

Multidimensional Autonomy: The Socio-Political and Temporal Dimensions of Autonomy

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I. Introduction

Per sociologist Robert L. Barker, oppression is defined as “the social act of placing severe restrictions on an individual group, or institution.”¹ The extent of the impact that oppression can have on a person’s life can be measured on various axes. Although it can affect individuals on distinctive levels, two impactful aspects include the social-political sphere and the temporal element. The socio-political dimension is ruled by both “subtle and not so subtle forms of inequality and oppression” that are systemically driven and furthered by cultural contexts and governmental infrastructure.² The temporal dimensions, wherein the autonomy of the self is extended, are driven by any changes that occur across time. Both of these levels are of great importance to the discussion of autonomy, such that their effects ought to be analyzed individually and in tandem with one another.

Despite the impact that these levels have on autonomy, the subject itself remains broad and complex. Two general schools of thought within philosophical discourse surrounding autonomy are the internalist and externalist views. Put simply, the internalists determine autonomy by considering internal states of mind and how the external world causally impacts these mindsets, thereby impacting autonomy. In contrast, the externalists hold that while agent psychology is important, it does not represent the entire scope of impact, and so they consider external circumstances as well. While the current views illuminate some considerably important facets of what it means to be autonomous and how this autonomy is hindered or extended, they are not comprehensive. Aside from a brief mention of socio-political and temporal impacts on autonomy, externalist and internalist views do not comprehensively address these dimensions, thus rendering the existing views unable to properly understand impacts on autonomy.

This paper will attempt to discuss *how* the present frameworks understand oppressive constraints in terms of temporal limitations and socio-political implications, in order to determine to what extent these oppressive

¹ Barker, Robert L. *The Social Work Dictionary*. 5th ed. (Washington, DC: NASW Press, 2003), 307.

² Rebekah Johnston, “Personal Autonomy, Social Identity, and Oppressive Social Contexts,” *Hypatia* 32, no. 2 (2017): 312.

constraints impact autonomy. I will begin by briefly distinguishing externalist and internalist views on autonomy, focusing on those illustrated by Paul Benson, John Christman, and Marina Oshana. I will then outline the parameters of an example involving the experience of being a woman, and what the insinuations on individual autonomy are with regards to the aforementioned constraints. Responses to the example will be discussed from the perspective of the philosophers, before demonstrating that the interpretations are missing some crucial aspects that render them unable to properly consider within their scope the impact that the temporal and socio-political constraints have on autonomy.

II. The Views

In the vast expanse of philosophical discourse surrounding relational autonomy reside the internalist and externalist perspectives. The internalist views focus on how the external, social world impacts the internal life of agents, on whom a minimal “requirement of rationality” is imposed to ensure that their decisions maintain a certain level of independence free from coercion.^{3,4} These views can be further divided into subtypes, including the proceduralistic accounts, as well as the strongly and weakly substantivist accounts. The external views of autonomy are tied to internalist theories in that they are some combination of internal views and external circumstances. They are defined by the notion that “the conditions required for autonomy play a constitutive and causal role” wherein an agent’s psychological profile is important, but not sufficient.⁵

John Christman, in “The Historical Conception of Autonomy,” holds an internalist view that relies heavily on a person’s life history and its impact on their autonomy. By viewing the self as having “temporally extended elements,” Christman considers the “flow of events” that make up a person’s identity over time.⁶ This is part of his notion that “narrative coherence” is important for agents to be able to reference and utilize past experiences when making decisions in the present, so that these choices do not come about spontaneously.⁷ As such, the introspection that is required for these decisions is itself “temporally extended phenomena.”⁸ He views autonomy as being a form

³ Natalie Stoljar, “Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism,” *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2017): 28.

⁴ Natalie Stoljar, “Autonomy and the feminist intuition,” in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Mackenzie, Catriona and Natalie Stoljar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 103.

⁵ Natalie Stoljar, “Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism,” *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2017): 28.

⁶ John Philip Christman, “The Historical Conception of Autonomy,” in *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-Historical Selves*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 137.

⁷ *Ibid*, 138.

⁸ *Ibid*, 138.

of “self-government,” which is one’s ability to direct their own life from their “own perspective rather than be manipulated by others or forced into a particular path by surreptitious or irresistible forces.”⁹

Furthermore, he proposes that “authenticity or nonalienation” be considered “necessary” conditions for autonomy.¹⁰ By understanding whether an agent is authentically endorsing the decisions that they are not alienated from, Christman posits that a clearer picture of autonomy can be presented. According to Christman, alienation is psychological in nature and decidedly involves more than simply failing to identify with a trait; rather, it “involves feeling constrained by the trait and wanting decidedly to repudiate it.”^{11,12} On the other hand, authenticity involves an internal conception of traits or ideas as accepted extensions of the temporally extended self, rooted in “integrity or general faithfulness to one’s central values.”¹³ According to his proceduralistic account, a person can lack authenticity and still maintain autonomy – because although alienation (or lack thereof) is a determinant of authenticity, the two can be substantively distinguished as sub-conditions. This is to say that a person who lacks authenticity because they feel alienated from their decision can still have autonomy, but a diminished version of it. A person who is putting on a “charade” of authenticity, wherein there is a lack of integrity to their values, must also demonstrate that the ideals are “external” to their identity and “intolerable” to their temporally extended self-conception in order to lack autonomy.¹⁴ So, to be considered as autonomous, a person must acknowledge the ideals as being part of their practical personal identity and tolerated as part of their self-conception.

In Paul Benson’s “Authority and Voice in Autonomous Agency,” he outlines his weakly substantivist internalist view of self-authorization. This self-authorization posits that for agents to have genuine ownership over their actions, they must actively treat themselves as having authority, with reflexive attitudes that promote it. It is a more comprehensive and encompassing response to the “narrow” views of autonomy.¹⁵ The view that Benson endorses concerns a self-governance that is itself governed by conditions that necessitate agents to “take ownership”

⁹ Ibid, 134.

¹⁰ Natalie Stoljar, “Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism,” *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2017): 39.

¹¹ Ibid, 39.

¹² John Philip Christman, “The Historical Conception of Autonomy,” in *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-Historical Selves*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143.

¹³ Ibid, 159.

¹⁴ Ibid, 159.

¹⁵ Paul Benson, “Taking Ownership: Authority and Voice in Autonomous Agency,” in *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism: New Essays*, ed. John Christman and Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 102.

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of their motives and subsequent actions, by engaging the “active and reflexive features” of ownership.^{16,17} As such, this view considers the authority of autonomous agents based on their will, not whether their authorized motives are authentically theirs.

The authority that he argues for must be externally bestowed unto agents, who internally endorse it within themselves simultaneously. It is not enough to simply assign a “*de facto* control” over agential properties, by assuming that agents inherently have authority.¹⁸ It is crucial to consider that agential persons are limited by aspects such as social circumstances, bound by the “needs and interests” of those within their spheres, as well as the institutions that govern them.¹⁹ The relational levels of ownership can be implicit or explicit, requiring consideration of the external factors that impact them and their application.

For Benson, an important aspect of self-authorization is that agents have the authority to conduct themselves in certain ways *and* the authority to be held responsible for their autonomous actions. In this way, they can answer for what they do, regardless of their moral or legal awareness at the time. Benson holds that they are still held responsible even in times of “trivial action or authentic ambivalence,” where they do not hold unequivocal support for their actions.²⁰ Thus, if they are able to speak to their actions when faced with any criticisms, then they are considered autonomous agents with ownership.

In a deviation from the internalist positions held by Benson and Christman, Maria Oshana presents an externalist view of relational autonomy. On her account, people who are “subject to ‘domination’ or the possibility of arbitrary interference” throughout their lives “do not have ‘substantive’ independence” and cannot be considered as autonomous.²¹ Due to the oppressive domination to which they are subjugated, agents are affected by a form of “practical disability” that renders them unable to be in proper and complete control of their own lives.²² As such, these agents lack “substantive autonomy.”²³

¹⁶ Ibid, 102.

¹⁷ Ibid, 107.

¹⁸ Ibid, 107.

¹⁹ Ibid, 108.

²⁰ Ibid, 108.

²¹ Natalie Stoljar, “Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism,” *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2017): 31.

²² Marina Oshana, “Social-Relational Autonomy,” in *Personal Autonomy in Society*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 70.

²³ Ibid, 73.

Oshana also discusses the plethora of conditions and circumstances that can impact autonomy. There are “psychological, historical,” and “procedural competency” requirements that agents ought to meet in order to be considered autonomous.²⁴ However, Oshana argues that even if these conditions are met, an agent can still be considered as non-autonomous by virtue of their “social circumstances.”²⁵ These social criteria are external, objective, and neutral with regards to the psychological state of the agent and their inner workings. As such, for Oshana, autonomy is based on the “social-relational” aspects that govern a person’s life, per their “personal relations” and “social institutions.”²⁶ This is why the impact of oppression and domination can be severe enough to render a person as lacking autonomy, regardless of their individual internal states or whether they internalize the coercion.

III. The Case

Using the Retro Woman as an example, I will illustrate the extent to which the aforementioned oppressive temporal and socio-political constraints impact autonomy. Similarly to Oshana’s Taliban Woman example, where there is a “woman living under a Talibanic regime” who appears to lack autonomy even though she lives a life that is “consistent” with her personal values, this example describes a woman living under harsh patriarchal standards.²⁷ These are the retro standards of a “middle-class America” in a post-World War II idealized society centering around the suburban nuclear family with archetypical roles based in the “limiting standards of gender identity.”^{28,29} In this Cold-War era Western society lives a White Woman who has grown up being primed to be a ‘good housewife’ to a man. She is bound by the “traditional gender roles” of the time, which obligate her to prioritize her physical person, maintaining the latest fashion and beauty styles, and ensuring that she is prim and proper, a reflection of the prescribed image of femininity.³⁰ Furthermore, she is encumbered with maintaining her family and home, taking care of her children, and upholding the moral values. For the most part, she will likely not set out high aspirations for educational or professional pursuits. Her social status as a (White) woman and cultural education has informed

²⁴ Ibid, 50.

²⁵ Ibid, 49.

²⁶ Ibid, 59.

²⁷ Ibid, 60.

²⁸ Francesca Vavotici, “Being an Instance of the Norm”: Women, Surveillance and Guilt in Richard Yates’s *Revolutionary Road*,” *European journal of American studies* 15, no. 2 (2020): 1.

²⁹ Ibid, 2.

³⁰ Christin Stracke. “Postwar America and the Suburban Housewife in *Revolutionary Road* and *Mad Men*,” *Philippis-Universität Marburg* (2013): 12.

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her that a man will marry her and take care of her and her material needs.³¹ As such, she follows the social scripts to become this ideal suburban housewife, living out her life until she is molded just right for a man.

While she may have expected a poetic fairytale ending full of love and children, that is likely not the case. In continuing with the traditions of her time, she is overworked in her undervalued role as a housewife – not only must she maintain the illusion of a docile and perfect woman, she is to keep her home in a spotless state, raise her children, *and* keep her husband happy. For her efforts, she likely receives no payment or financial benefits in return as it is expected of her and taken for granted that women will comply with the standards that are set for them by society. It may be assumed that she ought to be content with the privilege and status afforded to her by relation to her husband, as well as any potential “material upgrade.”³² She may even be subjected to further harm in the form of physical and emotional abuse. Although she may not appear oppressed to those within her society who have grown accustomed to the status quo, even her own privilege as a White Woman is not enough to protect against the stifling patriarchal norms of her society. As such, her social status and the many restrictions that it comes with (of which she has been raised and educated to understand) make it so that she should *not* be considered as having full agency, or even having partial autonomy. The oppression of the (White) Retro Woman can contextualize the greater extent of autonomy diminishment that a racialized woman would experience in Cold-War era American society.

Should this woman find the opportunity and ability to decide to leave her society in favor of another place that would give her the freedom to pursue an education of her choice or a career that does not limit her based on her gender, then perhaps some things may change. Her ability to exist may be less restrained by the social scripts that are heavily enforced and monitored within her society; she may be able to become who she *really* is, uninhibited, and not who her society has forced her to become. However, it is likely that she will maintain that her life before, under the oppressive society, was a fully autonomous life and that the choices she made were authentically hers, regardless of influence. As such, even with the newly found liberties of this open society, the Retro Woman would hold onto the schemes of the oppressive society wherein she once lived.

Not only is the Retro Woman oppressed in the past by virtue of the socio-political implications imposed by her social status as a woman in a dominant, aggressively patriarchal society, but her oppression has implications over

³¹ Ibid, 19.

³² Ibid, 19.

time. Although she may change her setting and society, and in turn her situation and status, it may be the case that the reason the ideas from her previous social education persist within her is that the effects of the oppressive society remain in her mind. Even when the socio-political dimension of her autonomy is not as compromised as it once was, she maintains a shaky sense of autonomy – if any at all. Almost like a reflex, she continues to respond to social stimuli in the same way, even when the oppression is long gone.

IV. The Responses

The aforementioned example illustrates a woman who exists within the framework of an oppressive patriarchal society. Just like Oshana's Taliban Woman, the Retro Woman most likely feels as though "she has chosen her life-plan autonomously," almost taking for granted the profound impact that her social education and culture might have had on the development of these sentiments.³³ While this is not to disregard that everyone is in some shape or form the product of their social upbringing, it is not always the case that this upbringing leads people to accept their oppression and become complacent to this subjugation. It appears that she maintains some integrity between her decisions and core values even once she leaves the oppressive society – however the doubt is whether those were *her* own values to begin with.

Oshana presents the Taliban Woman, a woman who lived a life that seemed to be effectively autonomous, wherein she once worked as a physician.³⁴ As such, her decision to embark towards a life that will likely "disable self-awareness" and impair her autonomy is itself an autonomous decision.³⁵ Her choice to embrace a life path that she is cognizant may negatively impact her agency is further emphasized as being autonomous upon her affirmation that it is "consistent with her spiritual and social values," making it authentically her own.³⁶ However, Oshana holds that the Taliban Woman is *not* autonomous, because despite the fact that she seems to have made an autonomous choice to pursue a new life, her autonomy is limited and "systemically subject to the ultimate will of others" which means that she is no longer able to exercise autonomy in her present situation.³⁷ So, even though she does what wants, what she wants effectively impedes her autonomy.

³³ Marina Oshana, "Social-Relational Autonomy," in *Personal Autonomy in Society*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 61.

³⁴ Ibid, 60.

³⁵ Ibid, 60.

³⁶ Ibid, 60.

³⁷ Ibid, 61.

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Based on her analysis of the Taliban Woman, it can be assumed that Oshana would respond in the same way to the Retro Woman. Where in the “occurrent sense of the term,” while she is in the society, it may seem like she has some sense of autonomy, this is *not* the case.³⁸ All of her decisions are based on the wills and whims of others, who likely do not take her into consideration when constructing the schematic notion of what it means to be a woman in that society – a blueprint that she is to follow. If she does not, there are society-wide observed consequences that she may suffer due to her status and circumstance – ranging from social exile to abuse and torment. However, a key difference between the Retro Woman and the Taliban Woman is that the latter made the conscious choice to “renounce her rights,” even though she is in fact oppressed regardless of her internal view on the matter.³⁹ On the other hand, the Retro Woman was born into this society and raised under the tutelage of those who actively oppress her in order to become a complacent cog in their machine.

In this case, Oshana would likely maintain that the Retro Woman “has no practical authority over her situation” during her time in the oppressive society and therefore cannot make any decisions that are truly her own.⁴⁰ She will always be limited by the fence that her society has created for her, just as the Taliban Woman does not possess any true authority or control over her own will, since they are both manipulated and ordered by others around them – namely, men. It may be possible that she meets all of the conditions that impact the formation and evolution of autonomy, but per Oshana’s view, that does not necessarily mean that the Retro Woman has autonomy. In fact, the impact of her social-relational atmosphere renders her autonomy so lacking, that the effects of her oppression are long-lasting beyond her persistence in the society of their origin. Although Oshana may hold that the Retro Woman would have practical control over her decisions once she departs from her gilded cage of suburbia, the long-standing temporal constraints on her autonomy may persist, and impact her ability to exercise this control.

Christman, with his proceduralistic internalist view of autonomy, would consider the story of her life up until that point of great import. By referring to her narrative history, it is clear that the choices of the Retro Woman make sense along the trajectory of her life story and were not made on a whim without forethought. When making these decisions, she introspected and considered this history, as well as her social education. In order for her to have

³⁸ Ibid, 61.

³⁹ Ibid, 61.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 61.

properly engaged in the procedure prescribed by Christman, however, she ought to come to the awareness that her social influences were instrumentally oppressive. When considering this on its own, it is difficult to see her as oppressed. Her socially constructed identity and the cultural influences that created it have been with her from the start, and the narrative structure that she resides in does not contain any alarming deviation that would raise any red flags regarding her autonomy.

According to Christman, this is not the end of the story. The authenticity and nature of alienation must be considered when deciding on the status of one's autonomy. Here, either argument regarding her autonomy could be supported. If the Retro Woman exhibits a level of authenticity in her choices – where they align with the history she has developed within the context of her society – then it is only a matter of alienation. In this case, it is unlikely that the Retro Woman would feel alienated by her choice, because she may not feel the need to consider it constraining in any way. As such, from this perspective, Christman would consider her as autonomous. Yet, it is possible that despite having spent her entire life within that social sphere, she may not feel that the decisions she makes while participating in that society are authentically hers. Perhaps they are simply adaptable preferences that she has to make in order to survive given the oppression faced by someone of her social status. Regardless, she does not accept them as authentically her own. Due to both authenticity and alienation being necessary for autonomy, it would be difficult to consider her autonomous in this case according to Christman.

By analyzing the case of the Retro Woman from the perspective of Benson's self-authorization view, it is likely that she would be considered as lacking autonomy. Ralph Ellison writes of the *Invisible Man*, a Black man living in 1930s America who feels that his true self is infinitely unseen due to racial prejudices and stereotypes that impose certain roles and characters on him, rendering him categorically invisible.⁴¹ Just like the Invisible Man, the Retro Woman is placed against social scripts that confirm attitudes aligning with subjugation and complacency.⁴² This may foster a false sense of security within the Retro Woman, or an acute lack of confidence – as with the Invisible Man – which would erode any potential sense of autonomy that she may have had prior to understanding the machinations of her society. Even after leaving the oppressive context, she may continue to carry the inability to

⁴¹ Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage International, 1995.

⁴² Paul Benson. "Taking Ownership: Authority and Voice in Autonomous Agency," In *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism: New Essays*, ed. by John Christman and Joel Anderson, 101–26. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 111.

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consider herself as having authority or the ability to speak for her actions. As such, per Benson's view, she would be considered as lacking autonomy.

Thus, by considering the three perspectives offered by the aforementioned philosophers, the Retro Woman would be found to be lacking autonomy.

V. What is Missing?

Despite the range of responses provided to analyze the case of the Retro Woman, wherein she appears to lack autonomy in her own life even after changing her contexts, there still appears to be something neglected from the discourse. Each of the perspectives addressed by Christman, Benson and Oshana seem to consider an aspect of the mammoth that represents autonomy, but they only tackle one part at a time. This leaves much to be desired with regards to understanding the amalgamation of conditions associated with a bolstering sense of autonomy, as in reality, it is not one or the other but rather the combination of conditions which come together to impact it.

On Christman's proceduralist view, personal history and the temporal dimension of the self (and by extension autonomy) are given ample consideration. Although it does consider the "value commitments, cultural identifications, [and] religious connections" that agents have, it does so within the context of how they fit into the person's narrative.⁴³ While it may appear that the two are part and parcel, for one's history is shaped within the context of their culture, it misses the nuance of the impact of the socio-political on the individual. Despite Christman's "political liberalism," he does not consider how social status or constitutive constraints can impact one in the present – regardless of history or experience.⁴⁴ This dynamic aspect of practical identity is often neglected owing to its political nature, but it is important due to the stringent hold that it has on autonomy. Furthermore, his position hinges on agent's having a two-dimensional socio-political identity, wherein they are subject to only *one* kind of oppression at a time that they always internalize, before going through procedural motions of introspection. As such, his view, while important in its consideration of the temporal dimension, has an incomplete grasp on personal autonomy.

⁴³ John Philip Christman, "The Historical Conception of Autonomy," in *The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-Historical Selves*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 141.

⁴⁴ Natalie Stoljar, "Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism," *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2017): 40.

Benson's position falters in the same manner as Christman's. He places far too much emphasis on the agent's own authorization that they afford unto themselves. Although he does mention that the external expectations or perceptions of the agent and their ownership can impact the agent's ability to bestow this authorization on themselves, it is still an internal process. The caliber of social circumstances is not considered at the length it ought to be for such a position, and its temporal association is considered even less. While an interesting point, to allow the agent this authority, it still wavers between being too stringent and not stringent enough.

In tandem, internalist positions do not consider the possibility of agent's *not* internalizing their oppression. Regardless of whether or not they are impacted by the oppression, directly or otherwise, agent's do not always acknowledge their circumstances as burdened by oppressive factors, and thus do not always internalize them as part of their self-conception. While their autonomy can still be impacted even when the oppression is not internalized, it warrants its own discussion that the internalists do not consider. Most of the internalist views on autonomy simply operate on the conception that agents *have* internalized the things that hinder (or progress) their autonomy. It is possible that the temporal implications of a person's autonomy are much different when they do not internalize their oppression – perhaps their personal history is altered because they do not internalize their oppression, or because they interpret it differently *since* they do not internalize it. So, these scopes are extremely important for autonomy as they continue to push discourse towards understanding autonomy, but internalists do not succeed in this.

On the other hand, Oshana and the externalists like her provide much needed attention to the impact that social circumstances have on the development of individual autonomy. The point she makes regarding the history, psychology and competency requirements being important but not representative of the whole picture is vital to consideration of all the possible aspects that can affect agent's autonomy. It is also emblematic of the externalist nature to act as a combination of internal views and external circumstances. However, by honing her focus mostly on the social-relational components of an agent's life, such that these are the aspects that determine autonomy, Oshana seems to be committing the same offence she implies other views are committing. By illustrating that the previously mentioned conditions are *not* actually the most important part of personal autonomy since she simultaneously focuses on the external relational effects, Oshana seems to be undermining them just as much.

Furthermore, in doing so, she overestimates the impact that the external world has on autonomy – so much so, that she states that autonomy is *based* on these external aspects. This view neglects to consider the effect that the

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individual, their abilities and internal management has on autonomy. At the very least, this view minimizes these aspects to a startling degree. Not only does this allow people to receive more leeway when considering things like moral blameworthiness, it also does not consider that certain social relationships are superficial and perhaps poor indicators of autonomy due to biases, stereotype threats, and misconceptions about perceptions. Due to these factors, more consideration should be given to the psychological, historical and competency requirements in this externalist view.

By focusing on this external aspect, however, the externalists also necessarily neglect decision making. Decision-making is an internal process that requires introspection, as well as the use of previous experiences and knowledge (i.e. one's accumulated history). Since externalists favor the impact of outward circumstances on agential autonomy – despite giving some consideration to internal processes – then it is largely no longer up to the individual what the status or nature of their autonomy is, as it is solely defined by the scope of their social relations. Further to this, decision-making is heavily impacted by the constraints and conditions of the agent's external life, including their social ties and cultural identity. This does not mean that the agent's decisions will cease to have an impact on the development of their autonomy. Whether directly or indirectly, the decision-making process of agents is inextricably tied to autonomy, for the aforementioned reasons of bias and perception. In their choice to move past internal decision-making, externalists are leaving their view vulnerable to many criticisms regarding its ability to address autonomy, especially considering the embedded internal views within.

This demonstrates that a potential solution to all of these problems, both internalist and externalist, could be to meet in the middle of these views. By incorporating the consideration of personal history, self-authorization – as well as responsibility and ownership over actions – and both the social-relational aspect *and* the psychological, historical, and competency requirements offered by Oshana, a more comprehensive view can be constructed. The amalgamation of these factors ought to be considered as kinetic along the continuing temporal sequence of the self. As such, an amended view that takes into consideration multiple aspects that can have very real and practical impacts on autonomy ought to be given consideration over views that simply focus on one aspect while neglecting others of import.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper discussed the nuances of the internalist and externalist views of autonomy as provided by Christman, Benson, and Oshana, respectively. These views were applied to a hypothetical case illustrating oppression which focused on the socio-political and temporal dimensions of a woman's autonomy. By analyzing this case example through the lens of these theories, it was concluded that the woman was *not* autonomous, even after she left the context of her oppression. However, despite the analyses provided, these theories are imperfect and incomplete – through their narrow, single-tasked focus on one aspect at a time, they neglect to consider the entire scope of aspects that impact autonomy. As such, on their own, they appear unable to properly understand or explain how oppressive constraints can be thought of in terms of their temporal limitations and socio-political implications, to determine to what extent these constraints can impact autonomy.

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