he means by 'strong evaluation', 'inescapable frameworks', 'hypergoods', and 'shared consensus'. I will show how he constructs an argument from these concepts of how the individual self is prearticulately oriented within the context of a world, and this pre-understanding shapes our moral orientation. Although Taylor does not concentrate his discussion on autonomy, I believe that his contentions about the nature of the self present a serious problem for retaining autonomy as something that is valuable, independent of being just another 'hypergood' characteristic of modern identity.

All of this is really to lay the groundwork for Section Four, where I will use the arguments about the constitutive nature of the world-context to research the effect of the marketplace, advertising, the play of images in the media, and technology upon the way that the individual interprets himself.

If there is really any substance to 'autonomy', it will be something, as I will show, that involves a montage of variables. It will be deeply influenced by the relationship between the self and the world-context, and this will lead us to reexamine and alter the picture of the 'autonomy supporting environment' envisaged by Raz. It will also be highly influenced by the propensities of the self, the underlying psychological barriers to self-governance, and will necessarily need to work within the human psychological domain. Things like belief, conditioned behavior, and unconscious motivations will need to be considered. And finally, if autonomy is a possibility, it will be articulated as something that involves a certain

attitude of both the individual and the society. the self and the supportive

environment. practical reason within human limitations. This is why I think that the

present section is needed. In order to understand autonomy. we must first examine

the nature of the self.

Taylor's Analysis of the Emergence of the Cogito, Disengaged Reason, and Inwardness

In <u>Sources of the Self</u>, Charles Taylor argues that the concept of the self only makes sense in context of a world in which the self is involved and from which it cannot be disengaged. His position has been called 'communitarian' because it stands in contrast to many thinkers who argue that autonomy is a function of disengaged rationality. This picture of autonomy follows Kant's equation of reason and morality in <u>The Critique of Practical Reason</u>; however, it has been attributed to many thinkers, including Berlin, Rawls, and Nozick, to name only a few. Broadly, the view that the self is something that stands apart from the world (at least when the rational stance is adopted) has been associated with the camp of modern philosophers broadly referred to as 'liberals'. In contrast, the 'communitarian' perspective holds that the self is so connected with its world that even reason does not make sense without context. Of course, the view ascribed to the liberal camp is mostly incorrect (which I will demonstrate in the following chapter on Rawls), but the notion of the self as 'disengaged reason' has perpetuated a certain orientation toward philosophical problems in Western thought. Taylor's analysis traces a thread of this argument throughout the history of ideas and will be a useful starting point for the current section.

Taylor's <u>Sources of the Self</u> is divided into five parts. In this chapter, I will only be concerned with his treatment of the problem of disengaged reason, which I will show has influenced a certain wrong conception of autonomy. Clearly, the presupposition here is that the notion of autonomy involves a conception of the self,

which, to thinkers such as Berofsky, is itself suspect.[56] Although I will address his

complaints later in this section (not in this chapter), the central point is that 'self-

governance', 'self-direction', or 'self-determining' all coalesce into a definition of

practical autonomy that must, in order to make any sense whatsoever, articulate

some concept of the self. Furthermore, the very concept of self that lies alongside

this definition of practical autonomy will determine, to an enormous extent, the

restrictions and possibilities of practical autonomy. What I will begin to argue here

is that philosophy needs a very astute description of the extent of necessary

involvement that a self has within the world in order to approach an understanding

of practical autonomy.

The idea of the self as 'disengaged' from the world leads one to think about

autonomy as something that the self can do, regardless of the kind of environment

with which it is confronted. However, Taylor demonstrates that this idea of the self

has not always been in force, that it has a historical development and is attached to a

certain metaphysical and epistemological bias. It is this emergence through history

that we must examine here.

Taylor begins with the notion that the modern notion of the self is

constituted by 'inwardness'. By this he means that we tend to ascribe certain things

like thoughts, feelings, and desires as 'within', while we view objects as 'without'.

"But," he contends, "strong as this partitioning of the world appears to us, as solid

as this localization may seem, and anchored in the very nature of the human agent, it

is in large part a feature of our world, the world of modern, Western people

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[56] Berofsky, Bernard. Liberation from Self: A Theory of Personal Autonomy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. (Note: Berofsky argues that there is no current notion of the self that is not paradigmatic and believes that a clear notion of self is unnecessary for an understanding of autonomy. I will take up this argument later in this work and show that [1] Berofsky's main

[emphasis added]."[57] He argues that this way of understanding the self is a historical phenomenon that has become dominant in modern thinking. As opposed to a mechanistic outer world, Taylor contends, we have rich and mysterious inner lives (he cites Conrad's Heart of Darkness).

Plato's Cosmic Order

Taylor begins his argument by recalling that Plato's moral doctrine primarily consisted in a view of self-mastery. In the Republic, Plato argues that goodness is associated with the rule of reason, while badness with the rule of emotion or desire (430E). What Plato is arguing against appears to be the timocratic and hedonistic views associated more with the Homeric warrior, which, according to Plato is in chaos. Instead, he argues, reason provides connection to the order of things (cosmos) and gives us form. Reason, thus, for Plato, is 'seeing things as they are', recognizing the natural order of eternal forms, which are themselves independent from reason and constitutive of it. Plato's position represents the hegemony of reason ruling over other orientations. Let's look at Plato's argument.

Briefly, in the Republic, Plato applies his distinctions of the justice in society to justice in the soul. Of course, his premise, which will be useful later in understanding his perspective, is that 'justice' will be the same thing manifested in state and individual (434d-435a). Vlastos attempts to make sense of this move by suggesting a possible key premise, "If the same predicate is predicable of any two things [the state and the individual], then, however they may differ in other ways,

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complaint is the kind of self that I am criticizing here, and [2] that the integrated conception of the self and world that I develop in this work remains unaffected by his position.)

[57] Taylor, Charles. Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989. P. 111.

they must be exactly alike in the respect in which it is predicable of each."[58]

Although Plato does not specifically argue this premise, he relies upon it, even when he starts the initial examination of the state as an enlarged view of the individual (Cf. 368a).

An understanding of Plato's use of 'soul' is useful background for an analysis of the theory of its parts. In contrast to the early Greek view of 'soul', a ghostly, non-volitional shadow, Plato introduces a concept of the soul that is more akin to 'living thing'.[59] This conception of 'psyche' had already made an appearance in Greek culture, indicated by a shift in its historico-linguistic context (Havelock. P. 198). On the other hand, Plato's use of 'psyche' as 'living thing' does not mean that he was devising a 'theory of mind' in the modern sense.[60]

There has been a controversy surrounding Plato's division of the psyche into parts (Annas. P. 124). In fact, Plato himself does not make explicit use of the word *meros*, which means 'part'.[61] Instead, he uses phrases that only translate into English with difficulty. In this way, the 'appetitive part', for example, might be translated into English as 'that by which we desire'. So, Annas writes, Plato keeps his vocabulary here perhaps deliberately vague; . . . insisting that there is a complexity in a single person without saying too much about how that complexity might be realized."[62]

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[58] Vlastos, Fregory, "Justice and Happiness in the Republic," in Vlastos, Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays. P. 84.

[59] The difference between the early Greek conception of the soul and the revolutionary conception introduced by Plato has been discussed at length by Havelock in Preface to Plato, especially pages 197ff. He writes, "it is probably more accurate to say that while the discovery [of the soul as psyche in the Platonic sense] was affirmed and exploited by Socrates, it was the slow creation of many minds among his predecessors and contemporaries."

[60] Annas, Julia. An Introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981. P. 124.

[61] His first use of *meros* appears in the Republic at passage 444b3.

[62] Annas, *Op. Cit.*, P. 124.

Plato gives an elaborate argument about the division of he soul into its parts. The key premise in this argument is that 'one and the same thing cannot act or be affected in opposite ways at the same time in the same part of it [soul] and in relation to the same object" (436b-c). That is, opposite states cannot exist coincidentally in the soul regarding the same thing at the same time.[63]

Plato begins his division of the soul by characterizing its three parts: (1) the appetitive part [epithumetikon], (2) the emotional part [thumoeides], and (3) the rational part [logistikon]. His characterization of the 'appetitive' part of the soul is developed by saying that it is the simple direction of the soul toward an object (437e). He uses the example of thirst (439a-d). Although desires, seen in this way, are basically independent from cognitive performance, they are, at least according to Annas, capable of 'means-end' reasoning (Annas. P. 129).[64] In contrast, the rational part of the soul is discussed by Plato (438e-439d) in terms of two parts: (1) It is the part that searches for truth and increases knowledge; and (2) It rules the soul (corresponding to the role of the guardians). Reason, according to Plato, is the only part that cares for the whole soul (441e). The third part of the soul is the 'spirit'. In contrast to the appetitive part, the spirit (emotional part) is good-dependent (Irwin, P. 193). Plato's example of Leonitius gazing at a corpse shows that Leonitius is angry (emotional) about looking at it and condemns himself (439e-440b). As such,

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[63] This argument "establishes the distinctness of the parts [of the soul] on the basis of necessary truths, whereas elsewhere (581b-c) he argues from experience that the distinctness of the parts can be seen in the different kinds of lives people lead" (Annas, P. 125).

[64] This meanness a strong break with the earlier Socratic views, for "basic appetites show most clearly why Socrates was wrong to identify intelligible, explicable action with rational action. Elsewhere, however, Plato wants appetite to include all good-independent desires, not just basic urges." Terrence Irwin, Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues/ Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. P. 193.

the spirit is "the source of moral sentiments, and its training is especially important in moral education" (Irwin. P. 194. ref. 440a-e).[65]

Once the soul has been divided into distinct parts. the virtues are introduced parallel to their appearance in the state (441c-442d). Thus. an individual is wise when reason rules all other parts of his soul (442c); brave when he acts on his belief despite pain. pleasure, fear, or appetite (429c-430b); self-disciplined (temperate) when the rational part of the soul dominates the other parts, which are in concordance (430e-431e); and finally, just when each part of the soul performs its proper function (441e). Thus, justice. in the individual. as Plato defines it. is 'psychic harmony'.[66]

Regarding the Platonic conception of justice as 'psychic harmony', Taylor correctly observes: "Plato offers what we can call a substantive conception of reason. Rationality is tied to the perception of order; and so to realize our capacity for reason is to see the order as it is. . . There is no way one could be ruled by reason and be *mistaken* or wrong about the order of reality."[67] He further points out that the order of reality is not. for Plato. something inside us; rather, it is "the order of things in the cosmos."

Plato's discovery of rational order in the cosmos. reflected in the individual through a proper ordering of the soul, according to Taylor, is indicative of a certain conception of the self. Accordingly, "Reason reaches its fullness in the vision of the

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[65] "An emotion is attached to its goal by habituation; it depends on fairly constant beliefs about the goodness or badness of something; it is not wholly flexible when rational beliefs about over-all good require different kinds of choices; and so it must be attached to the right kinds of objects to reduce conflicts with rational desires." (Irwin, *Op. Cit.*, P. 195).

[66] Hume's problem, according to Annas, was that reason, acting (as Plato described it) has no motivational power of its own. Hume argued that "reason ought to be a slave to the passions" (Annas, P. 133). The outcome of this is prudence; however, according to Annas, Plato has more in mind since, according to his view, "reason, which is thought of as always straining towards the truth, is thought of as having considerable motivational force of its own" (Annas, 134).

[67] Taylor, Sources of the Self, *Op. Cit.* P. 121-2.

larger order, which is also the vision of the Good. And this is why the language of inside/outside can in a sense be misleading as a formulation of Plato's position."[68] Recalling Plato's allegory of the cave, Taylor argues that the point is that Plato does not believe that attaining knowledge is a matter of putting things into the soul: rather, it is a turning of rational vision, so that one can recognize the outward ordering of things. Taylor sums up the Platonic view: "Reason is our capacity to see being, illuminated reality . . . That is why reason has to be understood substantively, and why the vision of the true order is critical for rationality."[69]

Taylor observes that while we see the notion of self-mastery as one of the modern options, a concept that somewhat fits into a modern picture of overcoming desires and emotions through reason, that Plato had a conception of the self that does not fit into the modern picture as intuitive. He focuses upon the underlying sense of discovering this order outside of the self –the rule of reason is actually the rule of a vision of the rational order. He observes: "To be ruled by reason means to have one's life shaped by a pre-existent rational order which one knows and loves."[70]

According to Taylor, the Platonic view became a paradigm of sorts. This means that even though Aristotle disagreed with the realm of ideality professed by Plato, and placed the forms in the world, he still saw reason as that which turns itself toward the cosmic ordering, which can be described in a scientific manner. It appears as a form of practical reasoning in the Nichomachean Ethics. Taylor writes: ". . . for Aristotle, this practical wisdom is a kind of awareness of order, the

[68] Ibid. P. 123.
[69] Ibid. P. 124.
[70] Ibid. P. 124.

correct order of ends in my life. which integrates all my goals and desires into a unified whole in which each has its proper weight."[71]

For Aristotle. there are two separate orders: (1) knowledge of the eternal order (*Theoria*). and (2) knowledge of the correct order for our lives (*Phronesis*). In the first book of the Nichomachean Ethics. Aristotle presents what has come to be known as the 'function argument'. According to this view. everything has a function. including humans. Basically. the function of human beings is to 'flourish' as human. and this means that human *qua* human should seek the highest levels possible for human beings. And this is the life of practical reasoning coupled with the life of contemplation (theoretical reasoning). Both forms of life provide an ordering according to the cosmic order (or natural order). Taylor describes this dual orientation in life: "The complete good of human life as rational doesn't simply consist in ethical excellence; it also includes the excellences of science. And the fulfilment [sic] of these requires a grasp of the cosmic order. Attending to both orders is thus constitutive of the human good."[72] He adds. ". . . the link between the two orders is also ontological. The good life for human beings is as it is because of humans' nature as rational life. Humanity is part of the order of beings. each with its own nature."[73]

In contrast, the modern view of disengaged reason is comprised of a mental project. not discovery of an outside order. This position is developed in the Cartesian version of the 'cogito'. But Taylor insists that an examination of the views of Augustine is necessary to fully grasp what motivated Descartes to develop his disengaged reason.

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[71] Ibid. P. 125.
[72] Ibid. P. 125.
[73] Ibid. P. 125.

Augustine and the Move Inward

Augustine was deeply influenced by two doctrines: Platonism (as presented in the writings of Plotinus) and Christianity. Many of his understandings of Christian theology are modifications of Platonic notions. For example. he saw the Platonic idea of the Good as God. the bestower of all order on the cosmos and the principle of supreme reason. God allowed participation by human beings in the order of things. Intelligibility came from God. who was beyond all created things. The created world was not the supreme reality, which was eternal. Plato's ideas were the thoughts of God. Taylor notes, "whether this synthesis works or not [i.e.. Platonism and Christianity], Augustine gives us a Platonic understanding of the universe as an external realization of a rational order."[74]

As far as the soul. in Augustine. like Plato there is a process of orienting toward rational order. This order is not a part of the mind, but is something that we adopt a perspective toward. Just as in the Platonic allegory of the cave. Augustine holds that "the soul must be swivelled [sic] around; it has to change the direction of its attention/desire. For the whole moral condition of the soul depends ultimately on what it attends to and loves."[75] However, Taylor points out, Augustine differs from Plato in seeing the order as comprised of an 'inner' and an 'outer' nature (Taylor. P. 129). This stems from the dichotomy of flesh/spirit in Christian thought. He writes, "The outer is the bodily, what we have in common with the beasts. including even our senses, and the memory storage of our images of outer things. The inner is the soul."[76]

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[74] Ibid. P. 128.
[75] Ibid. P. 128.
[76] Ibid. P. 129.

Furthermore. this movement from outer to inner is not just one of location: it is seen by Augustine as a hierarchy, whereby the move toward inner life. through renunciation of the pleasures of the body and of worldly things. makes us more spiritual and thus closer to God. While Plato saw the highest purpose in life as consisting of seeing the organization of reality, recognizing the perfect cosmic order through the Ideas. Augustine has made a shift: "our principal route to God is not through the object domain but 'in' ourselves. . . God is not just what we long to see. but what powers the eye that sees. So the light of God is not just 'out there'. illuminating the order of being. as it is for Plato; it is also an 'inner' light . . . the light in the soul."[77]

Augustine has made the move toward 'radical reflexivity'. thus we have the beginnings of the language of inwardness that will influence Descartes toward his conception of the rational agent. Taylor writes: "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that it was Augustine who introduced the inwardness of radical reflexivity and bequeathed it to the Western tradition of thought. The step was a fateful one. because we have certainly made a big thing of the first-person standpoint. The modern epistemological tradition from Descartes, and all that has flowed from it in modern culture, has made this standpoint fundamental –to the point of aberration, one might think."[78]

Augustine thus has created what Taylor calls a 'proto-cogito'. In fact. certain passages in The City of God almost sound like Descartes: ". . . without any delusive representation of images or phantasms, I am most certain that I am and that I know and delight in this. In respect of these truths, I am not afraid of the

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[77] Ibid. P. 129.
[78] Ibid. P. 131.

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arguments of the Academicians, who say 'What if you are deceived?' For if I am

deceived, I am. For he who is not, cannot be deceived; and if I am deceived, by the

same token I am."[79] He has made the first-person standpoint fundamental to the

quest for reason in life.

Descartes' Disengagement of Reason: The Abstract Self

We have seen the emergence of a view of the self that is radically different

from that of Plato. While Plato (and similarly Aristotle) required what Taylor calls

the 'ontic logos', or logic of being, as the outward organization that allows us to

recognize the rational. Augustine, even while employing many Platonic concepts,

has made a sharp distinction between inner life and outward manifestations.

Furthermore, the inner life is more important, since it is through introspection that

we come to know God. We have seen this move toward the hegemony of the inner

realm as a prelude to Descartes. In fact, Augustine has actually laid out a proto-

cogito, which he argues can survive the method of doubt. Descartes was deeply

influenced by Augustine; however, Augustine continued to place the moral source

in getting close to God. God, for Augustine, bestows grace, wisdom, and

understanding.

Descartes is the first philosopher in the Western tradition to place the moral

source within the inner self. Taylor examines one central thread of Descartes'

notion of the self. In this section, I will critically review Taylor's interpretation of

Descartes, while not becoming sidetracked by extensive treatments of Descartes'

theory of the cogito. What is important is the radical shift, toward a detached,

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[79] Augustine, The City of God. Translated by Marcus Dods, In Great Books of the Western World, Volume 18. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952. P. 337 [chapter 26].

disengaged reasoning self. for this view became a Western paradigm. leading to theories of autonomy that have nothing, or little, to do with the world.

In a preliminary vein. Taylor points out that the rise of empirical science. with the mechanistic world-view of Galileo, has dethroned the Platonic Ideas. Reason was no longer found within the cosmic order, which itself can be understood as a mechanism, designed by a rational agent. and something that is an object for reason to figure out. rather than the source of rationality. Taylor explains: "This shift in scientific theory . . . involved a radical change in anthropology as well. Plato's theory of the Ideas involved a very close relation between scientific explanation and moral vision . . . If we destroy this vision of the ontic logos and substitute a very different theory of scientific explanation. the entire account of moral virtue and self-mastery has to be transformed as well."[80]

It is this shift that causes Descartes to relocate the 'idea' from a Platonic realm of absolute and independent being, to the mind itself. This means that rational order ceases to be something that is found and becomes something that is made (Taylor, P. 144). The ideas have become contents which are 'in the mind'. Certainty is granted by 'clear and distinct' ideas. Because of the strong break with the rational self as recognizing the cosmic order and reason through a vision of the great chain of being, Descartes is left with a detached rational agent over against a mechanistic outer world. This constitutes a mind-body dualism that Descartes never went beyond.

As for the emergence of the self as disengaged reason, Taylor says, "The material world here includes the body, and coming to see the real distinction requires that we, and coming to see the real distinction requires that we disengage

from our usual embodied perspective, within which the ordinary person tends to see the objects around him as really qualified by colour or sweetness or heat, tends to think of the pain or tickle as in his tooth or foot. We have to objectify the world, including our own bodies, and that means to come to see them mechanistically and functionally, in the same was that an uninvolved external observer would."[81] The cosmos is no longer the embodiment of rational order; it, therefore, can no longer define the good for us.

As far as the passions are concerned, Descartes does not discard them simply. Instead, he holds that reason should hold them in check, so that they perform their instrumental functions within the boundaries of reason. This means that reason is not only a disengaged perspective, but it also rules emotions and desires. Taylor quotes Descartes' letter to Elisabeth (Sept. 1, 1645): "The true function of reason, then, in the conduct of life is to examine and consider without passion the value of all perfections of body and soul that can be acquired by our conduct, so that since we are commonly obliged to deprive ourselves of some goods in order to acquire others, we shall always choose the better."[82] Thus reason, as master, becomes the inner source of morality.

So from an ethical perspective, Descartes moral self requires a disengagement from the world (including the body), so that reason can rule everyday life in the same manner as it dissects the mechanistic world. Taylor points out, ". . . when the hegemony of reason becomes rational control, it is no longer understood as our being attuned to the order of things we find in the cosmos, but

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[80] Taylor, *Op. Cit.* P. 144.
[81] Ibid. P. 145.
[82] Ibid. P. 151.

rather as out life being shaped by the orders which we construct according to the demands of reason's dominance."[83]

He points out that this means that rationality is no longer defined substantially, but rather as a procedure. "in terms of the standards by which we construct orders in science and life (Taylor. 156)." This, according to Taylor, has become the 'standard modern view' of rationality, which has ceased to be a vision of reality and is instead 'an internal property of subjective thinking'. It is this view of the self that Taylor is arguing against, and which has become paradigmatic within the modern world-view. Taylor remarks: "The subject of disengagement and rational control has become a familiar modern figure. One might almost say it has become one way of construing ourselves. which we find it hard to shake off."[84]

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[83] Ibid. P. 155.
[84] Ibid. P. 160.

The Life-World Horizon, Being-in-the-World, and *Lebensform*: Husserl, Schutz, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein

In this section I will examine the location of the self within a horizonal structure that the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl called the 'lebenswelt' or 'life-world'. This analysis will reveal that the self cannot be found without its life-world horizon. that this structure is intrinsic to the nature of subjectivity in general. Structured in this way, certain features of the human world will become apparent: the fact that we are born into a world within a certain context, socially, historically, culturally, and that there exist for each of us a prearticulated orientation, much like a stream carries a fish down a mountain. From Alfred Schutz' The Structures of the Life-World. I will sketch a phenomenological description of this horizon. I will then take up Charles Taylor's analysis of Heidegger's '*umwelt*' and Wittgenstein's '*lebensform*'. showing how they are early attempts at overcoming (deconstructing) the hegemonic 'disengaged reason' which has. in his view. led to a misapprehension of the self and. consequently. autonomy. Finally. I will argue that all of these views will heighten the argument that a clear view of the self. which, I believe is essential for an understanding of personal autonomy, requires an analysis of how the things we consider 'ordinary' actually refer to a horizonal totality that itself eludes articulation yet maintains the context for the apprehension of meaning.

Husserl and the Introduction of the *Lebenswelt*

Just as Kant's transcendental architectonics can be seen as a proto-intentionality, Husserl's concept of *lebenswelt* can be viewed as the prototype for a more encompassing critique of disengaged reason, i.e., that we are inserted within a contextuality from which we can never gain an Archimedian perspective.

Following the Kantian tradition. the early Husserl focused more strongly upon the concept of transcendental subjectivity. by which he meant the absolute grounding point for cognitive life. But, nearing the end of his life. in the series of lectures destined to become the posthumous The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, Husserl introduced the new concept of *lebenswelt* (life-world). This move led many commentators to argue that his philosophical position had undergone a radical revision, perhaps in response to Heidegger's findings in Being and Time. Central to this discussion was the relationship between Husserl's earlier notion of transcendental subjectivity and the life-world. While some thinkers. such as Ludwig Landgrebe. contend that the life-world represents an overthrowing of the earlier concept of transcendental subjectivity and shows that it is limited by its historical facticity, others. Mohanty. for example. argue that the life-world still requires transcendental subjectivity as its grounding point. Again, Aron Gurwitsch thought that the life-world was the cultural world and. as such. is sociohistorically relative. What is clear, however. is that Husserl was not exceptionally clear in the Crisis about the nature of the life world and what it meant for his long-standing reliance upon transcendental subjectivity.

From the perspective of this study of autonomy, the early Husserl remains consistently in line with what Charles Taylor has described as the emergence of the modern view of subjectivity, i.e., the self, as a disengaged pinnacle of reason. corresponding to what Nagel calls the 'view from nowhere'.[85] In the Crisis, Husserl presents a harsh critique of the Galileo's mechanistic world, arguing that the 'mathematization' of the world presents the scientist with a secondary object, an ideality created out of mathematical modeling, that is in desperate need of

grounding in the 'things themselves'. Of course. Husserl contends that the 'things themselves' are really only knowable as phenomena, self-evident (clear and distinct) as they present themselves to consciousness. which. through an understanding of the way in which experience is 'constituted' phenomenologically as a noetic-noematic blend, can be understood as the most basic foundation for knowledge.

Husserl held that going back to the 'things themselves' brought direct access to the prescientific world, which, through a series of 'purifications' known as the 'phenomenological reductions', could be understood as a blending of intentionality and the essential boundaries of objectivity and meaning. Meaning. for Husserl, was always an intending that 'hit the mark', i.e., reached meaning as intended within the essence of a certain objectivity. As such, it is fairly clear that Husserl did not want to abandon the grounding of all meaning in the transcendental (constituting) self. In the Crisis. he talked of 'flowing-in', which seems to mean that transcendental subjectivity is always engaged in the meaning process. This means that his later conception of transcendental subjectivity was one as plugged into a world. However. this world was not just 'out there' for Husserl, as it was for Descartes. but itself caught in the flux of being constituted as a meaningful context for the apprehension of any meaning whatsoever.

Husserl failed to get completely away from the paradigm of 'disengaged reason'; however, because he still believed that it was possible, and in fact the project of phenomenology, to reflect upon 'pure' experience and describe exactly how it is constituted. This perspective was attained by employing the 'phenomenological reductions', which 'bracketed off' certain commitments and

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[85] Cf. Nagel, Thomas. The View From Nowhere. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

practical concerns, eventually leading to the 'transcendental reduction', from which the individual became a 'detached spectator'.

While it is clear that this aspect of Husserl's thought falls under the criticisms leveled by Taylor against the hegemony of 'disengaged reason' as the modern view of the self. Husserl's concept of life-world is itself a rich notion and, to a great extent, unfathomed. Alfred Schutz has taken the Husserlian concept of life-world and tried to paint a descriptive picture of its necessary structures, without making the move to transcendental phenomenology. As a result, he has given us a thick description of what it means that the individual is located within a life-world context.

Schutz' Description of the Life-World

The abstract world described through the sciences had at its root the prescientific world of experience. This prescientific world is that world of everyday experience, where I find myself, along with others, caught up in a historical context, and laden with meanings, relations, and significance. It is the world that is taken for granted, that we do not notice because we are <u>involved</u> in it as the context for life, wherein lies our notions of a full and good existence. Schutz calls this relationship that we have with our world the 'natural attitude': He writes: "In the natural attitude, I always find myself in a world which is for me taken for granted and self-evidently 'real'. I was born into it and I assume that it existed before me. It is the unexamined ground of everything given in my experience, as it were, the taken-for-granted frame in which all the problems which I must overcome are placed. This world appears to me in coherent arrangements of well-circumscribed objects having determinate properties (Schutz, P. 4)." This world is also populated with others like myself and is both a social and cultural world —forming a 'stock of knowledge',

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which forms a reference point for my understanding of the world.[86] It is this life-world that forms the horizon human life; it stretches through space and time and provides the unity of context for human activity.

I find myself within this structure in what Schutz calls the 'biographical situation' which contains the context for life. In other words, I find myself within a preconstituted order. I myself am inseparable from this order and I find my own explanation within it. I am inserted into it through my biographical situation: I was born within a culture in a particular time within that culture's history, with a certain mythic heritage, various language-games[87], social practice, rituals, and all of the components which make up a world. Furthermore, I shall die within this world. My biographical situation, therefore, is an opening into the cultural world; yet, on the other hand, it is an enclosure within that world.

Stratification of the Life-World

Fundamental to the life-world is what Schutz called the 'reality accent', in other words, I am able to distinguish what is regarded as 'real' from that which is 'not real'. It is arranged within space so that I am related to the world within actual, potential, restorable, and attainable reach. And the life-world is temporal, not only providing the contextual matrix for internal time-consciousness (my past pressing through a present into a future), but it also has a historical horizon containing all previous subjective life, constituted meanings, and cultural orientations. It has a

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[86] It should be noted that Schutz' analysis of the life-world remains within what Husserl calls the 'natural attitude'. Husserl himself was concerned with the transcendental constitution of the life-world as a necessary horizon of transcendental intersubjectivity. This project is outside of the scope of the present work; however, the best rendering of it can be found in Husserl's posthumous work, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology.

[87] A term borrowed from Wittgenstein. It is interesting to note that in Wittgenstein's philosophy each language-game is associated with a 'form of life', which, although a distinct concept, can be seen in light of the life-world.

social dimension containing the other: predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. And the life-world has a social stock of knowledge.

The Stock of Knowledge

From the outset, we are confronted with a body of prearticulated meaning. We use it to interpret our life and map our future activities. My own insertion into my world through the biographical situation intersects the stock of knowledge as a realm of possible expressions of life, as a range of possible activity, as a field within which to conduct daily affairs: ". . . within the natural attitude I do not act only within a biographically determined hierarchy of plans. Rather, I also see typical consequences of my acts which are apprehended as typical, and I insert myself into a structure of incompatibilities partially ontological in character (I cannot write letters with my eyes), partially historical (it would never "have occurred to me." in the fifteenth century, to write other than with a pen), and partly biographical (I have never learned to write legibly; I have to write with a typewriter). Thus the purely conceivable hierarchies of plans confront specific and partially unalterable spheres of incompatibilities; the result is a system of motivation for *practicable* goals." Not only does the stock of knowledge possess various interpretations of the meaning of the world, humankind, its mythic origin, its history, its structure, its scientific character, etc., but it furthermore is the vehicle that passes on to me certain basic orientations toward the world, myself, and others.

It is easy, therefore, in the enterprise of self-discovery or deliberation about what constitutes a full life, to interpret oneself according to the prefabricated stock of knowledge; to do so, in fact, is to appeal to 'common sense'. All of my basic needs are fulfilled and explicated through the central logos that manifests itself along various levels of (conventional) interpretation. I find the fundamental structure of

meaning that carves out a meaningful context: objects, relations between objects, language, other beings (some of whom are people), practical affairs, history, legend, myth, and science. My world and my possible actions and discovery of meaning is fulfilled in the shaping of life according to the cultural reality in which I find myself inserted. Although I may relate to this cultural manifold in many ways and from various perspectives, it nevertheless provides the fundamental orientation necessary as the context for all meaningful paths of life.

Heidegger's Being-in-the-World

Heidegger's aim in Being and Time is to describe what it means 'to be', in all forms. Through distinguishing every way in which something can be said 'to be', Heidegger attempts to show how the mode of being peculiar to human beings fits in with the total picture and how all being whatsoever is essentially temporal. He claims that the Western metaphysical tradition has gone astray in its representation of human being, the result of which has been a certain view about knowledge and human action that is wrong. Heidegger's main point is that human beings cannot get outside of their mode of being to an ideal perspective. Thus, the Western tradition of seeing human beings as 'thinking beings' provides an incorrect view.

Charles Taylor sees Heidegger as the first opponent to the hegemony of an abstract self. He writes: "Heidegger's importance lies partly in the fact that he is perhaps the leading figure among that small list of twentieth-century philosophers who have helped us emerge, painfully and with difficulty, from the grip of modern rationalism."[88] The tradition that Heidegger argues against comprises a movement that he believes started with Plato and culminated with his mentor, Edmund Husserl.

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[88] Taylor, Charles. "Engaged agency and background in Heidegger." In The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger, edited by Charles Guignon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. P. 317.

It parallels the emergence of the view that sees disengages reason as constitutive of the self.[89] Instead, Heidegger wants to argue that the self (*Dasein*) cannot be abstracted, at the most basic level of being itself, from its world context (*Umwelt*).

The concept of *umwelt* (being-in-the-world) makes its major appearance in Heidegger's Being and Time, in which his aim was to pose the question "What is meant by Being?". According to Heidegger, the concept of 'Being' is universal and thus cannot be captured and described through an Aristotelian 'genus'. It cannot be comprehended as any thing that is; it cannot be represented; it cannot be deduced from higher concepts. Yet, 'Being' seems evident.

Heidegger begins his analysis by describing the mode of 'Being' for which 'Being' appears. He calls this mode of being, which critics take to be the human mode of being. 'Dasein' (being-there).[90] However, it is easy to misunderstand and think that Heidegger is talking about consciousness. Instead, his concern is with a mode of being.

'Being', for Heidegger, 'discloses itself' to *dasein*. This disclosure initially appears as an everyday orientation which is prereflective and pretheoretical. *Dasein* is in a world, where things bear a sense of relatedness. Being discloses itself to *Dasein* as 'vorhandensein' (existent), which is in the background and remains outside of *dasein's* concern; and as 'zuhandensein' (ready at hand), which is not only proximal to *dasein* but also there for use (mostly unthematized). Reaching for a

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[89] Langan writes: ". . . the new phenomenology would occupy a place in history lying beyond the traditional metaphysical opposition of realism-idealism. It would achieve a fundamentality capable of undercutting the root 'metaphysical' dichotomy that has plagued Western thought since Plato's time –the very opposition of subject and object." Cf. Langan, Thomas. The Meaning of Heidegger: A Critical Study of an Existentialist Phenomenology. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961. P. 21. Also, see Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, New York: Harper and Row, 1962. Pp. 214ff.

[90] Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* comprises a great deal of Being and Time; however, the initial discussion to which I am referring is contained between pages 12 and 27 [German edition pagination], *Op. Cit.*

doorknob. which is 'zuhanden'. does not mean that we have to think about the doorknob; rather. we are concerned with whatever task with which we are involved.[91]

The point of Heidegger's analysis of this everydayness is that the underlying world with which *dasein* is concerned is prearticulated before it even becomes a feature of Husserl's intentional consciousness. Heidegger refers to this orientation as a 'comportment' toward the world. Each mode of comportment toward the things that already there reveals *dasein* as 'already' in the world. 'umwelt.' *Dasein* as our original comportment toward a world. is inseparable from its background.

Taylor, in his essay "Engaged agency and background." discusses how Heidegger's *umwelt* is more than just a mechanistic universe over and against the knowing subject. Instead, it is a necessary context. that 'shapes our world'. "The ways in which our world is shaped define the contours of . . . engaged agency – what Heidegger sometimes referred to as the 'finitude' of the knowing agent."[92] He believes that this presents a counter to the ideas of both 'ontic logos' and 'disengaged reason'. From the 'ontic logos' of Plato and Aristotle. to the disembodied subject of Descartes. the project of Western metaphysics has been one of locating rational ordering. In the modern world. according to Taylor. "The fateful step was not so much its formulation [i.e., reason as a function of the mind. mine], but rather what I earlier called its ontologizing. that is. the reading of the ideal method into the very constitution of the mind."[93]

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[91] Cf. Taylor, Engaged agency and Background," *Op. Cit.* Also Cf. Hall, Harrison. "Intentionality and World: Division I of Being and Time." In, Guignon, *Op. Cit.* Pp. 124-130. Also, Heidegger, Being and Time, *Op. Cit.* Pp. 42-45 [German text pagination].

[92] Taylor, *Op. Cit.* P. 319. Also Cf. Heidegger, *Op. Cit.* P. 56 [German text pagination] "The concept of 'facticity' implies that an entity 'within-the-world' has Being-in -the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world."

[93] Taylor, *Op. Cit.* P. 321.

Instead, Taylor argues, the Heideggarian notion of *umwelt* gives us a picture of 'engaged agency', that is, "that agency whose experience is made intelligible only by being placed in the context of the kind of agency it is." Carrying this thought further, he adds, "the context stands as the unexplicated horizon within which --or to vary the image, as the vantage point from out of which—this experience can be understood."[94] According to this view, we are caught up in a background that cannot itself be thematized because it is the precondition of thematization. All awareness requires this background, which itself remains as the horizon of all possibilities. Akin to the Kantian 'transcendental argument', Heidegger's argues, according to Taylor, "that things are disclosed first as part of a world, that is, as the correlates of concerned involvement, and within a totality of such involvements."[95]

The import of all this, for Taylor, is that original human being is contextual and the position of disengaged rationality is a construct that, to a great extent, falsifies the picture of human being. Rather than seeing Heidegger's arguments as proof that the tradition has been misdirected, Taylor sees this as a valuable critique, opening the way for further exploration. He wants to use this as a springboard from which to characterize the modern identity, and to critique its preoccupation with a certain metaphysical and epistemological bias.

Wittgenstein's *lebensform*

Taylor sees a parallel between Heidegger and Wittgenstein in the way that both critique Cartesian rationalism.[96] This equation may be somewhat puzzling at first; however, it is important to note that Taylor is not describing large overlapping parts of these two very different thinkers. What he does observe is that both have a

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[94] Ibid. P. 325.
[95] Ibid. P. 332.
[96] Taylor, Charles. Philosophical Arguments. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995. P. 61ff.

strong critique of disengaged reason as having an ideal perspective on the world, which, for its part, sits 'out there' as a thing to be explored. While Wittgenstein's critique of the 'self' as a detached spectator is a theme that occurs throughout the corpus of his writings, Taylor finds the most useful part of his position in the concept of *lebensform* (form of life).

Interestingly enough, there are only five short and cryptic passages in the Philosophical Investigations that make explicit reference to 'form of life'. This ambiguity on the part of Wittgenstein has led to diverse and disparate interpretations of this notion. For example, Black argues that 'form of life' is an expression that Wittgenstein kept deliberately vague, so it is a mistake for a reader to seek clear understanding.[97] On the other hand, Malcolm contends that "one could hardly place too much stress on this . . . notion in Wittgenstein's thought."[98] Therefore, Taylor's position regarding Wittgenstein's 'form of life' does not have unanimous consensus among Wittgenstein critics.

Part of what Taylor wants to argue is that Wittgenstein, in his notion of 'form of life' is telling us something about the nature of the self. But, because of the severe criticisms leveled against concepts of the 'self' leveled by Wittgenstein, beginning with the Tractatus and continuing throughout his works, it is important to try and get at exactly how Taylor means for us to understand this position.

First, as pointed out by Hans Sluga, "To trace Wittgenstein's discussion of the self means . . . to trace the complex web of connections between questions of

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[97] Black, Max. "Lebensform and Sprachspiel," in Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought: Proceedings of the Second Annual International Wittgenstein Symposium. Eds. E. Leinfellner, W. Leinfellner, Berghel, and Hubner. Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1978.
[98] Cf. Malcolm, Norman. "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations," in Pitcher, ed. Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations. New York: Anchor books, 1966.

mind and language."[99] It is clear that Wittgenstein wanted to refute the idea of a self

that is simply a detached observer, as propounded in the works of Bertrand Russell

and which begins with the Cartesian *cogito*. Wittgenstein writes that it is a peculiar

feature of our language that it creates the illusion that the word 'I' refers to

"something bodiless, which has its seat in our body."[100] The illusion of this detached

self is caused, according to Wittgenstein, by the peculiarities of language. He says,

"Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the

clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it."[101]

But is it clear that Wittgenstein is attacking a certain conception of the self.

He is arguing, in a different way but similar to Heidegger, that the idea of a self that

stands outside of everything, to which everything is an object waiting to be correctly

described, is simply wrong. While Heidegger argued this position from the

perspective of a phenomenological ontology, Wittgenstein did so from an awareness

of the confines of language. However, Wittgenstein, despite his attacks on the idea

of a 'self', retained a central role in his philosophy for the concept of 'subjectivity'.

And, for him, this notion of subjectivity is inextricably bound up with the notion of

'world'. He writes: "The I makes its appearance in philosophy through the world's

being *my* world."[102] It appears that Wittgenstein has the idea that the self (as a

linguistic construct) does not exist as an independent 'I'; however, he does appear to

[99] Sluga, Hans. "Whose House is That? Wittgenstein on the Self," in Sluga and Stern (eds), The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. P. 321.
[100] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. The Blue and Brown Books. Oxford: Blackwell, 1958. 2nd ed., 1960. P. 69.
[101] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Trans. C. K. Ogden. London: Routeledge, 1922. [4.002].
[102] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Notebooks, 1914-1916. Eds. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1961; 2nd ed. 1979. P. 80. Also Cf. Tractatus [5.641].

have a sense of subjectivity (unthematized) that is intrinsically related to a linguistic horizon. He adds: "the limits of my language signify the limits of my world."[103]

The meaning of 'I' is attached, according to Wittgenstein's position in the Philosophical Investigations, to different 'language games', which create an area of discourse that determines the rules for using certain terms. No language can exist without being in a context of a language-game and certainly no meaningful utterance can occur without itself being situated within a frame of reference. However, a 'language game' is not just a simple set of rules that can be understood in much the same way as can a grammar book; rather, it is a horizon of use, which determines whether utterances make sense or not. We live within the context of language games –it is peculiar to our 'form of life'.

For this reason, Wittgenstein would hold that there is no Cartesian 'cogito' that can survey the world of *res extensa*. Nominalism, the view that we simply name the things in the world, is wrong. Instead, Wittgenstein contends, all perspectives are partial, making sense only within a language game and bound by a peculiar 'form of life'. He writes: "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false? [he replies] It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in forms of life."[104]

Even if it is not explicitly clear what Wittgenstein meant by 'form of life', a good case can be made, from the position just articulated, that it refers to an underlying agreement within a linguistic community. Now, what I mean by 'linguistic community' is not as simple as 'English speakers' –it is more akin to the

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[103] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, *Op. Cit.* [5.6].
[104] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations, *Op. Cit.*, P. 242.

shared unthematized understandings that make communication in a specific domain (say physics) possible. The underlying layer of agreement, which Wittgenstein sees as rules of use, remains in the background as a necessary condition for meaningful statements. Further, while many of these domains are coherent with each other, many are not.

It is unclear whether Wittgenstein believed that there was a single, embracing 'form of life'. From the tone of his earlier writings and lack of specificity in the Philosophical Investigations, it is likely that he did not. But there is clear indication that he saw many interrelated language games, some converging and some diverging, that are orientations which are continually and dynamically delimited by how we use language. If Wittgenstein's perspective were stretched, we could say that it is our 'form of life' to be caught in this complicated web of language games, from which we are unable to extricate ourselves. There is no ideal perspective.

Jonathan Lear characterizes this as "perceptions of salience, routes of interest, feelings of naturalness in following a rule that constitute being part of a form of life."[105] This is not unlike Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world'. Both Heidegger and Wittgenstein would contend that our form of life is not a Platonic form, fixed, and existing in a realm external to us. We are intrinsically connected and contained within a form of life. We only see it from the inside.

But unlike Heidegger, Wittgenstein would argue that there are different forms of life, that there is not a single all-embracing one. From this perspective, objectivity is removed from epistemic foundationalism and it resurfaces in the domain of politics and social understanding.[106] This can lead to misunderstandings and difficulties when

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[105] Lear, Jonathan. "The Disappearing 'We'," in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supp. Vol. 58 (1984), p. 229.
[106] Cf. Lovibond. Realism and Imagination in Ethics. , Pp. 210-19.

different individuals who are coming from a different form of life meet. Scheman writes: "Those who are wholly strangers to the form of life in which our words now find themselves may regard such forms of life as abhorrent, but are unlikely to bring to their abhorrence sufficient insight to give it any standing."[107]

Furthermore, it is incorrect to attribute the correlation of 'form of life' and 'language game' in Wittgenstein's thought. There is a special relationship between the two; however, there may be many different language games within a single form of life. As Garver points out, "the correlation between *Sprachspiel* and *Lebensform* is many to one rather than one to one. Each language game does constitute or determine a special form, namely, a form of activity or behavior, not a form of life."[108] Garver further cautions the reader to avoid misconstruing 'form of life' with 'life-style' or 'culture'. It is a more fundamental concept --one which is at the root of what it means to be a human being.

Returning to Taylor's analysis, it is now clear that his view of certain common features between Heidegger and Wittgenstein makes sense. Both reject the Cartesian ideal of disengaged reason being the essential structure of the self; further, both reject the ability to adopt a perspective that is outside of an underlying context. Taylor reminds us, ". . . the background is what arises with engaged agency. It is the context of intelligibility of experience for this kind of agent. If a given kind of agency is engaged in this sense, then its experience is not intelligible outside this context."[109] He adds: "Heidegger speaks of 'finitude' in his account of human being (*Dasein*). Wittgenstein places the meanings of our words in the context of our form of life (*Lebensform*). Both are therefore concerned with the context of intelligibility

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[107] Scheman, Naomi. "Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground," in The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein, *Op. Cit.*, P.403.
[108] Garver, Newton. This complicated Form of Life: Essays on Wittgenstein, *Op. Cit.* P. 246.

of knowledge, thought, and meaning. Both propose some notion of background: and, more, both articulate some part of this background whose neglect has allowed the disengaged view to seem possible."[110]

Self and World as an Inseparable Unity

I have traced many different arguments about the intrinsic connection between the self and its world. What is common to them all is that the Cartesian picture of a detached 'cogito' alongside a world which is 'out there' waiting to be described and reasoned about, is misleading. Furthermore, Taylor has argued correctly that this view of the self has led us down two distinct paths: (1) some form of dualism between the mind and body, and (2) the model of a mechanistic world standing alone, which has caused the emergence of many 'computational models' of the mind as mechanistic brain function. The thinkers considered in this chapter all disagree with this picture in different ways; however, they all agree that it is wrong and that a more careful description, one that shows an intrinsic connection between the self and the world, is desperately needed.

Husserl was closest to the Cartesian picture with his theory of the transcendental ego. But his theory of intentionality was a vast improvement over the rough view held by 'Brentano. According to Husserl, consciousness is always 'consciousness-of ', but this intentional consciousness does not have direct access to the thing in itself. Instead, Husserl used a linguistic model close to that professed by Saussure. In this way, intentional consciousness reaches its object mediated by meaning. The intention (noesis) reaches out for the object, which gives itself within

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[109] Taylor, Charles. Philosophical Arguments, Op. Cit. P. 69.
[110] Ibid. P. 75.

a context of meaning (noema). Husserl introduced a linguistic approach to phenomenology.

Further. Husserl proposed the *Lebenswelt* (life-world) as the contextuality for all meanings. The life-world was, for Husserl, the horizon of all possible meaning fulfillment. It is a feature of conscious life which is inseparable from it. Even in The Crisis, the aged Husserl spoke about 'flowing-in' as a necessary feature of transcendental consciousness. The import of this concept is that the life of consciousness is contained within and lives through the life-world.

Schutz performed his phenomenology of the life-world without recourse to its constitution as an essential feature of a constituting transcendental consciousness. His work is more a descriptive account of being in the human world. As such. he articulated the historical and cultural characters of human life. showing that we are born into a biographical situation. inserted into a fully developed structure of meaning. The social stock of knowledge. language. and cultural orientations all coalesce to provide the framework from which the individual learns to see objects. distinguish real from non-real. truth from falsity. and orient toward the world. self. and others.

Heidegger approached the problem in a different manner from Husserl and Schutz. For him, the underlying question about the meaning of 'Being' led him to see that there are certain pre-thematic shapings of the kind of being that makes human life what it is. It is this underlying context of being-in-the-world, and its inseparability from the self, that means that we are always caught in interpretation of being. Every thought has at its roots a prearticulated context. It is this context that interests us here, for it is another way of showing that there is an essential connection between the self and the world.

Finally Wittgenstein, in his cryptic and challenging concept of *Lebensform*, argues that we are trapped because we are linguistic beings. We cannot make sense of anything outside of a particular language-game; and these language-games are peculiar to a particular form of life. Unlike Husserl, Schutz, and Heidegger, Wittgenstein showed a more basic connection between the sense of subjectivity and its context. For him, meaning is only possible within the language horizon.

During much of this inquiry, I have continually referred to the assessment of this particular fold within the history of ideas made by Charles Taylor. His point is that the movement from an ontic logos (Platonic tradition) to Descartes' view of the self as disengaged reason (described in Chapter 4), has led us to a crisis of modern identity. By viewing the self as disengaged and able to occupy the position of an ideal observer, he contends, we have forgotten our context. The danger in this loss is that we fail to understand the value of how our world is instrumental in our constitution. Any understanding of the self, Taylor would argue, comes only after seeing it as it is within a world. Further, the concept of the self does not make any sense whatsoever without seeing it as unified with a world.

This essential contextuality of the self means that we are unable to attain an ideal perspective. No where is this problem more pronounced as in deliberations about everyday choices in life. For example, if we tend to identify ourselves with specific social conceptions of what we 'should be', then we are living according to a model that may not offer us much personal autonomy. Personal autonomy is not just something that happens within the thoughts and actions of an individual —it involves the world-context as well. What I have tried to show is the way in which the self is connected to a world. What I will show is how this world impacts personal autonomy.

ABSTRACT SELF, AUTONOMY, AND RAWLS' IMPLICIT APPEAL TO COMMUNITY IN HIS THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

<u>Introduction</u>

Descartes is credited with a notion of the self that is devoid of anything beyond pure subjectivity. *Cogito ergo sum* is the result of a progressive unplugging of the self from its world, so that what remains is a self that neither contains nor requires anything outside of itself. Furthermore. it is this abstract self. the cogito. that grounds all meaning and gives value to the external world.

Kant continued to develop the Cartesian theory of the self. We can only have knowledge of the world of appearances. Pure reason is locked within the phenomenal world. never to actually reach a noumenal object. Furthermore. the mind actually structures sense experience according to the *a priori* categories of understanding and according to the aesthetics of space and time. The world as it appears is all we know. while the world in which we act is noumenal. It is not easy, if at all possible, to reconcile the phenomenal-noumenal distinction.

Kant's theory of the self, particularly as it acts within a noumenal world of which it only has phenomenal understanding, has formed the core of many theories of the self that fall within the broad umbrella of 'liberalism'. Foremost within this tradition stands John Rawls, who in his <u>A Theory of Justice</u> describes the constitution of a just world order that itself animates and requires abstract subjectivity. In what follows, I will describe Rawls' theory and then critique his approach as somewhat self-contradictory, a feature which appears most clearly in his idea of moral development.

The Abstract Self. Autonomy, and Rawls' Theory of Moral Development

In this section I will critically examine Rawls' theory of moral development described in A Theory of Justice, primarily focusing upon two things: (1) the grounding of moral sense upon underlying natural attitudes, and (2) the implicit goal (telos) of attaining the ability of acting upon principles. I will argue that Rawls runs into difficulty explaining both the rigidity of his theoretical framework and how progress from the moralities of authority and association can evolve into acting according to principles. While the implicit goal of Rawls' theory is achieving autonomy in order to ground the principles of justice, I think that his view that autonomy is the result of a complex developmental process is markedly different from Kant, for whom autonomy was an a priori fact of reason. However, Rawls has offered, by relying on the notion that the sense of justice is rooted in natural attitudes, a more useful version of autonomy. Accordingly, autonomy is not an a priori condition that is accomplished through abstract reasoning alone, but is a practical achievement, often dependent upon conditions in the social world, and operates according to a scale of 'more or less' (according to one's stage of development). While I reject Rawls dependence upon Kohlberg's psychology of moral development, I will argue that Rawls was on the right track. Specifically, he is pointing to a richer notion of autonomy than I believe others, such as Sandel and Taylor, have given him credit for using. Further, his theory may be improved by eliminating the cumbersome and paradigm-bound psychology of moral development and replacing it with the twofold idea that a person has to be epistemically responsible and a well-ordered society must hold social institutions to a standard of an 'epistemically responsible community'.

The Sense of Justice

In chapter VIII of A Theory of Justice. Rawls discusses the origin of the 'sense' of justice. It's roots, according to Rawls, can be traced back through two traditions in the history of ideas: (1) empiricism and (2) rationalism. The empiricist tradition that Rawls examines spans from Hume to Sidgwick and has found its strongest contemporary advocates in social learning theory (TJ, 458).[111] Broadly, this tradition portrays the development of moral sense as behavioral change caused by social force, conditioning, and training to develop proper moral habits; or, in other words, 'socialization'.

Rawls believes that this position somewhat akin to that expressed by Freud (TJ, 459), whose learning theory is based upon initial conflicts brought upon by the oedipal complex. In this view, morality is taught by the parents and relieves the initial feelings of stress and conflict, but the oedipal complex taints the relationship between the child and parents, who are also naturally misguided in their instrumental use of punishment and reward. For this reason, original moral precepts are often confused and moral advancement in adult life comes from the process of socialization, i.e., finding acceptable social avenues for expressing the drives and conflicts of the id. Although Rawls does not want to completely abandon the empirical line of thought, he sees it as defective in explaining the full developmental process of moral sense. In particular, he wants to get away from morality as contingent upon socio-behavioral influences alone and find a more solid foundation for the sense of justice.

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[111] Rawls cites the following exponents of what he calls 'social learning theory': Roger Brown, 1965. Social Psychology. New York: Free Press, and Martin L. Hoffman, 1970. "Moral Development," in Carmichaels's Manual of Psychology, ed. Paul H. Mussen, 3rd ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

The second tradition in moral learning which interests Rawls can be traced back to the theories of Rousseau, Kant, and, to some degree, Mill. It is also reflected in the contemporary thinking of Piaget and Kohlberg (TJ, 459). According to this view, which Rawls believes offers a better account of how individuals come to act upon the basis of principles, moral sentiments are a natural and essential part of human development. These sentiments are intrinsically bound to the notion that human beings thrive in a social world but are not strictly 'conditioned' by that world (TJ, 460); however, the powerful influence of society upon our behavior remains an integral part of any moral learning theory. To emphasize this point, Rawls quotes Mill, who said that "the arrangements of a just society are so suited to us that anything which is obviously necessary for it is accepted much like a physical necessity (TJ, 460)." If true, this shows how strong a just society motivates individuals to adopt behavior that reinforces and promotes its continuation.[112] Although Rawls seems to agree in part with this perspective, he does not believe that Mill's full blown utilitarianism adequately explains the development of moral sense. Instead, Rawls holds that the Kohlbergian picture of the development of moral sense is more accurate. Accordingly, moral sense emerges as a natural part of human development and is not contingent upon motives supplied by harm, sanctions, or any other social influence.

The Well-Ordered Society

In A Theory of Justice, Rawls describes how moral development might occur within a well ordered society (TJ §§ 69-72). He is interested in taking a close look at the methods by which a person might come to understand and revere the

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[112] The idea that there is a strong relationship between human knowledge and the epistemic community will be instrumental later in this argument.

principles of justice. It is interesting to notice. however, that Rawls describes the sense of justice as something that only fully emerges within a 'well-ordered society' and along a rigidly structured process of psychological development. Earlier in the text, he has defined a 'well-ordered society' as "one designed to advance the good of its members and effectively regulated by a public conception of justice (TJ. 453. Cf. also 4-5)." To some degree, it is the exemplification of the kind of social world that would result from the grounding of institutions upon the principles of justice. Paradoxically, Rawls wants to discover how the 'sense' of justice is developed. but, at the same time, also requires that there already be a just society in which this sense develops.[113] Within the well-ordered society there are two main elements: (1) there is common acceptance of the principles of justice which are known to be commonly shared. and (2) these principles are reflected in and supported by the basic social institutions (TJ. 5).

Robert Paul Wolff has described Rawls' notion of a well-ordered society to have a deeper significance (Wolff. 80). He states that this concept enables Rawls to eliminate "certain sorts of . . . 'noble lie' versions of utilitarianism (Wolff. 80)." The necessary conditions of the well-ordered society rule out this sort of view. This means that Rawls' concept of a well-ordered society does not lend itself to 'socialization' theories of moral development (i.e., the view that moral development is merely a process of socialization).

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[113] This point will be important in the later parts of this paper. I will try to argue that there is a sense in which Rawls needs a pre-articulated 'well-ordered society' in order for his moral development theory to work. On the other hand, Rawls presupposes that individuals adopting the original position have a sense of justice already –and from this sense of justice lay out the principles of justice, the four stage sequence, and form a well-ordered society. Although Rawls appears to be using, if not circular, elliptical reasoning here, I do not believe that the apparent circularity is vicious, nor does it cripple his theory.

Another characteristic of the well-ordered society is that it exhibits, "or would come to exhibit, an explicit sense of justice (Martin, 16-17)."

A society governed by a stable conception of justice is itself more stable. Rawls writes: "One conception of justice is more stable than another if the sense of justice that it tends to generate is stronger and more likely to override disruptive inclinations and if the institutions it allows foster weaker impulses and temptations to act unjustly (TJ, 454)." There is a direct relationship, for Rawls, between the stability of a society and the sense of justice that it fosters. For this reason, Rawls chooses the well-ordered society as the one in which the most refined sense of justice can be achieved through the process of moral development. He appears only interested in how a sense of justice arises within this kind of social world.

Moral Development

Rawls' theory of moral development borrows from several thinkers, including McDougall, Piaget, and Kohlberg (TJ, 461 ftn.). However, a cursory glance at Rawls' theory shows that it is most aligned with the moral development theory of Lawrence Kohlberg.[114] He introduces a moral development theory for three main reasons: (1) to show how it is possible for an individual to reach a stage of personal development that facilitates acting from principles, beyond wants and needs, (2) to explain why certain individuals and children are unable to act in this manner (and justify paternalism in certain cases), and (3) to devise a concept of autonomy that allows both goodness and justice to become congruent in the notion of the self. Rawls relies upon this process to show that the development of a sense of justice is natural for human beings within a certain type of social environment

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[114] Rawls and Kohlberg were colleagues at Harvard. Some debate has been made about which one influenced the other on this theory. However, it is clear that Kohlberg was trying to develop a theory that was consistent with a Rawlsian notion of justice.

and that this development is an essential component of the survival of that society. In simple terms, he believes that only after reaching a level of practical autonomy can individuals be said to have a sense of justice. He also implies, through discussions about stability, that a community of autonomous individuals is a necessary component of a just society.

Rawls begins his discussion of moral development by saying that his stages of moral development, although fewer in number, encompass the same domains as those proposed by Kohlberg (TJ, 462 ftn.).[115] Starting with the 'morality of authority', an infant is born into the society with no pre-constituted sense of morality. The initial needs of the infant are met by the parents, who provide love and satisfy basic requirements. As the parents continue to care for and love the child, the child reciprocates, developing love and trust for the parents. The child sees the parents as authority figures, and they hand out punishment and rewards for certain types of behavior. The child's first understanding of the moral landscape is in terms of punishment and reward, adjusting her behavior, as needed, to avoid punishment. She does not critically examine the precepts of rules imposed by the parents at this stage (TJ, 463). Eventually, the child begins to understand and display the kinds of behavior that are permitted. When the child fails to meet these behavioral standards, feelings of guilt, coupled with fear of punishment, arise. This idea of guilt and its associated feelings will play a central role in Rawls' understanding of moral development.

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[115] Kohlberg, who was also influenced by Rawls, lumps his six stages into three categories, corresponding roughly to Rawls three kinds of morality (The Psychology of Moral Development, Pp. 177 ff.).

The next stage of moral development characterized by Rawls is the "morality of association". While the morality of authority characteristic of the child's world is, according to Rawls, a "collection of (uncritical) precepts," the morality of association subjects the maturing moral subject to her first set of standards based upon her role in the group. The first association is the family, which, although only a small association, gives rise to concepts of being a 'good daughter' or 'good son' (TJ, 467). Schools and neighborhoods provide other early forms of associations and contain other ideals. Rawls describes developing a social life as a dynamic process of complex associations. He believes that a person's moral understanding "increases as we move in the course of life" and, following the ideals of increasingly complex associations "quite naturally leads up to a morality of principles (TJ, 468)."

A person must develop the ability to see from the perspective of the other in order to achieve the second level of moral development (TJ, 468). One must have a certain degree of cognitive skill in order to perceive what others want, their plans, motives, and intentions. Further, the only clues that we have to assess these things are the other person's speech, behavior, attitude and other observable characteristics (TJ, 469). Rawls does not believe that a child has the cognitive ability to perceive the complex relationships necessary to fully develop to the stage of the morality of association. He thinks that there is a relationship between a person's ability to perceive these factors and their moral development.[116] He writes: "How well the art of perceiving the person is learned is bound to affect one's moral sensibility; and it is equally important to understand the intricacies of social cooperation (TJ, 469)."

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[116] This point will be instrumental later in this paper. I will argue that there is a necessary connection between a person's cognitive abilities, how they use these abilities, and their level of autonomy.

However, the development of these cognitive abilities alone is not sufficient to attain the morality of association.[117]

Rawls argues that the moral sense underlying the morality of association is a function of having feelings of guilt when obligations are not met, goals are not reached, and the one does not live up to requirements within the association (TJ, 470). Clearly, these feelings are of the same kind as found in the earlier 'morality of authority', except that they arise from different conditions. Thus, the morality of association, *just like the morality of authority, is founded upon feelings of guilt* which are appropriate in specific circumstances. Because of these feelings, each person tries to live up to certain expected standards, which are perceived as obligations to others within the association. The survival of the association is contingent upon everyone (or at least most) doing her share. When most members of an association do their share, a state of equilibrium is reached (TJ, 471). This equilibrium is perpetuated when role-models within each association influence others to adopt their ideals. Any person will, necessarily, be involved in numerous associations, some of which may have conflicting ideals; however, Rawls believes that the ideals that contribute to the sense of justice would be consistent among different associations. In fact, he holds that society itself is a grand morality of association and its members, each viewing the other as equals, are joined together by a shared conception of justice (TJ, 472).

Involvement in complex associations eventually leads to an understanding of the principle of justice (TJ, 472). As long as the motivation for obeying the principles of justice are from association (friendship, fellow feeling, concern for

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[117] This is similar to the problem raised by Glaucon and Thrasymachus in Plato's Republic: why should someone be just when it might be to their advantage to appear just (i.e., know all of the

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acceptance), the person has not reached the highest stage of moral development: however, using the principles of justice in complex social situations leads to an understanding of their independent value. Eventually, according to Rawls, the individual develops a desire to act upon the basis of the principles for their own sake, because she has recognized their independent value (TJ, 474). Rawls' final stage of moral development is called the 'morality of principles'. It requires a certain level of autonomy and is characterized by the sense of justice, which, in Rawls' view, shows itself in two ways: (1) through our acceptance of just institutions, and (2) by our willingness to work to maintain or establish just institutions. At this point, feelings associated with guilt arise when we fail to live up to the principles of justice. Rawls says that the cause of the guilt feelings at this level of moral development stem from a failure to act on the basis of principles. It is clear that Rawls' characterization of guilt feelings and their importance in defining the sense of justice shows that having the proper sentiments is a prerequisite for a sense of justice. These sentiments initially come from punishment and reward, then from friendship and obligation, finally from an allegiance to principles.

Clearly, given this view, a person's sense of justice, and, correspondingly, their level of moral development, depends upon motive. If the motive is punishment and reward, the person is at the level of the morality of authority. If social acceptance, friendship, and group recognition are the motives, the person is at the level of the morality of association. But only if the motives are from a commitment to principles themselves can a person be said to have reached the level of the morality of principles (TJ, 474-5). But this does not mean that action at this

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correct behavior) and really not be? A trickster, according to Rawls, might just as easily possess these cognitive skills and use them immorally.

level is based solely upon abstract reasoning; instead, Rawls argues that there are three reasons that moral principles are and remain vital: (1) the principles have content that has been used to arbitrate in meaningful situations. (2) the sense of justice is continuous with the love of humanity, and (3) from a Kantian perspective, we express our true nature as free and equal rational beings when we act upon the basis of principles (TJ. 476). This last perspective is what Rawls calls `the morality of self-command` and can be seen as an important component of his idea of autonomy.

Rawls` theory of moral development reveals a genetic process of acquiring principles that guide activity which are themselves grounded in moral feelings and natural attitudes. Dividing sentiments broadly into `natural` and `moral`. Rawls holds that a person`s explanation of having `moral feelings` is always accompanied by a moral concept. So. for example. when asked about why she feels guilty. a person might respond that what she did was `wrong`. The point is that the feeling of guilt alone is insufficient to ground morality; there must also be a developmental process of acquiring an ability to understand and act upon the basis of principles.

Moral feelings, such as guilt, relate back to natural attitudes. such as a child's feelings of love and trust for her parents. Rawls believes that the absence of moral attitudes reveals an absence of these natural ties (TJ, 486). Early childhood experiences have an effect upon the development of moral sense. The absence of that sense points toward a problem in the child's development. This process continues throughout adult life and remains unrectified until she demonstrates the capability of acting upon the basis of moral principles. Since, as Rawls points out,

moral feelings are a "normal part of human life," their absence represents either an arrest in development or a character flaw.[118]

Rawls wants to codify the psychological propensities that are characteristic to the moral developmental process (TJ, § 75). Parallel to his moral development theory, therefore, Rawls introduces three 'principles of moral psychology' that are supposed to regulate the dynamics of acquiring moral principles. These principles are tenuous at best and fail to capture the intrinsic connection between stages one through three. While a longer critique of this theory will appear later in this paper, at this point it is sufficient to imagine a simple counterexample whereby it is possible for a person to develop an ability to act upon the basis of principles and yet have not received the love, care and affection in stage one.

Rawls notion of moral development is crucial for his theory of justice. He relies upon the concept of equal, rational persons in order to discover the principles of justice. However, many people, in any society, will be neither free not rational. If the developmental theory is correct in general, then only those who have achieved the capability to act upon the basis of principles can participate in the quest for just institutions (TJ, 505). The capacity for attaining this level is the condition for being treated as a moral person. And Rawls writes "the capacity for moral personality is a sufficient condition for being entitled to equal justice (TJ, 505)." That means that most people will fit into this category, even though many will not have actualized their potential. Those who cannot attain moral personality will be doomed to a life of paternalistic control.

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[118] Rawls writes: "One may say, then, that a person who lacks a sense of justice. . . not only is without ties of friendship, affection, and mutual trust, but is incapable of experiencing resentment and indignation. He lacks certain natural attitudes and moral feelings of a particularly elementary kind. Put another way, one who lacks a sense of justice lacks certain fundamental attitudes and capacities included under the notion of humanity (TJ, 488)."

The theory of moral development, therefore, is an attempt to ground a society of individuals who are able to recognize and act upon the basis of principles because they believe in the principles. Furthermore, their sentiments are grounded in benevolent sentiments toward all of humanity. Rawls thinks that these sentiments are the product of a certain type of upbringing in a certain kind of social world: namely, parental love and trust, and a social world of obligations and feelings toward others associated with the individual. From this beneficent world emerges an autonomous person, acting upon the basis of principles. That this process is common is demonstrated by the fact that we live in a world in which the principles of justice can be discovered. Only autonomous individuals can adopt the original position, and only they can discover the principles of justice from their underlying sense of justice.

Evaluation of Rawls' Kohlbergian Account of Moral Development

Since Rawls' admits that his theory of moral development is influenced by Kohlberg (TJ, 461 ftn.), problems with the theories should be similar in nature. It would be useful to examine certain elements of Kohlberg's theory of moral development and see how he sought empirical validation for the developmental sequence. First, as a cognitive psychologist, Kohlberg attempted to create a model of moral development that had its grounding in the results obtained through empirical research. In order to accomplish this goal, he developed a moral problem that could be interpreted from a number of perspectives. By cataloging the ways in which individuals from the United States, Turkey, and Israel solved the problem, Kohlberg both proposed and believed that he could justify a six-stage sequence of moral development.

The moral dilemma that Kohlberg used as an experiment is known as the 'Heinz' dilemma. Simply:

> Heinz's wife is dying of cancer and the only
> cure is owned by a druggist who wants more
> for it than Heinz can ever afford. Although
> Heinz is able to borrow half of the cost, the
> druggist demands full price. The question is
> whether Heinz should steal the drug (The
> Psychology of Moral Development, 640).

What makes this problem useful is that it involves choosing between conflicting values, e.g., life and property. Individuals are 'tested' by being confronted with the Heinz dilemma and are required to answer several questions, including whether Heinz would be justified in stealing the drugs necessary to save the life of his wife. They are also required to justify why they believe what they have answered is right. The reasons offered for choosing one solution over another provide the basis for Kohlberg's assessment. By analyzing the results in terms of qualitatively different structures of moral thinking, Kohlberg claims to have discovered six distinct 'levels' of moral thinking —each attached to a structured way of seeing the world and not just a moral preference (Reed and Hanna, 44-5). These six stages can be grouped into Rawls' three stages, with Kohlberg's stages one and two corresponding to Rawls 'morality of authority', stages three to five corresponding to the 'morality of association' and stage six corresponding to the 'morality of principles' (TJ, 462).

Kohlberg argues that each successive stage of development is at a 'higher level' than its predecessor. This is because what appears as a conflict at a lower level appears to be resolved at the next level. Each successive stage of development creates a greater equilibrium (Reed and Hanna, 45). However, the formal criteria for something to qualify as a moral judgment are met by reasoning at

the stage six level alone. Kohlberg also argues that this evidence supports the claim

that these stages are universal and cross-cultural. He writes: "universal values and

even some hierarchy of values do exist (Philosophy of Moral Development. xxviii)"

Even though there are differences between the Rawlsian and Kohlbergian

accounts of moral development. they remain congruent. Both are concerned with

showing how it is possible for an individual to reach a level of acting on the basis of

principles. This amounts to adopting a deontological approach to morality over a

teleological method. In the former. the individual. although raised within a society

and its influences. must attain a level of development in order to be able to perceive

the deeper levels of moral judgment: in the later. the socialization process is alone

responsible for learning morality.

Problems with this Approach

Basing this aspect of his philosophical theory on empirical psychology.

Rawls' theory is subject to the limitations of any scientific paradigm. Scientific

knowledge. by its nature. is paradigm-bound (Kuhn. 10-11). At the very least. this

means that it is dangerous to base a philosophical explanation on the validity of a

scientific paradigm. This is because paradigms shift. which is the nature of

scientific revolutions. Kohlberg's theory of cognitive moral development is no

exception. Rawls' reliance upon this scientific explanation could prove difficult as

cognitive psychology takes issue with the Kohlbergian thesis.

Other problems beset the Kohlbergian view. First, he argues that his

cognitive-developmental process describes a universal, cross-cultural structure

(Philosophy of Moral Development, xxviii). However, his results were based upon

interviews in only three different societies: the United States, Israel, and Turkey.

Clearly, this is much too small of a sample to proclaim universal validity. But even

if Kohlberg tested representatives from every culture, he would still face the problem of cultural history. Rawls, insofar as he develops three 'psychological laws' corresponding to the three stages, also appears to have the view that the stages of development are universal.

Part of the reason that the stages of moral development seem so attractive to both Rawls and Kohlberg is that they are based, to a degree, upon 'formalism'. Like Kant, Kohlberg argues that the most abstract principles offer better grounding for morality than empirical knowledge. In other words, the formalist holds that acting morally correct is a matter of formal reasoning, regardless of the content of the particular situation. Rawls, like Kohlberg, was enamored with form. From his model approach to solving the problem of justice to his pure procedural theory approach to implementing the principles of justice, Rawls exhibits a strong Kantian influence. However, Rawls maintains a commitment that moral principles have real content.

Equilibrium is another concept that plays a central role in the theories of both Rawls and Kohlberg. The more evolved the sense of morality, the more stable the individual and, consequently, a society made up of more stable individuals, who share a conception of justice, is itself more stable. This is what both Rawls and Kohlberg use as the basis of arguing that the 'higher stages' are superior to the 'lower'. If an individual is faced with a moral dilemma, such as the Heinz example, the Kohlbergian stage four person (rule bound) will say that Heinz should obey the rules and suffer the loss of his wife. On the other hand, the stage six individual will argue that Heinz should steal the drugs because life is more valuable than property. The stage six moral 'gestalt' is held by Kohlberg to be superior to the others because Heinz would not be left with a moral dilemma after making the choice.

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However, a case could be made that Heinz will suffer moral conflict regardless at what 'stage' he resides. For example, Heinz could have made a stage six decision, but still anguish over having broken the law, which he also views as morally wrong. Even though Heinz, in this example, has made the higher decision, it does not necessarily carry with it a greater amount of equilibrium.

Finally, there remains the problem, for both Rawls and Kohlberg, of exactly how an individual moves from one stage to another and how these stages are interlocked so that a person cannot be at a higher stage without having been at a lower one first. Rawls offers a story of human development to show how the stages are interdependent: a child is raised in a certain way, begins to associate with others, grows up and gradually encompasses more and more complex associations until principles are clarified, finally arriving at a level of understanding where the principles themselves are the basis for moral judgment. Underlying this developmental process are natural attitudes, which give rise to moral sentiments, which lead to the sense of justice. Rawls argues that the absence of the underlying attitudes signals the absence of moral development (TJ, 488). However, a counter-example could be imagined in which a child is abused, receiving no correct guidance, does not form many, if any valuable associations, and yet still develops the ability to act on principles and demonstrates that she has a sense of justice.

It is clear from these limited examples that the moral development theories of both Rawls and Kohlberg suffer similar criticisms. Although these criticisms are not themselves crippling to either thinker, they require each to be on a less solid foundation. To use a variation of Kohlberg's moral development theory, Rawls will have to accept the fact that his theory is paradigm-bound and that presupposes the correctness of the formalist approach to ethics. He will also have to accept that his

theory of moral development, and consequently his arguments about the origins of the sense of justice, are less universal and more speculative than originally thought. Despite these problems, Rawls' theory of moral development contains many useful and positive elements. These elements are still able to support his overall theory, and with the addition of more fluid concepts, may even explain more about the institutions necessary for a well-ordered society.

Positive Contributions of this Approach

Rawls believed that moral sense is grounded upon natural attitudes. Moral attitudes, therefore, are not merely formal principles whose only purpose is to govern behavior. Rather, they are vital, fleshed-out with content. We are emotionally tied to our sense of morality and react deeply when it is violated. These reactions, it has been argued, may themselves be the source of morality (Cf. DePaul). It is the absence of such content that has been the central complaint by thinkers who criticized Rawls for having an overly abstract conception of the self (Cf. Sandel, Taylor). But if Rawls can retain the theory of moral sense having roots in natural attitudes, he actually has a much broader conception of the self than critics would allow.

The general notion that moral sense develops is extremely insightful. Unlike many thinkers throughout the history of ideas who believed that morality was independent of experience, or that there was some innate knowledge of the good, Rawls argues that moral sense is acquired only after a process of individual development. This process is hinged upon the individual reaching a certain level of cognitive skill. The greater or lesser degree of cognitive development that an individual has reached is instrumental in the attainment of a well-ordered society.

Simply. the higher level of development within a society. the better the society fulfills the higher needs of humanity.

These elements of Rawls theory of moral development are valuable and can be used in many ways to ground social justice. There is an implicit idea that. in order for people to be autonomous. they must reach a certain cognitive level. This level is comprised of the ability to deliberate effectively and resolve problems that hinder autonomous action. Further. this level of cognitive ability is attained through some process established in a society that values autonomous individuals. It is useful. therefore. to examine Rawls' conception of autonomy in order to see how it relates to moral development and the formation of the well-ordered society.

Rawls' Notion of Autonomy

Rawls has been accused of being Kantian. and his concept of a person has been critiqued as 'too thin' (Sandel), just as Kant's law of autonomy as the categorical imperative was criticized for being an 'empty formalism'.[119] But to dismiss Rawls in this manner is too simple; it ascribes a concept of 'person' to Rawls that he did not hold. Instead. Rawls has a multi-dimensional view of the self: (1) the self of the original position, (2) the living self engaged in reflective equilibrium, and (3) the ideal self who is a member of a well-ordered society.[120] The living self. Rawls believes, is a fully engaged person. who undergoes a process of moral development, reflects upon the sense of justice, decides about what principles of justice to employ, and is a critical participant within a well-ordered society. One of the key features of this concept of the self is that it is autonomous.

[119] See Hegel, Philosophy of Right, par. 135. For further development of Hegel's criticisms of Kant's moral theory see Stephen Priest (ed) Hegel's Critique of Kant. Also, Henry E. Allison, Kant's Theory of Freedom, Pp. 184-191.
[120] This analysis was presented by Prof. Chris Swoyer in April 1997.

Rawls does not spend time lamenting the fact that human beings are determined in many ways; rather, he presupposes a certain developmental level that is necessary for the formation of a just society; i.e., the ability of the members of a society to have a sense of justice and to live out their own rational plan. Both of these notions involve autonomy: the first in reaching the level of cognitive development that enables one to act upon the basis of principles, and the second in prescribing what the good is for autonomous beings (TJ, §§63-4, 78, 83).

It is clear that for Rawls autonomy is an achievement. Individuals have to reach a level of development before they are said to be autonomous. This developmental process is founded upon moral development, i.e. a person has to reach a level such that they can act upon the basis of principles. However, it also involves the adoption of a rational plan for life. Each person within the society has to determine exactly the goals for which they will live. Rawls introduces the notion of 'deliberative rationality', borrowing Sidgwick's view that a person could decide his future 'good' if he could foresee all of the consequences of the various courses of action open to him (TJ, 416-17). Rawls believes that Sidgwick's example is unrealizable, since we cannot have knowledge of the consequences of all of our actions. Instead, deliberative rationality refers to carefully reflecting upon possibilities, given one's inclinations, desires, wishes, and the constraints of ability, talent, society, and so forth (TJ, 417 ff). The capacity of acting upon principles (morality of principles) alone, for Rawls, is not enough to make a person autonomous; rather, that capacity, arrived at through empirical means, must be actualized by deliberating and actually choosing within the constraints of a real

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social world.[121] A person does not choose in a vacuum –genuine choice is constrained by time, place, circumstance, ability, intelligence, and desires. Likewise, autonomy, for Rawls, is something that is actualized in the world more or less, according to deliberative rationality and the attainment of a level of cognitive ability. Rawls uses the notion of autonomy to bring together justice and goodness (TJ, §§ 78, 85-86). He argues that the good for a person is the ability to live according to a rational plan. On the other hand, the sense of justice, arising from the attainment of the highest stage of moral development, facilitates our adoption of the original position and the derivation of the two principles of justice, which, through implementation according to the four-stage sequence, creates a well-ordered society of just institutions, which, in turn, support the fulfillment of individual rational plans.[122]

From this analysis it is clear that Rawls relies heavily upon the notion of community, or at leas the shaping force of it, in developing individuals who are capable of adopting the original position. What they do after their moral development process is completed is only attainable after the individuals have learned to act upon the basis of principles. But acting upon the basis of principles requires a process of moral development that begins within and draws greatly from the social world. It is an educational process that requires a community that values certain forms of life over others. Once they have attained this level, for Rawls, they

[121] For a clear account of the kinds of things that limit autonomy, see Bernard Berofsky, Liberation from Self: A Theory of Personal Autonomy (esp. Pp. 210 ff.). For a stricter view of autonomy within a deterministic world, see Daniel Dennett, Elbow Room.

[122] This picture is modified somewhat in Political Liberalism, where Rawls introduces the idea that there is a plurality of 'reasonable comprehensive doctrines' each requiring a political conception of justice to thrive in a society that respects diversity. Because of this common feature, Rawls argues for an 'overlapping consensus' as the hub around which differing rational plans (contained within reasonable comprehensive doctrines) can co-exist. I do not believe that this development alters the argument I have
made on the basis of material in A Theory of Justice.

can then adopt the hypothetical 'original position', which, although not prior ontologically, is, for him, the way to discover the principles of justice.

In the next chapter I will consider Charles Taylor's arguments about how this underlying reliance upon a constitutive world actually predisposes us toward certain views of the self.

TAYLOR'S CONCEPTS OF STRONG EVALUATION, INESCAPABLE FRAMEWORKS, HYPERGOODS, AND THE PROBLEM OF MODERN IDENTITY

As we have seen. one of the major critiques of Rawls and other thinkers categorized as 'liberals' is the belief that they, by and large. have a 'thin' description of the self. They implicitly rely. so the allegation goes. upon a concept of the self as a disengaged agent. However. maintaining a view of the self as 'disengaged rationality' and trying to portray any conceivably accurate picture of the moral landscape. or. even more so. of the complex social universe. is not only difficult to do. but is perhaps implausible. After presenting a critique of the 'disengaged perspective' and showing that a great amount of contemporary philosophical thought has been a critique of this position. I have demonstrated that even Rawls. who has been strongly attacked for his unrealistic view of the self. relies implicitly upon an autonomy-supporting environment to provide the proper moral development for individuals to reach the point where they can be. even for the purposes of a thought experiment. be free and equal rational individuals who can pull down the 'veil of ignorance' and create a 'well ordered society'. It is as if we cannot escape the constitutive world or the way it influences our understanding of ourselves. our goals, and the purpose of life. Further. my desires for the goods that lie within the purview of my grasp are often socially conditioned long before I actually thematize them as objects of concern.

Charles Taylor, in his monumental Sources of the Self. describes the inseparability of the self and from its world. Although his conclusion that the self and world are really an amalgamation is not radically unlike some of the views expressed in previous chapters, his idea of 'frameworks' and our primordial

attachment to 'hypergoods' will further this study and set the stage for a more detailed analysis of how our initial attachments to the world may affect us in both positive and negative ways. Therefore, in this Chapter, I will examine the position held by Charles Taylor in Sources of the Self, focusing upon two major points: (1) the nature of what he calls 'inescapable frameworks', and (2) his idea of 'hypergoods' and how they shape the moral landscape. And although his treatment of the history of what he calls the 'conflicts' of modern identity is very illuminating —encyclopedically tracing the emergence of instrumentalism, romanticism, and deism, showing how they intertwine to define zones of conflict within the modern world—they will not be directly important for the direction that I want to go in the present work.

Broadly, Taylor argues that the concept of an abstract, disengaged self, which emerged most prominently with Descartes[123], makes no sense, because, without orientation, the self is an unstable entity, if an entity at all. Instead, the dissection of a part of the self in such a manner that abstracts it from its natural meaningful context not only provides a highly inaccurate view of the human condition, but it can also be dangerous, since the institutions of power and control often promote a certain 'greatest good' based upon a faulty view of human life. Taylor's position on this matter is important for this study, because it reveals strong arguments that we need to discover a new modern identity, that our world is caught up in a serious 'identity crisis', and that in order (in the context of the present study) for there to be some semblance of personal autonomy, we must first find a more enriched view of the self, particularly in terms of what the individual sees as the good life. Even a weak interpretation of Taylor's thesis provides the beginnings of

this solution, portraying a self vitally connected to his universe, inseparable from 'strong evaluations'.

'Strong Evaluation'

In Sources of the Self, Taylor begins by saying that "selfhood and the good, or in another way selfhood and morality, turn out to be inextricably intertwined themes (1989, 3)." His position, as we have seen, is contra to the self as outside of the world and capable of determining the good. But, at first, this may be misleading. One might be inclined to think that he is attempting to return to some 'ontic logos', a great chain of being that lies outside of the self, returning us to a world where outside sources tell us what the good is, where we have no self-determination, where we return to the 'utilitarian calculus' in order to meter out justice, punishment, and desert.

But Taylor is not saying this. What he is doing is looking at a more basic level, not to cast away some of the more important results of the Enlightenment (freedom, equality, justice, individual rights). Instead, he wants to find a more firm grounding for these things, enriching them by showing how they can contribute, in a positive manner, to a revision of modern identity. He is not unlike Heidegger and Wittgenstein, who reveal the self as something primordially connected to a prearticulated context of meaning.

It is the primordial aspect of the self that Taylor observes first. There are certain things that 'make life worth living'. They have a 'spiritual depth'. And they are rooted at the very core of our being. Taylor explains, ". . . what deserves the vague term 'spiritual', is that they all involve what I have called elsewhere 'strong evaluation' [emphasis added], that is, they involve discrimination of right or wrong,

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[123] see analysis of this in Chapter 4.

better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged (1989, 4)." According to this view, a 'strong evaluation' is something like a moral intuition, ontologically prior to consideration in any way. Many strong evaluations have to do with the integrity of life and the basic respect for others (1989, 4). And Taylor explains, "we are dealing here with moral intuitions that are uncommonly deep, powerful, and universal (1989, 4)."

Our cultural background, moral education, and social context may help us define these evaluations, but they do not originate there. Instead, they are more like 'instincts', they are just there. Taylor writes: "The roots for respect for life and integrity do seem to go deep as this [instinct], and to be connected perhaps with the almost universal tendency among other animals to stop short of the killing of conspecifics (1989, 5)." But the basic orientation is shaped into articulable form through inculturation. We are given an account of the basic gut feeling, a story that ties it to a view of morality in general.

Taylor describes the 'dual nature' of strong evaluations: (1) they are much like other noncognitive phenomena, such as taste preference or aversion to pain, and, most importantly for this study, (2) they seem to reveal an aspect of what it is to be a human being. Although a naturalistic reading of this phenomenon may be tempting, according to Taylor, showing a biological source of these strong evaluations, this interpretation would be misleading. But, in Taylor's view this would be a disaster for morality, since by "assimilating our moral reactions to these visceral ones would mean considering all our talk about fit objects of moral response to be utterly illusory (1989, 6)." On the other hand, he adds: "The whole way in which we think, reason, argue, and question ourselves about morality

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supposes that our moral reactions have these two sides: that they are not only 'gut' feelings but also implicit acknowledgements of claims concerning their objects (1989. 7)."

What Taylor is getting at here is that there is a moral sense before we think about it which is in some way inextricable and foundational for all higher order moral theorizing. As he emphasizes. however. he is not pointing toward a natural source for this sense; rather. he wants to show that it has to do with the way that human beings are connected to their world. If this is true. then we cannot go behind a Rawlsian 'veil of ignorance' to find justice. since the basic 'gut reaction' upon which justice rests is something that we cannot factor out through hypothetical reasoning.

For Taylor. our 'strong evaluations' are precognitive orientations that shape he human landscape and provide the initial content for moral judgments. He contends that moral theory should not attempt to abstract from this 'background picture'. but rather build upon it. Furthermore. the individual agent may remain unaware of the source of his moral orientations. This is because 'strong evaluations' remain part of the unthematized background. On the other hand. moral beliefs (as espoused formally in moral doctrines) tend to 'cluster' around this background and reflect it in some manner.

Taylor believes that basic moral intuitions, as revealed in strong evaluation, can be isolated along what he calls 'three axes' of moral thinking (1989. 25). These three axes are: (1) "our sense of respect for and obligations to others", (2) "our understandings of what makes a full life", and (3) "the range of notions concerned with dignity" (by which he means "our sense of ourselves as commanding [attitudinal] respect"). The sense of dignity is grounded in a sense of the social

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universe. These three 'axes' comprise the basic manner in which human beings are 'plugged' into their world: they coalesce to form the original moral outlook associated with strong evaluations.

'Inescapable Frameworks'

Taylor holds that, "Probably something like these three axes exist in every culture, but there are great differences in how they are conceived, how they relate, and in their relative importance (1989, 16)." For example, in a warrior culture the sense of individual dignity is the most important feature of the moral axis. On the other hand. Plato's arguments against Thrasymachus in the Republic show a shift from the Homeric warrior orientation to a focus upon the meaning of a good life, the second axis. The first axis, according to Taylor, is interpreted mostly in line with these two (1989, 16).

Taylor calls the phenomenon of organizing around the three axes 'frameworks', which he wants to show in Sources of the Self have become problematic in the modern world. However, what is important is that the framework is based upon an interpretation of our strong evaluations. It is often something that is culturally relative. And, according to Taylor, in the modern world, "no framework is shared by everyone (1989, 17)." In other words, there is no overarching, universal framework. Instead, there is a continual play of frameworks according to individual and social dynamics.[124] However, we cannot escape our fundamental orientations and convictions about ourselves and the world, a feature that makes it impossible to 'bracket out' concerns and thus attain a Rawlsian 'original position'.[125]

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[124] Taylor admits that perhaps in paleolithic times a group had greater cohesion.
[125] Many thinkers will contend that this orientation makes Taylor an 'anti-rationalist' and perhaps an 'irrationalist'. He attempts to avoid this accusation by pointing out that even though there are many

The frameworks actually 'shape' our world. Taylor writes: "What I have been calling a framework incorporates a crucial set of qualitative distinctions. To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with the sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us (1989, 19)." This means that we tend to understand ourselves in terms of how the frameworks qualitatively reflect the three axes of moral intuitions. For, example, if the emphasis is placed more heavily upon dignity, then a tribe of warriors may emerge. In addition, the frameworks provide a template by which all other qualitative decisions are ranked. It is arbitrary, according to Taylor, whether the frameworks are articulated into an anthropology or philosophical system of morality. They are always there anyway, serving as the underlying 'common sense' and structuring how we rank the goods in society.

Contrasting the 'warrior ethic' with the 'ethic of reason', Taylor gives us an illustration of how the frameworks actually operate:

> Looking at some common examples of such
> frameworks will help to focus the discussion. One of
> the earliest in our civilization, and which is still alive
> for some people today, is that associated with the
> honour ethic. The life of the warrior, or citizen, or
> citizen-soldier is deemed higher than the merely
> private existence, devoted to the arts of peace and
> economic well-being. The higher life is marked out
> by the aura of fame and glory which attaches to it, or
> at least to signal cases, those who succeed in it
> brilliantly. To be in public life or to be a warrior is to
> be at least a candidate for fame. To be ready to
> hazard one's tranquillity, wealth, even life for glory is
> the mark of a real man; and those who cannot bring
> themselves to this are judged with contempt as
> 'womanish' (this outlook seems to be inherently
> sexist) (1989, 20).

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things that fall within these frameworks, that discoveries such as logic, mathematics, science, and technologies are not, by realizing that we don't have ideal access, less relevant or valuable (1989, 8-11).

Against this Homeric and timocratic universe, Taylor illustrates the counter position promoted by Plato. According to the Platonic view, virtue in public life lies not in being the warrior, but is found in the rule of reason, which imposes order upon chaos. Those who live the life of reason view the warrior as a necessary evil -- fickle and prone to emotions, which must, and can only be, tempered by reason.

Orientation of the Self in 'Moral Space'

Clearly, if Taylor is right, frameworks provide the background for our moral judgments, flesh out our intuitions, and bring sense to our gut reactions. They also provide the logic of organization of the various 'goods' within our grasp. Taylor believes that the amalgamation of our sense of what is right and the prearticulated frameworks (which may, of course be formalized later), reveals something about the nature of self-identity. "My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose (1989, 27)." Without the framework, the self would have no content and thus would flounder, without grounding. One of the essential features of human agency, according to Taylor, is that it exists within a space where there are strongly valued aspects of life –and these things exist for us prior to all choice. This challenges the peculiar form of naturalism that, as the result of Cartesian dualism, has led to the view of the self as a disengaged subjectivity. Taylor says, "in the light of our understanding of identity, the portrait of an agent free from all frameworks rather spells for us a person in the grip of an appalling identity crisis (1989, 31)."

Another way in which the self is embedded within the frameworks is through its intrinsic form of being. In order for there to be any coherence of the

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self, it must apprehend itself and its goals through the flow of time. The self is not just a snapshot, one instant moment, but rather an enduring entity, one that is constituted temporally. It is necessary, therefore, for there to be a temporal (or narrative) unity in order for the self to make sense of any action whatsoever. He writes, ". . . making sense of my present action, when we are not dealing with such trivial questions as where shall I go in the next five minutes but with the issue of my place relative to the good, requires a narrative understanding of my life, a sense of what I have become which can only be given in a story (1989, 48)."

The frameworks orient individuals within moral space. This is done through their grounding in strong evaluations, which, evidenced in the frameworks, orient us in relation to the deepest meaning of life. This fundamental orientation leads the individual to a reinforcement of certain valuations, beliefs, and goals that constitute the underlying sense of the self. It is important to remember that this entire structure depends upon strong evaluations, which, according to Taylor, must include two interlocking orders: (1) the understanding of the social world, specifically the principles of social coordination; and, (2) a qualitative discrimination of the good. It is the latter that concerns Taylor and provides the greatest sense of commitment for an individual.

Because Taylor places so much emphasis upon the qualitative aspect of moral orientation, he responds to allegations that he has committed the 'naturalistic fallacy'.[126] To counter this accusation, he argues that just because values are not objects of natural science is no reason to suppose that they are less real. Science

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[126] What is called the 'naturalistic fallacy' stems from the work of G.E. Moore, who, in Principia Ethica, considered it to be a fallacy to view ethics from the perspective of empirical science –which thereby reduces ethical notions (values) to those of the natural sciences (facts); thus deriving values from facts (i.e., non-ethical premises). For further discussion of this 'fallacy', see Moore, G.E. Principia Ethica. New York: Prometheus books, Pp. 9-17.

deals exclusively with a certain kind of object; however, Taylor believes that we must broaden our understanding of reality to include qualitative aspects as well as quantitative. He contends that even if we succeed in describing human behavior in 'objective' descriptive language, we still cannot do without qualitative distinctions in the deliberations about our lives (1989, 57).

The self, by its nature, is oriented within moral space. This is not something that we choose, but it is a natural part of the 'form of life' that humans embrace. We cannot escape this fundamental orientation, which, although it may be manifested in many different and often contradictory forms, itself forms the under layer of morality in general. What he is pointing out is that we are really unable to be disengaged, even though post-Cartesian thinkers postulate such a view of the self.

'Hypergoods'

One of the most interesting and useful aspects of Taylor's thesis is contained in his notion of 'hypergoods'. Simply, these refer to certain goods that, by their strong importance to our lives, actually shape the hierarchy of all other goods. This is a natural feature of our living within a framework that is vectored according to strong evaluations. Because most individuals live within a world where there are many different kinds of goods, there is always a necessity to prioritize and rank them. Most often, this process ranks one good higher than the others. These 'higher-order' goods are the 'hypergoods' described by Taylor. Not only are hypergoods, by their nature, more important than other goods, but they also "provide a standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, [and] decided about (1989, 63)."

Some examples of hypergoods might be found in a 'love for God'. a search for 'justice'. or a 'commitment to family'. For individuals who are strongly committed to such a good. hypergoods provide a landmark in relation to which judgments about the direction of life can be made. However. because hypergoods are themselves constituted through intense commitment to a prearticulated sense of strong evaluation. and because these strong evaluations tend to manifest themselves in various and different frameworks. individuals may disagree about which goods are. in fact. hypergoods. This means that they can serve as the source of conflict. Taylor sees the emergence of modern identity as a result of these conflicts (e.g.. he cites the shift between what he calls 'pre-modern' and 'modern' science). He also believes that the modern individual is caught up in a major conflict about which particular hypergood shall reign over social order and individual fructification.

The Self as Inextricably Intertwin: d with Its Frameworks

It should be clear by now that Taylor's view of the self is one that cannot be abstracted from the values and commitments that. he thinks. actually constitute it. He argues that it is futile to attempt to describe the self in abstraction from these concerns: ". . . if our moral ontology springs from the best account of the human domain we can arrive at, and if this account must be in anthropocentric terms. terms which relate to the meanings things have for us. then the demand to start outside of all such meanings. not to rely on our moral institutions or on what we find morally moving, is in fact a proposal to change the subject (1989, 72)." The goal of practical reasoning about ethical matters should therefore not be concerned with whether a proposition is absolutely correct, but that some position is superior to another. The qualitative discriminations that compose our ethical existence function as an orienting sense, charting what is most important, how we should react, feel,

interact with others, and provide the grounding in a 'gut feeling' that is necessary for and underlies our deliberations about ethical matters.

Taylor has argued against the Cartesian project which has led to a notion of the individual ethical agent as disengaged from the world, as a 'cogito' that embodies the faculty of pure reason, which can always make rational judgments about a mechanistic or naturalistic world. He believes that this is a falsification of the nature of the self. In many ways, Taylor is akin to Hume, who argued that ethics are necessarily founded upon the passions. Taylor's notion of 'strong evaluation', which leads to a framework of moral understanding, which may or may not be articulated into a 'theory' or 'dogma', which then provides the basic 'common sense' feelings that we have about how to rank our goods and which are 'hypergoods', means that the grounding for morality lies not in reason, although we can and should reason about ethical matters, but instead in a fundamental ontological orientation toward the world. This is the reason that Taylor is a communitarian –he finds the answer not in the isolation of individual reasoning, but in the underlying 'gut feelings' that prearticulate our moral orientation and which are intersubjective by nature.

Following a Rule and 'Shared Understanding'

One other area that would be useful to examine is brought out in Taylor's Philosophical Arguments, on rule following. Initially a discussion on the problems posed by Wittgenstein having to do with the complex nature of what it means to follow a rule, Taylor's analysis will provide valuable insight into the nature of social conformity. This is related to what he has said about the ways in which strong evaluations and resultant frameworks actually shape us ontologically. If this is correct, then there is a certain sense of 'blind conformity' that happens in the human

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social world. Perhaps an initial fix on this topic can be obtained by listening closely to Taylor.[127]

Citing Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations. Taylor raises the question about what is involved in the simple following of a rule (1995. 165-80). He uses the example of simple directions. a person asking how to get to point B from point A. However. the simple explanation of the directions can lead to confusion, if the person asking for directions does not know the (deceptively) simple process of the rule for following directions. To be able to understand directions. we must first understand the rule of how to follow directions. He writes: "If in order to understand directions or know how to follow a rule. we have to know that all [of the] . . . deviant readings are deviant. and if this means that we must have already formulated thoughts to this effect. then we need an infinite number of thoughts in our heads even to follow the simplest instructions (1995. 166)." Of course. this is insane; so. Taylor. following Wittgenstein. argues that something else is going on.

Taylor's response to why we do not have to resolve every possible deviant misunderstanding before being able to follow directions is that our understanding always occurs against an existing background. He writes: "Understanding is always against a background of what is taken for granted, just relied on. Someone can always come along who lacks this background, and so the plainest things can be misunderstood (1995, 167)." Individuals, therefore, from this reading. are fixed to some unnoticed background, the context for 'common sense'. This background

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[127] The central import of the next section will be that what Taylor has shown as strong evaluation and frameworks have become so polluted with faulty information and proliferated with images that it distorts our fundamental orientation toward the world (Baudrillard's hyper-reality). What I want to show here is that there is some philosophical underpinning for this thesis.

remains unarticulated (and, as Taylor points out "at some points unarticulable").
According to Taylor, this is Wittgenstein's position, i.e., that following a rule is a
practice stemming from connection with a background that remains unarticulated
(1995, 167-8).

But this leads to a division between those who, (1) like Saul Kripke, hold
that the background, the context for the practice, is imposed by our society as a form
of conditioned behavior; and, (2) those who, like Taylor, argue that it is a
fundamental part of how human beings are 'wired in'. Taylor says it this way: "On
the first view, then, the 'bedrock' our explicit explanations rest on is made up of
brute connections; on the second, it is a mode of understanding and thus makes a
kind of unarticulated sense of things (1995, 168)." His argument for the second
view is that following the first does not require, or even admit of, understanding;
and yet there 'appears' to be certain underlying meanings that are associated with
following a rule. We can, if required, give justification and articulate reasons for
doing what we do. Taylor writes, "What we need to do is follow a hint from
Wittgenstein and attempt to give an account of the background as understanding,
which also places it in social space (1995, 168)."

What Taylor wants to do is locate understanding (at least on the most basic
level) within practice. In Wittgensteinian terms, he is referring to a 'form of life', a
certain background orientation that is the context for articulation. However, as the
background, it has certain features: "(1) it is always there, whereas we sometimes
frame representations and sometimes do not, and (2) the representations we make
are only comprehensible against the background provided by inarticulate
understanding (1995, 170)."

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Bringing to mind the arguments of Merleau-Ponty in The Phenomenology of

Perception about the constitutive nature of embodiment. Taylor wants to argue that

this background has something to do with the way in which human beings are

embodied. He says. "Our understanding itself is embodied. That is. our bodily

know-how. and the way we act and move. can encode components of our

understanding of self and world (1995. 170)." However. Taylor takes this notion to

the writings of Pierre Bourdieu. who created the term 'habitus' to describe a

particular form of social understanding.[128]

According to Taylor. human beings operate to a great degree without

articulating a thing. For example, catching a ball when it is thrown to you. moving

together in a waltz, standing in line to go through a door –all are behaviors that we

do without thinking. 'Shared understanding' is Taylor's term for this prearticulated

social sense. But shared understanding goes much further than simple acts of

coordination: it can account. according to Taylor. for allegiance to a political

ideology. religious movement. or even precipitate a war. Shared understandings are

what brings individuals together with a sense of common purpose (1995. 172).

But shared understanding implies the community of others. "We can't

understand human life merely in terms of individual subjects, who frame

representations about and respond to others. because a great deal of human action

only happens insofar as the agent understands and constitutes himself as integrally

part of a 'we' (1995, 173)." Human life, therefore, is glued together into a

community of shared understanding, from which detached individuality is a sheer

illusion.

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[128] Taylor (1995, 171) makes reference to Bourdieu, Pierre. Outline of a Theory of Practice.

Summary

In this chapter I have tried to give a detailed account of the arguments laid out by Charles Taylor that show what he considers to be essential components to the nature of the self. Further. Taylor's thesis is not just to lay out certain components in a descriptive manner. but present a view that seriously challenges the tradition of seeing the self as a 'disengaged spectator' confined only by the domain of reason itself. It is his fundamental thesis that this understanding of the self is wrong. And that a truer picture of the self can only be found by revealing its fundamental connection to its community.

In talking about 'strong evaluation' Taylor wanted to show that our first orientation toward the world. an orientation that articulates the underlying sense of morality. can be found in the fact that we have very strong visceral feelings about certain things. Further. these things are more than just 'brute reactions'. they tell us something about the ontology of the self.

It is because of the phenomenon of 'strong evaluation', Taylor argues, that we live within 'inescapable frameworks', which are just the forms that are created out of that initial ontological orientation. Although these frameworks may remain hidden, unarticulated, they also become articulated into certain views of the good and create a more 'plugged in' orientation toward the qualitative assessment of ourselves, the world. and others.

Through the frameworks qualitatively shaping our world, we are thus oriented in what Taylor calls 'moral space'. This is the point where self-identity

comes into play. As I 'discover myself' inside the frameworks, I am able to locate my basic moral orientation. This is done by discovery of the goods that are most important, given my moral orientation, they are what Taylor calls 'hypergoods'. Accordingly, we can always rank the goods within our grasp according to their correspondence to our highest values. This process, of finding hypergoods, gives rise to the social order. However, since all individuals do not share a common conception of what is a hypergood, conflicts arise.

Finally, Taylor tracks Wittgenstein to examine the nature of following a rule, which tends to provide some support for the previous views. Rule-following, for Taylor, indicates a deeper structuring, something that is prearticulated and shapes our abilities to coordinate with others. He clearly presents Wittgenstein's demonstration that following a rule is more than something going on in the head. If we had to understand ail deviations, we would be lost in an infinite series of possibilities. But this is not the case. Instead, according to Taylor, what it points to is the underlying structure of 'shared understandings', which are the prearticulate sense of human ontology. These shared understandings can expand to include larger features of human enterprise, especially the fact that large numbers of people tend to aggregate toward certain ideals.

Taylor's picture is useful for this study in many ways. First, it is a clear exposition of yet another version of how the self is really an amalgamation with the world. He articulates the nature of this underlying background, without which the concept of the self makes no sense whatsoever. But more importantly, Taylor's exposition shows that there are strong arguments not only that the self can only be

understood within a context, but also that this context is extremely important in the constitution of the self.

While I do not agree with every point of Taylor's argument. For example. his analysis of strong evaluations seems to focus only on those evaluative forms that will support his later thesis, and his 'frameworks' appear to me to be too rigid. Further., I believe that Taylor is presenting a rather conventional view of the conflicts within modern society and fails to recognize that these conflicts have a much broader context than he suggests.

But. in general. I think that Taylor's thesis about the nature of the connection between the self and background. particularly of the influence that the background has on the very constitution of the self –on our self image. can lead to interesting discussions about how the world of images –their production. marketing. and self-referentiality—can impinge upon how we see ourselves. And this means that we must be very careful in setting goals that are based upon a set of created images. However. this is a matter that will form the central theme of the next section. in which I shall examine the semiotic view of how the self is constituted. which will lead to a careful reading of Baudrillard's views of humanity lost within a barrier of signs without genuine referents. While Taylor would hesitate to extend his thesis in this direction, I believe that it is inevitable that we must examine the force of image, especially in the media, that shapes the modern human landscape.

PART THREE

SEMIOTICS, HYPER-REALITY, AND THE EFFECT OF THE

MEDIA UPON THE SELF AND AUTONOMY

PART THREE

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of this work. during the analysis of Raz' 'autonomy supporting environment'. a view of personal autonomy was presented that was itself an amalgamation of various components of personal ability as they may be related to a complex and changing world-context. The problematic concerns with the world context. in a preliminary way, touched upon coercion and manipulation. Then. in section two. various kinds of relationships between the self and world were explored. Every one of these ways of seeing the essential connection between self and world required the abandonment of the Cartesian view of the self as somehow disengaged from the world, able to function as a detached rational agent. over and against a world which stands alone as a sheer mechanism. It is this abstract idea of the self that has given rise to a certain view of autonomy. thus leading to liberal theories of the state. But. after Taylor's analysis of this perspective as a historical emergence. and hint that it has perverted a full description of the self. it is clear that a more comprehensive view be taken.

One central feature of each of the preceding views about the connections between self and world. is that there is a 'constitutive' force coming from the way in which we are inextricably inserted into a socio-historic world. It is that constitutive force that interests us here. Just how much are we influenced by society in perceiving who we are? Is self-image a socially created phenomenon? What about self-identity? If the self is a constituted image, conditioned by social reality, then how much of what we do, see, want, and live for is also conditioned? These are questions that guide the present section.

But first, let's briefly look at the social landscape. We live in a world of meanings in flux. Everything has some significance in the human world. New images emerge every second. And we often find ourselves desperately in need of something that only a short time ago did not even exist. We live in a world of fast paced markets, where sexy images are attached to brute things so that they appear to offer divine satisfaction. Packaging is the key to successful marketing, which can only survive by making people want what they do not have. Our world is one of intense and far reaching media and communications. Within a moment, I can know the temperature in Moscow, the balance of trade between Japan and The People's Republic of China, how many children starved this morning in Nigeria, and the alleged sexual exploits of the President of the United States. Information presses against our consciousness without interruption. But not only are we told what happened, but also how we are supposed to feel about it. News is made sexy by extremism and conflict, information is 'packaged' for consumption. Analysts and pollsters discover who wants what, so that 'target groups' can be identified for sales campaigns. Animation is so good that we can recreate the Jurassic Age, replete with a tyrannosaurus rex so 'real' that it excites the fight or flight adrenal reflex. Detergent talks to us, as do a host of other objects. Reality is up for grabs.

This is the contemporary human landscape, pulsating with information, illusion, and deception. We are 'thrown', almost in the Heideggarian sense, into this spinning vortex that swallows up individual identity into 'mass society', an identity that can be regained, we are told, by buying the right things, adopting the right (politically correct) attitudes, and following the dictates in how we live. Social control, in the age of mass communication, has taken the form of a 'global market', which we are plugged into through 'cyberspace'.

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We are dissected and redissected again and again. A moment of athletics is caught forever in the loop of an 'instant replay'. and the call made in a flash is analyzed by experts from throughout the world for hours. Criticism abounds. We are expected to be perfect; otherwise we will be caught in that replay like a fly on sticky fly paper. We wriggle under the scrutiny of the microscope. we marvel at science. We can grow livers from human DNA on the breasts of a cow. We talk about the beginning of the universe as a 'big bang'. We can destroy the world in a nuclear flash. or slowly through environmental contamination. We wipe out entire continental forests for profit. We consume trillions of dollars worth of drugs to escape. The human social world is complex. fragmented, and caught up in a magnificent play of images that separate us from. perhaps even obscure. reality.

It is in the midst of this tornado that we find ourselves. Morality has become detached from reality. We are now faced with a compelling need to discover who and what we are. But this is not an easy process. Just look around. Upper middle-class teenagers in Omaha. Nebraska are dressing. gesturing. talking. and killing each other just like street gang thugs in East Los Angeles. How did they come to define themselves in this way? Our desperate need for self-identity reaches out for anything that gives us a 'right of passage', a 'form' that is somehow not as superficial as those more ready to hand. We use cultural models to define who we are. But there are hosts of different models, and there is no standard by which to distinguish their relative worth. This is especially difficult for children, but even adults follow fashion. chase the banner, forever, until they die. Death itself has become the object of fashion. We dress up freezer cold corpses in the latest garb, play the appropriate homage to whatever deity or world view is currently popular, and go through what seems like 'prearranged' motions. There is no escape.

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How can there be any autonomy in this world? Certainly it is far from what Raz believes is the 'autonomy supporting environment'. In this section. I will examine this play of images. arguing finally for two things: (1) something like a 'virtue ethic' for information. and (2) a call for the kinds of social institutions that help individual develop critical skills and cognitive attitudes necessary to sort out value from illusion. I am despondent about ever finding anything that approximates the ideal supportive environment. On the other hand. I believe that individuals still can find a grounding for meaning, still approach things rationally. and still. to a certain extent. live autonomously. The problem is that the easy path in life is not to do these things. It is to be swept away on a tidal wave of prearranged understandings. attitudes. clichés. and die. like Dostoyevsky's 'underground man'. having been only 'ordinary'.

This is a difficult subject to broach. And I certainly cannot even remotely do it justice in these few pages. Instead. what I will try to do is first present an analysis of the history of contemporary thought that sees the human landscape as 'signs'. This movement began with Saussure and has taken many forms. First as linguistics. then as semiotics, and finally as a form of understanding the social construction of reality. So, I will trace this development from Saussure and Peirce. through Levi-Strauss' 'structural study of myth'. to the problem of 'self-signification' discussed by Benveniste. delve into Lacan's semiotics of the unconscious, to Sebeok's theory of the 'code' which led to semiotic theories of 'cognitive modeling', and finally into Eco's semiotics of human reality. Then I will briefly examine the 'archaeological' critique of modern subjectivity presented by Foucault, and sketch his 'technologies of the self'. Hopefully, this chapter will take the reader to the point of understanding where a great deal of modern social critique comes from. It will

certainly set the stage for the following chapter about the way in which we are caught in a web of signification gone crazy.

That chapter will begin with a very close analysis of the semiotic universe described by Jean Baudrillard. In his view, semiotics is the proper method of understanding the effects of media, 'techno-culture, image, and fashion on the individual. He presents a challenging account of social reality that has evolved into what he calls 'hyper-reality', where our images have lost all grounding with objective reality. During this analysis, I will show the development of Baudrillard's position, place it alongside the basic tenants of 'media as an extension of our sensory awareness' as propounded by McLuhan. Finally, I will critically assess the overall argument, finally adopting the position that Baudrillard's thesis, in its entirety, is probably untenable. However, if even a portion of what he says is right (and I believe that it is), it presents an interesting challenge to anyone attempting to describe the 'autonomy supporting environment'.

In this controversial section, I am only mapping a landscape, which I will use to pose a problem facing any theory of autonomy. The final answers are well beyond my ability, and are certainly not contained within these pages. On the other hand, I hope to at least gain a provisional understanding of the significant impact that the modern social world plays on an individual trying to articulate who he is, and decide how to live.

I believe that understanding is, in a sense, power. Therefore, my final claim about the stance that an individual should take within this landscape will be one whereby doxastic responsibility and epistemic virtue are critical for even a particle of personal autonomy. But this is will be the substance of part four.

POSTMODERNISM, SEMIOTICS, AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE WORLD

"I saw a banner there upon the mist.
Circling and circling. it seemed to scorn all pause.
So it ran on. and still behind it pressed

a never-ending rout of souls in pain.
I had not thought death had undone so many
As passed before me in the mournful train."

The Inferno. Dante

In this chapter. I will take up the issue of how the market place influences

our understanding of what constitutes a 'good life' by presenting a continual horizon

of images laden with the confusion of meaning as it relates to the self. Although

many thinkers disagree about the depth of influence that media. such as television.

radio. movies. and cyberspace have upon the shape of human life. there is great

consensus on the fact that it does play an important role in providing information

that we use in deliberating about how to live our lives. As the primary source of

information. this mechanism is particularly vulnerable to contamination by

intentional misinformation. The practice of marketing products that are packaged

in such a manner as to appeal less to actual need but instead to a deeper

psychological level --such as an automobile that embodies power and potency. or a

cosmetic that 'restores youth', or a cologne that enhances sex appeal—is a danger

for a society that values autonomy.

It could be argued that autonomy cuts both ways. that marketing practices.

i.e. 'free market' economics are simply a reflection of a society that values freedom

of expression, and that those who are marketing are thus free to pursue whatever

tactic is available to accomplish their end. On the other hand, I believe that it has

been illustrated in previous chapters that autonomy is a multi-dimensional concept. It not only implies having a certain range of free options. but also entails a social world that supports the autonomy of individuals. This means that people. in order to be autonomous. must have accurate information upon which to deliberate regarding their choices. The distortion of truth in contemporary marketing practices. left unchecked. fails to provide individuals with clear and accurate information: rather. it is ambiguity itself that enables advertisers to create images that undercut self-identity.

I am not going to argue that such advertisements should be banned (although that may not be such a bad idea); rather. I will argue that individuals should be equipped with the cognitive skills necessary to see beyond the intentional illusions created for the practice of marketing and that self-image should not rest on the current fashion without critical appraisal. Of course. this plea has gone unheard. People flock around the *avant garde* as if it were the only campfire which will keep them warm. Unreflectively. individuals conform to molds that have emerged from the darkness and scorn those who fail to conform. Not only dress. but gestures. language. behavior, and dreams all conform to an image of the self. The question is whether this inevitable conformity allows room for any meaningful autonomy.

The topic of how individuals are affected by the technologies of the image has been a theme of many thinkers who have been broadly classified as 'postmodernist'.[129] These thinkers. deeply influenced by Sassure. Barthes. and Eco. have generally seen the human world not as something 'out there' to be discovered through the veracity of perception and scientific discovery; but rather as a complex

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[129] I am not going to argue the merits of this label. Like any attempt at classifying a group of thinkers, this is bound to not actually capture the diverse perspectives reflected in their work. In fact, only a handful of those who have been called 'postmodernist' actually embrace the title.

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interaction of language, image, and theory. In other words, the semiotics developed

by the structuralists has been annexed to a new level at which the relationship

between the image and reality is blurred, or, according to some views, obfuscated

entirely.

The same technologies that can influence individuals in a negative way can

also increase autonomy if used differently. Many social critics have focused solely

upon the insidious dimensions of technology –it alienates, enslaves, deceives, and

destroys individuality. This has been the theme of much art: literature, film, visual

art. On the other hand, technology itself is neither good nor bad: it depends upon

how it is used to create and augment the human world. I will argue in this section

that a revision of our attitudes toward technology, in the broad sense, can be a path

toward the autonomy supporting environment, enhancing the decision-making

process, enriching the range of goods, and allowing individuals to go beyond

naturalistic limitations (e.g., through using genetic engineering, transportation,

medical science, etc.).

In this chapter, therefore, I will begin with an analysis of how early

structuralists replaced metaphysics with semiotics. Primarily, I will trace this

argument from its beginnings in the linguistic theory of Saussure, through its

application in the anthropological works of Levi-Strauss, and finally to its full-

blown expression in the Semiotics of Umberto Eco. I will then examine how

Foucault showed that diachronic analysis has been neglected throughout this

tradition and recount his arguments for the emergence of the modern notion of

subjectivity. I will then examine Baudrillard's theories about the construction of

'hyper-reality' and how he believes that images have lost their referents. Finally, I

will assess the impact of these arguments upon the overall conception of autonomy

presented in this work, revealing both the positive and negative results. Hopefully, this final analysis will provide a key component for a later vision of what kinds of features are necessary to maximize the autonomy supporting environment.

Semiotics and the Human World

The emergence of contemporary semiotics, the study of signs, can be traced back to two very different thinkers. First, Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist, laid the groundwork for a large segment of continental thought about the relationship between language and our experience of the world. On the other hand, Charles Sanders Peirce, an American, devised a notion of semiotics that is more firmly entrenched in the history of ideas, leaving less room for the exotic theories of the likes of Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, and Guattari. I will begin by laying out a simple picture of these two theories, which will suffice for grounding a larger argument about the effect of language on the concept of the self and life.

Saussure and Peirce

The structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure constitutes the starting point for contemporary semiotics.[130] Unlike previous linguist, who examined language historically (diachronically), focusing on word formations, uses, and morphologies; Saussure analyzed language as a totality, from a structural, a-temporal (synchronic) perspective. Each language, argued Saussure, is a total system of signs, each depending upon the entire edifice for its meaning. This means that every expression contains the whole of language as its necessary horizon. Language is not simply 'naming'; instead, it is a system of organizing meaning.

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[130] De Saussure, Ferdinand. Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966. Especially parts I-III.

Language is not just a group of sounds. It is a system of ideas. blossoming with meaning. This means that different languages provide a different conceptual framework. A French speaker <u>thinks</u> differently from an English speaker. Saussure believed that ideas are a function of language, and that they are not simply 'out there' in a Platonic heaven. It is made up of <u>signs</u>. A 'sign', according to Saussure, is a unity of two aspects: the 'signifier' (sound-image) and the 'signified' (idea or concept). These two are inseparable. Yet the sign itself is arbitrary: there is no natural connection between the signifier and the signified. These relations are only conventional, so one may call a cat 'cat', 'chat', or 'feline' equally referring to the <u>same</u> entity.

Further, the actual speaking of a language (*parole*) is distinguished from the whole linguistic system (*la langue*). 'Parole' is composed of the actual speech acts that are uttered by an individual. In a sense, it is the individual's participation in the language. On the other hand, 'la langue' refers to the entire language system. 'La langue' is a system into which the individual is born: it is the universe of all possible signs that can be utilized through 'parole'. Since language is a system, and since it can be used by all inhabitants of the linguistic community, it represents a link between the semiotic universe and the human life-world. Even though the semiotic universe articulates the meaningfulness of the life-world, it is usually not a matter of thematization and remains elusively in the background much like the rules of chess govern the moves of the game without being constantly in the fore front.

Charles Sanders Peirce held a slightly different view of the sign.[131] Instead of a self-contained dyad, as Saussure thought, Peirce held that there were three

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[131] See Hoopes, James (ed.). <u>Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic by Charles Sanders Peirce</u>. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

distinct features of the sign. In this triadic theory, there is the sign itself, which Peirce called the 'representamen', which is related to an object, which entails an 'interpretant'. This simple triad is made more complex by the fact that there are varying degrees of object, interpretant, and signs. Peirce held that because of this dynamic structure, all signs vector into each other: this is what leads us to 'free association' of images.

Further breaking down how the sign functions, Peirce argued that it can operate on one of three levels: 'firstness', 'secondness', or 'thirdness'. Accordingly, 'firstness' is the realm of feelings, a simple disposition which is attached to an object. An example might be the color of the sky, a musical note, or a vague touch. 'Secondness' is the domain of brute facts that exist because of some elementary relationship, such as a vase sitting on a table or a rug on the floor. And finally 'thirdness' is the universe of general laws, e.g. objects fall when dropped. These levels roughly correspond to a certain view of psychology. The domain of mental contents ranges from simple percepts to complex generalities.

Although the contention between Peirce and Saussure is significant, for the present purpose it is sufficient to briefly glance at their positions as a starting point. While Peirce remains staunchly entrenched in the western intellectual tradition, including Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and particularly Hume; Saussure adopts a more radical view, holding that there are no 'natural signs': there is only human discourse, which is the boundaries of the meanings that can be attached to reality. For the purpose of this study, it will suffice to argue that in either case, there is at least a portion of, if not the entire, human world that is solely constructed of arbitrary signs. For this reason, I will focus primarily on the tradition that follows Saussure, since its exponents have adopted a more critical stance against the

proliferation of images and their effect upon the human world. In their view the world of human experience is radically dominated by its language. which carves out meanings. relationships. and the underlying sense of reality.

Claude Levi-Strauss and the Structural Study of Myth

Levi-Strauss was deeply influenced by the linguistics of Saussure. as refined and developed by Roman Jakobson. He was also very impressed with Freud's theory of the unconscious, especially that there were primordial relationships that were themselves constitutive of the higher orders within human life. What he wanted to find was the elementary building blocks. the basic structures. that were common to all cultures and were necessary structural features of the human mind.

Just as Saussure discovered elementary relationships within the structure of language. Levi-Strauss saw a correlation between various cultural practices. These correlations manifested themselves in many social routines. including totemism. kinship. rituals, and myths.[132] Citing structural linguistics as the paradigm for conducting research in the human sciences. he writes:

> First. structural linguistics shifts from the study of
> *conscious* linguistic phenomena to study of their
> *unconscious* infrastructure; second, it does not treat
> *terms* as independent entities. taking instead as its
> basis of analysis the *relations* between terms; third, it
> introduces the concept of *system*. . . finally,
> structural linguistics aims at discovering *general
> laws*.[133]

What has happened in this shift is a lifting of the method of linguistics to a larger framework of human behavior in general. According to Levi-Strauss, there are

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[132] Cf. Levi-Strauss. Myth and Meaning, Structural Anthropology, and The Elementary Structures of Kinship. This represents a radical break with the 'traditional' descriptive anthropology of Sir James George Frazer as presented in The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion. Instead, Levi-Strauss wanted to find the underlying structures.

[133] Levi-Strauss, Claude. Structural Anthropology. Translated by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York: Basic books, 1963. P. 31.

discoverable structures that are necessary conditions for human life. In other words.

human life is not something that is 'hit and miss'; rather. an underlying

infrastructure of prearticulated meaning forms the playing field for the social

world.[134]

Perhaps the most interesting application of Levi-Strauss' method can be

found in his treatment of myth. Myths have an underlying structure in which certain

relationships are established and codified. He called the smallest constituent parts

of a myth 'mythemes'. which correlate to form underlying paradigms for the

structure of human society. In The Savage Mind. Levi-Strauss argues that the

complex structures of the human social world adhere regardless of the level of

technological sophistication. In other words. the notion that prehistoric individuals

had 'primitive' minds, somewhat like that of a child. is false. This means that the

articulation of the social world is around a complex 'logos'. which forms the nexus

of meaning for that world. And this world. with its structure. is handed down from

generation to generation. only gradually going through modifications and

developments.

Benveniste and the Problem of Self-Signification

While Saussure postulated the arbitrariness of the sign, e.g. that the word

'tree' which is associated with the idea of a tree could just as well be something

else. the French linguist Emile Benveniste believed that the connection between the

signifier and the signified is so comprehensively learned at an early age that there is

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[134] It is interesting to notice that Levi-Strauss is attempting to solve a problem that has bee posed by Frazer; namely, why are there similar social rituals, taboos, totems, myths, and social practices in diverse and unconnected parts of the world? Carl Jung adopted the view of a 'collective unconscious' to explain the 'archetypal' models that form this infrastructure.

virtually no separation between the two.[135] For example, the word 'tree' to an English speaker immediately invokes the idea of tree.

If this is true, then we are enculturated into the connections of signifier-signified. This illustrates the intrinsic and complex relationship between the system of signs and the individuals within that socio-linguistic community. When, therefore, the word 'I' is expressed, according to Benveniste, it refers to a culturally necessitated idea of 'I' that itself is the product of the language system. So, when I use the word 'I', I am referring to an 'I' that is the product of a system of signs that lies outside of myself. The paradox is that the 'I' that is the product of the linguistic system, by which I interpret myself, is not identical with the 'I' who is experiencing pain, excitement, wonder, or any of the immediate uninterpreted aspects of human life.

Lacan's Critique of Subjectivity

Jacques Lacan's interest in semiotics is primarily related to his interest in psychology. He took up argument where Benveniste ends: His concern is how the individual is simultaneously something different from his means of representation, yet is at the same time constituted as a subject through it (i.e., as a means of self-interpretation and representation).

A child learns the sign 'cat' by both experiencing a cat and being part of a linguistic community that unifies the signifier and signified into what members of that particular linguistic community call 'cat'.[136] At the same time that the child

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[135] See Benveniste, Emile. "The Semiology of Language" and Problems in General Linguistics, translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press.

[136] It is interesting to observe the argument presented by W.V.O. Quine in Ontological Relativity, which is similar to this. Accordingly, Quine argues that "we persist in breaking reality down somehow into a multiplicity of identifiable and discriminable objects, to be referred to by singular and general terms (P. 1)." And furthermore, "I have urged that we could know the necessary and sufficient stimulatory conditions of every possible act of utterance, in a foreign language, and still

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learns elements of the language system, she inserts herself into the language. She takes up residence in the language. In other words, for the child to be able to refer to herself in the social world, she must take a position in a pre-existing system of signs. For Lacan, this means that the individual is dominated by the signifier.

The system of signs, according to Lacan, provides the material from which the notion of subjectivity is made understandable. Individual subjects are caught in an endless web of signification and, because of the inherent instability of language, so the self finds itself upon a slippery surface, unable to reach definition. What Lacan has concluded is that the 'subject', as it is understood, is a product of signification. This is in contrast to the western tradition throughout the history of ideas, wherein the subject is mostly seen as acting independently outside of the signifying system, and living life in a voluntaristic manner.

Morris' Search for a Foundation within Behaviorism

The American philosopher, Charles Morris avoided the extreme position reached by Lacan by attaching his theory of semiotics to Pavlovian behaviorism rather than the Freudian unconscious. In <u>Foundations of the Theory of Signs</u>, he started with Peirce's triadic formation of the sign and began to look for correlates within behavior. Since this view is primarily based upon behavior, Morris' semiology has been applied, by himself and others, to species outside of the human race.

According to Morris, signs function as behavioral cues. For example, if I wish to get my dog to sleep in a certain room, but the dog does not comply, I may entice him with food. Over a period of time, the dog associates the sound of the can

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not know how to determine what objects the speakers of that language believe in (P. 11)." Quine reflects upon the inculturation of how we carve up objects; for instance, where does rabbithood begin and end? This reflects a very close concern by Quine to that expressed by Lacan.

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being opened with the food. which is served in the room I want him to be in for the night. Eventually, the sound of the can alone is enough to entice the dog to the room. The dog has perceived the 'stimulus object' (opening can) and has followed what Morris calls a 'response-sequence'.

Modifying Peirce's theory of the sign, Morris would analyze this example in the following manner: (1) the sign is presented (opening can); (2) a 'denotatum' is recognized (something that completes the response-sequence, i.e. food); (3) a 'significatum' occurs (the connection between the sign and the denotatum is recognized); (4) an 'interpretant' occurs (a disposition is caused that entices the interpreter to participate in the response-sequence); and there must be an 'interpreter' (a conscious being for whom the sign has meaning that excites the response-sequence). So the sign, according to Morris, is something that directs behavior outside of a present stimulus. In other words, the sign stimulates the interpreter beyond present conditions.

Sebeok's Discovery of the 'Code'

A student of Morris, Thomas Sebeok wanted to liberate Morris' theory from its behavioristic paradigm. He envisioned a form of semiotics that was entirely free from humanistic presuppositions and could be applied to any species of animal. In fact, he distinguished 'anthroposemiotic' from 'zooseimotic'. Instead of behaviorism, Sebeok turned to genetics as a solution to the problem of communication.

Sebeok was fascinated by studies of insect and animal behavior. Rather than mindlessness stimulus-response behavior, there was indication that animals communicated in some manner. Despite the ability of some higher animals, such as gorillas to communicate using human sign-language, Sebeok argued that the

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animals are not part of the same language system that houses their human friends. Instead. he believes that the animal is passing on a human sign from a human prompter to another human participant in the human community.

According to Sebeok. there are two universal sign systems: the genetic and verbal codes. Every organism on the planet contains some genetic code within DNA and RNA. Every human society has a verbal code as well. which is the underlying infrastructure which makes language possible. These two 'codes' underlie every formation of meaning. First. the genetic code equips an organism to inhabit a certain place or 'umwelt' (significant environment). It forms the perceptual universe for that organism and there is a close connection between the genetic code and this environment. In other words, organisms have features that allow them to inhabit a certain subjective universe. The 'umwelt' and the organism are bound together according to a code that Sebeok calls the 'meaning-plan'. The 'umwelt' precedes the individual organism. which is born into it and in turn gives birth to other organisms that continue to inhabit the ongoing 'umwelt'.

The Idea of Language as Cognitive Modeling

It was Morris' idea of the 'umwelt' a universe that provides an opening for a certain form of life that led to the theory of language as cognitive modeling. This means that there is a dynamic and constitutive relationship between an organism and its environment. The Russian thinker Jurji Lotman is perhaps the most influential proponent of this perspective. Fundamentally, this view incorporates information processing technology into the interpretive schemata of communication. Time, according to this view, can be viewed in either a digital and analog way. This corresponds roughly to the distinction between synchronic and diachronic. For example, a digital clock can only tell you what time it is right now; it cannot tell you

about elapsed time, or that time is measured in circular rhythms. On the other hand, an analog clock, with its round face and moving hands, shows time measurement as both elapsed and circular.

Lotman is mainly interested in the impact of elapsed time upon the semiotic universe. He sees culture as non-hereditary information that is acquired and transmitted through time by the various groups of the human society. Culture is a repository of information. But it is more that just a stockpile of information. The cultural stock of knowledge provides an ongoing modeling apparatus for human understanding.

With this in mind, Lotman examines archaeological data and applies his theory. Anthropologists have traced the origins of modern humanity back through various prehistoric proto-human forms: homo-habilis, homo-erectus, and homo-sapiens. Each proto-human incorporated a range of tools and techniques to respond to his environment. Therefore, it seems clear, argues Lotman, that these proto-humans were capable of processing information and passing it on to their social group. But, he contends, there is evidence that these proto-humans did not speak. Yet their use of implements and technology suggests that they had a language. If these proto-humans indeed had a language but did not speak, Lotman contends that language evolved fundamentally not as a method of communicating with others, but for the purposes of cognitive modeling. If this view is correct language can be understood as a form of mental processing rather than a form of intersubjective communication.

The Semiotics of Umberto Eco

Umberto Eco's main concern is to "explore the theoretical possibility and the social function of a unified approach to every phenomenon of signification

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and/or communication."[137]   This ambitious task is divided into two areas: (1) a theory of codes, and (2) a theory of sign production. What he strives to achieve is a semiotics of culture, that is, an understanding of cultural reality as fundamentally an interplay of signs and codes. This does not mean, for Eco, that the material world is a mental phenomenon, but that our appraisal of the world, the way we talk about it, and the social structures within it, only have <u>meaning</u> in terms of semiotics. It is peculiar to the human universe that we live within a horizon of meaning; thus, for Eco, we live within a semiotic horizon.

Objects, for Eco, can be studied from many different perspectives. For example, in the case of an automobile, we can see it on: "(a) the *physical level* (it has weight, is made of certain metal and other materials); (b) the *mechanical level* (it functions and fulfills a certain function on the basis of certain laws); (c) the *economic level* (it has an exchange value, a set price); (d) the *social level* (it indicates a certain social status); (e) the *semantic level* (it is not only an object as such but a cultural unit inserted into a system of cultural units with which it enters into certain relationships which are studied by structural semantics."[138]   Along all of these levels of seeing the automobile, according to Eco, each level presents a symbolic value that is related back to the semiotics of cultural reality.

There is a trail, says Eco, left by the way that we use signs and codes. He likens it to a landscape that we explore, where "cart-trails or footprints do modify the explored landscape, so that the description the explorer gives of it must also take into account the ecological variations that he has produced."[139] Therefore, the practice of exploring semiotics creates its own trail and thus modifies its subject

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[137] Eco, Umberto. A Theory of Semiotics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979. P. 3.
[138] Ibid. P. 27.
[139] Ibid. P. 29.

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matter. For this reason, Eco argues that the study of semiotics alters the landscape, thus operating within an area of 'indeterminacy'.

Eco's basic model of communication of signs is a progression of source to destination according to a 'code', which, following the paradigm of electronics, is defined as "a set of *signals* ruled by internal combinatory laws (1979, 36)." When these signals convey meaning, they can be seen as the structure of semiotics. The 'code' not only organizes signs within the semiotic universe, but it also provides the rules that are necessary for the expression of a sign. We live, according to Eco, according to the underlying 'codes', which are necessary for meaning in human life.

But the 'codes' are not just for organizing language, they also provide the basis for human action. We go through formal rituals, practice a certain set of rules, in almost every single human endeavor. Codes, for Eco, provide a way of analyzing human behavior. This feature of Eco's thought will lead us to the theories of Jean Baudrillard in the next chapter, however, for the moment it is sufficient to see that Eco has reduced all meaning to a function of semiotics, which itself can be used to study the human world of meaning, how it is formed. But also, implicit in Eco's notion of semiotics is a way of seeing the social world as constructed from an array of interlocking signs. This means that insofar as we see our self, our goals, and our needs, they are only meaningful within the semiotic horizon. Before we examine the dangers associated with this view as painted by Baudrillard and McLuhan, it is first useful to see how Foucault used this kind of perspective in his critique of modern subjectivity and in his view that the bestowing of meaning has historically been corrupted by those who are in a position of power and want to manipulate images (Foucault's universe of discourse) in order to control the masses.

Michael Foucault and the End of Subjectivity

"One thing in any case is certain: Man is neither the
oldest or the most constant problem that has been
posed for human knowledge. Taking a relatively
short chronological sample within a restricted
geographical area –European culture since the
sixteenth century—one can be certain that man is a
recent invention within it."

"If those arrangements were to disappear as they
appeared. if some event of which we can at the
moment do no more than sense the possibility –
without knowing either what its form will be or what
it promises—were to cause them to crumble. as the
ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the
eighteenth century. then one can certainly wager that
man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the
edge of the sea."

The Order of Things. Michael Foucault

Michael Foucault is one of the most controversial thinkers of the twentieth

century. Originally associated with the structuralist camp of Levi-Strauss. Barthes,

and Lacan. Foucault set out on a path that focused upon history and power as the

context of language; he claimed that previous inquiry had been too synchronic.

neglecting the emergence of various 'universes of discourse'. the diachronic context

within which objectivities, as possible areas of concern, are brought into meaningful

existence. He is concerned with power, war. and the way that we try to contain a

subject of discourse. This is a radical break from the semiotic tradition that we have

seen earlier.

The Break with Traditional Semiotics

In Power/Knowledge, Foucault writes: ". . . one's point of reference should

not be to the great model of language (*langue*) and signs. but to that of war and

battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than

that of a language: relations of power. not relations of meaning."[140] What Foucault

has focused upon is not the relationship between signifier and signified: rather. he is

trying to examine the role of discourse in how it is applied: what can be talked

about and in what ways. He associates this feature with the balance of power.

comprised of a select few who are. because of the nature of who constitutes an

authority. able to control what he calls 'legitimacy'.

The Emergence of Modern Identity

In The Order of Things, Foucault traces the emergence of the modern notion

of a person. Through this 'archaeological' method. he argues that reason awakened

in the classical world and immediately set about ordering chaos.[141] This rational

ordering of the world. according to Foucault. attempts to regulate all forms of

experience by structuring. classifying. and regulating experience through knowledge

and discourse. In this manner. systems of language. for Foucault. become

intertwined with forms of social practice.

He is interested in the 'birth of man' within the historical context of

language. Seeing the subject as constituted rather than constituting. Foucault

excavates 'man' as a discursive construct. This means that 'man' is the object of

various human sciences (psychology, sociology. literature, anthropology) and has

emerged after the classical era of representationalism has been dethroned, freeing

the idea of man as an object of study, for scientific investigation. political being, and

psychological object. Of course, Foucault fails to recognize the works of Aristotle,

which classified humans according to scientific categories and made human ethos

an object of study.

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[140] Foucault, Michael. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77, ed.
Colin Gordon: USA, Pantheon, 1980. P. 114.

Another thing that Foucault proposes is that grand syntheses, such as history, civilization, or any theoretical edifice that attempts to cluster everything under a single umbrella, are mistaken. Rather, he argues, that history is filled with discontinuities: instead of being a seamless continuity, it is more like a patchwork quilt. Discontinuity, for Foucault, shows us that from one historical era to another "things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way."[142]

Power, Conformity, and Coercion

Influenced by his reading of Neitzche, in 1970 Foucault began to make a transition from 'archaeology' to 'genealogy'. In this phase, Foucault moves from his concept of 'universes of discourse' to more concern upon the material conditions necessary for discourse. These take the form of institutions, political events, economic practices and processes. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault describes how the body and soul of a subject are introduced into various models of control. These are the disciplinary institutions that regulate human behavior. Examples of such institutions are prisons, mental hospitals, and schools. The institutions themselves establish a certain order over the human soul and body. Conformity is necessary to survive. Instead of merely a discursive construct, the individual is now shaped and constituted by political technologies. As Best and Kellner point out: "The ultimate goal and effect of discipline is 'normalization', the elimination of all social and psychological irregularities and the production of useful and docile subjects through a refashioning of minds and bodies."[143]

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[141] Foucault, Michael. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.
[142] Ibid. P. 217.
[143] Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations. New York: Guilford Press, 1991. P. 47.

From this perspective, there is a relationship between social institutions, the self, and any possibility of autonomy. He leaves little room for 'inalienable rights', 'primal liberty', or ' autonomous individuality'; power permeates our entire existence and human beings are controlled within this power struggle. Every human relation is strategic.[144]

Technologies of the Self

"We have to create ourselves as a work of art"[145]

In the 1980s, Foucault again changed his orientation toward the problems of human subjectivity. Underlying this view, Foucault argues that if the human subject has emerged as a new construction within present discourse, and if the individual is locked within a controlling domination of social normalcy, then it is possible to create new 'technologies of the self', to re-create humanity. This is the first positive stance that Foucault has taken regarding the human condition.

Adding to his previous discussions about the technologies of domination, he writes: "If one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, one has to take into account not only techniques of domination, but also techniques of the self. One has to show the interaction between these two types of self."[146] Foucault, it seems has began grappling with the problems associated with autonomy.

By 'technologies of the self', Foucault means practices "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number

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[144] Kritzman, Lawrence (ed.) Michael Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture. New York: Routledge, 1988. P. 168.
[145] Foucult, Michael. 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', in Hubert L Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (eds.) Michael Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. P. 237.
[146] Foucault, Michael and Sennet, Richard. 'Sexuality and solitude', in D. Rieff (ed.) Humanities in Review, vol. 1, London: Cambridge University Press, 1982. P. 10.

of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so

as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity,

wisdom, perfection, or immortality."[147] This means that, for Foucault, the

individual is no longer bound within an insidious domination by external powers;

instead, she can create herself, using discipline, not in a negative, oppressive way,

but in the process of self-creation. As Best and Kellner observe, "Foucault seems to

be embracing the reinvention of the self as an autonomous and self-governing being

who enjoys new forms of experience, pleasure, and desire in stylized forms."[148]

Foucault himself writes: "We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the

refusal of this kind of [normalized] individuality which has been imposed on us for

centuries."[149]

An Ethics of Autonomy

Using the technologies of the self amounts to an ethics of free activity akin

to that of the Greeks. It is through a life of self-creation that one emerges as a

master of one's desires and constitutes a free life. This kind of ethics focuses less

on adherence to social norms and rules, but rather in the emphasis upon individual

liberty and freedom. One does not discover an inner essence from which morality

springs; rather, Foucault envisions a life of continually producing oneself. For

Foucault, his genealogy creates a discursive space in which there can be a

"constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects."[150] In order to create ourselves,

Foucault observes, we must practice discipline, promote self-knowledge, and

maintain rational self-control.

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[147] Foucault, Michael. 'Technologies of the Self', in Luther M. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (eds) Technologies of the Self. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988. P. 18.
[148] Best and Kellner, Op. Cit. P. 63.
[149] Foucault, Michael 'The subject and Power', in Dreyfur and Rabinow op. Cit. P. 216.

HYPER-REALITY, SIMULATIONS, MEDIA TECHNO-CULTURE, AND ITS EFFECTS UPON PRACTICAL AUTONOMY

Introduction

We have seen that the ways in which the self is constituted, particularly how the individual interprets himself, has a great deal to do with practical autonomy. First, actions within life are structured to conform to an image of whom I want to be, what I want to do, and how things fit into the overall canvas of my existence. In the modern world of media, technology, cyberspace, and instantaneous information exchange, I am faced with a bombardment of varying interpretations of who and what I am. Furthermore, the market has inserted itself right in the middle of every form of information exchange; it permeates our world. In this world, the play of images and suggestions constitute a significant part of my total makeup: I see qualities of life that appeal to me reflected in the objects of the market, which are advertised as promoting almost ideal qualities. For example, I would like to be seen by my peers as attractive, so I am seduced into buying a sports car, which carries with it a sense of social acceptance and excitement.

In this chapter, I will examine the arguments of Jean Baudrillard, who has argued that contemporary society has become so engrossed with images that it has lost touch with reality. While Baudrillard has been scorned by many thinkers, I believe that he should be read as someone who is painting extreme pictures of society, hyperbole rather than simple description. Therefore, I will describe the major thrust of his position, which has been called by Levin 'cultural

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[150] Foucault, Michael 'What is Enlightenment?' in Paul Rabinow (ed.) The Foucault Reader. New York: Pantheon, 1984. P. 43.

metaphysics".[151] Essentially. Baudrillard used semiotics to critique Marxist

production theory and create a picture of a world of images from which there is only

self-reference. back to the images themselves. and out of which there is no escape.

Although I will not take Baudrillard's views in their entirety (since I believe that we

are still able to reach objective reference through language. and since I like to think

that certain principles are not arbitrary), I will describe his position in some detail.

showing that even in a weak sense. the challenge presented by Baudrillard has far

reaching consequences for any theory of what constitutes the self. which. in turn.

alters the nature of the horizons of what we want to be and do. thus having an

impact upon autonomy. This position will reach fruition in the last part of this

section, where I will address the problems of needs and how they are affected by

media and technology.

Baudrillard's Dissolution of Reality into Image

Jean Baudrillard has been called the `prophet of doom` of the emerging

techno-culture and is one of the most controversial figures in contemporary

philosophy. He has radically "proclaimed the disappearance of the subject. political

economy. meaning. truth, the social. and the real in contemporary social

formations."[152] His postmodern theories, in the strong sense, threaten the very

foundations of philosophy; from a more conservative position (which I prefer).

Baudrillard presents a challenging critique of the contemporary developed societies

fascination with the market, images, and self-interpretation related to a system of

objects. This is particularly interesting within the context of a study of practical

autonomy, since if only a small part of what Baudrillard describes is in fact true,

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[151] Levin, Charles. Jean Baudrillard: a Study in Cultural Metaphysics. New York: Prentice Hall, 1996.

individuals continually exercise a pervasive tendency to conform and thus live their lives for goals that are really not their own.

Originally a champion of Marxist social critique. Baudrillard abandoned the view of 'production' in favor of a revised interpretation of consumption. He believes that consumption, rather than production forms the basis of social order. Early in his intellectual development, he was greatly influenced by the 1968 social revolt in Paris and especially by the ironic fact that the revolt ended when the activist students all went on holiday. However, behind the movement was a group of thinkers who were called the 'Situationists' (a radical group that advocated an overthrow of bureaucratic order). Because of his fascination with the situations' semiotic approach to the consumer society, Baudrillard became fascinated with the work of the French thinker Guy Debord.

Debord had written a critique of the social world and its incessant preoccupation with consumption, entitled The Society of the Spectacle, in which he portrays a rampant capitalism that has become fixated, not on subjectivity, nor upon actual needs, but rather upon the production of images. Debord calls this fixation the 'spectacle', which is just the human social world as it stands mediated by and absorbed within images.[153] Accordingly, he argues that it is the very emergence of the 'affluent society' that has caused a shift whereby individuals now focus upon objects in order to provide a sense of self-identity. Baudrillard uses Debord's thesis as his springboard for a much more radical view in which humanity is lost within a panoply of images, to the point that the images, free-floating without any connection whatsoever to any underlying sense of reality, without a referent, themselves

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[152] Kellner, Douglas. "Jean Baudrillard in the Fin-De-Millennium," in Baudrillard: A Critical Reader. Edited by Douglas Kellner. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. P. 1.
[153] Debord, Guy. The Society of the Spectacle. P.3.

constitute the ultimate substrate, which Baudrillard has named 'hyper-reality.' A closer look at the profiles of this argument will form the foundation for a position that will clarify the relationship between the constructed world of modern developed society, caught in its own whirlpool of confusion, and what can be called personal autonomy.

The Role of the Consumer and Baudrillard's Critique of 'Need'

According to Baudrillard, the process of consumption has become the essential characteristic of the human species. At the same time, however, it is an activity that diminishes us. This is because we tend to lose ourselves in the pursuit of objects that, by their stratification in an overall object-value system, actually define us. As Kellner points out, "For Baudrillard, people attain status and prestige according to which products they consume and display in a differential logic of consumption, in which some products have more prestige and sign-value than others, according to current tastes and fashion."[154] In 'postmodern' society, we tend to define ourselves by what we own. For this reason, the concept of 'consumer' plays an important role in the Baudrillardian view. This leads him to a revision of the traditional view of need.

Baudrillard contrasts his analysis of need with what I call the 'naturalistic' view, i.e., that a person has certain 'natural' requirements, or needs, which direct him toward the objects that give him satisfaction. Instead, Baudrillard argues that the fact that appetite, left unchecked, tends toward insatiability, means that the 'naturalistic view' is mistaken. He also attacks the premise that needs are psychologically motivated.

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[154] Kellner, Douglas. *Op. Cit.* P. 2.

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In contrast, Baudrillard holds that needs are learned. They are only explainable by a careful understanding of social dynamics, especially conformity. It is not possible, according to Baudrillard, to simply separate 'real' needs from conditioned ones. In fact, the system of needs, in this Baudrillardian postmodern universe, is itself produced by the system of production.

Semiotics and Consumerism

As we have seen earlier in this work, semiotics has formed the undergarment for a host of theories about the nature of the self and world. It describes the complex and interlocking system of various layerings of conventions and distinctions that make it possible for an arrangement of objects to have particular meanings. This is accomplished through the use of signs (in the Saussurian sense). Steven Best observes, "Baudrillard initially argues that the commodity form has developed to such an extent that use and exchange value have been superseded by 'sign value' that redefines the commodity primarily as a symbol to be consumed and displayed."[155]

Of particular interest to Baudrillard was Barthes' semiotic analysis of fashion.[156] Barthes grounded his analysis upon Saussurian semiotics, which ". . . is based on two principles: a metaphysics of depth and a metaphysics of surface. The metaphysics of depth refers to meaning as based on the link between the signified which underlies the signifier (for example, in fashion imagery, soft materials stand for sensuality). A metaphysics of surface implies a relational concept of meaning. It is the notion that signs do not have inherent meaning but gain their meaning

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[155] Best, Steven. He Commodification of Reality and the Reality of Commodification: Baudrillard, Debord, and Postmodern Theory." In Kellner, Douglas. Baudrillard: A Critical Reader, Op. Cit., P. 41.

[156] Barthes, Roland. The Fashion system, trans. M. Ward and R. Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983 (originally 1967).

through their relation to other signs (for example, in fashion the 'soft' gains meaning against the 'severe', the 'elaborate' against the 'austere', and the 'feminine' against the 'masculine'.)"[157]

Barthes studied clothes, and how people use them as signifying social class, world orientation, and self-conception. In short, he showed how the practice of bodily adornment is structured like a language. However, the system of fashion is distinguished from the system of dress, since it more closely reflects intentionally and intersubjectivity. It is an ideology promulgated by the fashion industry that reinforces the social order. The dress code, for Barthes, has to do with the adornment of the body according to a paradigmatic regulation of fashion choices. The system of fashion, although regulated by the dress code, ". . . is a second system . . . which attempts to control the everyday decisions of individuals regarding appearance for the purposes of selling the commodities of the fashion industry."[158] The world of clothes, according to Barthes, constituted a 'fashion-system' –signs of who and what we are.

It is a fact that human social life, and indeed our own conception of ourselves, including what we want, and our ultimate view of life, is, to a great extent, conditioned through society. The new sneakers, new computer game, new automobile, new decor, new diet –in short, all of the 'things' that are enriched with deep human significance, permeate our universe to the extent that we deliberate about things that only a short time before did not even exist for us. It is of no doubt

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[157] Tseelon, Efrat. "Fashion and Significance in Baudrillard," in Kellner, Douglas, *Op. Cit.* P. 119.
[158] Gottdiener, Mark. "The System of Objects and the Commodification of Everyday Life: The Early Baudrillard," in Kellner, Douglas, *Op. Cit.* P. 28. This point is also very interesting from the perspective of a study of practical autonomy, since if our very perception of out needs is coerced by some underlying motive outside of ourselves, then we are manipulated into living in a way that is not chosen from a perspective of self-governance. This point will be more fully developed later in this work.

that Baudrillard was deeply influenced by Barthes study of fashion. which provided

an impetus for his early work. He correctly reads Barthes as saying that there is a

momentum. often and apparently self-propelled. that carries us with it like a tidal

wave. so that our very sphere of desire is shaped by the market and the luring

advertisement of objects that have been so far removed from actual need that we

have to invent needs to justify their existence.

Baudrillard focuses upon the way that the process of consumption behaves

like a semiotic system. Rather than relying upon individual expressions of need for

objects. or the pleasure that we derive from objects. it is an abstract 'code' of

consumption that perpetually organizes objects. laden with human significance.

'Consumption'. insofar as it is meaningful. is a systematic process of the

manipulation of signs: objects. or categories of objects. "tyrannically induce

categories of persons." All social difference is organized. according to Baudrillard.

by the system of objects.

The System of Objects

In his first major book. Baudrillard observed that "we live in a time of

objects: I mean that we live according to their rhythm and according to their

incessant succession. It is objects which today observe our being born. which

accompany our death . . . and which survive us."[159] He describes a subject-object

dialectic in which the subject is continually confronted and seduced by a horizon of

objects that lure, intrigue, and often control an individual's perceptions, thoughts,

and behaviors. As Best and Kellner point out, "Baudrillard's ambitious task is to

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[159] Baudrillard, Jean. Le Systeme des objets, p. 18.

describe the contours and dominant structures of the new system of objects while indicating how they condition and structure needs, fantasies, and behavior."[160]

There are two underlying currents of thought behind Baudrillard's study of how human beings are caught in a vicious form of consumption that is controlled by the differentiation and organization of objects that led to the writing of his famous Le Systeme des Objets (1968). As a young scholar, Baudrillard was influenced by Marxists and neo-Marxists thinkers (Althusser, Adorno, Walter Benjamin), on the one hand, and structuralists (Saussure, Barthes, and Debord) on the other. These influences led him to abandon much of Marxism because of what he considered an inability of the system to explain the full sense of commodity. Believing that Marxism was unable to address the nature of the commodity as well as structuralism did, and disagreeing with the extent to which the structuralists were willing to go in order to explain objectivity, Baudrillard opted to devise a structural account of the commodity that would reveal its underlying force in shaping everyday life. It will be useful for the present study to examine briefly the ways in which Baudrillard relied upon yet went beyond Marxism.

For Marx, the emergence of capitalism is what transcended the medieval era by overthrowing 'natural' relations by fragmenting labor and introducing commodity production which is designed to maximize profit, which, in turn, feeds back upon itself. Commodities were in fact produced prior to capitalist society, but their production was not the central motivation of society. Under capitalist production, private ownership takes hold of the process, proliferating the production of commodities, which, in turn, alienate the worker at the expense of the wealthy.

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[160] Cf. Best, Steven and Kellner, Douglas. Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations. New York: The Guilford Press, 1991. P. 113.

In what has been called 'capitalist inversion', and according to Marxist doctrine, there is a process that occurs which begins by a domination of the subject by the object.[161] In fact, there is a seemingly proportionate relationship, for as the object becomes more prevalent, so does the subject diminish in stature.[162] According to Best, "Under the capitalist mode of production, the forces of production come under private ownership, commodity production proliferates, a fragmenting division of labor spreads, and subjects are displaced from their life-activity to confront a world of alien objects."[163] According to Marxist theory, as the objective world becomes more and more commodified, the worker is more alienated, which is described by Marx as a "loss of reality."[164] This process leads the individual to a loss of human character, into a world of abstraction and coerced by external powers.

Capitalism, Marx argues, eventually replaces simple use-value with the more refined exchange-value. This means that commodities are no longer produced to satisfy a basic need, but rather on the basis of their ability to generate and promote wealth. Because wealth rather than use becomes the standard of assessment, everything is transformed quantitatively. Best observes, "The insertion of subjects and objects into an economic calculus transforms them, turns them into abstract entities, strips away their unique characteristics and reduces them to numerical expression, to a quantitative sign. With the spread of money, commodification, and quantifying logic, a general abstraction process envelops society."[165] Exchange

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[161] Best, Steven. "The Commodification of Reality and the Reality of Commodification: Baudrillard, DeBord, and Postmodern Theory," *Op. Cit.*, P. 43.
[162] Marx, Karl. The Marx-Engles Reader, 2nd edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker, New York: Norton, P. 93.
[163] Best, Steven. *Op. Cit.* P. 43.
[164] Marx, Karl. The Marx-Engles Reader, *Op. Cit.*, P. 74.
[165] Best, Steven. *Op. Cit.* P. 44.

value thus becomes detached from a reality where human powers actually depend upon human abilities (e.g.. if I have enough money. I can buy what I do not have). In this abstract manner. money begins to determine the nature of social reality and opens a world that can be vastly distant from actual needs. The individual can embark on a quest toward the reification of illusions and fantasies. Best summarizes "in the early Marx. there is already a heightened sense of the desubstantialization process thematized by postmodernists. a vivid description of beginnings of an abstract commodity phantasmagoria, a process I will term the commodification of reality."[166]

Baudrillard was deeply influenced by this vein of Marxist theory. He agreed that there has been an ever-increasing spiral of abstraction. whereby the object takes on a superior aura over the subject; however. he substantially rejects the Marxist political theory. It is the thrust of Guy Debord that entices Baudrillard to examine the semiotic method of analysis as a tool with which to press this critique farther. Debord argued that there is a deeper dimension: he writes: "an earlier stage in the economy's domination of social life entailed an obvious downgrading of being into having that left its stamp on all human endeavor. The present stage. in which social life is completely taken over by the accumulated products of the economy. entails a generalized shift from having to appearing: all effective` having` must now derive both its immediate prestige and its ultimate raision d'etre from appearances."[167] Thus, for Debord, and later for Baudrillard, the appearance of the commodity replaces both its use-value and its exchange-value as the most important feature of contemporary social life. Debord believed that 'image' has taken the place of

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[166] Ibid. P. 45.
[167] Debord, Guy. The Society of the Spectacle, Op. Cit. P. 16 (#17).

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reality. He writes: "This principle is absolutely fulfilled in the spectacle, where the perceptible world is replaced by a set of images that are superior to that world and yet at the same time impose themselves as <u>eminently</u> perceptible."[168]

With Marx and Debord as backdrops, Baudrillard examined the nature of objects. Following the semiotic model, he believes that objects have two sign functions: connotative and denotative. The 'denotative' function is what the object does, i.e. its direct function (a toaster heats bread). The 'connotative' function, on the other hand, is what the object means. While denotation is object specific, connotation can occur with a range of possible objects. For example, a Rolls Royce automobile and a luxury yacht both can be used to mean social status. For Baudrillard, it is the connotative quality of objects that leads to the practice of 'substituting' one object for another. Following this practice is dangerous, according to Baudrillard, since it blurs the reference function of objects, instead focusing upon their image function.

In <u>Le Systeme des Objets</u>, Baudrillard enumerates three succinct features of what he calls the 'logic' of consumer objects: (1) functional objects, (2) commodities as projections of the future, and (3) nonfunctional objects. These three distinctions correspond to levels of abstraction and reveal, at least somewhat, how we organize our lives according to a functional and semiotic logic of objects. Initially, Baudrillard performs an analysis of 'home furnishings', much in the same way as Barthes discusses fashion. His point is to enunciate how we not only surround ourselves with objects, but, at the same time, use their connotative function to embody a complex social arrangement leading to self-definition.

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[168] Ibid. P. 26 (#36).

'Functional objects' are examined in the context of the family home and know this world through our childhood memories that function in experience "not [as] an objective world. but [as] the boundaries of a symbolic relation of family life."[169] Baudrillard describes how the modern home has become detached from this underlying sentimentality. Gottdiener observes. "when objects are freed from affect and reduced to function, people are freed from sentimentality but become only 'users' of objects. The transformative shift of modernity creates a set of functional objects as commodities and a status of humans as users or consumers. This transforms the house from the hearth of tradition and historical continuity to a showcase for consumerism and status."[170] The modern home has become less of a collective unity and more of a functional space for individual self-definition.

By 'commodities as projections of the future'. Baudrillard means the emergence of a type of object that. by its very nature. breaks from the past. He cites gadgets and technological inventions as examples of this tendency. Gottdiener. notes: "Home furnishings are no longer meant to signify continuity with the past. They are meant to be controlled. managed. manipulated. and inventoried. They can also be sold or junked when 'out of style'. . . The new technical. modern order is a phallic environment of calculation. functionality, and control."[171] While traditionally functional objects were related to bodily movements (e.g. a scythe or a basket) the forms of gadgets and technological objects are generally more divorced from the body, redefining the logic of function. Rather than the entire body, newer objects tend to involve merely a finger's touch or the push of a button. Baudrillard, believes that this contributes to the distancing of the individual from the natural

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[169] Baudrillard, Jean. The System of Objects. Op. Cit. P. 26.
[170] Gottdiener, Mark. "The System of Objects and the Commodification of Everyday Life: The Early Baudrillard," in Douglas Kellner, Baudrillard: A Critical Reader, Op.Cit. P. 31.

environment, and because of the ease of use, seduces people into a different world of objective classification.

Finally, the third kind of commodity 'nonfunctional objects' are described by Baudrillard as those that are completely divorced from use-value. He cites antiques as objects that 'stand outside time' and says that they escape the previous two categories. He writes: "The marginal object is not synchronic or diachronic, it is achronic. It represents a transcendence of the fashion system . . . [it] stands outside the myth of progress embodied in modernity."

Through cataloging the various manifestations of objects, Baudrillard is creating a neo-Marxist exploration of the social order that is tempered by elements from both Saussure and Freud. His main thrust is that consumption has become the underlying force behind the moral order, forming a classification system that lays out the code for human behavior and the interpretation of everyday life. This structure conforms more suitably to a linguistic style analysis than a Marxist critique.

Baudrillard writes: "If we consume the product as product, we consume its meaning through advertising."[172] Consumer objects structure human life through their sign function. The images of advertising dangle these meanings bait-like and the object completes its effect when it is consumed, thus transferring the meaning to the consumer. As Mark Poster observes in his insightfully clear introduction to Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings, " A potentially infinite play of signs is thus instituted which orders society while providing the individual with an illusory sense

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[171] Gottdiener, Ibid. P. 32.
[172] Poster, Mark (ed). Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988. P.11.

of freedom and self-determination."[173] It is the underlying 'code' that forces the system of objects upon us.

If Baudrillard is correct (or even partially correct). this means that individuals are born into and forever caught up in a universe replete with pure images. which are themselves detached from any major connection with their referents. From this perspective. when we interpret ourselves. set goals. feel the urge of desire. and. in short. act at all. we do so within a complex system of objects that carries with it a pre-ordering of the world. How else do teenagers in the Midwest adopt the gangland dress. talk. and behavior of California street gang members? Why do cowboys all dress in the same garb? Why is fashion so important? Why are people interpreted in terms of their outward manifestations? Baudrillard's The System of Objects attempts to provide a challenging response: Human behavior. including our wants and perceived needs. is articulated by the horizon of images within which we are inextricably woven and according to which we interpret ourselves.

Baudrillard remarks: "In the United States 90 percent of he population experience no other desire than to possess what others possess. From year to year. consumer choices are focused *en masse* on the latest model which is uniformly the best. A fixed class of 'normal' consumers has been created that coincides with the whole population."[174] He describes the way in which, in modern, post-industrial Europe and America, objects have a profound effect upon the psychology of need. What Baudrillard is focusing upon is how individuals interpret themselves in terms of the fashion system and find meaning through owning a collection of objects.

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[173] Ibid. P.2.
[174] Poster, *Op. Cit.* P.11.

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The System of Objects constitutes Baudrillard's initial perspective and is still related to a great extent to his Marxist and structuralist roots. His focus upon consumerism leads to a radical perspective in which individuals have much less freedom than an initial assessment would reveal. He writes: ". . . one could think that the ultimate goal of consumer society (not through any technocratic Machiavellianism, but through the ordinary structural play of competition) is the functionalization of the consumer and the psychological monopolization of all needs – a unanimity in consumption which at last would harmoniously conform to the complete consolidation and control of production."[175]

This has a profound effect upon morality. Citing the American advertiser Dichter, Baudrillard tells the story of how advertising is a practice that allows the consumer to feel moral even while flirting, spending, and satiating his desires.[176] In fact, advertising's goal is to make people feel good about self-indulgence. As Baudrillard astutely observes: "Hence, through planned (*dirigee*) motivation we find ourselves in an era where advertising takes over the moral responsibility for all society and replaces a puritan morality with a hedonistic morality of pure satisfaction."[177]

Baudrillard believes that the system of objects exerts a form of social control over the individual. The system of production, oriented toward mass consumption, creates an aura in which it is justifiable to seek sheer satisfaction through consuming itself. He goes on the illustrate the dimensions of the way in which the system of objects enforces an underlying structuring of society as a whole: ". . . objects are *categories of objects* which quite tyrannically induce *categories of persons*. They

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[175] Ibid. Pp. 11-12.
[176] Cf. Dichter, Ernest. The Strategy of Desire. New York: Doubleday, 1960.
[177] Poster, *Op. Cit.*. Pp. 12-13.

undertake the policing of social meanings, and the significations they engender are controlled."[178]

Symbolic Exchange

Baudrillard focuses upon the nature of symbolic-exchange as the glue that holds the social order in place. He was deeply influenced by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss's analysis of the 'gift'. According to Mauss, a 'gift' is not just an object given to another; rather, it is an index to a complex social order, which reflects vital information about a culture, its organization, and its meanings. Baudrillard sees this as symbolic-exchange, and holds that it is the fundamental feature of the consumer society. Underlying this pattern is the edifice of social organization, a 'code' which defines the behavior that is accepted and limits that which is not.

Although controversial, Baudrillard holds the position that once the signifier-signified relationship is established, we only have a mediated access to the referent, i.e., to reality. The 'naked object' never appears. All appearance blossoms with meaning which vectors us into the cultural preoccupation with the system of objects. While alluding to reality, the sign actually occludes it.

Culture, Simulation and Hyperreality

Baudrillard has argued that it is the system of signs that carves out and organizes reality for us. Culture itself can be defined by the production and consumption of signs. It is described entirely by the dynamics of the process of consumption. The 'original presence' of nature, traditionally contrasted with 'culture', no longer holds. Instead, nature itself has been appropriated, and we are left with only what Baudrillard calls 'simulations'.

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[178] Ibid. Pp. 16-17.

In Simulacra and Simulation, Baudrillard recounts the Borges fable in which

a group of cartographers created a map that was so detailed and perfect that its

surface completely covered the kingdom. He draws an analogy with the

proliferation of images within the horizons of human experience and how they tend

to obfuscate reality. Noting this loss of reality and its replacement with what he

calls 'hyperreality', Baudrillard remarks: "Today abstraction is no longer that of the

map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a

territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real

without origin in reality: a hyperreal."

While representation presupposes a connection between the sign and reality,

simulation is the collapse of the real with the imaginary. This leads Baudrillard to

postulate 'hyperreality'. Hyperreality is more real than real and is distinguished by

an absence of connection between the sign and its referent. Ward adds: "We might

naturally assume that simulation either duplicates or is emitted by a pre-given real.

In this sense we might think that simulation and reality have a necessary attachment

to each other. But for Baudrillard, this connection has long since snapped, so that

simulation can no longer be taken as either an imitation or distortion of reality."[179]

He adds: "In Baudrillard's dizzying cosmos there is no firm, pure reality left against

which we can measure the truth or falsity of representation, and electronic

reproduction has gone so far that the notion of originality is (or ought to be)

irrelevant."

A Critical Note

Clearly, Baudrillard has painted an extreme picture of modern culture. The

weakest point in his argument is that images have become completely distended

from their reference in reality. If the system of signs is so compelling that it needs absolutely no grounding outside itself, the we are faced with a 'hyperreality'. lost within a sea of images with no hope of returning. Perhaps the world has become commodified to the point of distortion of reality. While from a phenomenological perspective 'reality' is a sense attached to certain features of experience (e.g.. I perceive a 'real' world, which I distinguish from my dream world and my world of fantasy). many thinkers from the analytic tradition. such as Saul Kripke. have made arguments that language can still tell us things about the world. The entire edifice of possible world semantics has to do with the nature of sense and reference.

For this and other reasons, I think that Baudrillard's hyperreality is in fact a hyperbolic treatment of a world predominated. not totally encapsulated by images. It is still a very useful tool. providing a perspective from which to survey the damage that the media. especially advertising, has done to self-identity. The world of images. leading our desires and perceptions of our needs. has created many barriers for autonomy. In some senses and at the same time it has opened vast new possibilities for creating new forms of the self that transcend traditional boundaries.

Reasoning plays an important part in keeping the wobbling world of images in check. It is like an anchor for a ship. tethering the mad world of self-gratification and illusion to something tangible. On the other hand. reason has its limitation. When one reasons instrumentally about the play of images. it becomes subservient to the play of simulations.

Baudrillard has effectively described the deep impact of the liberation of the sign upon the human condition. Without a doubt there is a strong influence of social ordering and behavior controls that constrain human life within a field of images.

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[179] Ward, Glen. Postmodernism. Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1997. P. 61.

Even if this array does not extend quite into the depths of hyperreality. as Baudrillard suggests. it approximates it. at least from a practical point of view. It is the nature of the preoccupation with images. and the tendency that we have to interpret ourselves and define our needs in terms of them. that leads us to a discussion of the media. with its 'techno-culture' that shapes the lives of modern humanity.

Baudrillard. McLuhan. and the Impact of Techno-Culture

We have seen how Baudrillard portrays the individual as flooded by the overwhelming ocean of images. to the point that reality itself is swamped and drowned within hyperreality. Even though Baudrillard's hyperreality may exaggerate the extent that commodification has influenced self-interpretation. and even if there is still the possibility of reaching some reference in reality. his critique has illuminated a vast problem in the articulation of a theory of practical autonomy. Let's just say that individuals are greatly influenced by the enormous play of images that surround us in life. Then we tend to identify ourselves with certain images. reflected in certain objects, and soon we believe that we need what is in reality only something superficial and trendy. If this perceived need arose spontaneously within my detached consciousness, then it could be argued that the cacophony of images did not restrict my personal autonomy. On the other hand. and as we have seen in earlier chapters. there is strong argument that the self is intrinsically connected to the world, not just in an instrumental sense, but in a way such that the constituted meanings press into my awareness and provide the 'stuff' from which my conception of myself, including desires and dreams, is fabricated.

Baudrillard's position is the fatalistic version of a two sided argument. If the media –advertising, commodification, intense coded information—really engulfs us,

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it may, on the one hand, dissolve us within it in a negative manner; on the other

hand, it may open new possibilities, create new forms of expression, and provide

more accurate and timely information to us –thus enhancing, rather than obstructing,

personal autonomy.

Marshall McLuhan is a thinker who has offered a more optimistic version of

the media, although he cautions us that it is a double-edged sword. In this section, I

will examine McLuhan's position, contrast it with Baudrillard, and paint a portrait

of the emerging and frantic 'techno-culture', which forms the context for modern

life. I will show how each of these thinkers develops valid points that illuminate our

study of autonomy.

McLuhan and Media as 'Extensions of Man'

Marshall McLuhan, the famous Canadian social theorist, developed his

compelling analysis of the impact of the various forms of media upon human beings

along a more optimistic plane than did Baudrillard. In the opening of his most

influential work, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, McLuhan argues

that while the greater part of the history of humankind has been outward expansion,

extending the grasp of individuals physically, that the past century has been an

inward implosion, bringing the outward things into closer contact with individual

consciousness. He writes: "After three thousand years of explosion, by means of

fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During

the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more of a

century in electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in

a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is

concerned."[180] He believes that electronic media are extensions of the human central nervous system –they extend the ranges of our ordinary senses.

McLuhan thinks that this is a process that is continually evolving. eventually to reach a final plateau in a unity between electronic media and individual consciousness. But let's listen to what McLuhan has to say: "Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man –the technological simulation of consciousness. when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and nerves by the various media."[181] As far as the ethical standing of this extension of man, McLuhan adds: "Whether the extension of consciousness, so long sought by advertisers for specific products, will be a 'good thing' is a question that admits of a wide solution. There is little possibility of answering such questions about the extensions of man without considering all of them together. Any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex."[182]

McLuhan's general thesis is that throughout the history of humankind, our thoughts, feelings, desires, and actions have been determined by developments in the means that is used to communicate. He believed that emerging technologies give birth to new environments, thus creating, at the same time, constraints upon action and new possibilities. The central point for him is that there is a behavioral control exerted by the form of communication over the individuals. In many ways this view is shared by Baudrillard; however, McLuhan never completely disengages this process from its foundation in basic human needs and a concrete reality. This

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[180] McLuhan, Marshal. Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1964. Pp. 3.
[181] Ibid.

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does not mean that his version of the impact of the media upon human life is less comprehensive. McLuhan points out that ". . . every age has its favorite model of perception and knowledge that it is inclined to prescribe for everybody and everything."[183] He believes that the present age has a "revulsion against imposed patterns," leading the present age, through what McLuhan calls 'electric speed', to an implosion of reality, heightening the awareness of individuals in relation to their social world. He remarked that the 'electromagnetic' media —radio, television, electric lights, electric appliances—have reshaped the world, to the extent that we now find ourselves in a 'global village'.[184]

This process is further accentuated by the fact that McLuhan sees that the amplification of certain human traits carries with it profound psychological consequences. "The railway did not introduce movement or transportation or wheel or road into human society, but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions, creating totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work and leisure."[185] However, it is important to remember that his definition of media includes trends, technologies, behavioral patterns that are transmitted from one person to another, and anything which can be remotely interpreted in a social context. New forms of communication actually reshape the human landscape.

McLuhan distinguishes between 'hot' and 'cool' media. Hot media, of which some examples are radio, movies, printed words, waltz, etc., are defined as allowing very little audience participation. Everything is filled in. The individual is filled with data in a very intense space. On the other hand, cool media —telephones, TV,

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[182] Ibid. P. 4.
[183] McLuhan, Marshal. Understanding Media, Op. Cit. P. 5.
[184] McLuhan introduced the idea of a 'global village': "As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility, to an intense degree (P. 5)."

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lithographs, etc. move slower and must be filled in more by the audience. According to McLuhan, there is a reciprocal relationship between 'hot' and 'cool' media. Faced with the introduction of a hot new media, individuals tend to respond by cooling off. McLuhan states: "Were we to accept fully and directly every shock to our various structures of awareness, we would soon be nervous wrecks, doing double-takes and pressing panic buttons every minute."[186] This is described as a psychological process that is akin to the 'three stages of alarm, resistance, and exhaustion' associated with intense stress or disease.

So, a 'hot' technology, when introduced to a 'cool' culture, tends to tear at the foundations of that culture. McLuhan uses the example of the devastating impact of the introduction of the steel ax (hot technology) upon a lithic civilization (cool culture). He writes: "When Australian natives were give steel axes by the missionaries, their culture, based on the stone ax, collapsed. The stone ax had not only been scarce but had always been a basic statue symbol of male importance. The missionaries provided quantities of sharp steel axes and gave them to women and children. The men had even to borrow these from the women, causing a collapse of male dignity. A tribal and feudal hierarchy of traditional kind collapses quickly when it meets any hot medium of the mechanical, uniform, and repetitive kind [emphasis added]."[187]

One of the central features of McLuhan's thought which is similar to that of Baudrillard is the way in which media controls everyday life, not only from the perspective of disseminating information, but on a more basic level, one that influences emotions, desires, and behavior. He writes: "We are certainly coming

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[185] Ibid. P. 8.
[186] Ibid. P. 24.

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within conceivable range of a world automatically controlled to the point where we could say. 'Six hours less radio in Indonesia next week or there will be a great falling off in literary attention.' Or. 'We can program twenty more hours of TV in South Africa next week to cool down the tribal temperature raised by radio last week. Whole cultures could now be programmed to keep their emotional climate stable in the same way that we have begun to know something about maintaining equilibrium in the commercial economies of the world."[188]

Although McLuhan recognizes the insidious social control potential of the media. he does not appear to focus upon its negative implications. Instead. one gets the impression that he believes that there is some natural dialectic. twisting its way toward an increase in human potential. In fact. at times. he even appears to favor some sort of social manipulation by the media as a form of pacification.

McLuhan states that the media is irresistible. He writes: "To behold. use or perceive any extension of ourselves in technological form is necessarily to embrace it. To listen to radio or to read the printed page is to accept these extensions of ourselves into our personal system and to undergo the 'closure' or displacement of perception that follows automatically."[189] Not only are the forms of media compelling. they are all embracing and assert a 'master-slave dialectic'. He adds, "By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. That is why we must, to use them all, serve these objects, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions. An Indian is the servo-mechanism of his canoe, as the cowboy of his horse or the executive his clock." [190]

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[187] McLuhan, Ibid. P. 24. (Note: McLuhan has lifted this example from Robert Theobald's The Rich and the Poor.)
[188] Ibid. P. 28.
[189] Ibid. P. 46.
[190] Ibid. P. 46.

Paradoxically, by embracing new forms of media, which is itself a necessity, we are also forced into a relationship in which we come to depend upon them. This is because they are intrinsically 'extensions' of our awareness, in the same way as shoes augment our feet, automobiles enhance our range, telephones stretch our voice, and television our sight.

From the perspective of autonomy, McLuhan's vision of the media is a double-edged sword: it extends our natural capabilities, thus opening new horizons for setting and realizing goals and governing our activities; on the other hand, and much more subliminally, it rearticulates our understanding of self, seduces us with images which entice our desires, often because of advertising, and, to a great extent, it exerts an overwhelming social control which deprives us of a great deal of personal autonomy.

Authur Kroker, a proponent of the dangers of the encompassing of human sensibility by the forms of media, wrote about how media as the 'extension of man' permits technology to mediate human experience. Warning of the dangers of this mediation, he writes: "[w]e are the first citizens of a society that has been eaten by technology, a culture that has actually vanished into the dark vortex of the electronic frontier."[191] In contrast, McLuhan could be considered a technological optimist, arguing that the new media open vast areas of potential creativity and extend it to the whole of human society, the 'global village'. However, he does appear to caution us against assimilating this new extension too quickly, which brings on a sense of numbness. He further argues that "as the media become the primary commodity. . . it is likely that these media will become accepted as the 'social

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[191] Kroker, Arthur. Spasm: Virtual Reality, Android Music, and Electric Flesh. New Yore: St. Martin Press, 1993. P. 15.

bond' causing 'subliminal and docile acceptance of media impact' creating 'prisons without walls for their human users."[192]

Baudrillard's 'Fatal Strategy' as a Response to McLuhan

Baudrillard was deeply influenced by McLuhan. However, he consistently disagrees with McLuhan's assessment of the media implosion. Instead of extending our senses in a dialectic play between 'hot' and 'cool', Baudrillard holds that this implosion has already completely engulfed society; rather than a process of reorganizing the global village, it has completely swallowed it.

Because there is no play of this dialectic, according to Baudrillard, we are facing a 'fatal strategy', one in which the media have lost connection with the outside, become totally self-referential, and thriving upon a produced hyperreality. He calls this a 'fatal strategy' precisely because there is no opposite. Quoting Baudrillard, Ward, describes this condition in the following terms: "As well as the media now operating without having to make any necessary reference to reality, we now face a situation in which, to Baudrillard's mind, the image 'bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum'."[193]

Kellner notes that Baudrillard envisages "a model of the media as a black hole of signs and information that absorbs all contents into cybernetic noise which no longer communicates meaningful messages in a process in which all contents implode into form."[194] The analogy of the black hole implies that the media have

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[192] Epstein, Jonathon S. and Margarete J. "Fatal Forms: Toward a (Neo) Formal Sociological Theory of Media Culture," in Douglas Kellner, Op. Cit. P. 140. Also see McLuhan, Op. Cit. Pp. 23-44 and Mark Poster, The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990.

[193] Ward, Glenn. Op. Cit. P. 59. The quotation from Baudrillard is from Selected Writings, 1988 p. 170.

[194] Kellner, Douglas. Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989. P. 68.

become a closed system of signs "from which no event escapes"[195] Because of the speed of the flow of information the McLuhan idea of 'extensions of man' becomes blurred. shaking the relationship between subject and object. cause and effect. signifier and signified.

As Kellner observes: "The escalating role of the media in contemporary society is for Baudrillard equivalent to THE FALL into the postmodern society of simulations from the modern universe of production . . . [leaving behind only a] site of an implosion of all boundaries. regions. and distinctions between high and low culture. appearance and reality and just about every other binary operation maintained by traditional philosophy and social theory."[196] McLuhan's 'global village' has been replaced by Baudrillard's 'mass'. which have lost themselves within their content form. As the Epstein's have stated: ". . . individuals watch the news in order to discover their opinion. to find the causes to 'believe' in. and. most importantly. to uncover an identity."[197]

Techno-Culture. Self and Personal Autonomy

The thoughts of Jean Baudrillard and Marshall McLuhan open new insights into the nature of how the world effects individuals. We are not simply lodged within a neutral landscape, but rather a vibrant environment that connects us to each other in unlimited ways. It is the nature of these connections that has formed the basis of the present study. Are they simply extensions of our own awareness. enabling our grasp, vision. hearing, and central nervous system to intertwine with the global village? And is this process merely shocking at first and finally finding an equilibrium? Do these extensions grant us more possibilities, open new frontiers

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[195] Baudrillard, Jean. For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign. trans. Charles Levin. St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981. P. 175.
[196] Kellner, Baudrillard, Pp. 67-8.

of self-creation, enable us to increase personal autonomy exponentially? Or, has the world around us become absorbed into its own narcissistic universe of floating images that only point back to themselves? Are we imprisoned within this spiraling vortex, which dethrones personal autonomy, leaving it just one illusion among many, caught forever in an unreal universe?

Baudrillard has presented a compelling description of the semiotic horizon. Accordingly, it has replaced the modern technological world with hyperreality. Image, instead of substance, has become the central constituting force in our definition of the self. What I interpret as my goals and desires are seductively provided by a world beyond anyone's control. The patterns of behavior in everyday life are orchestrations of conformity to images, styles, fashions, and marketing.

This bleak Baudrillardian cosmos is certainly partly true. Everyday life is replete with blind conformity. Each individual uses the material at hand to construct the future and interpret the present. On the other hand, Baudrillard's claim that all images have lost their references is an extreme picture that is probably not true. Even though many people live in a world determined by false images, I believe that it is possible to seek valid referents, find substance, and live within the aura of superficiality while, at the same time, transcending it significantly.

While McLuhan fails to recognize the complexity of the semiotic horizon, Baudrillard takes it too far. I believe that the best solution is somewhere between these extremes. The answer lies in maximizing the amount of input that is critically aware of the role that appearance and image play in creating self-image. Personal autonomy is a form of self-direction. Implicit in this notion is the idea of the future and the self as a narrative unity. I choose to do this, because I want to do this,

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[197] Jonathon S. and Margarete J. Epstein, *Op. Cit.* P. 142.

because I can do this, because it means something to me. In order for me to be autonomous, I must not be coerced into false interpretations of self, world, needs, and beliefs. What is necessary is an understanding of how these things are constituted and how I can take a position regarding belief and knowledge that will enhance the process of practical reasoning.

By understanding the nature of belief, and the means to critically assess and perhaps influence it towards a more responsible position, we must have an understanding of how it works and what it works against. Biographically inserted into a phenomenological world from birth, I learn how to orient myself and acquire a body of beliefs. It is easy to ignore the inadequacy of beliefs, often confusing the strength of belief with the truth. However, Plato was the first to point out the distinct difference between belief and knowledge. Further, beliefs are not something that I can just turn on or off. They are a disposition that attaches to our orientation toward the world. For this reason, it is necessary to maintain an openness toward belief, a skepticism about the validity of desire, a view of the self as possibility rather than a thing, and a sense of epistemic responsibility. Only through a change in attitude can we face the frightening loss of self portrayed by Baudrillard. Only through using our capacity to reason, with a willingness to change, can we truly be autonomous. This leads us to consider the problem of the nature of belief, knowledge, and epistemic responsibility.

PART FOUR

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PRACTICAL AUTONOMY

MENTAL ABILITIES, UNCONSCIOUS MOTIVATION, AND CONDITIONED BEHAVIOR

As we have seen, there are many components of personal autonomy. And all of these components have to be orchestrated in order for autonomy to be actualized. We have been looking at individual components in isolation from each other, realizing that this is, in a sense, an abstraction. On the other hand, it is an important way of understanding what we are talking about –taking up the problem from different perspectives, looking at it, then moving to the next perspective in hopes of circumscribing a domain of autonomy, gaining new comprehension of its depth.

In the previous sections, autonomy has been examined mainly from the perspective of the supportive environment –those 'outside' influences that help or hinder our chances of being autonomous. Setting up the distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' may be misleading, since there is a continual interplay, as we have seen (especially in parts two and three), between these two poles of life. Therefore, in the present chapter, I will begin to examine the various psychological components of autonomy: an inventory of the mental abilities that contribute to a greater degree of personal autonomy. This list will include minimal rationality, rational will, time-consciousness, self-control, emotional balance, 'objectivity', 'open-mindedness', and the ability to perceive and weigh values. Just like every other aspect of autonomy, these features of individual ability are not themselves constitutive of autonomy (i.e., just having these abilities does not make one autonomous). Rather, they must come into play in a certain way in order to enhance autonomy. And, like the elements of the autonomy supporting environment there are three things to keep

in mind: (1) there is a range from optimal to minimal for any of these abilities. (2) there is a range of optimal to minimal for how they are used in unison. and (3) there is infinite variability in how these abilities can help produce autonomy.

After looking at these various 'abilities' and how they might be related to producing autonomy, I will briefly examine two psychological theories that offer arguments that may raise problems for a theory of autonomy: First. I will look at the Freudian ideas of the unconscious mind and the problems of repression. not from the standpoint of the psychologist, but as a philosopher. interested primarily in how this phenomenon might adversely impact our emerging picture of personal autonomy. Likewise, I will describe the problem of 'operant conditioning'. initially appearing in a proto-form in Pavlov and finding its full-blown form in the works of Skinner. If their theories are true, both Skinner and Freud present some interesting challenges to any emerging view of autonomy.

Mental Abilities Associated with Personal Autonomy

Human action involves deliberating within the constraints of time. We are not able to perform infinite calculations before deciding upon a path. As such, we must orchestrate many different elements of mental ability, sometimes very quickly, and make a decision. Of course, this does not apply to reflex reactions, which just happen, and then we are aware that they did. But in everyday life, we are faced with many choices. The ways in which mental abilities are coordinated in responding to a world which requires continual deciding is useful in observing what basic mental abilities are necessary for autonomy.

Concept of Self-Identity, Unity, and Time-Consciousness

Jaques Lacan postulated that somewhere between age six months to eighteen months, children find the image of themselves as a unity. He calls this the 'mirror

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phase', implying that they actually discover that they are not only a subject, but an object.[198] Whether or not this event actually occurs within the life of every child does not matter. It is the forming of a conception of our self as a locus of experience, thoughts, desires, and needs that is important. At the most primitive level, self-identity is merely an awareness of the self and numerous pathological disorders have been researched by psychologists of people who are unable to have an awareness of themselves as a unity. Multiple personality disorder is an example, but other kinds of problems can exist, say with memory.

An individual who has no memory cannot have a full awareness of the self. This is because part of what we mean by self is an enduring thing. So, while this person may have feelings, desires, and needs, she lacks the ability to bring them together and project her desires from a past into a future. Such a person might eat five breakfasts, forgetting that she has eaten after each one. She may perform the same idiotic routine of brushing her teeth until they wear away, because she has no memory of brushing them in the first place. This is just an extreme example of how integral memory is for self-identity.

Time-consciousness is the precondition for memory. We are constituted temporally as a locus of perceptions from past, to present, into a future. William James called flow of past through the present into the future the 'stream of thought' and it was one way of answering Hume's problem of how individual percepts are connected.[199] According to James, consciousness has both substantive (roughly,

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[198] Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in Lacan, Ecrits, Translated by Sheridan. Tavistock: Routledge, 1977.
[199] See James, William. The Principles of Psychology. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1893. Volume 1, especially Chapter IX, "The Stream of Thought," pp. 224-290. Also see, Hume, David. A Treatise on Human Nature, (2nd ed.) edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, and Husserl, Edmund, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness. Edited by Martin Heidegger, translated by James S. Churchill. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.

percepts) and transitive (temporality) parts. It is easy. therefore. to see that this basic structure of consciousness must be intact before a person can have the awareness of a self which endures as a unity through time.

But simply understanding the self as a unity through time is not full self-awareness. I must identify with this unity. It is my need. my desire. my perception. and my self. I have to 'own' these events in some way; they are 'parts' of my life. As I begin to see the world more and more in this way. I develop interests. habits. set goals. and move from simple self awareness. to self-identity. to self-development. I see my life as a project; or. if not in a holistic sense. as a multitude of projects. each bearing a relation to what I want to be. Of course. this does not imply that everyone has an overall view of the purpose of their life. or that they have an overarching project. but it does imply that there is a connection between what individuals want and their idea of self.

Eventually. a person may adopt an attitude of self-actualization: i.e.. the attempt to 'make the most' of life. Many psychologists confuse this with 'self-direction' (autonomy). But self-actualization, however valuable in life. is not the same as self-direction. The latter contains the possibility of not choosing the path of self-actualization. However. self-direction, by its very linguistic form. implies some view of self.

It is the basic sense of self that is important for personal autonomy. In order to have personal autonomy, to be able to direct the self, it is important to first have an awareness of the self as an enduring entity, as the locus of desires and needs, and, most importantly, as an entity that makes choices, that, to some degree, shapes its future. Berofsky calls this self-orientation 'purposiveness', and says that it, "calls on certain capacities, to set priorities, formulate long-term goals, subordinate certain

interests for the sake of goals deemed more important, anticipate actions to promote these goals, and reflect on the extent to which success has been attained."[200] But 'purposiveness' is not rationality, which is also a very important aspect of individual psychological makeup that is critical for personal autonomy.

Minimal Rationality

If we imagine a purely rational individual, we will have a picture of a person who never makes logical mistakes, but also of one who has no other orientation but rational understanding of the self and world. This does not mean that this individual is only capable of seeing things logically, since logic is a tool of reason and not the whole of reason. But this individual will approach every problem procedurally, using reason in order to find the appropriate solution. He would never act upon impulse, intense desire, sheer hunger, or emotional conviction. He would never appeal to an unformulated 'feeling'. He would never be anything but rational about life —everything he did would have a purpose and a reason.

But people are not wholly rational, partly because they are not made that way (human beings have emotions, desires, needs, and gut feelings), partly because the best route to solve a problem may not find its source in reasoning about the problem. Further, human life is a stream of decisions, some trivial and some imperative. We deliberate about what to do all the time. But we must also act upon the basis of our deliberations. There is a time constraint upon deliberation; we must act now and do not have the time to gather more information or process this information further. We cannot be purely rational agents in the human world.

On the other hand, the ability to reason about things in life is critical for personal autonomy. And since we cannot achieve the ideal perspective, we must be

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[200] Berofsky, Bernard. Liberation From Self, *Op. Cit.* P. 10.

able to reason as much as necessary in order to make sense out of the myriad of choices before us. What is necessary for this to happen is 'minimal rationality'.[201]

'Minimal rationality' is contrasted with the concept of 'idealized rationality'. about which. Cherniak observes. "the pervasively and tacitly assumed conception of rationality in philosophy is so idealized that it cannot apply in an interesting way to actual human beings (1986. 5).[202] What he sees in minimal rationality is something more practical. something that is more instrumental to a conception of practical reasoning.

Cherniak begins his analysis by pointing out that there is an essential connection in philosophy between rationality and being an agent. One cannot be a moral agent. according to this view. unless one evinces a *certain degree* of rationality. How rational does a person have to be in order to be a moral agent? This is the guiding question for Cherniak's study.

The first step in describing this kind of rationality is to decide what the minimum requirements are in order for an individual to be a moral agent. Cherniak calls this the 'minimal agent' (1986. 3). The minimal agent has "fixed limits on cognitive resources such as time and memory (1986. 3)." But. the ideal of rationality set forth in the philosophical tradition is unattainable by human beings. Cherniak writes: "human beings are in the *finitary predicament* of having fixed limits on their cognitive capacities and the time available to them. Unlike Turing machines, actual human beings in everyday situations or even in scientific inquiry do not have potentially infinite memory and computing time. This is the 'cognitive

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[201] This perspective has been developed more fully by Christopher Cherniak in his Minimal Rationality. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992.
[202] An example of what Cherniak calls the 'ideal rationality condition' can be found in the J. Hintikka's Knowledge and Belief. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962. From this perspective, an

friction' the idealizations overlook. Since any human being is in the finitary

predicament, using a cognitive theory with the ideal rationality condition seems to

amount to having very nearly no applicable theory at all (1986. 8)." In other words.

because human beings are finite in both their abilities and time, they are unable to

ever achieve ideal rationality; therefore, as a result, always compromise and fall

short. Because of this, Cherniak wants to describe a form of rationality that is

achievable and also the necessary condition for rational deliberation.

Describing requirements for what he calls the 'minimal general rationality

condition', Cherniak argues that an agent must first have a 'minimal deductive

ability', which he described in the following general proposition: "If 'A' has a

particular belief-desire set. 'A' would make some, but not necessarily all, of the

sound inferences from the belief set that are apparently appropriate (1986, 10)." In

addition. 'A' can only be expected to make those inferences that are appropriate for

'A' to make (minimum heuristic requirement) and must be able to actually deduce

some of the inferences (minimal deducing requirement). These three abilities

intertwine to form a general condition necessary for minimal rationaity.

A further condition for minimal rationality is that of 'minimal consistency'.

This means that : "If 'A' has a particular belief-desire set, then if any

inconsistencies arose in the belief set, 'A' would eliminate some of them (1986,

16)." Therefore, an agent cannot be said to be 'minimally rational' unless there is

general consistency in his belief set. This means that a person cannot hold opposite

views about the same thing at the same time and, even more, that an individual must

have a mostly consistent set of beliefs. It is interesting to notice that the

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agent's belief set is deductively closed, so that: 'A' actually believes (or, infers, or can infer) all and only consequences of 'A's beliefs (1986, 12).

terminology used by Cherniak is fuzzy --'mostly, generally, some'-- are terms that are used intentionally to characterize the inherent vagueness of minimal conditions.

One other area talked about by Cherniak is the relationship between rationality and human memory. After affirming the simple psychological fact that a person cannot reason without having some form of memory, Cherniak shows that the typical model of memory, like that of reason, has been idealized in the Western philosophical tradition. Against models falling into this category (he uses Quine's version in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"), Cherniak discusses the psychological model involving two kinds of memory: short term and long term. While short term memory has constraints upon how much can be stored at any one time (he is claiming that one cannot have all memories present to mind at once), long term memory appears to have an indefinite capacity for storage. The pragmatic call that Cherniak makes regarding a 'minimal memory condition' is that a person have 'efficient recall' to perform the functions necessary to accomplish the 'minimal rationality condition' (1986, 61).

Without going into the entire epistemology outlined by Cherniak, these examples show how a certain minimal level of rationality is necessary for an individual to be a moral agent. These same conditions constitute a minimal ability necessary for an individual to be considered capable of acting autonomously. Rather than being an ideal rational agent, an individual need only have 'practical adequacy' and meet the conditions of 'minimal rationality'.

Rational Will

Having minimal rationality is not enough. An individual has to have a certain kind of ability to focus activity, to direct life according to the tenents of reason. This ability is close to what is generally meant by the concept of 'will';

however. I would like to make a distinction between at least two kinds of will: (1) a general sense of the term that is analogous to 'strong desire', and (2) a more narrow conception that presupposes a sense of 'self-direction' and which I will follow Berofsky in calling 'rational will'. He states that if a person "is too weak to effect the promptings of practical reason and he is unable to rectify this deficiency: he lacks *strength of rational will*."[203]

Berofsky cites the example of an individual suffering from addiction or compulsion as forms of lack, or at least weakness, of the rational will (1995, 28). He also talks about less dominating conditions such as "anomie, melancholia, world-weariness, lethargy, dispiritedness, sloth, and depression" as other psychological characteristics that can interfere with the ability to direct one's will (1995, 28).

In a sense, having rational will is commensurate with having a certain kind of motivation. It involves having and using a desire to implement reason to whatever extent is necessary in order that long-range plans can be achieved. It involves overriding the practice of gratifying immediate desires. But there is something else going on —having rational will means that a person is motivated in the right way, able to adopt a certain cognitive approach toward life. It also involves an attitude to persevere. Berofsky concludes: "Even if they face temptation, conflict, ennui, fears, and enervating physical and emotional conditions, they do not suffer from a serious defect of will and can be expected to execute the decisions they have autonomously arrived at (1995, 30)."

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[203] Berofsky, Bernard. Liberation from Self, Op. Cit. P. 28.

Self-control and Emotional Intelligence

Self-control is closely related to rational will: however. it is not entirely the same thing. Berofsky talks about the lack of self control. and points out that it may be detrimental to autonomy. He writes. "We may worry that an agent who does not pass his impulses through a <u>valuational filter</u> [emphasis added] lacks self-control. He is not his own ruler because he is a slave to his passions and impulses. Indeed. the function of critical reflection is to ensure control over one's life. and it is exactly in this domain that the psychopath appears to be deficient (1995. 107)."

What Berofsky brings out is the valuative nature of self-control. It is not merely being able to control myself. but understanding my options in terms of their relative and intrinsic values. As Berofsky points out. "A value-less (sic) agent [such as the psychopath] evidently reflects. but only as much as he needs to. As a clever con artist. he is prudent enough to ensure the maximization of utility in the long run (1995. 108)." In order to have autonomy, according to Berofsky. a person must be able to exercise enough control over himself and his actions to overcome impulse, first-order desires. and strong feelings.

This raises the issue of emotions. While some thinkers have tried to displace the importance of emotions in decision making. I think that they are critical for choices and that it is not possible to 'bracket' one's emotions, so that 'pure' reason can guide deliberation. In fact, a simple etymology of 'emotion' shows that the root of the word is the Latin verb *motere*, which is translated into English as 'to move'. With the addition of the prefix 'e', 'emotion' comes from the Latin root 'to move away'. This suggest that the concept of action is at the very heart of emotion.

However, many recent studies have talked about initial emotional responses as a 'survival mechanism' having their origin in the 'limbic system' of the brain.

An examination of this position will be useful for the present study to show, not that there actually is a necessary connection between emotions and the physical brain (although I think that there is), which would commit us here to some form of physicalism: but instead, that there are strong arguments that emotions are very fundamental aspects of what constitutes a human being.

First, LeDoux has pioneered neurophysiological research into the limbic system of the brain, especially in his studies of the nature and function of the 'amygdala'.[204] The amygdala is an almond shaped cluster of interconnected neurological structures that sits on top of the medulla oblongata in the human brain. Daniel Goleman states: "The amygdala acts as a storehouse of emotional memory, and thus of significance itself; life without the amygdala is a life stripped of personal meanings."[205] This statement is based upon observations of individuals who have had extensive damage to that part of the brain, and are thus virtual vegetables, lacking motivation to do anything.

But, Ladoux argues, the amygdala contains a primitive emotional reaction mechanism that causes immediate emotional responses, almost like emotional reflexes, that are necessary, he believes, to the survival of human life. Goleman writes, "in the first few milliseconds of our perceiving something we not only unconsciously comprehend what it is, but decide whether we like it or not [emphasis added]; the 'cognitive unconscious' presents our awareness with not just the identity of what we see, but an opinion about it (1995, 20)." LeDoux calls this phenomenon 'precognitive emotion'.

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[204] See, LeDoux, Joseph. "Emotion and the Limbic System concept," in Concepts in Neuroscience, 2, 1992: and also, LeDoux, Joseph. "Sensory Systems and Emotion," in Integrative Psychiatry, 4, 1986.
[205] Goleman, Daniel. Emotional Intelligence. New York: Bantam books, 1995. P. 15.

Neurological studies conducted by Antonio Damasio of patients with a damaged amygdala system, has revealed no lowering of the IQ, but severe impairment of their elementary decision-making skills.[206] His conclusion is that emotions are indispensable for practical reasoning. They provide the initial orientation toward an event, about which we can then deliberate.

This research leads Goleman to call for 'emotional intelligence', by which he means a certain cognitive attitude toward the emotions which accepts them as necessary components while, at the same, time using them to enhance, rather than control our lives. He states: "Emotional life is a domain that, as surely as math or reading, can be handled with greater or lesser skill, and requires its unique set of competencies. And how adept a person is at those is crucial to understanding why one person thrives in life while another, or equal intellect, dead-ends: emotional aptitude is a *meta-ability*, determining how well we can use whatever other skills we have, including raw intellect (1995, 36)."

Clearly, and regardless of whether the emotional part of human consciousness is caused by the amygdala or something else, the concept of 'emotional intelligence' is important for a theory of personal autonomy. It implies that the individual has a 'grip' on emotional life, that the emotions contribute to, rather than deter from, the way in which a person deliberates and acts. While Goleman presents a full-blown theory of how to practice 'emotional intelligence', the concern here is that it is a way of seeing emotional life that should be added to the kinds of things necessary for an individual to act autonomously.

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[206] Damasio, Antonio. Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain. New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1994.

Objectivity, Flexibility of Attitude, and Open-Mindedness

Berofsky introduces the notion of 'objectivity' as an important condition for personal autonomy. This is because, he asserts, "autonomy is *not* internal generation. In spite of the etymology of the term, we must look not to the internal connection, not to the origin in self, but rather to the way the agent enters his world (1995, 182)." On the one hand, the individual has to be able to 'measure' possible actions by a certain grasp of the world. It does not matter what the metaphysics of the world ultimately is: whether it is matter held in energy flux, imaginary, or whatever -what is important is that there is an approach to the knowing process that is 'objective'.

However, objectivity is not a state of the world, it is an orientation to the acquisition of information. Berofsky defines it in the following manner: "Objectivity, as I would characterize it, is in part an epistemic condition, distinguished by the degree to which the acquisition of information, particularly in perception, is independent of subjective principles or nonuniversal psychological defects. That is involved in seeing things 'as they really are' (or at least as a normal, competent, impartial spectator would), seeing facets of things whether or not they would conflict with principles, and not being limited by flaws of a physiological character. In this regard, objectivity is reminiscent of procedural independence; it matters not how the perceptual powers of an agent came about; it is rather their current reliability which confers objectivity upon them (1995, 185)."

According to Berofsky, there are two major components of 'objectivity' in this sense: (1) an awareness of and respect for perceptual norms, and (2) the ability and propensity to re-evaluate views, beliefs, and positions based upon evidence (1995, 187-8). While an awareness of perceptual norms is essential, it is not

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essential that the individual actually conform to them in order to be autonomous. For example. if Picasso saw a way of stretching the perceptual norm by confronting the viewer with a new way of seeing objectivity. then he understands perceptual norms but does not confine himself to them. But Berofsky means that the individual is not able to distinguish (as is the case in certain psychological disorders) the norm. If one is unable to see the table. for example. except as a symbol of fear. then one is unable to be fully autonomous. Likewise, the ability to evaluate beliefs against compelling evidence is a requirement for being autonomous.[207] Of course. both of these requirements presuppose that the individual is flexible enough to "change one's behavior. views. and responses in light of new and relevant information (1995. 188)." Without this flexibility, "a person may have an excellent grasp of the world as it is. but be too set in his ways to change (1995. 188)."

Summary

This discussion has only been a sketch of some of the more important psychological components that are necessary for an individual to have the mental ability to act autonomously. It is a fairly commonsensical view: a necessary condition for personal autonomy is that a person must understand himself as a 'narrative unity' through time; identify with himself in terms of goals, needs and desires; he must possess 'minimal rationality'. i.e., have a minimal deductive ability, minimally coherent belief set. minimal heuristic ability, and meet a minimal memory condition; he must have a rational will. that is, be able to direct his will for things of perceived value, overcoming desires that may interfere with attaining this value; he must have a minimal amount of self-control and emotional intelligence;

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[207] I will return to this point in Chapter 12, arguing that 'doxastic responsibility and epistemic virtue' are the cognitive components absolutely necessary for personal autonomy.

and, finally, he must be able to apply objective standards (i.e., have a willingness to consider and rely upon evidence) to his thinking and beliefs.

The picture of the potentially autonomous agent is one of a human being with some very basic talents. However, it is important to remember that these are just abilities and, in themselves, do not constitute personal autonomy. As was mentioned earlier, having these things is not enough, they must be used. Further, they must be used in a certain way, i.e., self-direction and within an autonomy supporting environment.

Having these abilities presupposes certain cognitive structures and that everything that motivates us is something that we can (1) recognize and (2) control. However, there are two basic psychological theories that take issue with this claim about human cognition. First, Freud's theory of the unconscious paints a completely different picture: one of an individual consciousness in constant struggle with the unconscious mind which redirects our desires through a process of repression, thus clouding the array of mental options that seem reasonable to our conscious mind. Second, Skinner's theory of 'operant behavior' is a form of conditioned behavior, which shows that we may be acting upon the basis of external conditioning in a very uncognitive manner.

Unconscious Motivation

While traditional 'philosophical' psychology has, to a great extent, followed Aristotle in seeing the various 'functions' of the mind, such as reason, motion, and desire, and concentrated on how these functions operate, Freud postulated the existence of a part of the mind that is not present to consciousness and it cannot be simply observed as one function among others. This part of the mind is the unconscious.

According to Freud's view. human motivation and behavior are not completely things that we do because we are rational. And rather than taking all of the things that are not rational and placing them into lesser categories. Freud argued that there are certain things that we do not see accurately. He says. "Psychoanalysis has taught us that the essence of the process of repression lies. not in abrogating or annihilating the ideational presentation of an instinct. but in withholding it from becoming conscious. We then say of the idea that it is in a state of *unconsciousness*. of being not apprehended by the conscious mind. and we can produce convincing proofs to show that unconsciously it can also produce effects. even of a kind that finally penetrate to consciousness."[208]

Freud loudly proclaims the existence of the unconscious. arguing that even in healthy individuals. mental acts rely upon other mental acts which are not present to consciousness. He cites examples such as parapraxes (slips of the tongue. misplacing objects. etc.). dreams. and. in the case of ·sick· individuals. obsession (1915, 428).

But there are many different senses of what it means to be an unconscious mental phenomenon. There are things that are latent. just outside of being present in consciousness and those, more deeply seated. that are the products of what Freud called 'repression'. It is the concept of repression that provides the key to Freud's thought. But, in order to understand it fully, one must first understand Freud's basic structure of the mind.

According to Freud, a mental acts goes through two phases: (1) it is unconscious, and (2) it moves into consciousness. However. he postulates an

[208] Freud, Sigmund. "The Unconscious," in Great Books of the Western World, Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler, eds. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1952. P. 428.

intermediate phase, 'pre-conscious' as the nexus between the conscious and unconscious mind. Therefore a mental act first arises in preconsciousness, from which it either goes on the conscious mind or is 'repressed' and is made a part of the unconsciousness. When the mental act goes to the conscious mind, Freud only thinks that it is necessary that it <u>can become</u>, or, is "capable of entering consciousness (1915, 431)."

It is only ideas that can reside within consciousness and unconsciousness. But, he argues, we often refer to unconscious instincts, emotions, and feelings. In response to this problem, Freud writes: "An instinct can never be an object of consciousness —only the idea that represents the instinct. Even in the unconscious, moreover, it can only be represented by the idea. If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it (1915, 432)." Therefore, speaking about these things is "misconstrued". The instinct is converted to an unconscious idea by the process of 'repression', whereby it is connected to another idea and, if it surfaces to consciousness, is thus interpreted as the other idea.

Repression is a mechanism that inhibits certain ideas from entering into consciousness. It is possible, in fact, according to Freud natural, for an individual to have repressed instinctual impulses. This is because the preconscious evaluation of the idea finds that it is something that would not be conducive to conscious life in its bare form, so the instinctual desire to kill the father and mate with the mother (Freud's 'Oedipal complex') might be repressed. As repressed, the idea might be associated with succeeding in life (especially if one's father, like Freud's, was not

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Reprinted from Freud, <u>Collected Papers</u>, IV, London: The Hogarth Press, 1915. Freud loudly proclaims that the notion of the unconscious mind is indisputable, since he has vast empirical proof.

particularly successful). As repressed in the unconscious, this idea becomes motivational for conscious life. This is the basic structure of what Freud called 'unconscious motivation'.

There are several points that should be considered about this process. First, it is clear that Freud's view of consciousness is traditional, i.e., it is the internal perception of 'objects' in a clear and distinct manner. This representation of the object is, traditionally and for Freud, an idea. But Freud believed that the mental should not be identified with what is present to consciousness. In his view, we are not conscious of most of the contents of the mind, which remain in the unconscious only to accidentally and occasionally surface to the domain of consciousness.

Further, his idea of the unconscious mind is not just things that are unperceived. Rather, unconscious process are not just outside of consciousness, but are <u>prevented</u> from being perceived by the conscious mind. These process are unknown because the individual does not want them to be known; therefore, they can make themselves known only indirectly and in disguise. In <u>The Ego and the Id</u>, Freud remarks that "such ideas cannot become conscious because a certain force is opposed to them, otherwise they could become conscious and then one would see how little they differ from other elements which are admittedly mental."[209]

For the present study, this sketch of Freudian theory is sufficient to raise the question of whether motivations that are unthematized, say repressed instincts in the Freudian sense, may interfere with an individual's ability to be self-directing. The answer is not easy. Disregarding, for the moment, the corpus of arguments against this view of the mind, it is clear that if an individual acts from unknown motives

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[209] Freud, Sigmund (1927). <u>The Ego and the Id</u>. Translated by Joan Riviere. London: Hogarth Press, 1947., Pp. 11-12.

(repressed instincts, for example), that there is no way that these actions can be seen as autonomous. Autonomy presupposes that the mind can grasp genuine goals, desires, and feelings. If they are not genuine (in the sense that we understand 'why' we are doing them), then we are not autonomous.

But, on the other hand, Freud would not contend that in a person who was in good mental health is solely motivated by repression from the unconscious. Perhaps only a certain part of the individual's mental health is affected enough that there might be interference with autonomy. Let's say in dealings with parents. If this is the case, then an individual may, if other conditions attach, be able to be mostly autonomous, except when dealing with her parents.

Freud saw psychoanalysis as a way of bringing these unconscious repressed ideas into light. Accordingly, an individual would undergo therapy and become healthy-minded. Therapy is the solution, for Freud, to the problem of autonomy. If we are, in fact motivated by things beyond our control, and in ways that disguise our real desires, then we must find a way (psychoanalysis) that will allow us to get beyond these repressed urges. Only then can we act upon the basis of genuine desires.

Perhaps the most interesting philosophical critique of Freud comes from Wittgenstein. His first issue deals with what has been called the 'private language argument'. In postulating the unconscious, Freud argued that having both a conscious and unconscious mind was like having two minds. And we could see the 'other mind' in our self much as we would infer the mental acts of another person. Wittgenstein thought that this use of language was confusing. To begin with, there is no way that we can distinguish a statement like 'I am sick' from that of 'he is sick' on the basis of our having some kind of direct knowledge. There is no

privileged 'I' which gives me only my mental states, which would, in effect constitute a private language. Instead, language allows me to use the word "I" in certain ways. Wittgenstein challenges Freud's model of the mental as a privileged form of perception.

Second, Wittgenstein points out that if the model is inadequate, then the critical distinction that Freud makes between the descriptive and dynamic meanings as ways that Freud used 'unconscious' is also misleading. Therefore, Wittgenstein's criticism of Freud's reliance upon 'interior perceptions' falls under his overall position against a private language.

Another major problem with Freud's concept of the unconscious, according to Wittgenstein, is that he uses the same language to describe the events in the unconscious as he does in the conscious. Wittgenstein points out that this raises problems because the processes of the conscious mind, as described by Freud are distinct from those of the unconscious. If the processes are different, then they are not subject to the same grammar. Therefore, according to Wittgenstein, the unconscious, if it exists at all, cannot be described in terms that are fundamentally that of consciousness.

The linguistic aspect of Freud's theories of the unconscious was also taken up by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. For his part, Lacan claimed that he was developing Freudian ideas further, but there are many significant differences between how the two thinkers understood the human psyche.

Influenced greatly by both Freud and the Surrealists, Lacan and Freud shared several views: They both believed that the mind operates in images rather than logical propositions. Both held that the primary function of the ego is deception (Lacan calls the false judgments of the ego 'meconnaissance', or 'misknowing').

Further, there is an infinite number of ways of being self-deceptive (especially in self-judgment), so the study of psychology cannot be an exact science. The ego, in both theories, operates as a negotiator between unconscious desire and reality (this is performed, according to Lacan, by covering up life's necessary conflicts, managing them by creating a facade). And finally, human desires are mostly unconscious and masked over by the ego, which is deceptive; however, this does not mean that the ego is in charge of this process.

For Lacan, the study of semiotics provides the proper tools for the psychoanalyst. He thought that words do not have a stable reference; instead, the reference of words is established and reinforced by the linguistic community.[210] Because of this reliance upon semiotics, Lacan saw the 'subject' not as a thing, but as always connected to a signifier. Since we are represented by language (and, moreover, in language), Lacan held that "the signifier represents the subject." We cannot escape this representation; we cannot see ourselves without the mediation of a signifier. Thus, according to Lacan, we are all alienated by language.

Lacan's view of the unconscious is that it is structured like a language. It works through a play of signifiers. The mind is an inextricable conglomeration of three aspects: (1) the imaginary, (2) the symbolic, and (3) the 'real'. For Lacan, the 'real' is that which is impossible to say (this is because of the mediation of language). Repression occurs, therefore, in Lacan's view, because we express our desires symbolically as language, never getting to the level of reality. We are thus alienated from our desires. This is because the signifiers that we use to express desire are 'external', the property of others (the linguistic community). Our desires

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[210] I have already mentioned this feature of Lacan's thought in Chapter 8. Also, this reminds me of Wittgenstein's 'language game' as described in Chapter 5.

are connected to what other people desire through language. This process means that our 'real' desires are never what we actually mean.

Lacan's view is very different from Freud's. While Freud saw certain infantile desires as repressed because of preconscious judgment. Lacan saw them as repressed by our fact that we can only express ourselves medially through language. However. both Freud and Lacan held that there are major aspects of human life that are motivated by something beyond our direct control. Unconscious motivation. whether it is seen as Freudian repression or as Lacan's alienation of desire, presents a challenge to a theory of autonomy. Therefore. we must add a further 'minimal' requirement that the autonomous individual be in control of <u>most</u> of his desires and be clear that his desires for one thing are not just a transference process indicative of some form of psychosis.

<center>Skinner's 'Operant Conditioning: The Challenge of Behaviorism</center>

It will be useful to examine Skinner's views of conditioned behavior in the light of its effect upon the possibility of personal autonomy. This position. taken in the extreme. challenges the very possibility of self-direction. painting instead the bleak picture of human behavior as merely a complex mechanism of conditioned responses to stimuli. This form of determinism means that the individual lacks any independence whatsoever. It strictly rules out autonomy. Skinner did not accept this extreme form of determinism: rather, he held that we are, to a great extent. conditioned in our actions and our possibility for success is very much determined by the proper environmental conditions. This perspective will be examined in view of its potential effect upon the possibility of personal autonomy.

Skinner begins his analysis by stating that the classical definition of cause and effect might be misleading; instead of a rigid framework of understanding the

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world, he sees it as a 'functional relation' (1953, 23). His project, in attempting to make the study of psychology an empirical science, is to look at this functional relation as it apples to human behavior. He writes: "We are concerned, then, with the causes of human behavior. We want to know why men behave as they do. Any condition or event which can be shown to have an effect upon behavior must be taken into account. By discovering and analyzing these causes we can predict behavior: to the extent that we can manipulate them, we can control behavior [emphasis added] (1953, 23)."

Skinner believes that it is part of the 'pre-scientific' understanding of the world to attribute false causes to things. Likewise, he thinks that attributing the cause of human behavior to some "inner agent which lacks physical dimensions" is a form of early mysticism that was used in the past to describe human action and should be replaced with the science of studying behavior (1953, 29). Behavior, for its part, is observable, unlike the inner psychic self. Skinner writes: "The practice of looking inside the organism for an explanation of behavior has tended to obscure the variables which are immediately available for scientific analysis. These variables lie outside the organism, in its immediate environment and in its environmental history (1953, 31)." Through an understanding of these variables, "we undertake to predict and control the behavior of an individual organism (1953, 35)." Even though human behavior is highly complex, Skinner has faith that behavioral science can eventually arrive at a complete description (1953, 40).

All living things are distinguished from non-living things by the fact that they exhibit behavior, which, for Skinner, "is the primary characteristic of living things. We almost identify it with life itself. (1953, 45)." But there are many different levels and conditions that affect behavior.

Skinner begins his analysis of behavior by examining 'reflex actions'. According to his analysis, a reflex action is a combination of an external *stimulus* which produces a *response* on the part of the organism. The correlation of stimulus and response constitute the reflex action (1953, 47). Skinner calls this formation 'simple reflexes' and contends that, even though they form part of human behavior, "it is still true that if we were to assemble all the behavior which falls into the pattern of simple reflex, we should have only a very small fraction of the total behavior of the organism (1953, 49)."

What, then, constitutes the rest of human behavior? Skinner looks to the work of Pavlov in order to find the beginnings of an answer to this question. Pavlov discovered that a set of conditions could be 'programmed' or 'conditioned' to excite a certain response from an organism. His experiment with the feeding of dogs associated with ringing a bell, leading to the dog salivating when the bell was rung, led to the concept of conditioned behavior, whereby one stimulus is replaced by another which elicits the same response. Skinner writes: "the process of conditioning, as Pavlov reported in his book Conditioned Reflexes, is a process of *stimulus substitution*. A previously neutral stimulus acquires the power to elicit a response which was originally elicited by another stimulus. The change occurs when the neutral stimulus is followed or 'reinforced' by the effective stimulus 91953, 53)."

Conditioned responses will become the paradigm for Skinner and his theory of behavioral control. "Training the soldier consists in part of conditioning emotional responses. If pictures of the enemy, the enemy's flag, and so on are paired with stories or pictures of atrocities, a suitable aggressive reaction will probably occur at the sight of the enemy (1953, 57)." The process of controlling

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behavior, therefore, for Skinner, can be an effective manner of shaping individuals so that they behave in a certain way under certain conditions.

However, there are also the effects of the organism's behavior upon the organism itself. In other words, "the consequences of behavior may 'feed back' into the organism. When they do so, they may change the probability that the behavior which produced them will occur again. The English language contains many words, such as 'reward' and 'punishment', which refer to this effect . . . (1953, 59)." The type of 'reinforcements' perceived by the organism as feed back for certain behavior can be conducive or restrict that behavior in the future. For example, if every time I quote Husserl, I receive a shock, it will not be long before I cease quoting him. The reinforcement is negative, discouraging the behavior. Reinforcements can be used, therefore, to control human behavior, perhaps on the scale of entire civilizations. This is the process of 'operant conditioning'.

Skinner observes: "Operant conditioning shapes behavior as a sculptor shapes a lump of clay. Although at some point the sculptor seems to have produced an entirely novel object, we can always follow the process back to the original undifferentiated lump, and we can make the successive stages by which we return to this condition as small as we wish. At no point does anything emerge which is very different from what preceded it. The final product seems to have a special unity or integrity of design, but we cannot find a point at which this suddenly appears. In the same sense, an operant is not something which appears full grown in the behavior of the organism. It is the result of a continuous shaping process (1953, 91)." Thus, human life, it seems, according to Skinner, is the result of a process of being continuously shaped by external conditions, feed back, reinforcements, and operant

conditioning. Skinner catalogs many different kinds of reinforcement. showing that there is a gradient of how we are shaped by external conditioning.

This leads him to consider the problems associated with views of 'self control'. Is it possible, in Skinner's universe, for an individual to control herself? The problem arises from the picture of operant conditioning which has "left the organism itself in a peculiarly helpless position. Its behavior appears to be simply a 'repertoire' –a vocabulary of action, each item of which becomes more or less probable as the environment changes (1953. 228)." Skinner holds that seeing the behavioral root of all human action as a form of individual paralysis fails to appreciate the full dimension of behavioral complexity. He writes. "When a man controls himself. chooses a course of action. thinks out the solution to a problem. or strives toward an increase in self-knowledge. he is *behaving*. He controls himself precisely as he would control the behavior of anyone else –through the manipulation of variables of which behavior is a function. His behavior in so doing is the proper object of analysis, and <u>eventually it must be accounted for with variables lying outside the individual himself</u> [emphasis added] (1953. 228-9)." He adds: "A man may spend a great deal of time designing his own life –he may choose the circumstances in which he is to live with great care, and he may manipulate his daily environment on an extensive scale. Such activity appears to exemplify a high order of self-determination. But it is also behavior. and we account for it in terms of other variables in the environment and history of the individual. It is these variables which provide the ultimate control (1953, 240)."

Self-determination, therefore for Skinner, is a fiction when understood as an individual, over and above the shaping process of operant conditioning, making decisions from outside of the conditioned behavior model. This means that, for the

present study. Skinner is an opponent to the very possibility of personal autonomy.

Instead, he would argue, the illusion of autonomy appears as the result of a process of conditioned behavior that makes it appear as though we really had independent choice from the shaping process itself.

But behaviorism has many problems. First, it fails to explain the nature of meaning within human experience. While Skinner can reduce all human action to some form of analyzable behavior, he fails to grasp the fact that meaning, not behavior, is the essence of the human world. For example, according to the theory of operant conditioning, an individual's behavior can be shaped through the principle of pleasure and pain. But, let's use the example of torture. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault recounts a story of how torture was used in the year 1757 to elicit a confession from a 'wrongdoer' (1977, 3). The torture was extraordinarily gruesome and obviously painful. But it failed to elicit a confession. Straying from Foucault's example, let's say that the individual was committed to some higher meaning in life, to which, regardless of the kind or level of reinforcement, he would not waver.

Granted some elaborate story of behavior could be told about the reinforcements leading up to this overarching commitment, but the behaviorist story tends to get weaker and weaker as it stretches to accommodate deeper human meanings. It becomes less plausible. Therefore, I would hesitate to state the case as strongly as did Skinner.

On the other hand, it is clear that many features of human behavior can be, and in fact are, conditioned by external conditions. Some of these behaviors are inconsequential for a theory of autonomy; however, reactions are socially conditioned all of the time. Skinner's example of training a soldier shows that

'training' of any kind, is largely comprised of operant conditioning. However, this does not mean that we must be blindly conditioned or that we cannot choose another path. Behaviorism has limits, and it is these limits that are important for the individual in the practice of personal autonomy.

Conclusion: Positive Ability and Negative Freedom

In his influential essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty," Isaiah Berlin showed that there are two related yet distinct sides to the problem of liberty.[211] He argues that we have 'freedom to' (positive liberty) and 'freedom from' (negative liberty). It takes both of these senses of liberty in order to be free. In the context of the present discussion, and without any metaphysical presuppositions about human freedom, we can see the possession of requisite mental abilities –self identity, minimal rationality (and its components), rational will, self-control, emotional intelligence, objectivity, and open mindedness—as similar to 'positive liberty'. However, this analogy is merely illustrative, since the full-fleshed concept of positive liberty would also apply to the environmental aspect as well (which we are not focusing upon in this section). On the other hand, and continuing our limited analogy with Berlin's distinction, problems of unconscious motivation and operant conditioning are things that we must have less of in order to be autonomous.

This means that repressed desires and transference, unconscious motivation, fundamental alienation because of the semiotic structure of the mind (Lacan), and the shaping of human behavior through operant conditioning can all be seen as ways of stifling self-direction. This is because they are all, in a certain sense, out of our self-control. Overcoming them is, in a limited sense, akin to Berlin's 'negative

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[211] Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Four Essays on Liberty. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969. Pp. 118-172.

liberty'. We must be free from these hidden influences, so that we can direct ourselves.

But, there is some indication that we cannot be totally free from these hidden influences. This means that personal autonomy will be restricted by them to some extent. The key here is to maximize the positive abilities while minimizing those influences outside of our control. Of course, this is a process, like almost everything else that we have discussed, that admits of degree. Further, this gradient contains variables that are both from individual accomplishments and environmental conditions. This underscores the connection between the individual and the supportive (or restrictive) environment. The more the individual is shaped by operant conditioning, and the more by repressed desires, the less that person will have an ability to be autonomous. We must find ways to minimize these adverse conditions, while, at the same time, enhancing the conditions for an individual to exercise those abilities that enhance autonomy.

From the perspective of the individual, the accomplishment of this weighty task involves having a certain cognitive approach to knowledge and belief. It means that we are flexible in relying upon evidence and are willing to critically assess our beliefs. It is the nature of the practice of epistemic responsibility that we must now consider.

BELIEF, EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY, AND MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL FOR PERSONAL AUTONOMY

At the end of the last chapter. it was demonstrated that an individual must have and use certain mental abilities in order to be able to act autonomously. But. in the present chapter. I will argue that these conditions alone are insufficient for autonomy, that a notion of epistemic responsibility is necessary. Perhaps this will be clear from an example. Let's say that 'Jones' has all of the abilities that were described in Chapter 10. that is, that he understands himself as someone who exists through time, exhibits a notion of self-identity, although not well educated is minimally rational, can defer immediate desires for a long term gain. has his anger under control. is fairly open-minded, and strives to see things from more than a single perspective. At first blush. it might appear that 'Jones' is fully autonomous and can act according to his own direction. set goals. and work to achieve them. However. imagine that 'Jones' thinks that a spaceship exists, hidden behind the gas trail of an oncoming comet. that will transport him and his eager followers (who. for the present example, also have the minimum mental abilities) to another level of life if they commit suicide. His vision of this other world is everything that he has dreamed would be better and he has carefully instructed his followers about this ideal world to come. Acting upon the basis of this belief. 'Jones' leads a mass suicide. Of course, there was really no spaceship.

'Jones' and his followers acted upon the basis of an unfounded belief. one that, in this case, resulted from poor and misleading information coupled with inferior cognitive practice. We act upon the basis of our beliefs, which tend to shape our understanding of our self, needs, wants, and goals. I will argue, in this

chapter, that responsible cognitive practice is a necessary condition to maximize the level of personal autonomy. This view of cognitive practice has been called 'epistemic responsibility' by Lorraine Code and others. I will therefore examine epistemic responsibility as it relates to the practice of personal autonomy by first looking at the nature of belief.

While in everyday life we like to think that our choices are deliberate, that we are, at least to a great extent, the authors of our own existence, it is clear that we are never outside of some system of belief—about what is real and illusory, right and wrong, true and false, and viable versus nonviable paths for life itself. Simply, we are inserted from birth into a biographical situation laden with preconstituted meanings, a cultural reality that is sedimented into patterns of behavior that lie behind every one of our activities, that are blindly followed without the slightest reflection about their origins or their validity. Furthermore, the 'hyperreality' of the market place distorts the value of objects and excites desires that are often counterproductive to human need. Images of what we want as they form our interpretation of our self are key components in this unreflective lifestyle; they are also important in understanding the constraints limiting personal autonomy, which, as 'self-direction', operates within the boundaries of self-conception, and which, if distorted too much by cultural prejudices, market hype, and illusory ideal of the self, is greatly limited. To maximize personal autonomy requires critical reflection about and assessment of our beliefs.

In this chapter, therefore, I will discuss the various elements of how belief affects autonomy. As a point of departure, I will examine some of the more important historical arguments about the nature of belief which will lead to a discussion of the problem of how we sometimes come to hold unreasonable beliefs

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and whether we are able to transcend them. The social stock of information. along with its validity and trustworthiness, plays a critical role in the constitution of belief. And cultural biases, reflected in activities such as religion and law. shape the world for us much like a stream carries a fish down the mountain. We. like the fish. are caught up in our preshaped world. carried forward by its momentum. and given only a small range of options within this flow. I will examine these features of human experience and show how they both limit personal autonomy and often mislead us into wanting things that we do not need, living within molds that are not of our own creation. and giving us the illusion of choice where there is little. I will argue for the practice of critically assessing our beliefs (doxastic responsibility) and show that it is of central importance in maximizing personal autonomy. Finally I will argue that the concept of epistemic responsibility provides the individual and the community with a responsible way of evaluating and acting upon the basis of information. which is essential for the kind of deliberation necessary for personal autonomy.

The Nature of Belief: Voluntarism, Occurrence. Disposition, and 'Weak Voluntarism'

Throughout the history of ideas, the notion of belief has played a central role in epistemology. H.H. Price, in his monumental treatment of the subject, approached the study of belief by distinguishing between what he calls the 'traditional analysis' and the 'modern analysis'.[212] According to the 'traditional analysis', belief is a mental occurrence that, while not always introspected by the person believing, could always be. In contrast, Price's 'modern' way of understanding belief treats it as a disposition, not an occurrence. According to

Price. "(a)cquiring the belief. and losing it, are indeed occurrences. though we are not always able to assign precise dates to them. But the belief itself is not something which happens at a particular moment. but something which we have or possess throughout a period, long or short. And though it is liable to manifest itself by various sorts of occurrences. when and if suitable circumstances arise. none of these occurrences are themselves believings" (Belief. 20). If Price is correct. belief is not a simple mental act that can be analyzed by itself. isolated from the context in which it emerged. Rather, a belief often has uncertain origins. may not even manifest itself directly. and can never be understood apart from its context. It is this contextual background nature of belief that makes its study important in understanding how it comes to affect our choices.

There are two central questions that this distinction raises and that are important to understand in terms of how belief shapes our decision making process. First. is it possible to voluntarily believe 'that p'? And. second. if belief is not entirely voluntarily. is there any aspect of it that can be influenced by things that are voluntary? The way in which these questions are answered will disclose the underlying nature of belief as either a limiting or liberating condition for choice. If belief is entirely or even substantially beyond our control. it both shapes our deliberations and thus determines. to a large extent, what kinds of choices we will make. On the other hand, if belief can be honed. molded, critically examined. and changed, the range and quality of decisions about what constitutes the good life and how to live it will be enhanced. In order to answer these questions, it will be necessary to examine several conflicting theories of belief and decide whether doxastic responsibility is even a possibility.

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[212] Price, H.H. Belief, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., New York: Humanities Press, 1960. Pp., 19-20.

Cartesian Skepticism and Locke's 'Degrees of Assent'

In the Meditations, Descartes took a position regarding belief that became paradigmatic in the Western philosophical tradition. Descartes held a view of belief as something that is a voluntary, or at least subject to voluntary control by the rational self. By doubting the veracity of sense experience, of the external world, of the body of human knowledge, of the existence of God, Descartes arrived at a pinpoint of pure subjectivity –the cogito—from which we can never escape, and out of which comes the measure of truth and reality. Belief, understood in the Cartesian way, is totally voluntary and is an act of the mind.

On the other hand, John Locke, in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, argues, along a different line of reasoning from Descartes that belief is voluntary. It is a mental act that we can combine at will with any proposition. Rather than actually laying out an extensive argument for this feature of belief, Locke seems to see it as common sense to suppose that we have different strengths of belief. However, Locke appeals to demonstrable evidence in a way quite different from Descartes.

In Book IV, Chapter XVI, Locke begin be stating that "our assent ought to be regulated by the grounds of probability." And, since probability may be strong or weak, he correlates various corresponding levels of assent. Initially, Locke presents the view that 'degrees of assent' range from "full confidence and assurance, quite down to conjecture, doubt, and distrust."[213]

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[213] Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Book IV, Ch. 15 ('Of Probability').

His claim is the individual should consider the probability of a state of affairs and then either reject or accept (or place judgment somewhere between) it. Likewise, this process should be followed before giving assent (i.e., believing) a proposition. This means that, for Locke, belief is something that we can evaluate and re-evaluate according to reason (Book IV, ch. 15, Section 5.). In formulating his "Ethics of Belief," Locke articulated two distinct yet interrelated claims (1) that assent admits of degrees, and (2) that the degree of assent should be proportionate to the strength of the evidence. Belief (or assent) for Locke, while voluntary, is not immune from the burdens of evidence.

Hume's View of Belief

In A Treatise of Human Nature, Hume examines the problem of belief from a very specific point of view.[214] According to H. H. Price, "If we are to be fair to Hume's theory of belief and learn all he has to teach us, there are three preliminary points we must bear in mind. The first is the context (so to speak) of the theory, the part which his analysis of belief plays in the whole argument of Part iii of Book I of the Treatise . . . The second point . . . is the attention he pays to the phenomenology of belief itself, and not just to the relation between belief and knowledge . . . [and] The third point . . . is a terminological one . . . we must not be misled by his use of . . . the terminology of ideas and impressions" (1969, 158-9). However, Price also points out, Hume is not only "the most celebrated exponent of the traditional Occurrence Analysis of belief (1969, 157)," but he is also the first to provide a 'prototype' of the modern dispositional analysis.

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[214] Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978 (first edition 1888, Hume's original edition 1740). Hereafter, I will abbreviate notes referring to this work as SB (Selby-Bigge, 2nd edition).

First. for Hume there are two things that are contained in the mind: impressions and ideas. And while ideas are mere copies of sensory impressions. they may be arranged through the process of association. With this as background. Hume begins his analysis of belief by distinguishing it from having an idea of an object. He writes: "The idea of an object is an essential part of the belief of it. but not the whole. We conceive many things. which we do not believe (SB. 94)." Further. he adds: "I likewise maintain that the belief of the existence [of an object] joins no new ideas to those, which compose the idea of the object (SB. 94)." This sentence contains the germ of Hume's view that belief is not a separate mental act. since. if it were. there would be a new idea created by it. A belief. according to Hume. "does nothing but vary the manner. in which we conceive any object. it can only bestow on our ideas an additional force and vivacity (SB. 96)."

Thus belief. for Hume, is "a lively idea related to a present impression (SB. 98)." He holds that it has something to do with the way in which an idea first appears to us. so that a more `lively` idea carries with it a greater degree of believability than one that is less 'lively'. This 'liveliness'. according to Hume. is a disposition of the mind which is associated with the degree of excitation present in the idea (SB. 98). A new disposition may emerge. however. with the appearance of a new idea of greater or lesser vivacity.

As an example of this phenomenon. Hume cites the rituals performed by the Roman Catholics; he writes: "The ceremonies of the *Roman Catholic* religion may be consider'd as experiments of the same nature. The devotees of that strange superstition usually plead in excuse of the mummeries, with which they are upbraided, that they feel the good effect of those external motions, and postures, and actions, in enlivening their devotion, and quickening their fervour, which otherwise

wou'd decay away, if directed entirely to distant and immaterial objects (SB, 99-100)." Consequently, the closer an idea is to a sensible object, the greater is its vivacity and, hence, the degree of belief that we experience.

It is important to note that Hume does not apply this standard to *a priori* propositions such as those of mathematics. These things are strictly a matter of either understanding them or not. On the other hand, his theory of belief is addressed to empirical propositions. And of the empirical propositions, some are self-evident and do not really tell us much about belief. An example might be, 'the sky looks blue to me right now'.

What Hume is concerned with is belief about a matter of fact. As opposed to an 'imagined object', actual perceptions are stronger, and thus guide our actions more directly. Hume writes: "[belief is] that act of mind which renders realities more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in the thought, and gives them a superior influence on the passions and imagination . . . [and further] makes them appear of greater importance; infixes them in the mind; and renders them the governing principles of all our actions (SB, 629)."

What Hume has done is argue that the difference between belief and what he calls 'incredulity' lies not in the ideas that are conceived, but in the manner of conceiving. Ideas that generate stronger beliefs, Hume contends, are related to a present impression. Likewise, those which do not carry as much force are more distant from a present impression. When impressions have a history of being presented in constant conjunction, we tend to 'associate' them (and sometimes ascribe a causal relationship), so this association tends to lead to the belief that one impression leads to the other.

It is unreasonable, then, according to Hume, for a person to believe that certain impressions are associated when, as a matter of fact, they are not so associated. Therefore, a general sketch of Hume's position regarding belief might be as follows: (1) belief (as opposed to non-belief) is a matter of the force, vivacity, or liveliness of the idea; (2) this amounts to a difference in the way that the idea is conceived, not an additional idea; (3) greater liveliness is associated with a present impression, and (4) stronger associations between an idea and an impression arise from a history of past experiences of their constant conjunction.

Hume's theory of belief sets the stage for more discussion of belief as a disposition. However, its weakest aspect, according to H. H. Price is that it does not address general beliefs. He writes: "it is very odd that Hume's theory of belief will not apply to inductive generalizations, because he was so particularly interested in induction . . . [Hume's theory] will not apply to *general* beliefs about matters of fact, but only to beliefs about particular matters of fact. This is because he insists that an idea which we believe must be related to or associated with a present impression (1969, 180)." The value, in Price's view, is that Hume moved from the ideas of Descartes and Locke that belief was an act of the mind to a position that is closer, albeit a prototype, to the more contemporary 'dispositional analysis' of belief.

The Dispositional Theory of Belief

While Hume may have had a prototype of the dispositional analysis of belief, his theory should more correctly be characterized as the occurrence theory of belief. But the occurrence theory has been criticized extensively. As Price writes: "It is absurd to ask what kind of a mental occurrence believing, what kind of mental act it is, because believing is not any kind of mental occurrence or act (1969, 243)."

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Instead. he argues. "when a man believes some proposition which he is now entertaining. there is not some special sort of act occurring in his mind over and above the event or act of entertaining. The additional factor. which makes the difference between bare or neutral entertaining and believing. *is something dispositional* [emphasis added] 1969. 243)." The matter of belief. in this view. is a disposition of the believer toward a subject.

The subject of belief may be something that endures or it may be short lived. We come to hold some beliefs that last for the rest of our lives. while. on the other hand. we may only hold the belief for a moment. as in the case of believing that a car is about to run through a stop sign and then it does not. Further. a belief may be held without being continually present to the mind. Price demonstrates: "For many years I have believed. on the authority of my teachers. that Rome was founded in 753 BC. But it certainly is not true that all through those years this proposition has been continuously present to my mind in a forceful or vivid manner. or that an act of assenting which has for its object this proposition has been going on in me all the time (1969. 244)."

Further. beliefs have a certain 'extensibility', i.e.. we tend to draw inferences from a belief and act upon the basis of those inferences and the belief (1969. 290). Belief is an integral part of the way that we live, and it's extent is felt throughout our existence. This leads Price to formulate a workable version of the dispositional theory of belief: "It should now be clear that if '*A* believes that *p*' is a dispositional statement about *A*, the disposition we attribute to him is a multiform disposition, which is manifested or actualized in many different ways: not only in his actions . . . and his inactions, but also in emotional states such as hope and fear; in feelings of doubt, surprise and confidence; and finally in his inferences, both those in which a

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belief just 'spreads itself' from a proposition to some of its consequences (certain or probable). and those in which the inference is a self-conscious and self-critical intellectual operation (1969. 294)."

Components of Belief

From this analysis it is clear that there are many different components of belief. H.H. Price has described the plethora of issues surrounding the philosophical implications of a theory of belief.[215] Belief admits of degrees from weak to strong: although related to knowledge. belief is distinct from it; belief occurs from different 'orders'. i.e.. we have beliefs about the veracity of sense experience. propositional claims. the nature of the world. and our concept of self; some beliefs are often passed on from one generation to the next. or simply from one person to another; belief frequently is associated with some form of evidence. but can occur without such support; as discussed by Hume in the Treatise. it has a dispositional character; beliefs can be divided between 'belief in' and 'belief that'. Furthermore. not only are there different kinds of belief about individual propositions. but we speak every day of holding more 'general' beliefs. i.e.. not a simple belief (about a single state of affairs), but beliefs that have to do with life. government. society. and other complex 'universal' categories. And Price has shown that a comprehensive description of belief is that it is not just a rational disposition; rather, it is an interlocking of reason, feelings, desires. and strong emotions. Belief. instead of being a simple act of the mind. or individualized disposition. involves the human being in a comprehensive way, especially in the areas of generalized beliefs and in the way that beliefs involve all aspects of our character.

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[215] Price, H.H. Belief, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., New York: Humanities Press, 1960. Although it is beyond the scope of the present work to present and argue a critical appraisal of Price's work, several relevant points should be made.

However, throughout all of Price's analyses there is no mention of how someone may come to hold what we consider an incorrect belief. By this is meant that we often talk about someone, for example Hitler, having the wrong belief. This leads to the problem of doxastic incontinence which has recently emerged as a point of much discussion in contemporary epistemology.

Doxastic Incontinence

We often say that a person holds the 'wrong' beliefs. For example, those who evince strong beliefs in apartheid, 'ethnic cleansing', or genocide are criticized for having beliefs that are untenable. But when we say that the beliefs are wrong we mean two different things: (1) we are saying, on the one hand, that the particular set of beliefs is not supported by evidence; and, (2) there is an implicit statement that the individual who holds these beliefs is both responsible for them and should alter his perspective. It is the second point that is of interest for the present study. If beliefs are not under our control, how can we hold an individual responsible for them? What does it mean to say that someone has an incorrect belief? Some thinkers would argue that only a voluntaristic theory of belief allows for holding someone responsible for them: they ask, 'if belief is not a mental act, then how can we be responsible for our beliefs'?

These questions concern the possibility of what Montmarquet has called 'doxastic incontinence'. He describes the contemporary epistemological position on this problem:

> Now most contemporary thinkers (and many
> noncontemporary ones) reject, or would reject,
> such notions of "doxastic responsibility."
> They would do so, . . . because they hold that
> this kind of doxastic responsibility entails an

objectionable notion of "doxastic voluntarism"
or "voluntary control" of belief.[216]

    This problem is taken up by John Heil in his essay, "Doxastic Incontinence."[217] He examines the role of the 'doxastic agent' from the perspective of whether it implies a return to Cartesian voluntarism. According to Heil's interpretation of the Cartesian model, the process of belief is the product of a complex of mental activity. First, the understanding presents a mental content (e.g., thought, idea, conception), which retains both an 'objective' and 'intrinsic' aspect. The 'objective' aspects of mental content are the representational properties. The 'intrinsic' properties range from vague to clear and distinct. However, it is the will, according to Heil's reading, that passes judgment upon the contents of the understanding. Describing the view of Descartes, he writes, "it is only when a particular mental content is in this way endorsed by the Will that it becomes a belief."[218] The properties of 'clear and distinct', for Descartes, formed the basis of justification but not of belief.

    Contemporary thinkers have moved away from the notion of 'clear and distinct' as the measure of epistemic value and have taken up other ideas of justification. In particular, the idea that an epistemic statement must have adequate justification in order to be true has replaced it. Heil argues, however, that even if we replace 'clear and distinct' with some other form of justification, that the idea of a believer as an actor, i.e., doxastic agent, is still viable and is not radically different from the views held by Descartes. Simply, a 'doxastic agent' is one who is

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[216] Montmarquet, James A. Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility. 1993. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc. P. x.
[217] Heil, John. "Doxastic Incontinence," in Mind (1984) Vol. XCIII, 56-70.
[218] Heil (1984), P. 57.

"responsible for the beliefs he harbours."[219] The responsibility for believing in a

certain way may be performed well or poorly: it can be mitigated.

Heil describes a distinction in the notion of a doxastic agent. First, there is a

tendency to hold believers responsible for their beliefs; on the other hand, there is

the question as to whether belief itself is voluntary. To illustrate the point, Heil

describes an example of wanting to escape a certain commitment (say, dinner party)

and thus doing things that would cause one to have a cold. When the person in fact

catches a cold, we cannot say that catching it was a thing that he did; rather, it is a

result of things that she has done –it is her fault. He likens this process to the

formation of a belief:

> Thus one may be deemed responsible on a
> give occasion for holding a belief one ought
> not to hold, not because one's adoption of the
> belief is voluntary, but because it resulted from
> carelessness, in attention, immoderate
> gullibility or failure to scrutinize evidence as
> carefully as one might have done . . . These
> and countless similar considerations serve to
> focus or, when the agent falls victim to them,
> to mitigate responsibility.[220]

This analysis suggests a way in which it might be correct to hold a person

responsible for their beliefs, without presupposing that believing itself is a voluntary

action.

Heil shifts his discussion to the relationship between a belief and its

evidential support. Ideally, evidence should both support and play a role in the

formation of a belief. So if a doxastic agent is faced with two incompatible

propositions, he should believe the proposition that has more evidentiary support.[221]

However, this raises the possibility (or likelihood) that a person could behave in

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[219] Ibid. P. 58.

such a manner as to hold a belief that flies in the face of evidence, a condition that we see all too often in the modern world.

However, Heil distinguishes between beliefs that are formed without adequate evidence (lack epistemic virtue) and beliefs that are completely contrary with the evidence (doxastic incontinence).[222] He writes: "What is crucial for doxastic incontinence . . .is not that an agent hold a belief that is in fact at odds with his better epistemic judgment (one that is, in fact, unwarranted for him), but that he hold a belief that he takes to be in this way unwarranted."[223] Several examples can be found within religion, philosophy, science, and everyday life. For instance, a mother who hears overwhelming evidence that her son is guilty of an atrocious murder and yet persists in believing his innocence.

Against this brief sketch of doxastic incontinence, Heil describes the beginnings of a workable theory of doxastic responsibility. This includes characterizing a virtuous orientation toward belief. He writes: "Roughly, a continent doxastic agent is one who accepts a proposition on the basis of evidence available to him only when there is no competing proposition that is, so far as he can tell, better warranted by that evidence."[224]

This , according to Heil, does not commit us to return to Cartesian voluntarism. The power to exert certain qualities of epistemic virtue into the process of coming to believe 'that p' is quite different from coming to believe 'that p' at will. While a person may not be able to merely choose what to believe, that person can, in fact, choose a responsible orientation toward epistemic justification.

[220] Ibid. P. 60.
[221] Ibid. P. 62.
[222] Ibid. Pp. 65-66.
[223] Ibid. P. 66.
[224] Ibid. P. 70.

'Weak Doxastic Voluntarism'

In <u>Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility</u>. James Montmarquet

examines the problem of doxastic voluntariness.[225] Against those who would argue

against voluntarism, he devises an analysis of various kinds of doxastic voluntarism,

arguing that "I will construct a notion of voluntariness that, I will allow, *is* required

for doxastic responsibility (1993. 79)." That is, Montmarquet plans on developing a

weak voluntarism (not Cartesian) that, he thinks, is foundational for an 'ethics of

belief'.

First, Montmarquet distinguishes between voluntary actions and belief. He

remarks: ". . . it seems that we are compelled to *fit* our beliefs to the world in a

way in which we are not compelled –in fact cannot—fit our actions to the world.

With equally good reasons to *say* 'heads' or 'tails' I can simply say one or the other.

But with equally good reason to believe that one will come up as the other, I cannot

simply choose what to believe. Rather, my beliefs are constrained to fit my

assessment of the evidence in a way in which my actions are not constrained to fit

my reasons for them (1993, 80)." He points out that belief, in this case, is

constrained by a single controlling value –truth; on the other hand, action, in this

example, is not controlled by a single value (in fact, there seems to be endless

possible controlling values for my particular action). Taking this distinction to

heart, Montmarquet says that "belief, . . . then, is involuntary insofar as it seems to

be controlled by a single value (1993, 81)."

Montmarquet continues in his discussion by showing that many times it is

the case that the reason that an action is involuntary is because it is based upon an

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[225] Montmarquet, James A. <u>Doxastic Responsibility and Epistemic Virtue</u>. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993.

involuntary belief. He uses the example of coercion to illustrate this point, citing the 'Manchurian Candidate' (an example of 'brain washing'). However, this is an extreme case of what Montmarquet thinks is a very common practice. He writes: ". . . our world is replete with other forms of doxastic control, using nonrational (or subrational) fears, hopes, and, in the most general of senses, associations to achieve its ends (1993, 81)." What he is trying to get at, in this discussion, is how there are similarities, and often causal relationships, between involuntary actions and involuntary beliefs. The point is that both are out of our control.

But Montmarquet argues for what he calls a 'weakly voluntary belief' (1993, 83). He does this by suggesting that certain beliefs can come to be held by virtue of a certain responsible position regarding knowing, that a person who has cognitive virtue has, so to speak, 'educated' beliefs. He describes this condition: "A belief is weakly voluntary to the extent that it is formed or held under circumstances (a) allowing for, but not dictating, its epistemically virtuous formation or retention: and that (b) had the subject not been epistemically virtuous, this belief would not have been held, or continued to be held, with the same degree of conviction (1993, 83)." But his sense of doxastic voluntarism does not imply that an individual can, at will, choose what to believe. That would be what Montmarquet calls 'strong doxastic voluntarism', which is akin to his reading of Descartes and which he thinks is not possible. He explains, "whereas voluntary action involves 'doing what one would like' (under the circumstances), weakly voluntary belief does not involve 'believing what one would like'. At best or at most it seems to involve believing what one ought from an epistemic standpoint [emphasis added](1993, 86)."

What Montmarquet envisions in his concept of 'weakly voluntary belief' is the ability that an individual has to 'shape' reasonable beliefs through living

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according to epistemic virtue. Because of this, he argues that there is a sense in which individuals may be held responsible for their beliefs. Belief, insofar as it can be the kind of belief that could potentially be considered weakly voluntary, is at the same time subject to normative evaluations of acceptability. Both the nature of being able to shape beliefs, and their normative evaluation, point to a notion of epistemic responsibilism.

Epistemic Responsibility

Epistemic responsibility involves a relationship between the individual and the way he evaluates information. In the modern world it is not possible for a single person to have all of the information necessary to function, which leads to the notion of the 'epistemic community'. Sosa explains, "In epistemology, there is reason to think that the most useful and illuminating notion of intellectual virtue will prove broader than our tradition would suggest and must give due weight not only to the subject and his intrinsic nature but also to his environment and to his epistemic community."[226] A careful examination of this line of argument will prove very useful for the present study.

Lorraine Code, in her interesting work Epistemic Responsibility, recounts Aristotle's preoccupation in the Nichomachean Ethics with intellectual virtue.[227] Aristotle cataloged wisdom, intelligence, and prudence as the main intellectual virtues. However, Code characterizes intellectual virtue as "possessing a fairly constant and dependable set of qualities and capacities, manifested in one's orientation toward the world, toward one's knowledge-seeking self, and toward other such selves as part of the world (1987, 52)." She also speaks of it as "a quality

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[226] Sosa, Ernest. He Raft and the Pyramid," in Moser, Paul K. editor, Empirical Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1986. P. 168.

bound to maximize one's surplus of truth and error [from Sosa] (56)," "a matter of orientation toward one's knowledge seeking self (57)," striving "to do justice to the *object* –to the *world* they want to know as well as possible (58)," and resisting "the temptation to live with partial explanations where fuller ones are attainable (59)." These characterizations show that the concept of intellectual life that Code calls 'epistemic responsibility' is an activity which requires vigilance.

Although this vigilance possibly could be practiced in isolation; it flourishes in the modern world with a corresponding epistemically-responsible community. This perspective is different from the long epistemological tradition that focused upon knowledge claims made by a single epistemic subject. She notes: "Such a view grants too little significance to human cognitive interdependence, to the fact that, in most of the more complex and interesting things one might claim to know, even within one's own field of expertise, one is dependent upon the cognitive authority of the other, better informed, and/or differently specialized knowers whose intellectual virtue clearly *matters* (1987, 60)."

Cognitive interdependence is critical for childhood development, but adults rely extensively upon the 'testimony' of others: friends, colleagues, news reporters, scholars, and specialists in all fields, to name just a few (1987, 65). This characteristic of coming to believe shows that practical epistemic matters are in constant flux, without an indubitable foundation, and often bordering on incoherence. A 'epistemically responsible' community will provide a nexus of more reliable information, while one that is less responsible will have the bulk of its

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[227] Code, Lorraine. Epistemic Virtue. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987.

information unreliable.[228] However, this does not mean that there is homogeneity among the various cognitive subjects within this community. Code writes: "Different cognitive capacities and epistemic circumstances create situations where experience is structured, and hence the world is known. quite differently from one cognitive agent to another (1987, 69)."

However. there is a continual interplay between individuals about epistemic matters. A great deal of cognitive life is determining what is credible and what is not, both within our self and others. And this credibility is influenced greatly by the "normative demands of realism (75)." This means that the individual's cognitive world is continually undergoing adjustments according to information received from others and how it measures up against our continual search for the truth.

The Cognitive Subject

For Code, unlike Frege and Popper. individual belief is a developmental process. Not only is childhood development critical. but adults are continually refining their beliefs, learning new things, reconsidering perspectives, and constantly adjusting their cognitive orientation. Code argues that when we are dealing with individuals and human finitude, the practice of responsible belief is a process.

For this reason. she is interested in the developmental psychology of Piaget. She believes that his model of knowledge as a process of cognitive structuring is more realistic than a static form, such as Kant's. She writes: ". . . a study of the nature and role of individual cognitive agents as selves and as members of knowing communities promises to offer a more adequate understanding of the conditions that

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[228] Code cautions against interpreting this as a groundwork for an 'ethics of belief', although Montmarquet might hold that such an ethics is not only possible but the logical outcome of a community founded upon epistemic virtue.

make knowledge possible than is achievable in attempts to formulate pure, formal principles of knowledge, as Kant does (1987, 100)." It is because we are human beings, structured in a certain way, that we are cognitive subjects caught up in a process of developing more adequate and comprehensively useful beliefs.

Perhaps Code is talking somewhat cross purposes from the more traditional epistemological theorists. While the controlling question for epistemology has been historically "what is knowledge?", Code seems to be focusing more upon the process of knowing. For this reason, her theory is more conducive to practical reasoning. But using this focus does not undermine the traditional efforts, it just more nearly reflects the phenomenology of belief.

Normative Realism

The limiting factor for the individual is, for Code, normative realism. By 'normative realism', Code means the underlying standard of the truth that should influence the formation of our beliefs. This means that while she sees knowledge as a process, continually undergoing modifications, the individual is constrained by the normative boundary of the search for the truth. Code's view of normative realism is bound up with the idea of reality, which is beyond human knowledge. She notes: "Reality per se . . . is not coextensive with human knowledge. Continuous scientific discovery alone justifies the presumption that reality vastly exceeds human understanding and mastery of it; each new discovery points to the possibility of many more (1987, 106)." So, when she talks about normative realism, Code is implying that we operate with generalized demands, that themselves admit of various interpretations. She does not see this normative influence as relativism, arguing, "there is no contradiction in claiming both that the world known to human

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beings is formed or created through the cooperation of active exploration, perception, thinking, and imagining and that knowledge is objective (1987, 107)."

For the individual, "Knowledge is always acquired from a certain perspective. This involvement results in a continuous, reciprocal structuring of both the knower and the known. In a genuine sense, I am not the same person I was before I learned not to fear the dark; and the dark is something different for me now that I no longer fear it. Analogous examples permeate human cognitive experience (1987, 112)." So, for Code, I change along with the changes in my belief.

Epistemic responsibility, therefore, means that we are subject to normative realism, but as Code has pointed out, we are always faced with an ever deepening awareness which is itself continually reformulated through discovery. However there are more and less reliable interpretations of the world. So an epistemically responsible individual will seek out those interpretations that are better, reconsidering with each new discovery. She states: "The important point, then, is that knowledge and understanding are modes of interpreting experience. Reality, in so far as it can be understood at all, can be understood and interpreted only by cognitive agents in actual or possible situations. As it is known, reality is knower-relative, then; but a relativism of this nature would by no means endorse just any mode of interpretation (1987, 135)." Following the guideline of normative realism means, therefore for Code, practicing and cultivating a responsible attitude toward the measuring of information against evidence (1987, 138).

The Epistemic Community

One of the things that Code has emphasized has been the interdependence of cognitive agents. Accordingly, we do not simply develop beliefs in a vacuum, but we are part of a community which promotes the 'division of intellectual labor'. It

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is impossible, or at least unrealistic, for an individual to possess all of the relevant information necessary to function in the complex modern world. By necessity, we must rely upon others for reliable information. For example, since I am not a research pharmacologist, I must rely upon others, who have information about drugs and how they work, to ensure the safety of my medications: since I am not an aeronautical engineer, I must rely upon another's expertise in designing airplanes that actually fly; and because I am not a hydrologist, I must trust information provided to me by an expert to ensure safe drinking water. In the modern world, human beings are inextricably bound up, in receiving, evaluating, and using information, with their epistemic community.

This position is compatible with the theories of the self recounted in Section Two above. As we have seen, thinkers such as Husserl, Schutz, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, as well as contemporaries such as Taylor, Rawls, Sandel, MacIntyre, Walzer, and others fully understand this point. In order to understand the individual, we must understand his context. And this necessary connection carries forward to the way in which we receive and use information in deliberations about everyday matters. Code states: "In my view, human beings are social creatures as much in knowledge seeking as in moral activity. Human beings are cognitively interdependent in a fundamental sense, and knowledge is, essentially, a *commonable commodity* (1987, 167)."

One of the most important things that happens within the epistemic community is that we learn from each other. Of course, children learn from their parents, teachers, and others, but adults continually learn from one another in a multitude of different and endlessly open manner. If the acquisition of information and beliefs is seen as a solitary enterprise, as some form of introspection, then it

fails to account for the fact that we are vital members of a cognitively interdependent community.

But in order to learn from others, and in order to act responsibly upon the basis of information supplied by others, we must have a certain degree of trust. Without trusting the pharmacist, I would hardly be disposed to take any medications. Likewise, each day we act upon the basis of information and expertise that we implicitly trust without any further evaluation. When we do, in fact, evaluate information, we rely upon the 'testimony' of others. 'Testimony', used in this sense, is an epistemological term of art that refers to a form of sharing information. Michael Welbourne observes: "We are linked with one another by a complex web of epistemic dependence-relations and we must all, at least dimly, sense that we are not separately self-sufficient in knowledge."[229] And Code responds: "This implicit presupposition of trust is assumed both in exchanges of knowledge within an epistemic community and, with complex qualifications, from one community to another (1987, 172)." Shared trust, seen in this light, is the cement that holds a cognitive community together.

Code sees this network of implicit trust as something akin to the social contract (178), where every member of the epistemic community has a vested interest in maintaining a certain level of trust and epistemic responsibility.[230] This forms the basis of what Code calls 'epistemological altruism'. If the members of a society reach the point that they cannot trust each other, Code observes, the society will crumble. She writes: "Truthfulness is to the institutions of language what integrity is to human institutions in general (182)."

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[229] Welbourne, Michael. "The Community of Knowledge," The Philosophical Quarterly, 31 (1981), p. 303.

In Reason, Truth and History, Hilary Putnam coined the phrase 'division of intellectual labor' as a description of a form of cognitive interdependence whereby we are necessarily required to rely upon the testimony of experts.[231] This is particularly true in the modern world, which is almost unendingly complex. Code recognizes this, saying "this age is one of dependence upon experts (227)." She adds: "The division of intellectual labor occurs across the entire cognitive spectrum, from creative literature at one extreme to scientific experimentation and discovery at the other (228)." In many ways, this necessary reliance has created institutions of information. The information supplied by individual experts through these institutions (such as the Food and Drug Administration) is held to reasonably reliable standards, leading to a reliable source of information for members of the epistemic community.

The institutionalization of information not only enables us to have a body of reliable expertise, but also has the potential for corruption and social control. Code warns us: "what is an enabling feature is also, potentially, a constraining feature. There is a potential tyranny involved in any human institution that can inhibit as much as it facilitates new routes to discovery (231)." Foucault is perhaps the most vociferous proponent of the view that institutions operate with a design toward social manipulation and controlling human life. His picture in such works as The Order of Things, Discipline and Punish, and Madness and Civilization is a bleak view of the human condition, one in which the individual is swept along on a tidal wave in a universe of discourse that delimits her ability to speak, act, and know. But Code, and others, disagree with this dark portrayal. Her answer lies along an

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[230] Of course, Code's use of the parallel between this shared trust and social contract is illustrative and she warns the reader not to take it too strictly (178).

axis of three interdependent yet distinct requirements: (1) the practice of individual

epistemic responsiblity, (2) an epistemically responsible community, and (3)

normative realism. These three features of an overall cognitive practice combine to

minimize the coercive and manipulative nature of the social institutions that control

the dissemination of information. She explains: "Clearly, experts (and hence

arbiters) in any field of enquiry have some view about how things are that, perhaps,

is fully articulated. A position of expertise cannot be achieved without such a view,

the popularity of positivism notwithstanding. The guiding, intellectual purpose of

responsible experts will be, in the end, to achieve as realistic an ontological stance

as possible. This goal does not exclude an openness to the possibility that one's

own position might need to be abandoned or modified in light of wholly unexpected

and, on the face of it, *unlikely* findings (232)."

But the real burden of ensuring the sanctity of the social institutions that

control the flow of 'official information' lies within individual cognitive practice.

By scrutiny and careful evaluation, individuals decide which experts to trust, which

institutions are responsible, and how to navigate the difficult terrain between

reliable information and illusion.

Summary: Epistemic Responsibility and Maximizing the Potential for Personal

Autonomy

This chapter has dealt extensively with the role of belief, cognitive practice,

and the epistemic community in shaping our understanding of our self and world. It

should be fairly clear that the ability to evaluate information responsibly bears

greatly upon how we live, what we choose, our ideology, and how we understand

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[231] Code cites Putnam on this point (227). See, Putnam, Hilary. Reason, Truth and History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. P. 108.

our self as fitting into the world. In light of the present study. these features of the cognitive landscape are important to consider in understanding how to maximize the potential for the practice of personal autonomy. If we are led astray by false beliefs. bad information. and poor cognitive practices. as we saw in the beginning example of 'Jones' and the spaceship, we cannot expect to have any genuine potential for self-direction. On the other hand. if we hold reasonable beliefs. get good information. and maintain responsible cognitive practice. we will greatly enhance our ability to actualize personal autonomy. This chapter has been an exploration into the nature of these elements. which can be summarized. as they fit into the picture of an individual capacity for autonomy, as follows.

First. our actions are shaped extensively by our beliefs. But the tradition of thinkers beginning with Hume has shown us that belief is some kind of 'disposition' and not a simple act that we can choose or not to do. I cannot choose to believe that the sky is really red and not blue. that the Titanic did not sink. that I am not dying of cancer when in fact I am. I may fool myself and ignore my belief or act contrary to what I believe (we have seen that there are a host of psychological examples of this kind of behavior); but. this does not alter the fact that I believe something or I do not.

But we have also seen that belief admits of degrees. I can believe something strongly, weakly, or an infinite number of degrees in between. It is also something that is not just a matter of a single aspect of my character, but involves emotions, desires, and thoughts. And I can have particular beliefs ('this is my glove') or general beliefs ('God exists'). I can 'believe in' and I can 'believe that'. In short, belief is something that is enmeshed within our very being, and, as a disposition, seems out of our control.

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However, as Montmarquet argues, there is a sense in which we tend to hold people 'responsible' for their beliefs. But if beliefs are not something that we can control, how can we be responsible for them? His solution is that there are three kinds of belief: (1) involuntary beliefs, (2) weakly voluntary beliefs, and (3) voluntary beliefs. While we cannot control involuntary beliefs, and while voluntary beliefs are not possible, he contends that what he calls 'weakly voluntary beliefs' are something that we can, to a certain extent, control. This is not because we 'will' to believe, but because we voluntarily set up the epistemic conditions for the belief. 'Doxastic responsibility', for Montmarquet, is achieved by following a proper cognitive practice, which he calls 'epistemic virtue'.

Lorraine Code calls this activity 'epistemic responsibility' and characterizes it as cognitive way of life. The guiding principles of epistemic responsibility are (1) the individual who is epistemically responsible and (2) normative realism. While an individual can practice epistemic responsibility in a social world that does not value reliable information, it is best performed along with others, in what Code calls the 'epistemic community'.

We are each responsible for practicing epistemic responsibility. We must critically examine each bit of information according to how it fits into our overall cognitive picture. As a child, we undergo a process of cognitive development, learning who and what we can trust. But this process should not cease. We must remain vigilant about evaluating information that we use to make decisions in life. However, it is optimal for us, as part of a cognitive community, to live in a world of shared information and 'division of intellectual labor'. A single individual, in the complex modern social world, cannot possess all the requisite information in order to function within that world. We have to trust certain others, and, especially in this

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modern world, institutions. Trust in others and in institutions can lead to blind allegiance if left unchecked. These institutions can become controlled by tyrants, who disseminate deceptive information that milks us of any personal choice whatsoever. For this reason we must employ our own cognitive skills, practice thinking critically, and hold information up against the continual search for the truth. These practices orchestrate into a life of epistemic responsibility, which, by its intrinsic nature, works best within the boundaries of both an epistemically responsible community and normative realism.

Personal autonomy, like epistemic responsibility, is a practice. It is not just something that we have by virtue of our mode of being, but it is something that we have as a potential. Actualizing this potential can occur along a gradient of more to less. While the ideal autonomous agent is unrealizable, it may be the case that an individual has virtually no autonomy. Part of the way to maximize personal autonomy lies in good deliberation. But good deliberation can only occur when we have good information and are not imprisoned by erroneous beliefs.

By practicing epistemic responsibility, creating the cognitive conditions whereby we tend to have responsible beliefs, holding our community sources of information to a high standard, and judging this practice against normative realism, we can have a more accurate picture of our self, our opportunities, and our goals. These practices are essential for the practice of personal autonomy. Maximized, they will correlatively maximize individual potential for self-direction.

CONCLUSION

EXPANDING THE HORIZONS OF THE SELF

CONCLUSION: EXPANDING THE HORIZONS OF THE SELF THROUGH MAXIMIZING PERSONAL AUTONOMY

> "So Oedipus came to Thebes where the city was in
> distress; not only was the king dead, but also the city
> was plagued by a monster sent by Hera, called
> Sphinx. This creature had the face of a woman, the
> body of a lion and a bird's wings. It had . . . learned
> a riddle from the Muses, which it asked the Thebians.
> Those who could not answer the riddle, it ate; and it
> was prophesied the Thebes would only be free of the
> Sphinx when the riddle was answered. The riddle
> was: "What is it that has one name that is four-footed,
> two-footed, and three-footed?" No Thebian had been
> able to find the answer, . . . [but] Oedipus
> succeeded. "Man," said he, "is the answer: for as an
> infant he goes upon four feet; in his prime upon two;
> and in old age he takes a stick as a third foot." And so
> the Sphinx threw itself off the Thebian acropolis.[232]

The answer to the riddle of the Sphinx, as given by Oedipus, is only

provisional, for it implies that we seek an understanding of what it is to be a human

being. But, in order to understand ourselves, we must not only ask what we are, but

why we are, where we are, what is the world, and how do we know. The history of

philosophy can be seen as an attempt to solve the riddle of the Sphinx, which, to this

day, remains as perplexing to us as to the ancient Thebians. But one thing is clear,

philosophical problems are very complex and intertwined with each other.

Likewise, this study, which began as an examination of the concept of personal

autonomy, has emerged as a complex merger of views of the self, world, meaning,

belief, knowledge, and virtue. Autonomy does not exist as a thing, "out there", but

it is a part of who and what we are, it is a feature of human life that sometimes

exists in a greater way than other times. And, as a feature of human life, an

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[232] Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon. Classical Mythology (second edition). New York: Longman, Inc. 1971. P. 292. This recounts the story as told by Apollodorus (3.53-54)

understanding of the nature of autonomy implies a broader understanding of the human condition. This work has attempted. in a preliminary way. to sketch the boundaries. the horizons of the self as they appear connected to the practice of autonomy.

I began this study by recounting perhaps the most influential version of 'autonomy' found in the history of ideas. Relying upon prototypes of the concept found in Aristotle and Aquinas (to name only two), Kant saw it as acting upon the basis of the moral law. It was a way of melding morality and freedom. phenomenal and noumenal. pure and practical reasoning. Living autonomously. as explained by Kant. was living in accordance with the categorical imperative: acting only upon those maxims that. at the same time. one could will to be a universal law of nature. But even during his lifetime, this view of autonomy came under close and harsh scrutiny. culminating in Hegel's assertion that it was an 'empty formalism'.

Subsequent argument about the role and nature of autonomy has led to a division within the contemporary philosophical landscape between two groups of thinkers: liberals and communitarians. On the one hand. thinkers who are generally grouped under the broad classification of 'liberal' have tended to use 'autonomy' in much the same way as did Kant, although usually less restrictive (i.e., not welding it to a priori reasoning). For most of these thinkers, autonomy has been the guiding principle of acting in accordance with a rational plan of life (although some have equated it with metaphysical freedom). It is seen as a fundamental human right. without which we are somehow less human, certainly unable to flourish as human. On the other hand, and following the criticisms leveled against Kant by Hegel, the broad group of thinkers called 'communitarians' have resisted this line of thought. They generally hold some version of the argument that Kantian autonomy, as well

as subsequent liberal renderings of it, relies essentially upon an incorrect and shallow view of the self. They see the project of 'disengaged rationality', beginning with Descartes, as 'wrong headed', and they uniformly call for a 'thicker', more fully developed, notion of the self which includes a constitutive relationship with the socio-cultural world, replete with a history of values and a richness of sedimented meaning that cannot be found, they contend, from a detached perspective. The guiding question which marks the division between the liberals and communitarians is over which perspective is a more accurate picture of the human condition. Their division on how this question should be answered has created a corresponding separation within the literature of contemporary social and political philosophy.

Although claimed by the liberal camp, Joseph Raz has set forth, in The Morality of Freedom, a view that represents an attempt to concede to the constitutive nature of the social world, while, at the same time, preserving the central place for autonomy. In this way, he is attempting to opt for the best of both worlds, straddling the fence between liberalism and communitarianism. He does this by first distinguishing between 'Kantian autonomy' and a less stringent view, which he calls 'personal autonomy' and which, as a pragmatic tool, looks at autonomy not only as an individual capacity, but also as a world which either supports or restricts its practice. Raz postulates the need for an 'autonomy supporting environment'. While an individual must have appropriate mental abilities, the supportive environment, as described by Raz, must present the individual with an adequate range of morally acceptable options. This means that it must not only value personal autonomy, but also remain tolerant, supportive, and

pluralistic. Personal autonomy, therefore, has shown itself as a relationship between the individual and the world.

Section Two explored variations of the connection between the self and the world. Following Charles Taylor's brilliant rendering and rejection of the tradition of seeing the self as 'disengaged rationality', it became necessary to examine other perspectives which saw the self as contained within, and in varying degrees constituted by, its world. I chose to present examples from differing schools of thought –Husserl, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein—in order to portray the problem as one that cuts across disciplines. All of these thinkers, in one way or another, have tried to describe the manner in which the self is constituted within a world and the pressures that the world exerts upon the individual. While Husserl showed the correlation between an intending subject and a normative domain of possible meaning-fulfillment (life-world), Heidegger argued that our mode of being-in-the-world contains a necessary pre-articulation of how we understand ourselves and the things within the world, and Wittgenstein used language as that which outlines our form of life.

Even Rawls, who has been seen as representing a pinnacle of liberal thought and criticized by Sandel and others for having an abstract view of the self, implicitly relies upon the constitutive nature of the social world (through his theory of moral development) in order to produce free, equal, and rational individuals that can pull the 'veil of ignorance' and take up the 'original position' from which to form the principles of justice as fairness. His own 'Kantian project' cannot eliminate 'heteronomous' influences.

It is these heteronomous influences that Taylor sees as important. He begins his argument in <u>Sources of the Self</u> by appealing to the fact, somewhat akin to

Heidegger and Wittgenstein, that we are connected pre-cognitively to a certain

orientation toward the world. Strong evaluations are evinced along three

'inescapable frameworks' corresponding to our view of our self, others, and the way

in which we are perceived by others. Taylor's argument, although compelling, does

not go far enough. What is important, however, is the view that the self is

constituted, to a great extent, by its environment. If we tend to interpret who we are

from certain social norms, then our perceptions of what we need and desire are also

formed by the social world. Our concept of self greatly affects our view of self-

direction, i.e., autonomy.

The tradition of semiotics may provide a clue to taking the way in which the

individual, situated within a world-context, uses the meanings present within that

context to interpret both itself and its goals. This process is essential for

understanding personal autonomy, since self-image is necessarily connected to what

we want to do in life, our self-direction. But it is important to trace the ways in

which semiotics has been used, starting with the linguistics of Saussure, and moving

into a form of linguistic cognitive configuration manifold for all meaning

whatsoever. This path is marked briefly to get to the perspective that reveals the

semiotic horizon as the horizon of all possible meanings for human beings. A brief

look at the dark world portrayed by Foucault, in which individuals are swept along

in 'universes of discourse' like seashells in a tidal wave, illustrates the extreme

interpretation of semiotics applied to the study of human life, but, for the present

purpose, Foucault represents an untenable extreme.

Jean Baudrillard and Marshal McLuhan have both researched the influence

of the social world, especially the modern media-filled and commodified world of

images, upon the constitution of the self. Baudrillard's history goes back to

Marxism, especially the Marxist theories of production. But he believes it is consumption, rather than production, that characterizes the modern landscape. In order to examine consumption, Baudrillard leaves Marxism and moves to semiotics, which he thinks is a more useful way of describing the problem. Accordingly, we are caught up in a world that is, in Baudrillard's view, wholly constituted as an almost infinite play of images. We see ourselves, moreover, in terms of the 'objects' of consumption. For example, a teenage girl *needs* the right kind of shoes (the ones that are 'in') in order to be 'cool' (accepted by her friends). Her social status hinges upon having certain objects, upon a certain mode of consumption. She therefore tends to interpret both herself and her needs in terms of the socially reinforced images. This process has been so engulfing, says Baudrillard, that we have lost all touch with reality, images no longer refer to any normative reality: we live in 'hyperreality'. The commodification of the world has grown exponentially through the new media: television, animation, cyber-space, to name only a few. We are products of this engulfing movement that reduces us to 'mass' society. We lose our identity, which can only be regained through the consumption of the right images, and we are told by advertisers what images will make us special, individual, and popular.

McLuhan, on the other hand, does not go as far as Baudrillard in painting a picture of doom. He sees the media as sensory extensions, but, because we are not able to just switch sensibility, we tend to go into a form of 'shock', which, he thinks, manifests itself as a play of 'cool' responses to 'hot' media. For example, McLuhan thinks that television, which is 'hot' has caused us to move back into a more aggressive tribalism, which is 'cool'.

Both McLuhan and Baudrillard see dangers with the modern identity's foundation upon images. McLuhan with the intense and rapid changes to the human system. Baudrillard with the loss of identity and its rediscovery through the superficial world of the market. If these two thinkers are right. and I believe that. to a certain extent. they are. then we must expand Raz's notion of the autonomy supporting environment to include some minimization of the negative impact of this assault on individual identity. If we are not able to see ourselves except through the lens of the market. interpret ourselves beyond what 'things' that we have. and use technology to extend our awareness in beneficial ways. then we are not capable of practicing anything but a commodified image of personal autonomy.

I think that a partial answer to the problem of how we can have personal autonomy in a world that is filled with misleading information lies in looking at psychological and epistemological aspects of the individual. From a psychological standpoint. a person must possess certain basic mental abilities to have any semblance of a potential for autonomy. These include. but are not limited to. a concept self-identity (including self as a narrative unity), minimal rationality (and its components), rational will. self-control. emotional intelligence. objectivity. and open-mindedness. These are the positive abilities that are necessary conditions for a person to have a 'capacity' for autonomy. But things like 'unconscious motivation' and 'operant conditioning' represent negative influences upon the individual ability to achieve autonomy. Ideally, the individual will have an optimum of positive ability and a minimum of negative influences within his psychological makeup.

But psychological makeup is only one aspect of individual ability that creates conditions for more autonomy. Knowledge and belief play a very important

role in deliberation and also represent a way that the individual mind plugs into a social world.

Descartes thought that belief was voluntary. Since it was a mental act, according to this view, one could simply choose what to believe and what not to believe. But Hume pioneered the critique of doxastic voluntarism, arguing that belief is more like a disposition than a separate mental event. The complete dispositional analysis of belief reveals a feature of human life that brings intellect, emotion, and appetite together in an orientation toward what is believed. We act upon our beliefs. This means that what we believe will greatly influence how we act, thus belief is inextricably connected to autonomy.

Montmarquet distinguished three degrees of freedom regarding belief: (1) involuntary beliefs, (2) weakly voluntary beliefs, and (3) voluntary beliefs. While he rules out voluntary beliefs, and argues that involuntary beliefs are inconsequential and usually about self-evident things, he thinks that weakly voluntary beliefs represent the bulk of our general beliefs about our self, others, and the world. By 'weakly voluntary belief', Montmarquet does not want to reintroduce belief as a mental act, but he contends that we create the epistemic conditions for a set of beliefs. The more responsible our epistemic practice, the more responsible are our beliefs. And, because we commonly hold people responsible for holding 'bad' beliefs, he argues for the practice of cognitive virtue and for maintaining vigilance and open-mindedness toward what we believe.

Epistemic responsibility is a complex notion that does not try to undercut the traditional project of epistemology. Rather, it is seen more as a style of cognitive life rather than an answer to the problems of the justification of knowledge. It presupposes, however, that the question of knowledge is yet to be fully answered.

Fundamentally, it is an orientation whereby the individual knower interfaces with the cognitive community in a way that maximizes the chances for acting upon the basis of sound judgment. In a way, it is an appeal to common sense.

Lorraine Code has outlined the landscape of epistemic responsibility. She shows it as related to childhood development and the maintaining of the practice of evaluating knowledge claims in terms of evidence. But we are not isolated cognitive subjects, we rely upon the veracity of information from experts, regulatory institutions, and from the media. Necessarily a part of the 'division of intellectual labor', we must know whom we can trust and which institutions are reliable in the information they provide. The cognitive world admits of many degrees of accurate information, so I trust some of the news, but not all of it; most of the pharmacology; my professors, for the most part; and I trust my own ability to seek the information that I need to deliberate about what I want and how to get it. My deliberations, if I am practicing epistemic responsibility, are constrained within the boundaries of 'normative realism', which means that I understand that some things are so just because that is the way that the world is structured.

I believe that the practice of doxastic and epistemic responsibility is a vital component of my ability to achieve personal autonomy. Combined with the responsible epistemic community, as a vital aspect of the autonomy-supporting environment, and with normative realism, I think that an individual, with the requisite mental abilities, can avoid the relativistic universe of Baudrillard, can avoid being pinned to Taylor's frameworks in any deterministic way, and can keep from slipping into cultural relativism. Although these features are a part of the human landscape, I think that we can retain control, not because we are 'rational agents', but because we practice a form of life that pays attention to knowledge

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claims, beliefs, and demands a social world in which values, interpretations, and possibilities reflect a commitment to the truth.

Personal autonomy is not just a thing in the world. It is not something that I can do by virtue of being a rational agent. It is not an individual achievement alone. It is a very complex notion, that operates on a continuum of minimal to optimal, with each particular variable in the equation having the same spectrum of potentiality. This means that there are infinite variations of how individual can be autonomous and what may constrain him. Autonomy is an orchestration within a dynamic universe which combines the self, with all of its possible variations; the world, in all its varying permutations; and the intersection between the self and the world, which can occur in an infinite number of ways. Autonomy is a relation between self and world.

This means that we need to revisit Raz's 'autonomy supporting environment' and flesh it out. First, let's take the example of a social world that does not support autonomy, thus presenting the minimal conditions. This world can be described as follows: There are no options, what you do depends upon what you are selected to do --you have no choice. There is no sharing of information. There is no historical continuity. There are no institutions that educate individuals as critical thinkers. There is only one view, which is rigidly enforced. All authority is centralized and this authority is absolute and irrevocable. Human rights do not exist and non-compliance with the rules is severely punished. Individuals are conditioned to behave in certain ways and define themselves in terms of how they are told to. You do not decide what you want, need, or desire; rather, these things are manufactured without your input and imposed upon you from an outside authority.

Although you do not have any input into your actions, you are held totally responsible for them.

In contrast, let's portray a world that maximizes personal autonomy. In this world, there is a vast array of viable and attractive options, and you can decide which path to follow, when to abandon it, and how to follow it. Cognitive life is rich, not only because the social institutions have provided the kinds of education that have developed you into a person who can think well, and think for yourself, but also because the social institutions and community of others practices epistemic virtue. Although you are not told what to believe, the setting is pluralistic and tolerant, so you can believe what you want; however, there is an open atmosphere of responsibility toward the truth that influences the cognitive setting of your beliefs. Human rights are respected and protected. You do what you want, so long as you do not harm others or the environment, and you do things to the degree and according to the way that you choose. There is a minimum of adverse social control and a maximum of individual possibility.

Although my interpretation of these illustrations may be somewhat provincial, leaning toward the latter over the former, it seems to me that there is an implicit ethical superiority of the autonomy supporting world. If Aristotle was right, and a human being's highest form of life is to flourish, then the greatest degree of flourishing can be achieved within the autonomy supporting environment. A life of personal autonomy is essential to flourishing as a human being. It is a vital part of what we need to be what is most human.

But this means that there is a desperate need for an ethics of responsibilism in the social world, especially in the state, the institutions of knowledge, the dissemination of information, and the community in general. We must be able to

trust what we hear. But we also bear the responsibility to critically evaluate the information we receive. It is a combination of a responsible community and responsible individuals that combine to form the utopia of autonomy.

However, these optimal conditions will never exist. The trick is to see the potential and use it as a tool to improve the actual. Personal autonomy is a good thing. The liberals are right in holding it as the centerpiece of their moral theories. But the communitarians are right too. the social world is constitutive of the body of shared information which we use to understand ourselves. Neither is right in isolation. We need to preserve the integrity of the individual and. at the same time, create a more open and richer world of meanings and opportunities. The ethics of responsibilism is committed to the truth. but it remains open to new interpretations of the world. new scientific discoveries. and new dimensions of humanity. It uses the media to inform and create vast new potentials for individual awareness and expression. It uses technology not to oppress and control. but to enhance individual capabilities. Through shared understandings, it fosters an attitude of mutual respect. trust, and openness toward the multitude of paths to be chosen by the individuals living within its horizons.

The horizons of the self are dynamic. They interface with a vital world. blossoming with meaning and endless in possibility. They are intertwined with other selves, who each share this world and together can make it a larger place for all. Personal autonomy is the expression of this openness. As such, it is the cornerstone value in the constitution of an ethics of society and of individual life. Taken in the extreme sense. maximizing both personal autonomy and the autonomy-supporting environment is the creation of broader horizons for the self.

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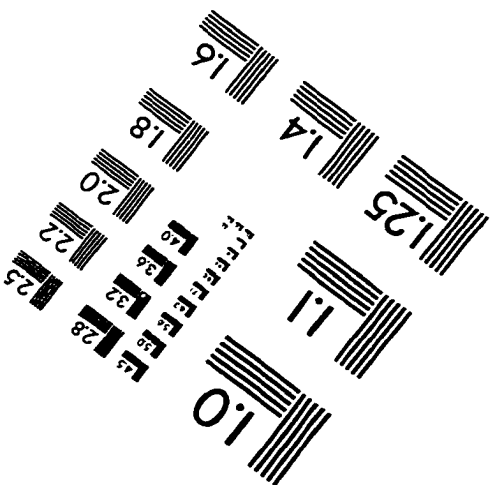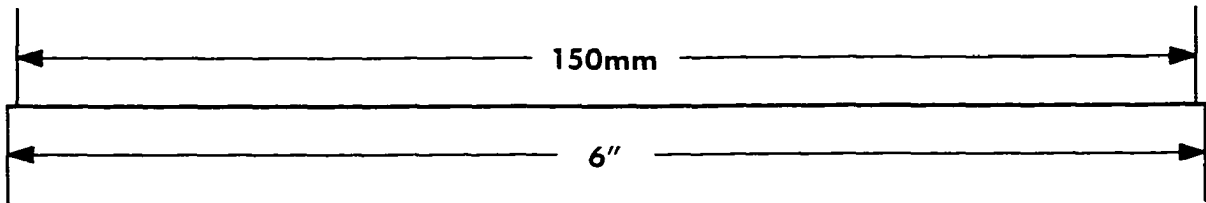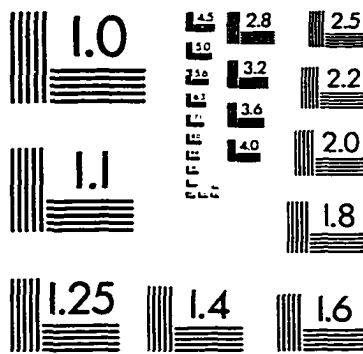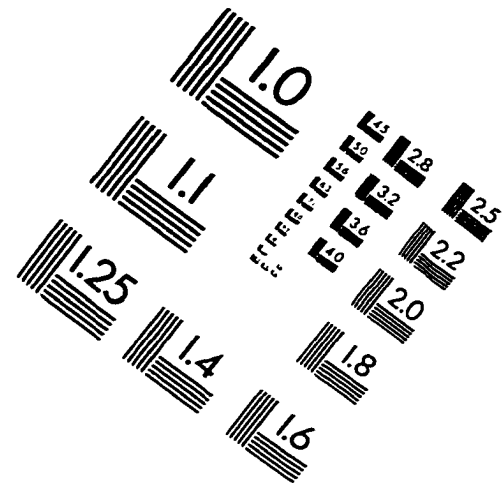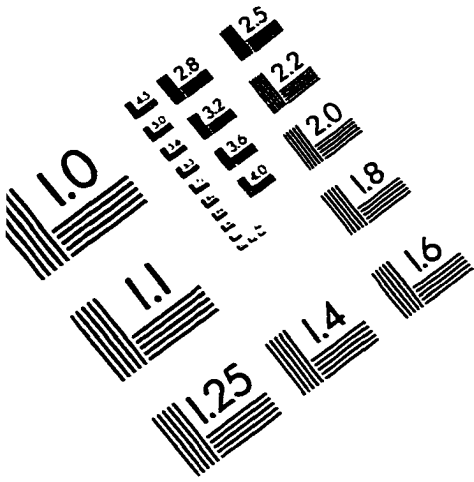
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