



# Philosophy of Human Working Autonomy

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## 1. The Concept of Autonomy

I would like to develop more carefully and lucidly about the concept of autonomy. The central idea that underlies the concept of autonomy is indicated by the etymology of the term: autos (self) and nomos (rules of way). The term was first applied to the Greek city state. A city had *autonomia* when its citizens made their own laws, as opposed to being under the control of some conquering power. There is then a natural extension to persons as being autonomous when their decisions and actions are their own.

It is characteristic of persons which seem to be a distinctively human ability that they are able to reflect upon and adopt attitudes towards their desires, intentions, life plans. One may not desire to handle dirty business and also desire not to have it. One may be motivated by manager and also desires that he may be motivated his own. A person may identify the influences that motivate him, the view of himself as the kind of person who wishes to be moved in particular ways. He may also resent being motivated in certain ways and prefer to be the kind of person who has different values and preferences. I am defining autonomy as the capacity to reflect upon one's motivational structure and to make changes in that structure. Thus, autonomy is not simply a reflective capacity but it includes some ability to alter one's preferences and to make them effective in action. Indeed to make them effective partly because one has reflected upon them and adopted them as one's own.

Autonomy is a second order capacity to reflect critically upon one's first order preferences and desires. It is also the ability either to identify with these or to change them in the light of higher order preference and values. By exercising such a capacity, we give meaning and coherence to our lives, and take responsibility for the kind of person we are. Liberty, power, and privacy are not equivalent to autonomy but they may be necessary conditions for individuals to develop their own aims and interests and to make their values effective in the living of their lives.

It is an implication that follows from my view that there is no specific content to the decisions an autonomous person takes. Someone who wishes to be the kind of person he is independently of whatever the manager orders is as autonomous as the person who wants to evaluate those orders for himself. This view differs from the view where a person is dictated to do course of action as R.P. Wolff says, is dictated "the autonomous man may do what another tells him, but not because he has been told to do it ... By accepting as final the commands of the others he forfeits his autonomy." This conception of autonomy has consequence. It overrules some of the

most important functions of the government, such as, passing legislations to citizens. Because legislations cure the autonomy of citizens. It may be also further pointed out that such values as loyalty, objectivity, commitment, and love are inconsistent with being autonomous.

Although I do not believe there is direct logical link between acting autonomously and being critical and independent in judging and acting. It is plausible to suppose there are psychological connections existing as between the two. It is likely that those who practice critical reflection on their values will tend to be suspicious of the uncritical acceptance of authority, tradition, and custom.

It should not be thought that those who autonomously choose to follow the commands of others can thereby escape responsibility for their actions. A professional is responsible for being independent to customer. A professional autonomy affected when the customer is not in a position to realize the autonomy that should be respected in relation to professionals. If the Professional plan of action is undermined due to the interfered of the customer then the responsibility of the professional's action will be shifted to customers. Because they have to be interfered with the professional autonomy.

## 2. The Nature of Autonomy

The notion of autonomy plays a central role in current normative philosophical work. The idea of autonomy has emerged as a central notion in the area of applied moral philosophy. The elaboration of the concept of autonomy will be necessary in view of the various theoretical purposes that its services both ethics and applied ethics. The concept of Autonomy has assumed increasing importance in contemporary moral philosophy. Many philosophers such as John Rowls, Ronald Dworkin...etc, have analysed the concept to define and illuminate issues such as the characterization of principles of justice, the limits of free speech, and the nature of the liberal state. A central feature of the idea of autonomy is "The main idea of Kantian constructivism is to establish a connection between the first principles of justice and the concept of moral persons as free and equal. The requisite connection is provided by a procedure of construction in which rationally autonomous agents subject to reasonable constraints agree to public principles of justice".<sup>16</sup>

The Autonomous man may do what customer tells him, but not because he has been told to do it by accepting as the final commands of the customer. The latter will forfeit his autonomy. His promise to abide by the will of the majority creates an obligation, but it does so precisely by giving up one's autonomy. Respect for the autonomy of persons is one of the four main highways to the liberal organization. In short, it is not necessary for autonomy to be associated only with good things but it also suffers if it fails to ensure the best things that will come in future.

The basic commitment of professional's autonomy is to promote autonomy. Kant argued, moral autonomy is a combination of freedom and responsibility. It is a submission to laws that one has made for oneself. The autonomous professional, in so far as he is autonomous, is not subjected to the will of organization. The Kantian conception of autonomy is the main feature of the final level of moral development. A professional is autonomous to the degree that what he thinks and does cannot be explained without reference to his own activity of mind. Acting autonomously means acting from principles or standards of organization.

The synonyms of autonomy are liberty, equality to self-rule or sovereignty. Sometimes these are identical with freedom of the will. It is also equated with dignity, integrity, individuality, independence, responsibility and self

knowledge. It is identified with qualities of self-assertion, reflection, freedom from obligation, absence of external causation, and knowledge of one's own interest. It is related to actions, beliefs, and reason for acting. Autonomy is also to relate to rules, thoughts, and principles. Autonomy so conceived is taken to be the feature of professionals and becomes desirable quality to have.

Kant said autonomy is supreme good because it is a competing value, that is, the autonomous profession is not ruled out on conceptual grounds from manifesting other virtues or acting justly. Autonomy functions as a moral and social ideal.

### 3. The Value of Autonomy

A traditional view of autonomy in my view is a conception that is too thin to be of value in professional ethics. In this context an important lacuna is that it provides specific content to the decisions an autonomous person takes. Autonomy must involve a particular content, a substantive and not merely procedural independence from the other. The concept of autonomy that insists upon substantive independence can not claim to be significant for the purpose of our inquiry. This idea of autonomy is also inconsistent with loyalty, objectivity commitment, benevolence, and love.

An autonomous agent must be independent minded. He must not depend on others for being told what he is to think or do. A professional is autonomous to the degree that what he thinks and does cannot be explained without reference to his own activity of mind. To be an ethical agent is to be an autonomous or self-directed agent. In this view, to submit oneself to a moral authority for direction about what to do is simply incompatible with being a moral agent. The roles of ethical agents, necessarily involves autonomous decision making. In this view, promising, worship, obedience to command, conformity to law are all seen as inconsistent with autonomy. The concept of autonomy which insists upon substantive independence violates one of the initial conditions of moral action. It makes autonomy inconsistent with other important values. Consider the nature of commitment. To be committed to a friend or a cause is to accept the fact that one's actions, and even desires, are to some extent determined by his willing and his loyalty to his friend.<sup>17</sup> The devotion of loyal man involves a sort of restraint or submission of his natural desires to his cause, that he serves. That is, he does not merely follow his own impulses. He looks to his cause for guidance. This tells him what to do, and he does it. The loyal man remains, at least on my account autonomous. His devotion is his own. He chooses it.

The above form of argument proves too much and this requires clarification. There is the other ideal which is liberty, conflict with values like loyalty, love, promising, and other forms of commitment. In spite of that we don't deny that liberty is valuable. The similarly autonomy considered as a substantive notion, though conflicting with other values is not contingent but necessary. The concept of autonomy that involves substantive independence leads to theoretical mistake about moral authority. The authority is inconsistent with autonomy, for Kant, which autonomy is the primary obligation of man because authority is inconsistent with autonomy, and thus there can be no authority. I am claiming that if autonomy is inconsistent with promising and commitment, it has no claim to be the supreme value. What is valuable about autonomy is that the commitments and promises a person makes to one he views him as the person he wants to be so that he defines himself via those commitments.

The autonomous person cannot accept without independent consideration and judgment of others regarding what he should do or believe. He may rely on the judgment of others, but when he does so he is prepared to advance independent reasons for thinking. His judgment is likely to be correct and weighs the evidential value or opinion against contrary evidence. There are contingent connections between being autonomous and the substantive nature of such personal values, because there are not priori truths about the content of autonomous professional values. It is likely that one begins to develop autonomy as a result of becoming skeptical about the received wisdom.

Having developed a conception of autonomy, and argued that alternative conception can create problems in our understanding of its value. I now want to consider the issue of the value of autonomy as I conceive it. Autonomy, as substantive independence, at least provides a context that one can attempt to justify as worthy of admiration. Every moral theory has some conception of treating others as equal in certain ways to oneself.

In the professional autonomy a person gives meaning to his life. Professionals can give meaning to their professional lives in all kinds of ways. Collecting the goods from market is taking care for one's own. There is no particular way of giving shape and meaning to his life. Morality is what is owned by everybody. In a more intimate relationships such as a manager and a customer it may be said that must respond to particular qualities, i.e., to the life shaped in particular way. All profession has the capacity for defining its own way. Therefore autonomy is important both normatively and conceptually.

#### **4. The Moral Autonomy**

It is a view that moral professional are necessarily autonomous. The position involves not merely a conception of autonomy but connected views about the nature of moral principles, moral epistemology, rationality, and responsibility. A person is morally autonomous if and only if his moral principles are his own. There are specific characterizations of moral principles to be one's own.

1. A person is morally autonomous implies to be the author of his moral principles, that is, their originator.
2. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he chooses his moral principles.
3. A person is morally autonomous if and only if the ultimate authority or sources of his moral principles are in his will.
4. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he decides which moral principles to accept as binding upon him.
5. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he bears the responsibility for the moral theory he accepts and principles he applies.
6. A person is morally autonomous if and only if he refuses to accept others as moral authorities, that is, he does not accept with out independent consideration the judgment of others as to what is morally correct.<sup>18</sup>

A central feature of moral principles is their social character; their interpretation often bears a conventional character. Moral rules often function to provide solutions to a coordination problem. A situation in which what a professional chooses to do depends upon his expectations of what other professionals will do. A professional whose choice is in turn depends on what the first agent will do. A moral professional that retains autonomy, must make his own moral choices. The moral professional ought to be autonomous. Either the statement is an



objectively true or not. For Kant the moral law does not obtain its objective character by being chosen or willed by us. The categorical imperative commands us to act on that maxim which we can will as universal law.

We are enjoined to act as if the maxim of our action were to become through our will a universal law of nature. What is essential is that we actually will. The argument is that a categorical imperative cannot be binding because of some interest that I have. Then it would be hypothetical. Hilary Putnam calls the “What else argument”, Kant concludes that categorical imperatives must be binding because we have legislated it ourselves. But there are other possibilities, including the thesis that there are objective requirements of reason which provide their own form of rational motivation.

## 5. Professional Autonomy

The central concern of this work is to focus on the ‘Professional Autonomy’ of professionals. Ethical problems relating to humans differ from those relating to corporate bodies. Every employed professional has to have the professional autonomy. This is essential for a true profession. The relation between employers and employees will not be healthy unless employers are willing to grant autonomy to their employees with respect to norms, standards and principles. These are ethical standards, which we apply to our respective profession.

In this conception of autonomy is not respected, the employees will not enjoy working in their work place. Because they can't execute their duty.<sup>19</sup> Lack of freedom prevent the employees to discharge their duties properly. There is both empirical and conceptual truth involved in it. The question is: How far freedom is essential to adequately discharge functions that employees are supposed to execute in the duty of their respective position or profession.

In the following, I shall explain the significance of the argument that freedom is a necessary pre-condition for an employee to discharge his/her duties.<sup>20</sup> Freedom is perceived in the sense that it is essential nature to any professional. In order to have the professional degree a professional has to go through formal tests of admission, licensing bodies, and disciplinary committees and so on. Professionals are subject to praiseworthy, because each profession's main idea is to serve society in a better way for the maximum benefits of the maximum people.<sup>21</sup> The concept of autonomy offers a much better description of the unique human capacity of free will, demonstrated in the respect of ‘moral principles’ and obligation. Immanuel Kant's original idea of autonomy is that it is the characteristic of moral agents, which enables them to shape the world through their choice.<sup>22</sup> Respecting moral principles means respecting autonomy. Often, an ethical theory helps management and organizational to sort out problems during difficult situations. Ethics is a discipline which we can apply in any area where social value and behaviour is at stake.

As professional ethical beings, we are basically moral and responsible towards our society for a peaceful and harmonious culture. Autonomy is a universal property of human beings and freedom is a necessary condition for autonomy.<sup>23</sup> The important issue is where the notion of freedom necessary for autonomy to be granted? Autonomy stands for the agent's capacity to make choices based on free will, including choice narrowing the scope of future choices.

At this level a question may be raised with regard to the nature of professionalism. Since professional behaviors change from time to time it is said that professionalism is the foundation to be related to employees not in a

consistent way. In otherwise, there is an inconsistent relationship existing between them. The question that is raised here is it a conceptual truth or an empirical truth?

In this respect, we shall develop the concept of professional autonomy. In professional autonomy we can see organizational autonomy and personal autonomy. The organizational autonomy is a regulation by one's own profession, rather than regulation by the 'laity'. This organizational autonomy is primarily a property of the profession as a whole. A profession is autonomous insofar as it has control over its own code of ethics and has standard for admission to the profession. This autonomy exists when the leaders of profession define or regulate the nature of the services offered in the following ways. The control recruitment and certification of members set the standards of adequate practice. Organizational autonomy is a close relative of personal autonomy.

## 6. Personal Autonomy

Personal autonomy is divided into political autonomy and moral autonomy. Moral autonomy will provide the basic discipline in our life which we professionals apply in our day to day lives. This helps us to act in a best possible way assuming responsibility for what we do. It is concerned with the conditions for moral responsibility for the benefit of the maximum people. Political autonomy is concerned what makes a state or Nation self-governing entity. The reason for distinguishing personal autonomy from political autonomy is self-evident. The individual persons are neither states nor nations. The reason for distinguishing personal autonomy from moral autonomy is not self-evident. The condition necessary for moral autonomy is also necessary for personal autonomy. This will protect all varieties of professional ethics that which are recognized in contemporary society.

Agents will depend on personal autonomy for protecting themselves in different situations and from different people. The act can be autonomous only when the agent is autonomous. We may call these as 'agent-centered' conception. The act is autonomous when the desire leading to the act is autonomous. We may call this conception 'desire-centered' action. The 'Agent-centered'<sup>24</sup> conception also talks about autonomous desires. An ethical autonomous person can do whatever he desires within the limits of his power. Such a person can take any better decision if he wants to function within a project successfully. An act is autonomous only insofar as it results from the exercise of the capacity of the agent. Autonomy is primarily a characteristic of desire and is a derivative of facts, that is, desires are derived from facts. A desire is autonomous if it stands in a certain relationship to other current desires of the person.

Professional responsibility that an agent assumes must behold by him consistently. The professional autonomy expressed through the agent's action sometimes may not contribute substantially to the organization or profession, as they are shrouded with restrictions. We will explain all these points systematically and conceptually because philosophy takes care and seeks to, solves these problems. It is due to this reason that the value of applied ethics is widely recognized as the essential to all professions. The basic job of applied ethics is to set up the organization in the right way where professionals will then enjoy their autonomy. On their exist many professions such as professional are many like management, medicine, law, teaching, business and engineering, etc. 'To act as a member of a profession is to act as a member of an ethical group'.<sup>25</sup> Definition of profession is: "A profession is a member of individuals sharing an occupation voluntarily organized to earn a

living by serving some moral ideal in a morally permissible way beyond what law, market and ordinary morality require".<sup>26</sup>

## 7. Basic Concept of professional Autonomy

The concept of professional autonomy may be divided into two categories: personal autonomy, and workplace autonomy. These autonomies will help to act in a morally responsible way. As a result our society is benefited by these professionals and profession. Many times as a professional we have some liberty or freedom, which leaves us to do what we desire to do. This will give us respectability and also entitlement. Autonomy is common to all professions.

The individual autonomy or personal autonomy is the control of ones' own work rather than control by client, patient, customer, employer or the like. For professional autonomy, the organization is primarily a property of the profession as a whole. When we are talking of organizational autonomy in a society, we are referring to a form of political and sociological autonomy. Every profession is governed by some code of ethics and standards which aim to be maintained by the systematic and disciplined nature of an organization. Without any norms and standards autonomy is lifeless. We may strongly support that without any norms and standards there is no meaning and life in the autonomy of the organization'. Autonomy will exist when the leaders of the organization or professionals define their rules and standards. Professional autonomy and organizational autonomy are related very closely. Somewhere or sometimes professions are not autonomous because these codes of ethics will change and discipline will be different, but generally speaking the ethical code and professional autonomy are identical. From profession to profession the ethics, norms, standards and discipline will change as well as their autonomy.<sup>27</sup> The profession of a manager is different from other professions. Hence the ethics associated with this profession (i.e., professions of a manager) is different from the ethics related to other professions. For example, ethical code of a manager is different from the ethical code of a doctor. But their purpose will be the same and their duty is that they have to follow some ethical rules and apply for the progress of the profession and of the organization. That's way we can justify the requirement of applied ethics in the global society.

Personal autonomy will not be desirable because many people may not encourage professional ways but seek positive response. Personal autonomy means an ultimate assessment only by one's professional peer, not by layperson, even when the latter is a professional employee. Even if analysis is true the ultimate significance of it will depend on how we understand on the ultimate consequence'.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, no profession has personal autonomy. When the professional will not practice his profession then they will not understand an ultimate assessment of the professional autonomy. The professional must have to practice his profession within certain laws and rules. Many times our society forces us to protect the norms and standards in our profession as a whole and decide what we shall and shall not practice as professionals. Professional autonomy in these senses seems to be inconsistent both with the normal authority of employers and with the cooperation and division of labour necessary to make any larger organizational work. As philosopher, Nike Martin, has noted how demanding this analysis is. Others such as Edina, Schwartz and Heing Luegenbiehl, have sought to provide a conception of managerial control (in organization cooperation) which "consists of leaving to professionals enough control over the content of the work to preserve the professionals' autonomy."<sup>29</sup> We can rise the question as to how can

an employer's authority be consistent with a manager's personal autonomy? Philosophers have not adequately examined this aspect in depth. The Manager controls most employees, so that they are never independent. When one experiences dependency, it prevents them to practice the profession seriously. But even the independence of a professional is subject to some extent to the demands of his client or customer. Sometimes, supervision, research and observation are required to know the importance of autonomy or professional autonomy. All professionals are good advisers and in certain situation they insist and order what they like. Sometimes clients or customers display their disagreement. But there will be a good understanding between professionals and customers. Sometimes the physicians have to drop everything and come to the hospital when the baby is ready to born. Professionals do not normally see such emergencies as a threat to his professional autonomy.

### **Conclusion:**

Some managers are free to exercise their professional autonomy indeed; some managers seem to go out of their way to stress the importance of managers. The concept of personal autonomy has adequacy. This explains the relation between professional autonomy and personal autonomy. The autonomy of professional autonomy shall make the professional autonomy of the employee an empirical question because many people considered it to be empirical. The autonomy of profession should suggest the ways to test the empirical content. If there are any claims concerning professional autonomy, it should yield a practical research programme, explaining why none is possible. All these conditions would bring together, as far as possible, the philosophical, professional and sociological concerns with workplace autonomy.<sup>30</sup> Professionals must act as a member of a profession. Personal autonomy must be suitable for our purposes. One can act autonomously as employees implying the member of a particular profession. In professional autonomy, the role personal autonomy is most useful in the workplace. Because they will follow the basic moral standards and they appear to be ethical in their organization. When the organization is strongly established on applied ethics it sounds well. This means, professional autonomy is necessary for professions. While I am conforming this illustration, I would like to recommend that ethics is mostly required to apply in any profession to make the things better in the global context. With these ideas I would like to end this chapter.

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