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# Deep Deference, Autonomy, and the Deferential Wife

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Philosophy

by

Elizabeth Rachel Silverstein

December 2013

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The Dissertation of Elizabeth Rachel Silverstein is approved:

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Dedicated to my Grandma Alyce;
she would have been so proud.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Deep Deference, Autonomy, and the Deferential Wife

by

Elizabeth Rachel Silverstein

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Philosophy
University of California, Riverside, December 2013
Dr. Coleen Macnamara, Chairperson

This dissertation focuses on two characters, the deferential wife (DW) and her closely related friend anti-feminist (AF). DW is committed to deferring to husband's preferences in all areas of their joint life. AF is also committed to deferring to her husband in all areas of their joint life, but unlike with DW, we know that AF is making an autonomous choice to commit to defer to her husband. My aim in this dissertation is to explain why DW is not autonomous; what it is that is problematic about AF's choice to be deferential; and how we might go about interacting with these women especially in real world settings. First, I sort out the concept of deference, identifying the particular type of deference that is displayed by DW and AF, which I call deep deference. Next, I identify three ways deep deference undermines agency: 1) it undermines the ability to be a good moral agent, 2) it limits the ability to be self-constituting, and 3) that it is problematic with respect to autonomy. I focus on deep deference and autonomy. I then give some criteria of what would be a good theory of autonomy for *explaining* why it is that DW is not autonomous. Ultimately, I argue Andrea

Westlund's account of autonomy does the best job of meeting these criteria and thus explaining why DW is not autonomous. I then turn to the choice to be deeply deferential. While Westlund gives the right sort of view for explaining why DW is not autonomous, she doesn't address my intuition that if you care about autonomy you should be concerned about the choice to commit to deep deference. I use her account of autonomy together with an understanding of the normativity of personal commitments to show exactly why we should be concerned about AF's autonomy. Finally, I build upon this view of autonomy by proposing that the best way to engage those like DW and AF such that their autonomy may be enhanced without disrespecting autonomy is to engage them in the autonomy enhancing practice of justificatory dialogue.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In a well-known scene from *Pride and Prejudice*, the two main characters, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett, debate the merits of Mr. Bingley's character. Bingley had earlier boasted that if he were struck with the notion to leave Netherfield Park, his current home, he would be off immediately. Darcy challenges this assertion, saying, "If, as you were mounting your horse, a friend were to say, 'Bingley, you had better stay till next week,' you would probably do it, you would probably not go – and at another word, might stay a month."[1] This is supposed to be a critique of Bingley's character, but Elizabeth attempts to persuade Darcy that he is mistaken, and that Bingley's readiness to do as his friend wishes is actually a praiseworthy aspect of his disposition. Darcy justifies his criticism of Bingley's hypothetical acquiescence to his friend's request because the friend merely stated his desire without offering any reasons for why Bingley ought to stay. Elizabeth thinks it is wrong to suggest that in such a situation Bingley would act without reason, because Darcy does not take into account the influence of friendship and affection, which ought to make one "readily yield to a request, without waiting for arguments to reason one into it."[2] During the discussion it is agreed that whether or not the act is praiseworthy or deserving of censure will be dependant on many factors including the nature of the friendship, the importance of the request, and the original reasons for departure. As the novel progresses Elizabeth learns first hand the down side of Bingley's readiness to do as his friends wish without question when he breaks off his relationship with her sister at their suggestion, causing much

[1] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Signet Classic, 1996). 43.

[2] Ibid. 44.

suffering for both himself and Jane Bennett. Likewise, Mr. Darcy learns the value of taking the wishes of others into consideration.

Elizabeth and Darcy's disagreement is at its core a debate about how much deference to the wishes and demands of others is appropriate. The dispute between Darcy and Elizabeth regarding the role of deference in interpersonal relationships is one of the themes of the novel and raises an important philosophical question. I take the primary question being raised to be: what are the boundaries of permissible deference? When is it praiseworthy to defer your own wishes to the desire of a friend, as Elizabeth initially suggests, and when is it to be condemned as a character flaw as Darcy argues?

While these questions are thought provoking and interesting, especially in light of their effect in contributing to the richness of a well-loved novel, there is a more serious nature to such questions as well. There are heavier philosophical questions, such as what is the relationship between interpersonal deference and autonomy? When Mr. Bingley does what his friend demands simply because his friend demands it are his actions attributable to him, or to the friend? In other, more philosophical, words, would we think that Bingley is acting autonomously or not? What the example for *Pride and Prejudice* begins to illuminate is that there is a tension between interpersonal deference and autonomy. Perhaps, a few more examples may help to illustrate the seriousness of getting clear about the nature of interpersonal deference and its relation to autonomy as well as drawing out more interesting related questions.

If Mr. Bingley were a woman living in Jane Austen's world, his social situation would have been one in which he was politically and socially oppressed and his deferential attitude would perhaps raise even more questions. Another literary example may help us to

understand the importance of such questions about the tension between deference and autonomy in light of social oppression. Azar Nafisi's memoir, *Reading Lolita in Teheran*, tells the story of real women reading forbidden novels, including Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, in secret shortly after the Iranian revolution.[3] The women in this story are forced, particularly in public, to be subordinate to men, to show deference and set aside their own wishes for those of others. However, despite this social and political oppression, they still find ways to exercise their autonomy. In this example, we see that despite deferring to political and religious authority these women still maintain their independence, autonomy, and self-respect. Examples like this raise interesting theoretical questions about the relationship between oppressive social situations, deference, and autonomy.

Another real world example of deference is found in the political realm. A group of filmmakers known as "The New Left Media" produce videos in which they interview "Tea Party" activists at different protests and events.[4] The "Tea Party" members when questioned about their views just repeat sound bites from conservative TV and radio pundits. When pressed further, confronted with contradictory facts, or their own logical inconsistencies they are unable to defend themselves and often just repeat what they said before. There seems to be something very odd going on here. The answers that these people are giving do not seem to belong to them, they do not seem to be their own. At best they seem to be mimicking

[3] Azar Nafisi, "Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books," in *London and New York: Harper Collins* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

[4] www.newleftmedia.com

things they have heard on the radio and TV.[5] We can begin to see that deferring all of one's political beliefs to conservative television and radio pundits may have serious repercussions for the autonomy of one's political choices. In fact the kind of deference being displayed here seems to be of a different kind than that of Bingley or the Iranian women in public, it seems to be deeper.

There is something more comprehensive about the deferential behavior of the Tea Partiers interviewed by The New Left Media, but we can imagine an even deeper, more comprehensive deferential attitude yet. While the Tea Party people may only be so absolutely deferential in the political realm imagine a person who deferred to another in essentially all areas of her life. In the philosophical literature the example of the Deferential Wife is often cited as just such a case. The Deferential Wife is the perfect traditional housewife who puts the desires, preferences and wishes of her husband first. She will always ignore her own desires in favor of his. The Deferential Wife displays a more pervasive form of deference than Mr. Bingley or The Tea Partiers interviewed by the New Left Media. Unlike Mr. Bingley who tends to defer to his friends' directives and advice, the deferential wife does not just tend to defer to her husband most of the time, she always defers to her husband. Unlike the Tea Party members her deference is not limited in scope, confined to only one aspect of her life. Rather her deference is very wide in scope encompassing almost all, if not all, of her life. The Deferential Wife's deference is what I call *deep deference*. Deep deference is a practical disposition to defer to the inclinations of another or others. It is pervasive and wide in scope.

[5] This sort of extreme dependency on the views of others is ironic because the views they are espousing are normally ideals of personal and political independence and autonomy.

To push deeper into the complexity of the example of the Deferential Wife, think of the case of a woman who has voluntarily adopted a deeply deferential role like that of the Deferential Wife. After the terrorist bombing of the Boston marathon, many people were surprised to find that one of the accused bombers' wives had until she married him been an independent-minded, free spirited, "typical" American young woman.[6] Many questioned how such a young woman could have come to adopt the submissive and subordinate role of deferential wife and mother. I think many American women wondered how she could make that choice, to give up her own aspirations, and to instead be completely submissive to and dependent on her husband. There was a general sense of discomfort with such a choice. This raises important questions about the choice to be deeply deferential. In the example here, it clearly raises concern, but why? What is it about the choice to be deeply deferential that we find troubling? In the case above the young woman seems to have made this choice freely and of her own volition, on what grounds can we criticize her choice?

Now, imagine that a young woman who is close to you, a sister or a friend, is planning to marry a man who comes from a culture where women are expected to subordinate themselves to their husbands. Imagine that your sister has decided that after she is married she plans to adopt the role of the deferential and subordinate wife as expected by her husband's culture or religion. How would you react? It is likely that this choice of your sister's may make you uneasy, you might fear for her ability to continue developing as her own person and follow her own goals and aspirations. What standing might you have to interfere with your sister's plan to marry and become a deferential wife? What might you do

[6] Michael Cooper *and others*, "Path From 'social Butterfly' to Boston Suspect's Widow in Hajib", *The New York Times* (2013): A1.

or say to your sister? What do we think the family and friends of the Boston marathon bomber's wife ought to have done when she told them of her choice to adopt such a deeply deferential role?

We can imagine one last example, a character much different than the Deferential Wife and the bombing suspect's wife, a woman who defers to her spouse's wishes in exchange for his acquiescence in other areas or in very important situations, let's call her the Caring Wife. Caring Wife may defer to her husband's wish to move far away for his job, because it is really important to him and she knows he would also defer to her in important situations. Her decision to move is likely to involve compromise and mutual deference. For example, they may agree to move, but CW will get the last say in the house they purchase to assure that they live in an area she would enjoy, or she may make her deferring to his wishes conditional on his agreement that they will only move if she too can find a job, or if they can find a better house, or if next year she can go back to school or start her own business. The Deferential Wife on the other hand has no bargaining power in a similar situation, she has no reason not to defer because she's already committed to deferring no matter what. In fact, it will seem as if she hasn't even deliberated about why she should move far away, as if her own considerations had no weight in her decision. The Deferential Wife's deference seems to be clearly different than that of the Caring Wife. The Deferential Wife does not seem to act autonomously, but the Caring Wife does. In thinking through these examples, it is important to me that we keep in mind the differences between more extreme examples of deference, and those like the Caring Wife.

These examples are extremely varied but they all raise important questions about the nature of deference and its relation to autonomy. And more specifically questions about the

relationship between deep deference and autonomy. Each of these examples highlights a different question. The example from *Pride and Prejudice* asks the question: what kind of deference is problematic? The character's from *Reading Lolita in Tehran* brings up questions about deference and autonomy in the context of oppression. The Deferential Wife highlights questions about a particularly insidious and troubling form of deference, deep deference and it's relationship to autonomy. The example of the Boston bombing suspect's wife raises the question of what is wrong with the choice to be deeply deferential? The hypothical question about a friend or sister who wants to choose a deeply deferential role brings up questions of how we should engage those who choose deference or seem to be already problematically deferential. All of these question require that we answer other important philosophical questions like: What is deference? What is deep deference? How is deep deference in tension with autonomy? In this dissertation my aim is to answer all of these questions.

As you may suspect, I have feminist intuitions here. As such it is important to me that in trying to answer all of these questions about deep deference, autonomy, and their relations to one another that I am sensitive to concerns that are central to feminists. The examples I am most interested in, those of deeply deferential women, are women who adopt traditionally feminine roles. Traditionally women's roles were to be caregivers who set aside their interests for those of others. For this reason, caring has been traditionally associated with the feminine and thus less valued. This has spilled over into traditional philosophical accounts of personal autonomy that take their cues from the Enlightenment. Traditional accounts of autonomy generally put a premium on independence and thus care relations are often seen as incompatible with autonomy. Not only is this problematic in terms of valuing care, but it also leads to a tendency to ignore the role socialization plays in constructing and

hindering one as an autonomous agent. Many feminists have for this reason rejected autonomy as a useful concept, or tried to reclaim care as an integral part of conceptions of autonomy.[7] I think it is important that in discussing autonomy and deep deference we be sure to be sensitive to the role that socialization and social roles play in constituting one as autonomous or not and that we not undervalue care relations and overdiagnose caregivers as non-autonomous. While I think autonomy is a very useful concept and am very interested in it's relationship to deep deference, it is clear that in answering questions about deference and autonomy I will want to be sensitive to these concerns. I want to be able to answer why deep deference like that of the Deferential Wife is problematic, without over-diagnosing those like the Caring Wife as also suffering from some pathology of agency when clearly her deferential behavior seems permissible.

As it stands the literature on autonomy and deep deference is lacking. First, it is hard to get into the literature on deference and pinpoint a clear definition of deference, let alone of the particularly problematic deep deference. So, as part of this dissertation, we will need to figure out what deference and deep deference are. Second, those who discuss deep deference and DW cannot agree on exactly what is wrong with her and run together three separate concerns about how her deep deference impinges on her agency. Sometimes they are talking about her ability to be a good moral agent, sometimes they are talking about her ability to be a fully self-constituting and flourishing agent, and sometimes they are talking

[7] For a useful discussion of the relationship between autonomy and feminist thinking see: Grimsaw, Jean. "Autonomy and Identity in Feminist Thinking". In *Feminist perspectives in philosophy* (1988): 90-108.

about her ability to exercise her autonomy. Even those who claim to be talking about her autonomy are really talking about different things. My plan is to clean this up, fill in gaps, and make clear what is wrong with DW and being deeply deferential.

In the next chapter of this dissertation, I will begin by sorting out exactly what deference is and what kinds may be of more concern than others. I will review the many ways in which the philosophical literature uses and discusses the concept of deference. Then I will lay out a map of the different kinds of deference to orient the reader to the primary kind of deference under discussion in this dissertation, deep deference.

In the third chapter, I turn my attention to deep deference, a kind of very insidious deference. I acquaint the reader with the paradigm example of such deep deference, the Deferential Wife (DW). I will then parse out the three concerns highlighted by the literature on DW mentioned above: that her deep deference undermines her ability to be a good moral agent, that it prevents her from being a fully self-constituting agent, and that it interferes with her exercise of autonomy. While the literature is not always clear on this, it is important to keep each of these concerns separate.

Ultimately, my focus will be on autonomy. In chapter four I turn to discussing the literature on autonomy's diagnosis of DW as autonomous or not autonomous. I begin by surveying important theorists of autonomy, breaking these views down into four interrelated camps of formal, substantive, non-relational, and relational, before turning to their diagnoses of DW as either autonomous or not autonomous.

I agree with those in the literature that argue that DW does not act autonomously, but I do not think these theorists do an adequate job of telling us why DW's deep deference is incompatible with the exercise of her autonomy. In chapter five, I argue that a formal

relational view of autonomy does the best job of explaining the tension between deep deference and autonomy. The formal relational view I endorse tells us that DW is not autonomous because she is not disposed to answer critical questions about her actions, choices, commitments, and her deference. This interpersonal understanding of her lack of autonomy is particularly illuminating because of the interpersonal nature of deference.

Once we have in hand an explication of why deep deference is incompatible with the exercise of autonomy, I turn to another one of the important questions above: Why is the choice to be deeply deferential problematic? In chapter six, I explore this question While some may think it is understandable why someone like DW would endorse her deferential role given that she had no other options, we may be less understanding of a person who autonomously chose her role as a deferential wife. I imagine just such a character and call her Anti-Feminist (AF). In chapter six, I explore AF's decision to make a personal commitment to deep deference and how that commitment affects her ability to exercise her autonomy. I argue that her commitment to defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life erodes her autonomy by giving her reasons to ignore all of her own wishes and desires, undermining her adoption of new projects and goals, and eliminating her own personal standpoint leaving her unable to answer for her actions and commitments, and thus rendering her non-autonomous. I show that the choice of a deeply deferential role is problematic precisely because it is in tension with her continuing to be autonomous.

Finally, in chapter seven I turn to the very practical question of how we ought to engage those who are deeply deferential or are choosing to be deeply deferential. I am interested in how we can interact with such women to help them become fully autonomous agents without having to rely on autonomy defeating paternalistic interventions. I argue that

to enhance the autonomy of these real world AFs and DWs we ought to engage them in justificatory dialogue, because holding them answerable for their commitments will be autonomy enhancing without the risk of further limiting their autonomy.

In the end my goal is to have a richer understanding of deep deference, it's relationship to autonomy, and a clear idea of the practical implications for how to deal with real world instantiations of deep deference.

## CHAPTER 2: DEFERENCE

With the project of answering important questions about deep deference, autonomy, and their relation to one another before us, the first thing we must get clear on is exactly what it is we are talking about when we talk about deference. In this chapter I will canvass the philosophical literature's discussion of deference, surveying what people are talking about when they are talking about deference, trying to get clear on what deference is, and laying out the terrain of different types and kinds of deference. The point of this is so that we can get a clear map of the terrain so that we can have an unambiguous understanding of the unique marks of deep deference.

### What is deference?

Ordinary examples of deference are plentiful. A construction contractor defers to his client's wishes to use a cheaper but less reputable product. In the military school of life, privates in the army defer to sergeants. Parents defer their own needs to those of their children. One may show deference by setting aside her preference for having her Saturday off to help out a co-worker by covering his shift. In the legal field, appellate courts defer to trial courts in regards to judgments of facts. Patients often defer to their doctor's diagnosis when forming a belief about the state of their health. Sometimes we defer to the wishes of our spouses, friends, and relatives to avoid unnecessary conflict with those loved ones. A nurse who sacrifices his lunch hour to spend extra time with sick patients shows deference

to the comfort of others. A host may defer to the preferences of her guests and serve coffee, even though she prefers tea. The list goes on.

What do all of these ways of behaving have in common that gives them all the name deference? What does it mean to defer?

Although there are discussions of deference within the philosophical literature, it is rarely defined outright. Sometimes there are more implicit definitions and various discussions mark out distinctions between different kinds of deference. Narrowing down what everyone is talking about when they are discussing deference is a difficult task. The philosophical literature uses the term deference to mean different things. Some use "deference' to refer to the act of setting aside one's own judgment. For example, in Howard Richard's paper titled *Deference* he uses the term deference to mean, "simply the declining of the role of moral judge."[8] When courts decline to hear a case, they are deferring their judgment in such a way. Implicit in Marilyn Friedman's discussion of deference is the idea that not only is it deference to yield one's judgments, but that sometimes to defer is to yield one's preferences to those of another.[9] The latter is clear in the example of serving coffee for your friend even though you prefer tea – you yield your preference. Friedman also discusses yielding one's principles to those of another by setting aside one's values to abide by what another wishes. This is different than yielding one's preferences to those of another. The contractor who yields to the preferences of his clients, may defer in this way by setting aside his principles regarding good quality materials. Yet others use the term "deference"

[8] Howard Richards, "Deference", *Ethics* 74, no. 2 (1974): 135-142.

[9] Marilyn A Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife", *Philosophical Studies* 47, no. 1 (1985): 141-150.

even more broadly. As examples, Jean Hampton in *Selflessness and the Loss of Self* thinks of deference as a "self-conception" and Susan Babbit in *Feminism and Objective Interests* talks about deference as an "interpretive framework."[10] Here deference is not merely something one does, it is the background condition of the way someone is. On these views, deference is a kind of disposition from which a person's various acts of deference spring. The private in the army, for example, is disposed to defer to his sergeant.

So what do these discussions of deference have in common? Some people are talking about setting aside or yielding one's judgment, some are talking about yielding actions, and some about dispositions. The dictionary uses similar language in defining deference. Everyday uses and the philosophical literature begin to give us an idea of the concept of deference, and The Oxford English Dictionary gives us the following helpful definitions:

> *Deference*
> 1. The action of offering or proffering; tendering, bestowing, yielding. [to the preferences, wishes, desires, wants of another]
> 2. Submission to the acknowledged superior claims, skill, judgement, or other qualities, of another.
> 3. Courteous regard such as is rendered to a superior, or to one to whom respect is due; The *manifestation of a disposition* to yield to the claims or wishes of another.
> **4. *in deference to***: in respectful acknowledgement of the authority of, out of practical respect or regard to.[11]

So deference can be an *act* of yielding to another's preferences as the first definition suggests. Parents do this for children, hosts for guests, nurses for patients, and friends and partners for their loved ones. Deference can also be the submission of one's thoughts, or to be more philosophical one's judgments, to those of another, as the second definition suggests.

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[10] Jean Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self", *Social Philosophy and Policy* 10, no. 1 (1993): 135-65.

[11] Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. s.v. "deference" (Underlining added for emphasis).

Patients defer to doctors diagnosis in just such a manner. Deference can also refer to the disposition to recognize the superiority of another, as the third definition suggests. We see this kind of deference in the example of the private who defers to his superior officer. When philosophers like Hampton and Babbit discuss a disposition to defer, they are also using the term in this way.[12] And finally, deference can also mean the acknowledgement of someone or something's appropriate authority. Again, the private's deference is an acknowledgement of the sergeant's authority.

So what is at the core of all of these ways of deferring? What is it that these definitions have in common? What seems to be at the core is that one must yield something of one's own to something or someone else. To defer is to believe or act, or to be disposed to act by yielding. We yield preferences, principles, and beliefs. We yield to other people, groups and to authorities of various kinds. So, in light of these various usages and definitions, I propose the following general definition: broadly speaking to defer is to believe or act by yielding one's own preferences, wishes, desires, wants, principles, judgments, or beliefs, to the preferences, principles, or beliefs of another person, group, or authority.

Even given the broad general definition as the examples from ordinary usage, the philosophical literature, and the dictionary definitions above indicate there are a variety of kinds of deference. We defer to various things, in various ways. For example, Friedman identifies at least three different kinds of deference: deference to judgments, *deference to*

[12] I should note the examples that they use and their arguments suggest that they do not think that the respect being shown by such a disposition is actually due to the person to whom one defers unlike in the military example.

*preferences, and deference to principals*.[13] Distinguishing between deference to judgments and other kinds of deference, highlights one major distinction in kinds of deference; deference can be theoretical or it can be practical.[14]

What I will call *theoretical deference* is when one relies solely on the knowledge of an authority or expert in forming their beliefs or judgments. For example, one may judge that a conservative economic policy is best because the Chairman of the Federal Reserve endorses it. Or one may believe that bananas are healthy because a nutritionist said so. On the other hand, what I will call *practical deference* is when one makes a choice or acts by yielding his own preferences, wishes, desires, wants, or principles to those of another person or group or to the commands of an authority. Practical deference affects the kinds of reasons and motivations that guide our choices and actions.

Just as there is a broad distinction to be made between deference to beliefs and judgments on the one hand and deference involving choice and action on the other, there are various kinds of practical deference. First, we can distinguish between showing deference to practical authority and morality on the one hand (what Friedman calls deferring to principles), and deferring one's own wishes, desires, or wants to the wishes, desires, or wants of another on the other hand (what Friedman calls deference to preferences).[15] When

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[13] Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife".

[14] Much emphasis is put on this distinction in the literature dealing with the legitimacy of deferring to the state. Joseph Raz, "Authority and Justification," in *Authority*, ed. Joseph Raz (New York: New York University Press, 1990). R.P. Wolff, "The Conflict Between Authority and Autonomy," in *Authority*, ed. Joseph Raz (New York: New York University Press, 1990). R.B. Friedman, "On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy," in *Authority*, ed. Joseph Raz (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

[15] Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife".

we act by deferring to practical authority our reason for deferring is that we take the authority's demand to be decisive. We defer to their practical authority just because they demand it of us. When the sergeant demands that the private drop and give him twenty, he does so just because she says so, because she has practical authority over him. The same is true of deference to morality, we do what morality demands just because morality demands it. For example, we do not cheat because morality demands that we do not. Sometimes though we defer our wishes because we want to do what someone else wants. We defer to another because we are inclined to do what the other is inclined to do. If I prefer coffee, but serve tea because it is my guest's favorite and I desire to make her happy, I am deferring to her inclination.

There is yet another important way that we can distinguish different types of deference. The act of deferring is to be differentiated from the general feature of persons of being deferential. Acts of deference, regardless of their appropriateness, are common and do not necessarily result from any underlying disposition to defer. A person who is deferential, on the other hand, is one who either always defers to certain people or in certain situations or is highly likely to defer. The private in the army has a disposition to be deferential. It is not just that he sometimes acts by deferring to his sergeant, but rather that he has a particular attitude or disposition that guides his behavior in the context of military life. It is a feature of him as a person and as a good solider that he is disposed to be deferential.

Just as there are different ways to act deferentially, so too our *assessment* of various acts of deference varies widely. Sometimes we think that deference is an obligation, sometimes it is permissible, and sometimes it is praiseworthy, and still other times it is of great concern.

In some cases we may think that deference is required or that we have a duty to defer.[16] When the construction contractor defers to his client's desire to use a less reputable product he does so because he is contractually obligated to do what the client wishes within the law. When the private in the army defers to his sergeant he does so because he has committed to a role that obligates him to do so.

While in some cases it may seem that there is an obligation to defer, there are certainly many cases in which we have no such obligation. An example of such permissible but not obligatory deference would be if my coworker really wants me to cover her shift, I am not obligated to do so. However, if I wanted to set aside my wish to enjoy my day off and help her out, it is unlikely that anyone would fault me for doing so. In such a case you can defer if you want to, but you are not required, and no one would judge you badly for not deferring.

Sometimes deference is permissible because it is useful. Deference plays some role in friendship.[17] Perhaps part of what it is to be a friend is to see one's friend's wishes as reasons for one to act contrary to one's own desires.[18] Not only is it often permissible to defer to our friend's wishes, it is often helpful. When two friends, lovers, or family members disagree and

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[16] For example, Philip Soper sites promising, fair play and friendship as situations where our obligation to defer to another may outweigh other reasons for acting on the reasons derived from our own preferences. Soper says that one's duty to defer may even overrule her obligation to do what she thinks is moral, if the duty to defer is weightier than the claims of morality in a particular situation. Philip Soper, *The Ethics of Deference: Learning From Law's Morals* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[17] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.; Soper, *The Ethics of Deference: Learning From Law's Morals*. Introduction.

[18] Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, "Friendship and Moral Danger", *The Journal of philosophy* 97, no. 5 (2000): 278-296.

no consensus can be reached about what is best to do it is often necessary for one person to defer to the wishes of the other, even if they still disagree that it is the best thing to do. Imagine a couple that are trying to decide where to take a vacation. He prefers relaxing on the beach; she prefers mountain climbing. The ideal solution would probably be to compromise. Perhaps she will agree to go the beach this year if next year they can go mountain climbing, thus deferring her trip for another time. Maybe mountain climbing is a passion of hers, whereas the beach is just something he really likes to do, so he may agree to go mountain climbing even though ultimately he still prefers the beach because he wants her to be able to pursue her passions. Whatever solution the couple arrives at they will likely have to yield to one another's wishes to some extent or risk bigger problems than not being able to agree on a vacation spot. While this kind of deference is not necessarily obligatory (I don't have to do what you want just because we can't agree) it often makes life easier and our relationships more amicable.

In practice, we not only permit others to defer their own preferences and wishes, we often praise those who put aside their own interests for those of another. For example, the nurse who sacrifices her lunch hour to spend extra time with a sick patient or the husband who sets aside his hatred of the ballet to make his wife happy for an evening can both be seen as models of good behavior. So we often praise supererogatory acts of deference.

On the other hand, we are also sometimes suspicious of certain acts of deference. For example, we would think it odd if in trying to choose whether or not to pursue and extramarital affair a man let his friend or his therapist make the choice of whether or not he would be faithful to his spouse. Similarly, we would think it inappropriate if someone gave up her life long dream to become an artist because her sister preferred her to be an engineer.

We often find it problematic if someone never questions purported authorities. Think here of a person like the "Tea Party" members discussed in the introduction who goes around believing whatever they were told by a political pundit on TV. Or to take another example, there seems to be something amiss with an adult person who allows her mother to make all of her decisions for her. We may think that a person who defers in this way is somehow shirking their responsibilities.[19] The idea might be something like, no one likes to make tough decisions, wouldn't we all like to just let someone else do all of the hard work of deciding what we should do, but that's just not how it's done. What rests at the heart of such concerns seems to be the belief that we have a responsibility to make our own decisions.

There are even some cases in which deference can be dangerous. Think here of the famous experiment conducted by Stanley Milgrim in which research participants deferred to the authority of a research assistant and continued to "shock" a person in another room even when they thought the person was in acute medical distress.[20] Such blind deference to authority strikes us as deeply morally problematic. Or to take another case, we would probably think it was wrong for someone to defer to his spouse's wish to beat their children. These cases suggest that there are situations and relationships in which deference is not appropriate and sometimes even wrong. It has been argued that some types of deference can undermine a person's self-respect, moral agency, autonomy, practical reason, and the

[19] We might call this the existentialist concern. Existentialists of all stripes are extremely concerned about those who do not take responsibility for their own actions and for living an authentic life of one's own.

[20] Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009).

development and maintenance of one's personal identity.[21] As these are aspects of human agency that we value, the types of deference that are incompatible with them are problematic.

It is often difficult to judge whether deference is appropriate or problematic. Even in cases of normally appropriate deference, such as the deference a private owes to a sergeant potential problems can arise. What happens when in the heat of battle the sergeant demands that her private do something he thinks is immoral under the circumstances? Is deferring to authority appropriate or problematic? We can more fully see the difficulty in making such a distinction if we contrast how two different kinds of deference can be assessed: deference to authority versus deference to inclination. With deference to authority, legitimate deference corresponds to legitimate authority. There are different standards by which one can justify authority, but there is consensus that some authorities are justifiable and some are not. For example, the authority of a democratically elected legislature may be considered legitimate, but those of a dictator may not. Unfortunately, the same distinction is not as clear when it

[21] Andrea C Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?", *The Philosophical Review* 112, no. 4 (2003): 483-523. Soper, *The Ethics of Deference: Learning From Law's Morals*. Marcia Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife", *Philosophical Studies* 48, no. 3 (1985): 393-400. Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife". Marina AL Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (1998). Jules Holroyd, "Substantively Constrained Choice and Deference", *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (2010): 180-199. Anita Superson, "The Deferential Wife Revisited: Agency and Moral Responsibility", *Hypatia* 25, no. 2 (2010): 253-275. Susan Babbitt, "Feminism and Objective Interests: The Role of Transformation Experiences in Rational Deliberation", *Feminist epistemologies* (1993): 245-265. Thomas E Hill, "Servility and Self-respect," in *Autonomy and Self-Respect*, ed. Thomas Hill (New York: Cambridge University Press, July 26, 1991). Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self". Wolff, "The Conflict Between Authority and Autonomy". Friedman, "On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy". Raz, "Authority and Justification".

comes to deference to inclination, it is not as easy to say that someone does not really want to do what the other wants, because it is hard to argue with the legitimacy of a desire.

It has been suggested that one way to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate deference to inclination is to distinguish between critical and uncritical deference. Marilyn Friedman refers to acting to satisfy others' preferences in accordance with one's own principles, values and ideals as *critical deference* and acting to satisfy the preferences of others without consulting one's own principles as *uncritical deference*. While the critically deferential person may defer to another person's wishes, she only does so when such wishes do not conflict with her own principles and ideals. Unlike the critical deferrer, the person who defers uncritically simply defers to the wishes and whims of another without consulting her own principles and ideals, rather the person who is uncritically deferential also yields her own principles and ideals to those of another. Imagine if a person is inclined to defer to her older brother's wishes and he prefers that she not associate with people of a lower social class than herself. If she defers critically she will evaluate whether or not satisfying his preference is consistent with her own principles, if she is an uncritical deferrer she will simply do what he prefers. The conclusion then is that critical deference is appropriate, but uncritical deference is problematic.[22]

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[22] R.B. Friedman makes a parallel claim about deference to authority: He distinguishes between what he calls sighted deference and blind deference. Sighted deference is deference where one still retains private judgment about what one believes is the best way to act, even though they publicly act as the authority demands. Blind deference is deference where one simply does whatever authority demands without question. Blind deference is problematic. For example, imagine the government has chosen to use my tax dollars to purchase nuclear weapons because they think that having such weapons is important to keep my neighbors and I safe. If I deliberate for myself the merits of the government's claim and determine that I disagree with them about the necessity of such weapons for my safety, but still pay my taxes because I have agreed to defer to the government on matters of public safety then

So we see that while there are some helpful ways of assessing the appropriateness of certain kinds of deference, being able to distinguish between appropriate and problematic deference can also be extremely challenging. Questions remain and clarification is still needed. Why are some kinds of deference obligatory? Why are some kinds of deference to be condemned and others to be praised? Why does it seem appropriate to defer to doctors in making important choices about our health and inappropriate to do whatever our friend tells us to do when making major life decisions? Why do we intuitively think it is appropriate for a private to defer to his sergeant's commands, but not for a daughter to always be guided by her mother's preferences rather than her own? How might the philosophical literature illuminate some of these intuitions?

Deference in the Philosophical Literature

The above has offered a general definition of deference, identifying different kinds of deference, and highlighting the fact that deference can be morally assessed in various ways. The point of all this has been to familiarize the reader with the the terrain of the concept of deference. In the last section I continue in this vein. I will highlight places where deference shows up in the philosophical literature so I can orient the reader as to where I am entering the philosophical literature on deference when I am discussing the particularly pernicious form of deference I call deep deference.

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although I am deferring on an issue I disagree with my deference is sighted. If I were to just go along with the government and say, "I never liked nuclear weapons, but the government says it's best for me, so it must be best for me, so I'll pay my taxes," then my deference is blind. So, while sighted deference is appropriate, blind deference is problematic. Friedman, "On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy".

Deference is all over the philosophical literature. Deference is discussed in the contexts of legal, political and moral theory. Many of these areas of thought address similar issues and there are a number of overlapping concerns regarding deference throughout the literature. I will try to pull these apart as much as possible while giving a very brief overview of deference in the literature.

A. Philosophy of law

There are at least two senses in which deference is discussed in regards to legal theory. First, jurisdictional questions are a matter of who has the power to decide a case. These are procedural not substantive questions of law, although that distinction can often break down.[23] One court may defer judgment to another court. What that court is saying is that it is not for them to judge. To give a few examples: an appeals court defers to the trial court about matters of fact and a state Supreme Court defers to the US Supreme Court in matters of federal law. Second, legal theory is sometimes concerned with contractually obligated deference. For example, if a person has agreed in writing to give another party ten percent of their profits, they must show deference to the authority of the contract and give them their ten percent even if they now wish to keep all of the money.

One thing to note about discussions of deference in the context of legal theory is that in these cases deference is something that is required or owed. While the boundaries of legitimacy may be in question, for example whether or not a particular court ought to defer to another, the overriding notion is that deference is necessary within legal systems.

[23] Richards, "Deference".

Another question that comes up in the philosophy of law is a question of the laws legitimacy. This can be a question of the legitimacy of a particular law, or of the legal system more generally. The latter sort of question is one that is of significant interest to another related area of philosophical inquiry, political philosophy. One could rightly say that this question of the legitimacy of the rule of law is the primary question of political philosophy, and it is also tied up in discussions of the legitimacy of deference.

B. Political philosophy

To *show deference to* someone or something can be defined as the respectful acknowledgement of authority.[24] So one way we talk about deference is as deference to authority, and political philosophy is first and foremost concerned with the question of legitimate authority. The primary questions of political philosophy are focused on the legitimacy of the state's authority. The anarchist R.P. Wolff famously concludes that deference to authority is incompatible with the exercise of individual autonomy and thus there is no such thing as legitimate authority.[25] The rest of the literature on political authority attempts to show that, contrary to Wolff, there is legitimate authority and that deference to legitimate authority is compatible with autonomy.[26]

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[24] Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. s.v. "deference"

[25] Wolff, "The Conflict Between Authority and Autonomy".

[26] For example, another explanation of why deferring to state authority is compatible with individual autonomy is to partially collapse the distinction between deference to theoretical authority and deference to practical authority. The idea is that state is *an authority* on political rule, and the commands of the state have authority because the state is a sort of expert about how best to pursue certain long term goals. So, in deferring to the state one is really doing what is most effectively in their best interest and so it isn't actually limiting their autonomy,

Discussions of deference in political philosophy focus on the legitimacy of the authority deferred to. Often the justification for legitimacy relies on a separate standard of moral legitimacy that the political authority conforms to. This brings us to the third area of philosophical discussions of deference: morality.

C. Moral philosophy

There are a variety of ways that the concept of deference is employed in philosophical discussions of morality. One common way is in discussions of deferring to moral judgments and principles. Moral principles give directives about what is the morally right action to take. If you desire one thing, say owning priceless works of art, and fulfilling that desire violates a moral principle, say stealing is wrong, then morality demands that one defer your desire to the command of the moral principle. The idea is that moral judgments have authority over other sorts of desires and judgments. This is compatible with sometimes judging that in a given situation a desire outweighs moral principles.[27] For example, the general utilitarian command to do what will lead to the greatest happiness for the greatest number is sometimes thought to be overruled by special relationships. You can satisfy your

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but actually enhancing it. This sort of instrumental justification of state authority is based on the fact that if we want to live well, then we often need to rely on those who know more than we do to make decisions for us. As a matter of fact there are limits to what we can know, so we must practice a sort of rational economy by delegating certain of our decision making responsibilities to others. We simply do not have enough time or energy to make certain sorts of decisions. For example, it would be extremely inefficient for me to always calculate exactly what speed it would be optimal for me to drive on each roadway, and so I instead defer to the state's authority in setting speed limits. Raz, "Authority and Justification".

[27] See Soper, *The Ethics of Deference: Learning From Law's Morals.* for a more detailed discussion on this point.

desire to save your mother even if doing so has the consequence that you fail to save five others. This is distinct from "absolute" moral authority. Absolute moral authority would be the sort of moral authority recognized by divine command theory; or perhaps even deontological commands may be thought to have absolute moral authority, where one must always defer to moral principles.

Not only does the literature talk about owing deference to morality itself, but often the discussion focuses on the idea that morality entails that we owe deference to other people generally. The idea is that we all have a basic kind of authority over everyone else to demand basic respect as members of the moral community. For example, I have the authority to demand that you remove your foot from on top of my foot just in virtue of being a person with basic human rights. Steven Darwall refers to this sort of authority as *equal basic authority*.[28] Echoing Darwall, we can call the sort of corresponding deference to this authority *equal basic deference*. In some discussions of undue deference it is argued that it is bad because it reflects a lack of respect for oneself as a member of the moral community, in other words undue deference fails to acknowledge equal basic authority and thus, equal basic deference.[29]

Not only can deference fail to acknowledge the general moral standing of persons, but it can also come into conflict with what morality demands more generally.[30] Sometimes

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[28] Stephen L Darwall, *The Second-person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Harvard University Press, 2006).

[29] Hill, "Servility and Self-respect".

[30] This is particularly of concern when there is a duty to defer. See Soper, *The Ethics of Deference: Learning From Law's Morals*. 19.

deference may make it the case that one must do something contrary to what morality demands. Think here again of the Milgrim experiments in which a person continues to defer to authority even though they are violating serious moral prohibitions against harming others. Of course it is not always the case that violating a moral principle is always a cause for concern. It really depends on the moral theory and the moral principle in question. As I mentioned before we may think it is permissible for a person to violate a moral norm to help a friend or loved one in need.

While one way the literature talks about deference is with regard to what morality itself demands with regard to deference, there are other ways the concept is used. On at least one account, what it is to defer is to decline the role of moral judge.[31] Sometimes it may be right to decline to be a moral judge. For example, if one does not know enough about the situation at hand, or if they are unclear about what morality demands in the situation then one ought to defer moral judgment.

And still there is yet another area of moral philosophy that is concerned with deference: discussions of autonomy. Similar to discussions in political philosophy about the incompatibility of deference to authority and individual autonomy, the concern is that some kinds of interpersonal deference are also incompatible with autonomy. A number of authors are concerned that certain kinds of pervasive deference undermine autonomy.[32] For

[31] Richards, "Deference".

[32] For example see Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife". Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". Babbitt, "Feminism and Objective Interests: The Role of Transformation Experiences in Rational Deliberation". Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self".

example, if the exercise of autonomy requires one to act on her own wishes, desires, and preferences then a person who is constantly yielding her own wishes, desires and preferences to those of another does not seem to act autonomously. Furthermore, if one thinks there is a duty to be autonomous, then the person who is deferential rather than autonomous fails to fulfill that duty.[33]

As we can see from the above discussion deference is a very rich concept and there are many distinctions that can be made between various kinds of deference. Having a clear map of the complexities of deference allows for a deeper analysis of different types of deferential behavior. I turn now to the particular type of deference of central interest to his project, deep deference.

[33] Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife". Hill, "Servility and Self-respect".

## CHAPTER 3: DEEP DEFERENCE AND THE DEFERENTIAL WIFE

In the last chapter I surveyed the philosophical literature's discussions of the concept of deference narrowing in on a general definition of deference and mapping the philosophical terrain of different types of deference. In this dissertation I am interested in entering into the discussion of deference by discussing an example that occurs within the morality literature on deference. The example I have in mind is that of the Deferential Wife (DW) who sets aside all of her own wishes and desires to fulfill the preferences of her husband. In this chapter, I will more intimately acquaint the reader with this example, which is generally thought to demonstrate a particularly problematic kind of deference. While there is a consensus in the literature that there is something troubling about DW's deference, there is no clear agreement about the specific features of her particular kind of deference or what exactly it is that is problematic with her particular brand of deference. In what follows, I will identify the key features of DW's particular kind of deference, and disambiguate what it is that the literature takes to be wrong with this type of deference.

### The Deferential Wife and Deep Deference

So why are people talking about this example of DW? Why am I interested in it? Historically, traditional conceptions of the ideal woman reinforced subservient behavior for women using what has been called "the morality of self-sacrifice."[34] The norm of feminine behavior was that the ideal woman be well trained in pleasing a husband and in fulfilling his

[34] Judith Farr Tormey, "Exploitation, Oppression and Self-sacrifice", *Women And Philosophy: Towards a Theory of Liberation* (1976): 204-221.

wishes.[35] In response to such valuations of women's deferential roles a discussion in both feminist and moral philosophy arose criticizing these types of roles.[36]

A number of examples of similarly deferential characters are presented by different writers. Gerald Dworkin introduces a son who has chosen to defer all of his wishes to those of his mother and Marina Oshana describes a man anytime he has to make a decision looks for someone he believes is smarter than himself and has them decide what he will do.[37] The most widely discussed example, however, is Thomas Hill's Deferential Wife (DW for short). Hill describes DW as follows:

> This is a woman who is utterly devoted to serving her husband. She buys the clothes he prefers, invites the guests he wants to entertain, and makes love whenever he is in the mood. She willingly moves to a new city in order for him to have a more attractive job, counting her own friendships and geographical preferences insignificant by comparison. She loves her husband, but she does not subordinate

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[35] Think here of Austen's satire of poor Mr. Collins, who in his proposal to Elizabeth Bennett fails to consider her own happiness but rather provides a lengthy list of reasons he thinks she will make him happy as reasons for their marrying. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. 91-92.

[36] Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Vindications: The Rights of Men, The Rights of Woman*, D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (eds.), Peterborough, ON.: Broadview 1792 [1997]. John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Great Books in Philosophy (New York: Prometheus Books, 1986). Superson, "The Deferential Wife Revisited: Agency and Moral Responsibility". Paul Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy", *Personal autonomy: New essays on personal autonomy and its role in contemporary moral philosophy* (2005): 124-142. Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". Natalie Stoljar, "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition", *Relational autonomy: Feminist perspectives on autonomy, agency, and the social self* (2000): 94-111. Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society". Babbitt, "Feminism and Objective Interests: The Role of Transformation Experiences in Rational Deliberation". Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self". Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife". Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife". Tormey, "Exploitation, Oppression and Self-sacrifice".

[37] Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (Cambridge University Press, 1988). 22-23. Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society".

> herself as a means to happiness. She does not simply defer to her husband in certain spheres as a trade-off for his deference in other spheres. On the contrary, she tends not to form her own interests, values, and ideals; and, when she does, she counts them as less important than her husband's… She agrees that women are mentally and physically equal, if not superior, to men. She just believes that the proper role for a woman is to serve her family. As a matter of fact, much of her happiness derives from her belief that she fulfills this role very well. No one is trampling on her rights, she says; for she is quite glad, and proud, to serve her husband as she does.[38]

Hill highlights DW's rights, because he is concerned that in adopting a deferential role, DW is violating her own right to respect, and as such is violating a duty to respect herself. However, not everyone emphasizes that particular aspect of DW's deference. Others who have taken up the case of DW have described in more detail this hypothetical woman. Marylin Friedman gives us a richer picture of DW.[39] Friedman makes it clear that DW defers to principles not just inclinations. Recall from the last chapter that Friedman differentiates between what she calls critical deference, acting to satisfy others preferences in accordance with one's own principles and uncritical deference, which is deference to the preferences of others not guided by one's own principles. DW's deference is uncritical deference. Andrea Westlund highlights DW's inability to engage in justificatory dialogue about her deference to her husband. If a critic asks DW to defend her deference to her husband she is unable to do so. Although she may derive happiness and take pride in her role, DW does not base her acceptance of her deferential role on such happiness and pride and so she cannot cite them in defense of her deference.

The reason that DW is so interesting is that she exemplifies a particular kind of very problematic deference, what I will call *deep deference*. Deep deference necessarily involves

[38] Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". 5-6.

[39] Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife".

acting and choosing based on one's deference to another or others, thus it is not theoretical deference, but practical deference. While the deeply deferential person may treat the wishes and preferences of the person they defer to as authoritative commands, deep deference is deference to inclination rather than authority. Deep deference doesn't just involve isolated acts of deference, but is rather a general disposition of being deferential.

There is another feature of deep deference. It is what I call absolute and complete. The disposition to be deferential can very in both scope and degree. With reference to degree we can make a distinction between partial and absolute deference. When deference is absolute there is a total transfer of deliberative decision-making power away from the subject. In strict rule governed political systems where there is an absolute duty to obey one would consider the deference demanded to be absolute. In other cases, we may think that deference is only partial. While it is expected that a student defers to the teacher in class discussions, there is always room for discussion. A similar distinction can be made with regard to scope, one's deference can be either restricted or complete. For example, in the case of a small child who relies on her mother to make all of her decisions the scope of her deference is complete. In other cases the scope of one's deference is more restricted. A state Supreme Court's deference to the federal Supreme Court in respect to federal law is an example of restricted deference. Another example of restricted deference is that of a private to a sergeant in the army. While the last is an example of absolute deference, it is restricted in scope because there are many aspects of the private's life in which his choices are still up to him. The person who is deeply differential's deference will be both absolute and complete.

DW's deference is deep. DW defers her choices and actions based on her husbands wishes and desires, so her deference is practical not theoretical. DW defers to her husbands

"wishes and whims" and thus her deference is to his inclinations not his authority. Deep deference doesn't just involve isolated acts of deference, she does not just defer sometimes, rather she has a general disposition of being deferential towards her husband. Finally, the scope of DW's deference is arguably both absolute and complete. She defers to her husband "in all areas of their joint life," which in practice is likely to encompass most if not all of her choices and actions and there is not indication that she compromises or only partially acquiesces to his desires. So her deference is both complete and absolute.

Assessing the literature on DW and deep deference

A variety of efforts have been put forth trying to parse out what exactly we find problematic about DW's deep deference.[40] It is hard to lay a finger on exactly what it is that is at issue, because we do not always think that deferring to one's spouse is problematic. For example, a wife may let her husband make choices about where they will vacation, because she gets to choose the activities they will do when they are there or one spouse may defer her preference for a blue couch because her wife wants the red one. Not only do we think it is often appropriate to defer to our spouse, we in fact often think it is sometimes praiseworthy. For example, a husband may attend the ballet with his wife even though he would prefer doing just about anything to going to the ballet, because he knows it will make her happy. So what is it about cases like those of DW that give us concern?

[40] Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife". Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife". Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". Babbitt, "Feminism and Objective Interests: The Role of Transformation Experiences in Rational Deliberation". Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". Superson, "The Deferential Wife Revisited: Agency and Moral Responsibility". Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self".

In the literature on DW there is strong consensus that her deference is indeed problematic, but trying to figure out why people think it's a problem is another story. There are several different approaches in the literature to diagnosing what is wrong with characters like DW. Susan Babbitt, says that the DW "fails to possess an adequate self and sense of integrity."[41] Andrea Westlund says that "What unsettles us, in cases of deference, is the profound difficulty we encounter in attempting to engage the agent in justificatory dialogue."[42] Hill claims that, "the objectionable feature of the servile person…is his tendency to disavow his moral rights either because he misunderstands them or because he cares little for them."[43] This is a moral defect because, "If one respects the moral law, then one must respect one's own moral rights; and this amounts to having a kind of self-respect incompatible with servility."[44] Marilyn Friedman says that,

> To the extent that the moral condition of the Deferential Wife is problematic, it is so, (I maintain), because she fails to utilize resources within her own person to make moral discriminations among the preferences which she acts to satisfy. In this deprivation consists the moral defect of her condition: she defers to her husband uncritically, and it is this uncritical deference which diminishes her overall moral integrity.[45]

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[41] Babbitt, "Feminism and Objective Interests: The Role of Transformation Experiences in Rational Deliberation". 249.

[42] Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?".484.

[43] Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". 146.

[44] Ibid. 146.

[45] Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife". 146

Jean Hampton says that what is wrong with a person who is deeply deferential is that they have a "dearth of plans, projects and goals that are uniquely their own."[46] She says,

> What primarily justifies our criticism of [DW's] choice as inauthentic is that her role, as she understands it, permits her to have very few ends other than those of her family, and thereby makes her, at virtually every turn, their servant. Although none of them wants to hurt her, they make use of her so thoroughly that she is not only unable to meet many of her objective needs as a human being, but also has very little room for engaging in self-expressing or self-defining activities outside that role.[47]

The literature on the deferential wife tends to discuss her pathologies of agency in terms of her lack of self-respect. For example, Hill above speaks of the incompatibility of DW's deference and self-respect.[48] Hampton also talks about the impermissibility of certain kinds of deferential behavior in terms of a lack of respect, she says, "altruistic behavior is wrong when it prevents one from paying moral respect to oneself."[49] While Oshana does not think self-respect is sufficient for understanding how deep deference compromises agency, she does think it plays a role, she says, "self-respect and respectful treatment from oters may make it more likely that a person will be autonomous, but neither are constitutive of self-government."[50] The list goes on.

While much of the literature on the deferential wife articulates a concern that being deferential undermines self-respect, they clearly mean different things by self-respect. However, I think that they are all properly talking about self-respect, just different aspects of

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[46] Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self". 149

[47] Ibid. 154

[48] Hill, "Servility and Self-Respect." 146.

[49] Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self".146

[50] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society". 90.

it. Robin Dillon identifies three types of self-respect: equality, individuality, and agency self-respect.[51] Each of these kinds of self-respect mean different things. I will briefly outline each of these and how they relate to discussions of DW in the philosophical literature.

Equality self-respect is that "respect for oneself as a person among persons, as a member of the moral community with a status and dignity equal to every other person."[52] Those who are primarily concerned with DW's ability to act well as a moral agent are talking about this kind of self-respect.

According to Dillon, identity self-respect is reflected in an "appreciation of the importance of being autonomously self-defining, of having and living by a conception of a life that gives expression to one's ideals and commitments and is expressed in the pursuits and projects that contribute to an individual's identity."[53] Those who are concerned that DW's deference is incompatible with her ability to fully flourish and form her own identity are talking about this kind of self-respect.

Agency self-respect requires one to "appreciate oneself as an agent." A person with this type of self-respect "appreciates herself as a being with the ability and responsibility to act autonomously and value appropriately." A person who disregards the direction of her own life would be someone who lacks this kind of self-respect, and would also be a person we would think fails to exercise her autonomy and precisely for the reason that she fails to

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[51] Note these are supposed to be influenced by the predominance of the Kantian conception of self-respect, and for Dillon are discussed in the following order: equality, agency, and individuality. Dillon, Robin S., "Respect", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/respect/

[52] Dillon, "Respect"

[53] Ibid.

guide her own life. Those in the literature who are focused on DW's autonomy are talking about this kind of self-respect.

So you see that it is correct to say that deference undermines self-respect, but one must be clear about what type of self-respect is being undermined. There is more than one type of self-respect that is relevant to properly diagnosing what is wrong with DW's deep deference. Because the literature is not clear on this point it is important to parse this out and to keep discussions of these three different problems with DW's agency separate.

Not only does the literature talk about self-respect indiscriminately but it also uses many other words to describe the kind of deferential attitudes and behaviors of DW and is not always clear about distinctions and terms. Hill, for example, talks about "servility." Servility is a sort of problematic or inappropriate deference. The servile person either defers too much or too often or defers to someone or something who does not actually have legitimate authority to command her deference. Others talk about "self-sacrifice," which is "the giving up of one's own interests, happiness, and desires, for the sake of duty or the welfare of others."[54] Some take self-sacrifice literally to mean giving up one's individual self, which is sometimes called *self-abnegating deference*. The sort of deep deference implied by such literal self-sacrifice suggests that rather than yielding one's preferences, to be deeply deferential is *to not have one's own* preferences, wishes, desires, or wants at all. It is argued that such literal self-sacrifice is never a permissible form of deference. While such literal self-sacrifice is arguably problematic, some, such as Hampton, differentiate between authentic, or permissible, ways of being self-sacrificing from literal self-sacrifice. *Altruism* is a term used by

[54] Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. s.v. "self-sacrifice"

both Friedman and Hampton to identify morally worthy self-sacrifice. To be altruistic is to have one's regard for the welfare of others as one's primary principle of action. What distinguishes it from servility is that altruistic behavior is supposed to be an authentic expression of one's self rather than a denial of one's self.

While the terms differ and the distinctions are not always clear, I believe we can identify three distinct categories of problems with being deeply deferential that are being drawn attention to by the literature on DW: 1) That deep deference undermines one's ability to be a good moral agent, 2) that it interferes with one's ability to be a self-constituting agent, and 3) that it undermines one's autonomy.[55] The concepts of good moral agency, self-constitution, and autonomy all overlap, and need to be parsed out. For each of these I will introduce the concept, and then discuss how the literature thinks DW goes wrong with regard to each.

Good Moral Agency

The bulk of the literature on DW is concerned primarily with how her deference affects her ability to make moral decisions.[56] On such views DW's deference undermines her ability to be a good moral agent. The focus of the discussion here is not about capacity to be a moral agent. The literature on DW is not suggesting that DW is a psychopath. Rather, people are keenly aware that if you are deeply deferential you are likely to behave immorally.

[55] It turns out that these categories correspond nicely with the three categories of self-respect identified by Dillon above. Dillon, "Respect".

[56] Hill, Friedman, Benson, and Hampton all suggest that this is what is wrong with DW. Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife". Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self". Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy".

For example, on Hill's account to be deferential is to violate the moral law; to be deeply deferential is to be immoral. The feature of moral agency that is being discussed in the literature is about the relationship between deference and being a good moral person, the ability to be a good moral agent, and the concern is about how we will assess DW as a moral agent, and the general consensus it that DW's deep deference undermines her readiness to exercise her capacity for moral agency; it makes it so that she won't actually be a good moral agent.

In order for a person to be a good moral agent they must be able to do what morality demands. There are at least two things that one must be able to do in order to do what morality demands 1) they must be able to understand moral principles and what they demand and 2) they must be able to act in accordance with what they believe to be required by such principles. In other words one must be able to know right from wrong and have the ability to do what is right if she so chooses.

The ability to understand moral principles requires that one must know what the moral law requires. A good moral agent must have the basic ability to understand and assess basic moral principles and rules. The good moral agent also needs to understand basic moral rights that should not be violated, which includes not only what is owed morally to others, but also what she herself is owed morally. "This involves having some conception of the kinds of treatment from others that would count as one's due as a person and treatment that would be degrading or beneath one's dignity, desiring to be regarded and treated

appropriately, and resenting and being disposed to protest and disregard disrespectful treatment."[57]

In addition to understanding moral principles and what one owes and is owed, the agent must have a kind of confidence in her ability to understand the moral law and choose what is best to do. One must be able to rely on her own judgments. She should not doubt her ability to judge properly what the moral law requires. This requires a basic self-worth condition.[58] A good moral agent will have confidence in her ability as a moral decision maker.

In addition to the above abilities to make moral judgments, to act as a good moral agent one must have the power to do what she thinks is right. One could not very well behave morally if she could not act on what she knew to be the right thing. If I know that the right thing to do for my student is to have her take an incomplete for the course, but school policy does not allow me to do so, then I am prevented from doing what I know is the right thing to do. Moral agency requires the freedom to choose to act in accordance with what one determines to be the morally right thing to do.

It should also be clear then that this concern with DW's ability to be a good moral agent is quite different than discussing whether or not she is morally responsible. The primary question with regard to moral agency that is being asked in the literature on deep deference is: "Is deep deference compatible with behaving morally?" This question is different than the question of whether or not a deeply deferential person is accountable for their moral failings. This latter question is generally left unanswered by the literature, which

[57] Dillon, "Respect".

[58] Ibid.

focuses on moral behavior instead. While the discussion of DW's moral responsibility is fascinating it is also complex and requires more attention than can properly be given here. To go into a detailed discussion here would lead us too far astray, and the primary focus of the literature is generally moral agency and not moral responsibility.[59]

With the concept of good moral agency before us let's look more specifically at the literature's discussion of DW's ability to behave morally. For DW to count as a good moral agent she must be able to know right from wrong and have the ability to do what is right if she so chooses. The literature attempts to show that DW's ability to do both is compromised by her deep deference.

Hill suggests that DW does not know what morality requires.[60] DW's moral understanding is limited specifically in reference to her deference. According to a view like this, DW thinks that her deference is actually required by the moral law, that she is obligated to defer when in fact she is not.[61] If DW cannot understand the requirements of morality sufficiently to understand that she is not morally required to be deferential, perhaps she misunderstands other moral proscriptions as well.

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[59] The question of whether or not DW is morally responsible is very interesting. Should we hold her responsible for her actions, is she to blame when she goes wrong? Recently, Anita Superson has taken up this important question about the moral responsibility of the deferential wife, arguing that she is morally responsible for those actions which are governed by her deep deference, but given issues related to oppression and subordination it is very likely that she is justified in such actions. Superson, "The Deferential Wife Revisited: Agency and Moral Responsibility".

[60] Hill says, " there are at least two types of servility: one resulting from misunderstanding one's rights and the other from placing comparatively little value on them…Whether rooted in ignorance or simply lack of concern for moral rights, the attitudes in both cases may be incompatible with a proper regard for morality." Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". 12.

[61] Judith Tormey highlights this specific problem in her discussion of what she calls the "morality of self sacrifice." Tormey, "Exploitation, Oppression and Self-sacrifice".

Even if she is able to understand what morality requires, if she doubts her ability to properly judge what is the right thing for her to do she will be unable to judge confidently what morality demands. Paul Benson suggests that a character like DW may think that she is unable to know what is morally required because she lacks a sense of her own self-worth.[62] She fails to see herself as one worthy of making such determinations for herself. Many in the literature think that DW's lack of basic self-respect manifests in her valuing her own wishes vary low, so we have reason to think that if that were true she may believe, incorrectly, that she is not very good at making moral decisions. Such lack of confidence undermines her capacity for being a good moral decision maker.

Even if DW did meet these conditions of good moral agency it is unclear that she would even be able to do what she determines to be morally right or avoid doing what she deems morally wrong. Because she defers to her husband in all areas of their joint life, she seems to lack the power to behave morally if doing what is morally right conflicts with what her husband wishes. For example, her husband may wish her to lie about how much money he makes so that he can pay a lower tax rate. Her problem is that even though she may know that what she does is wrong, for example she may feel the appropriate self-reactive attitude, she does not have the power not to do what she knows to be wrong – she feels she must defer to his wishes, and that overrules her acting in accordance with her own moral judgments.

Friedman's distinction between critical and uncritical deference is helpful here. Recall that Friedman differentiates between what she calls critical deference, which is acting to

[62] Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy".

satisfy others preferences in accordance with one's own (moral) principles and uncritical deference, which is deference to the preferences of others not guided by one's own (moral) principles.[63] DW's uncritical deference seems to be the real problem with respect to her ability to be a good moral agent. DW's commitment to defer to her husband makes her uncritically do whatever her husband wishes, even when his wishes conflict with moral principles that DW may have previously endorsed. Uncritically deferring to her husband without consulting her own moral principles undermines DW's ability to act in a way that she would, upon reflection, know to be the right.

Even if she is not consciously doing what she takes to be immoral, DW's deep deference clearly undermines her ability to be a good moral agent. DW not only harms herself by being deeply deferential, but her lack of moral integrity can also put others in danger. A deeply deferential wife acts as a mere instrument to the satisfaction of her husband's desires, rather than as a guide, and in deferring to his interests she fails to do what is in his best interests, and thus she harms him.[64] For this reason, characters like DW are most often criticized for their moral failings.

Self-constitution

Another problem with being deeply deferential that is highlighted in the literature is that it undermines one's capacity for what is referred to alternately as self-authorization, self-definition, authenticity, or self-constitution. For clarity, I will simply refer to this as the capacity for *self-constitution*. Being self-constituting is a way of being in which the agent

[63] Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife".

[64] Ibid.

actively engages in pursuing and developing her own projects, plans, and goals by the lights of her own values, ideals, and commitments. One example of a paradigmatically self-constituting person may be the working artist, someone who has a strong sense of what sort of creative enterprise she wants to engage in, who doesn't "sell-out," and who makes art that reflects her core values. Someone who is paradigmatically not self-constituting would be someone who just does what others do and acts like a member of Nietzsche's herd.

To be self-constituting requires two things: 1) that you understand "what you require, insofar as you are *a particular person*, to flourish as that particular person" and 2) that you have the capacity to do what is necessary for you to flourish as such.[65] To be self-constituting one needs to be able to develop her own "plans, projects and goals" in order to be a robust agent. Although not all aspects of our lives are up to us, many being determined by our social situation and events out of our control, some aspects of our life are up to us. Many of our core principles and values, and important choices about the course of our life are what some call "self-authored."[66] This means that there is always some sense in which it is up to us to choose who it is we want to be. To be self-constituting is to actively engage in making choices that determine your traits, activities and skills, and that ultimately determine what you might call an individual self-identity.

DW "tends not to form her own interests, values, and ideals; and, when she does, she counts them as less important than her husband's."[67] The literature expresses concern

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[65] I take these criteria from Hampton. Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self".

[66] Jean Hampton and Paul Benson both use this term. I am borrowing here from Hampton's use. Ibid.

[67] Hill, "Servility and Self-respect".

that this aspect of DW's deference undermines her capacity for self-constitution. For example, Hampton says that for a character like DW,

> What primarily justifies our criticism of her choice as inauthentic is that her role, as she understands it, permits her to have very few ends other than those of her family, … they [her family] make use of her so thoroughly that she is not only unable to meet many of her objective needs as a human being, but also has very little room for engaging in *self-expressing* or *self-defining* activities outside that role. [68]

In order to be self-constituting DW would need to be able to develop her own projects, goals, and plans. Because she defers to her husband in all areas of their joint life, DW's choices about what project to pursue or plans to make for her future are not ultimately up to her. If she does have projects and plans of her own, her husband's desire that she pursue other projects can always undermine her pursuit of her own ends. For example, imagine that DW wants to sing in the choir because she has always enjoyed singing and thinks it is a valuable experience, but her husband prefers that she play bridge with him the night of choir practices.[69] DW's deep deference dictates that she should defer to her husband's wishes and set aside her preference to sing in the choir. She may still prefer singing in the choir to playing bridge, but her desire to pursue that project is overridden by her commitment to defer to her husband.

Not only does her deference undermine her pursuit of her own projects, plans, and goals, but it may also lead her to no longer have preferences of her own at all. If DW must regularly give up her own plans and projects to defer to her husband's wishes she will ultimately stop making her own plans and projects rather than have her own interests

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[68] Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self". 154 (emphasis added).

[69] I borrow this example directly from Marcia Baron. Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife".

constantly undermined.[70] Whether her deference directly or indirectly cuts off her pursuit of her own interests, it seems clear that her deference to her husband does not allow her to fully flourish as an individual with her own projects and plans, but that she is rather a mere instrument to the achievement of her husband's goals. Given all of these concerns, it is clear that the literature although not always clear is correct; DW's deep deference is incompatible with her being self-constituting.

Autonomy

The literature discussing DW is not at all clear on what they mean by autonomy. Although, some in the literature refer to the condition described above of being self-constituting as that of "autonomy," self-constitution "involves more than an autonomous choice."[71] So that we can be clear about what we are talking about when we talk about DW's autonomy we will needed a clearer definition. For my purposes, autonomy is a thinner notion than that of self-constitution. Autonomy does not require that an agent engage in self-authoring activities, but only that her choices and actions in some important sense belong to her and no one else. Like self-constitution, autonomy is also undermined by deep deference.

An agent who is autonomous is one whose actions and choices are in an important sense *her own*. While the answers vary from account to account of autonomy, in general the primary question with rearguard to autonomy is to determine what makes an agent's attitudes, desires, plans, commitments, choices or actions her own and not attributable to

[70] I discuss this aspect of a commitment to deep deference in the final chapter. Also see Ibid.

[71] Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self". 154.

someone or something else. Whatever the criteria, if the person's choices or actions are attributable to someone or something else, then they fail to be autonomous. In general, if a person regularly fails to act in a way that reflects self-guidance we take their autonomy not only to be impaired in particular cases, but to be globally impaired a the level of being self-guided in general with regard to their whole life.

So as you can see autonomy is required for self-constitution but not vice versa. One can fail to have a self-authored life project and still be autonomous, but it would be impossible to engage in developing and pursuing one's own projects and goals if in an important sense one's choices and actions were not her own.

In addition to being a condition of self-constition, autonomy is also normally thought to be a condition of moral responsibility, but as I said before, the literature on deep deference normally sets aside questions of moral responsibility, and instead focuses on moral agency.[72] While being deeply deferential no doubt complicates ascriptions of moral responsibility, the literature agrees that the primary issue is of DW's ability to act as a good mroal agent not moral responsibility. However, being a good moral agent is different from having autonomy. The ability to be a good moral agent is related to how we treat others and concerns possible harm to others and what is owed to others. Autonomy on the other hand is about basic governance over one's own life. Autonomy is concerned with whether or not an action is attributable to an agent; good moral agency is concerned with whether or not that agent can act well with regard to others.

Going forward my focus will be on autonomy. The reason for this focus is that the other two aspects of agency undermined by deep deference are both related to autonomy in

[72] Superson, "The Deferential Wife Revisited: Agency and Moral Responsibility".

an important way and autonomy is most basic. Self-constitution is a richer notion than autonomy, one cannot be self-constituting if they are not autonomous. Autonomy is also necessary to exercising one's moral agency. To behave morally, one must have the power to do what is right and a non-autonomous person would lack that power. So we see that autonomy is a necessary condition and any kind of deep deference that violates autonomy can be safely criticized, because it undermines all three. Autonomy is a minimal condition that tells us if we at least have a candidate for appropriate deference.

Within the literature on DW, some say that she is autonomous, while many others say that she is not. Amongst those who say that she is not autonomous, they give a variety of different reasons. As the discussion of autonomy will now be the central focus, I will no longer confine myself to just talking about the literature on DW anymore. We must also think about what all of the various views of autonomy would say about her autonomy. On the one hand, more traditional conceptions of autonomy, like that of Harry Frankfurt, will say she is autonomous because she is satisfied with her deeply deferential role.[73] Other, traditional views, like that of Gerald Dworkin will say she is autonomous so long as she chose to be deeply deferential free from coercion or manipulation. On the other hand, much of the literature on being deeply deferential suggests that DW's autonomy is compromised by her deference. However, there is no clear consensus on what this claim amounts too. Some like Hill, will say DW is not autonomous because valuing deep deference conflicts with the value of autonomy, and thus one can never be both deeply deferential and autonomous. Others like Oshana will say she is not autonomous because her social situation

[73] For instance, DW would count as autonomous on Harry Frankfurt's account of autonomy. Harry G Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person* (Springer, 1988).

is one in which she does not have substantial control over her life. Still others wills suggest that her autonomy is compromised because she values her deference and that is value that is incompatible with being autonomous. Someone who wants a well thought out conclusion about relationship between DW and her autonomy and why she is or is not autonomous, is left wanting.

In this chapter I have introduced the literature on the deferential wife as an in-depth look at the nature of a particularly insidious form of deference I call deep deference. I have clearly identified the key characteristics of deep deference and disambiguated the literature on DW identifying three separate concerns discussed in the literature. Next, I will turn to look at autonomy in more detail.

In the next two chapters my aim is to navigate this terrain, to map out the various views of autonomy into several camps, and guide the reader through this terrain. In particular what I'm going to do is break down the autonomy literature into several basic camps of types of views and then discuss how they rule on DW's autonomy. Then I assess different theories for how they explain DW's lack of autonomy, in particular I take it as a given that she's not autonomous and add a number of other criteria for assessing these theories in relation to DW. Looking at the literature as a whole there is no clear picture of why DW is not autonomous, so I look at all of the kinds of views and ultimately endorse one view of autonomy which best explains her lack of autonomy.

## CHAPTER 4: AUTONOMY AND THE DEFERENTIAL WIFE

In the previous chapter I pinpointed three serious problems with being deeply deferential that are discussed in the literature. Deep deference undermines the Deferential Wife's ability to behave morally, her capacity for self-constitution, and her autonomy. I am most interested in DW's autonomy. What should we think about DW's autonomy? My intuition is that there is a tension between her deep deference and her ability to act autonomously. But, this raises the question of why isn't she autonomous? On what grounds can we explain her non-autonomy? Which theorists of autonomy are getting the story about her autonomy right? I want to explore these questions more deeply. In this chapter I am going to explain how different views of autonomy diagnose DW's autonomy. And here we need not confine ourselves to the literature that explicitly discusses DW's autonomy. If we really care about autonomy we shouldn't look at just a few theories that discuss DW's autonomy directly, but rather we should look at a wide variety of types of views of autonomy and see what they would say about DW. In this chapter I will review several different camps of autonomy theories, discuss how each of them would treat DW, and begin to narrow in on what sort of theory best captures the intuition that DW's autonomy is compromised by her deep deference.

There are many different conceptions of autonomy. The concept of individual autonomy plays an important role in various theoretical areas. For example, sometimes when people talk about autonomy they are concerned about its role in moral theories and conceptions of obligation and responsibility. While some people are concerned with autonomy's significance for moral and ethical theory, others think about its role in political

and social philosophy. Social theorists who are concerned about the limits of paternalism, for example, are concerned with autonomy because paternalist intervention cannot be justified if it violates a person's ability to act autonomously. Or, to take an example from political philosophy, the promotion of individual autonomy is a central feature of liberal political theory. My focus is on personal autonomy. The primary question that a theory of personal autonomy seeks to answer is what makes an agent's attitudes, desires, plans, commitments and actions her own, or to put it in terms of authority, which of her commitments have the authority to speak for the agent.[74] From here on out when I refer to autonomy, I mean personal autonomy.

While some discussions of personal autonomy refer to an agent's authentic creation of individual identity as a core part of the idea of autonomy, I call this thicker phenomenon of personal identity creation *self-constitution*, rather than autonomy. Instead I conceive of autonomy as a more minimal idea. The way I understand autonomy, an agent is autonomous when her actions and choices are in an important sense her *own*. In order to count as an agent's *own* an action or choice must be guided or directed by a standpoint that is in an important sense representative of the agent's individual perspective. This does not require that the agent have a well worked out self-conception or identity, rather it requires that at minimum she have an identifiable individual self.[75] To be autonomous in this minimal sense

[74] For this reasons much of the literature on autonomy is tied to questions about what exactly counts as the agent, what has the authority or power to authentically represent the agent's genuine point of view.

[75] Different theories of autonomy rely on different theories of self. Discussing theories of self would take me too far afield, but I endorse a very limited conception of self for the purposes of establishing minimal autonomy. This conception of self will become clear in the next chapter.

then an agent's actions and choices are in an important sense *her own* and not entirely attributable to someone or something else. What makes an action or choice an agent's *own* will vary from account to account of personal autonomy.[76]

In the previous chapter I introduced you to my primary example of deeply deferential behavior: Deferential Wife (DW). DW defers to her husband in all areas of their joint life. DW buys the clothes her husband prefers, so the choice in her own clothing does not even seem to be her own choice. When we question DW about her choices, the answers she gives are unsatisfying because they always reference her husband's wishes as reasons for deciding instead of her own. Her choices and actions do not seem attributable to her, but to her husband. DW seems to lack autonomy.

While our intuitions may suggest that DW is not autonomous, whether or not she will count as autonomous depends on what view of autonomy you consider. On some views DW will count as autonomous, on other views DW will not be autonomous, and on some it is not clear. In this chapter I will map the relevant literature on personal autonomy and discuss how these views would diagnose the autonomy of DW. Although various theoretical categories of personal autonomy have been proposed and utilized in attempts to map the literature on personal autonomy, for the purpose of discussing the autonomy of DW there

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[76] Not only will what counts as one's own will vary from account to account, different theorists focus on different levels of autonomy. Some are focused on the global notion of autonomy, which tells us whether or not an agent is in general autonomous, and others focus instead on particular instances of choice and action, or local autonomy. My concern is with local autonomy – I want to know wheter or not DW's particular choices or actions are autonomous. This is however deeply connected to global autonomy. For example, if DW's choices and actions are regularly not autonomous then she lacks global autonomy even if she may sometimes happen to act autonomously, and that is a significant agential defect.

are four overlapping core categories that are most relevant.[77] I will focus on formal, substantive, relational and non-relational views of autonomy.

A common distinction in the literature is that views of autonomy are either formal or substantive. Formal views are content and value neutral with respect to whether an agent meets the requirements of autonomy or not. As long as the agent meets the specified structural, procedural, or historical requirements deemed necessary for autonomy on a particular theory she will count as autonomous. Harry Frankfurt famously presents such a formal view. On such an account, so long as an agent identifies with her higher order desire to act in a certain way she will count as autonomous regardless of what that desire is. Substantive views on the other hand add a content-based requirement. These added requirements commit the autonomous agent to having certain values or desires or choosing only certain types of relationships if she is to count as autonomous. For example, the

[77]For other ways of categorizing the literature on autonomy see the following: 1)Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Automony, Agency, and the Social Self* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2000). Introduction. They refer to "formal views" as procedural and do not discuss the possibility of views that are both formal and relational, but their discussion is helpful here. Here views are organized by distinguishing between those that focus on the agent's internal psychological states and views that focus on the external, social conditions of autonomy. 2) James Stacey Taylor, *Personal Autonomy* (Cambridge University Press New York, 2005). Introduction. Taylor distinguishes between hierarchical, neo-hierarchical, and non-hierarchical views of autonomy. 3) Sarah Buss distinguishes between what she calls coherentist views, reasons responsivness views, and responsiveness to reasoning views. She also distinguishes between views that where the conditions are internal or external to the agent, and views that are synchronic or time slice views versus diachronic views of agency. Buss, Sarah, "Personal Autonomy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/personal-autonomy/

requirement that an agent must value her own independence in order to count as autonomous is a substantive requirement.[78]

Another distinction can be made between views that are sensitive to the role social relations play in the development and definition of autonomy, and views that are not. I will call these relational and non-relational views respectively. Relational views of autonomy "stress the ineliminable role that relatedness plays in persons' self-conceptions, relative to which autonomy must be defined."[79] One way that relational views do this is to stress the social conditions of autonomy, which proponents of relational views think are often ignored by traditional formal views of autonomy. Non-relational views are those theories of autonomy that are not relational.[80] These views are sometimes referred to as atomistic or individualistic because they focus on the individual agent separately from any social influences.[81] Non-relational views can be either formal or substantive. For example, both Frankfurt's formal view and Susan Wolf's substantive view are non-relational. The same is true for relational views. For example, Oshana and Westlund both have relational views but Oshana's is substantive and Westlund's is formal.

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[78] For similar requirements see Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society".

[79] Christman, John, "Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/autonomy-moral/>.

[80] "Individualistic" is used by Westlund. Andrea C Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy", *Hypatia* 24, no. 4 (2009): 26-49.

[81] Stoljar, Natalie, "Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/feminism-autonomy/>.

Relational views can be further distinguished; they can be either causally or constitutively relational. Causally relational views of autonomy are views that acknowledge the role that an agent's social embeddedness plays in the development of her autonomy.[82] Causally relational views focus on the influence of social factors on the development of an agent's autonomy. They do this by being careful to take into account the influence of sexist norms, oppressive social situations, and psychological coercion on the adoption of an agent's action-guiding commitments. The focus here is on the relational elements inherent in the process by which one comes to be autonomous or not. On constitutively relational views, on the other hand, social situations and relationships actually play a role in the definition of autonomy. For example, being in various kinds of social relationships may by the vary definition of what it is to be autonomous or be incompatible with being an autonomous agent. Although causally relational views are often formal and constitutively relational views are more likely to be substantive, the two categories should not be confused. Andrea Westlund, for example, contends that her view of autonomy is both formal and constitutively relational.

I turn now to look at each of these camps in more detail and examine particular views.

Formal

Traditionally in the literature on personal autonomy, most views are formal and non-relational. On formal views whether or not a person will count as autonomous depends on whether or not her actions are the result of the appropriate kind of critical reflection. There

[82] Many procedural views fit this definition of relational.

are a wide variety of formal accounts, and what distinguishes each of them is what is specified as the processes of critical reflection necessary for a person to count as autonomous.

There are two main camps of formal non-relational views: structural and proceduralist. Structurally formal views can be of two types: desire based and value based. I will begin by looking at each type of structural view, and then move onto discussing proceduralist views.

The most familiar example of a desire based structural formal view is Harry Frankfurt's theory that an agent is autonomous when she is motivated to act by a higher-order desire with which she identifies or is satisfied.[83] Frankfurt's view is a structural view, in that an agent will be autonomous just given that she has the appropriate motivational structure.[84] On a view like Frankfurt's what is important is that the agent's motivational

[83] Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person*.

[84] Frankfurt's view is hierarchical, meaning the structure that is required for autonomy is based on higher order desires that represent the agent's standpoint, this is in contrast to alternative structural views like Friedman's, where integration of various desires and preferences constitute an autonomous motivational structure and not a hierarchy. Marilyn Friedman critiques these top-down hierarchical views that identify an agent's point of view with her highest desire for their inability to deal with the effects of problematic socialization. We not only act from higher order desires which we endorse, we also assess those higher-order desires from the point of view of our lower level motivations. It is from this standpoint that one may assess whether or not her higher order motivations are the result of problematic socialization. Instead of the top down hierarchical model, Friedman favors a two way integration model of autonomy. Friedman proposes an alternative structural account in which what is necessary for autonomy is that an agent's lower level desires are integrated with her deeper and more enduring desires and principles. Marilyn Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2003).

structure is one that the agent is content with.[85] So long as an agent's action guiding desire does not conflict with any of her other higher order desires and her psychological harmony is maintained her choices and actions guided by her desire are her own and she is acting autonomously.

There is another important and relevant structural formal account of autonomy. Michael Bratman offers another structural account of autonomy that is a bit different than Frankfurt's. Rather than just being satisfied with a higher order desire the agent must have chosen and be satisfied with what Bratman calls her *self-governing policy*.[86] On Bratman's account of autonomy autonomous actions are those which are motivated by considerations whose functioning as reason giving is endorsed by a known self-governing policy with which the agent is *satisfied*. Bratman modifies what is required for satisfaction as well. Unlike Frankfurt's account of satisfaction, in which an agent is satisfied so long as they have no further wish to eliminate the desire in question, Bratman's satisfaction requires a certain sort of pro-attitude, meaning they must actually endorse the self-governing policy not just lack the desire to change it.[87]

The details of the views may very, but their diagnosis of DW's autonomy is the same. DW may be very happy with her deference. On a desire based structuralist formal view as long as DW endorses her desire to be deferential she acts autonomously when her actions issue from her commitment to defer to her husband. So on Frankfurt's view, as long as DW

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[85] Michael E Bratman, "Reflection, Planning, and Temporally Extended Agency", *The Philosophical Review* 109, no. 1 (2000): 35-61.

[86] Ibid. 47-48

[87] Ibid. 49-50

is satisfied with her desire for deference, she is autonomous. As long as DW's desire to be deferential does not conflict with any of her other higher order desires and her psychological harmony is maintained her choices and actions guided by her desire to be deferential are her own. This is the case with a reason governing policy based view as well, if DW freely chose her deference and actively endorses her reasoning governing policy to be deeply deferential then she will be autonomous even on a more complex view like Bratman's.

Another group of structurally formal views are views that claim that what is necessary for autonomy is that an agent's actions reflect her values rather than desires. Because these views are neutral as to what sorts of values the agent might have and still count as autonomous so long as she acts in accordance with them, these are formal views. An example of this type of type of view is Gary Watson's theory that an agent's actions will count as autonomous when her action results from her critical reflection on what action is worthwhile given her particular evaluative standpoint. If her action reflects her evaluative judgment, then she is autonomous with respect to it. We can see how DW could be autonomous on Watson's view. DW's deep deference to her husband very likely reflects the other values she holds as well. So, DW would count as autonomous on structurally formal views like those of Frankfurt, Bratman, and Watson. DW is deferential, but she may be very happy with her deference and value it.

Even Marilyn Friedman, who critiques top-down hierarchical views like that of Frankfurt for identifying an agent's point of view with her highest desire because they are unable to deal with the effects of problematic socialization, would consider DW autonomous. In her book, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics*, Friedman endorses a formal structural

view of autonomy.[88] However, Friedman sees autonomy as something that varies by degree, and that the formal requirements of her view show that someone like DW is minimally autonomous, although she would fall short of what she calls more robust autonomy.[89] She thinks this is how substantive views of autonomy are helpful, they help explain DW's shortcomings in terms of more robust autonomy and moral agency. In discussing DW, Friednman herself focuses on DW's lack of moral integrity rather than her lack of autonomy.[90] I will return to this idea of degrees of autonomy later in the dissertation.

Another camp of formal views is the proceduralist camp.[91] Like structural views, they require the agent to have a particular motivational structure to count as autonomous, what procedural views add is the requirement that the agent did not come to have such a motivational structure in a way that would estrange her from her own motivations. For example, if a person where brainwashed or manipulated into having particular higher order desires, action-guiding commitments, or values we wouldn't think that those desires, commitments, or values authentically represented the agent's point of view. For example, the history of how an agent came to desire something is relevant on Gerald Dworkin's

[88] Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics*.

[89] Marilyn Friedman, "Autonomy, Social Disruption, and Women", *Relational autonomy: Feminist perspectives on autonomy, agency, and the social self* (2000): 35-51. 41.

[90] Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife".

[91] These views are often called "historical views."

proceduralist view of autonomy[92]. On, Dworkin's view not only must an agent identify with her motivating desire, but she must also have come to have that desire autonomously. So if a person is motivated to exercise by her desire to look like a famous model, then we must ask whether or not her desire to look like a famous model was formed in the absence of coercion, manipulation, or other external forces before we can judge whether or not she is acting autonomously when she chooses to exercise.

John Christman defends a different variation of the proceduralist view, suggesting that it isn't necessary that one endorses the adoption of the motivational structure at the time it is developed but only that she would endorse it now upon reflection.[93] We might refer to this as the counterfactual requirement. The idea is that if we say to the woman who wants to look like the model – hey look, you only want to look like a model because you were brainwashed by the media, and she reflects on it and still says – yes but I really do want to look like a model and I would have even if I hadn't been brainwashed by the media, then she is acting autonomously. Proceduralist accounts have the advantage of being able to account for why we may not think that those who are coerced or manipulated into having certain desires or values are not autonomous with regard to them.

On procedural views it is not as clear whether or not DW will count as autonomous. We do not know enough about DW and how she came to be deeply deferential to diagnose her as autonomous or non-autonomous on a more crude understanding of procedural

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[92] This is why these views are sometimes also called historical views of autonomy. Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*.

[93] John Christman, "Autonomy and Personal History", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (1991): 1-24.

accounts. If she actually engaged in critical reflection, was free of brainwashing, manipulation, and coercion, and chose to be deeply deferential, then she would count as autonomous. If DW came to endorse her desire for her deferential role because of manipulation or brainwashing, or she did not properly engage in critical reflection, then she might not count as autonomous even if she acts in accordance with a motivational structure that she endorses. However, this does not necessarily mean that deeply deferential characters will not count as autonomous on such views. Dworkin and Christman both argue that characters like DW would be autonomous so long as they came to desire their deferential role through a process of procedural independence, or even if they were coerced or manipulated would have adopted the role anyways had they not been coerced or manipulated.[94] While things are more complicated on proceduralist views like those of Dworkin and Christman than structural views like Frankfurt's, DW will ultimately still be autonomous so long as she was not brainwashed or manipulated. As long as DW could in theory reflectively endorse the procedure by which she came to have the desire to be deferential she will count as autonomous on a counterfactual view like Christman's. Thus, given a particular sort of history and reflective endorsement of her deference, DW would count as autonomous even on procedural formal accounts.

To sum up, all of these views offer formal requirements for autonomy. As long as the person's underlying psychology meets certain formal requirements the agent's action will count as her own even if her desires or values are ones that others may find objectionable. What is interesting is that on all of these formal views of autonomy, contrary to our

[94] For example, Dworkin argues that a son who has committed to defer to his mother in all that he does would still be autonomous so long as he had autonomously chosen to defer to his mother.Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*. 22-23

intuitions, DW would count as autonomous.[95] It is likely that DW is perfectly content with deferring to her husband. Those actions, choices, and commitments that spring from DW's psychological endorsement of her deference are attributable to her. For the most part the literature on DW focuses on views that are not only formal, but also non-relational, views like those of Frankfurt and Dworkin, to critique them for inappropriately diagnosing DW as autonomous.

Substantive Non-Relational

In contrast to formal views, most substantive views of autonomy will tell us DW is not autonomous. Substantive views do not reject formal and procedural conditions of autonomy; they simply deny that they are sufficient. According to proponents of substantive non-relational views, while appropriate kinds of critical reflection and procedural independence may be necessary conditions of autonomy, they do not guarantee an agent's autonomy. Substantive views of autonomy require that agents not only meet certain competency requirements in order to count as autonomous, but in order to be autonomous agents must have certain kinds of desires or values. If one takes it to be a requirement of autonomy that one value her independence, then DW will surely fail to be autonomous.

Substantive views can be either strong or weak.[96] Strongly substantive accounts of personal autonomy place value constraints on the content of what can count as an

[95] Note, so far I have only discussed views that are both formal and non-relational.

[96] See the Introduction of Mackenzie and Stoljar, , *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Automony, Agency, and the Social Self*. for an overview of the distinction. See also, Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy". Holroyd, "Substantively Constrained Choice and Deference"..

autonomous choice. Substantive demands can be either positive or negative. Positive demands require that certain things must be desired by an agent in order for her to be autonomous. Negative demands limit the autonomous agent from acting from desires or values that are incompatible with autonomy. Weakly substantive views do not place any constraints on the content of autonomous choice, rather weakly substantive theories of autonomy require that agents have certain attitudes that reflect that the agent values themselves as an agent. For example, requirements that one must have self-respect, self-confidence in oneself as an agent, or meet certain self-worth conditions are all weakly substantive criteria.[97]

Strongly substantive accounts of personal autonomy place value constraints on the content of what can count as an autonomous choice. On such views, some things just cannot be chosen autonomously. For example, Susan Wolf's view of autonomy is strongly substantive.[98] Unlike formal view that say that the agent standpoint is constituted by her authentic desires or values, Wolf argues that only certain kinds of desires or values are appropriate candidates for representing the agent standpoint. Wolf argues that only those values that reflect an objective conception of the Good are those that will count and our conception of the Good is determined by Reason. On her view, even if a person valued her deference, if deference does not reflect an objective conception of the Good the person

[97] Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy". Robin S Dillon, "Toward a Feminist Conception of Self-Respect", *Hypatia* 7, no. 1 (1992): 52-69. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, one could also read Hill as having a weakly substantive view but that the strongly substantive reading seems not only more accurate, but far more interesting.

[98] Wolf, Susan. "Freedom Within Reason". In *Personal Autonomy*. Edited by James Stacey Taylor. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 268-276.

would not be autonomous. Wolf would claim that subservience is not something that is objectively valuable and thus choosing a life of subservience and deference is incompatible with autonomy. On such a view, the very choice to be deferential cannot be an autonomous choice and being deferential is never compatible with being autonomous. Thus, DW would fail to count as autonomous on Wolf's view.

Natalie Stoljar presents another strongly substantive view. Stoljar's view has the specific aim of illuminating concerns about oppressive socialization. Stoljar relies on the "feminist intuition" to diagnose characters like DW as lacking autonomy.[99] According to the "feminist intuition," preferences formed under the influence of oppressive norms of femininity are incompatible with autonomy.[100] A choice is only autonomous so long as its content does not reflect oppressive norms. On such a model the choice to be a self-sacrificing wife would clearly reflect oppressive norms of femininity and be incompatible with autonomy, thus DW would fail to be autonomous. It seems that even if DW was not oppressively socialized, she still cannot be autonomous because her commitment to defer to her husband reflects oppressive norms of femininity.

In discussions of the Deferential Wife, Thomas Hill Jr. advocates for a substantive Kantian view of autonomy to show that DW is not and cannot be autonomous.[101] Let's look

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[99] Stoljar, "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition".

[100] Ibid. 95.

[101] One may think that Hill's view is actually only weakly substantive because all he really seems to be requiring is that DW value herself as a moral agent, that she have self-respect. While I do think this is a plausible reading, others in the literature, notably Jules Holroyd read Hill as having a strongly substantive view. While I think that a more in depth discussion of which reading is more appropriate would be fruitful I set it aside for now, and instead, I

at Hill's discussion of DW. Hill introduces us to DW and tells us that she is not autonomous because she fails to respect herself. Hill's conception of autonomy requires that for an agent to be autonomous that she have an attitude of self-respect, and that being deeply deferential is incompatible with self-respect, thus DW fails to be autonomous because her deep deference entails a lack of self-respect. In defending Hill, Marcia Baron in her paper, *Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife,* defends a version of this view as well.[102]

In her critique of Hill, Jules Holroyd identifies the substantive condition of autonomy in play here as "V-Choice: a necessary condition for autonomous choice is that the agent choose in accordance with the value of self-respect."[103] This is based on Hill's Kantian view, so according to Holroyd, given this Kantian conception it follows from V-Choice that the "necessary condition for autonomous choice is that the choice is in accordance with (the value of) the moral law."[104] The value of the moral law requires that every person treat every other person with a basic kind of respect for their human dignity as the kind of being who can make free and rational choices about how to direct her life. According to Hill, this means we have a duty to respect this capacity not only in others, but also in ourselves. Being deeply deferential violates one's moral duty to respect oneself and undermines one's capacities as a moral agent – the only kind of agency that we have as moral beings.

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adopt Holroyd's well worked out strongly substantive reading of Hill. Holroyd, "Substantively Constrained Choice and Deference".

[102] Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife".

[103] Holroyd, "Substantively Constrained Choice and Deference". 2.

[104] Ibid. 3.

On Hill's view, DW fails to meet V-choice. No matter how much she thinks she wishes to defer to her husband, on the Hill-Baron model she is simply confused or misunderstands her rights. So long as she puts the needs of her husband ahead of her own she shows a wanton disregard for herself that constitutes a violation of self-respect and thus a lack of autonomy.

Paul Benson characterizes his most recent view as a weakly substantive view. Rather than make claims about what kind of normative content, values and preferences, are compatible with autonomy, he focuses on the content of necessary attitudes of autonomous agents. "Autonomy's normative substance resides in agents' attitudes toward their own authority to speak and answer for their decisions."[105] A person must have a minimal amount of self-worth or self-trust in her ability to make choices in order for actions to count as her own. While it may seem that DW meets this condition, Benson does not think so. It seems that the very nature of deferring to another person for all of one's major decisions and the fear of being undercut by this decision maker undermine one's confidence in one's own ability to make choices. On such a model DW would not be autonomous because her deferential attitude is incompatible with having an attitude of self-worth.

In what follows, I will only be discussing strongly substantive views. Because there is a spectrum here and the line between weakly substantive and formal views is blurry at best. In my evaluation of these different types of views, I focus on strongly substantive views,

[105] Benson, "Feminist Intuitions and the Normative Substance of Autonomy". 125.

which are clearly distinct from formal views. For practical purposes, I will class weakly substantive views like Benson's as more closely related to formal views.[106]

Substantive Relational

Like Wolf, Stoljar, and Hill's conceptions of autonomy, Mariana Oshana presents us with a strongly substantive view.[107] However, Oshana's claim is different. She rejects Hill's substantive claim that one cannot chose non-autonomy autonomously because it conflicts with the value of self-respect. Rather, her claim is that once an unequal social role is chosen the person will no longer be autonomous because an unequal social standing is incompatible with being autonomous. So, the choice to be deeply deferential is non-autonomous not because it is incompatible with the value of self-respect, but because it is incompatible with a particular social situation. Her view is not only substantive then, it is relational as well.

Oshana's view is both substantive and *constitutively* relational.[108] Her view of autonomy defines certain kinds of social situations as being compatible or incompatible with autonomy. She claims that to be an autonomous agent one must not *in fact* be affected by other persons, by social institutions, or by natural circumstances in ways that render her

[106] This is of particular importance in the next chapter when I look at the limits of substantive views. Weakly substantive views will not always be targets of the same criticisms I charge strongly substantive views with.

[107] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society".

[108] Oshana is not talking about local autonomy, but talking about global autonomy – but the two are related and we can still see how her view would assess whether or not the actions and choices of DW are attributable to her.

incapable of living a self-directed life.[109] On her view, autonomy is fundamentally incompatible with unequal dependent relationships.

Let's look at the details of Oshana's view. Oshana identifies several conditions which together are sufficient for autonomy. To be an autonomous agent, one must have appropriate capacities for critical reflection, have come to adopt the commitments that guide her choices and actions in accordance with a certain amount of procedural independence, have had access to a range of relevant options, and finally she must meet a certain range of social relational conditions.[110] The first two conditions are simply formal conditions for autonomy. The latter two conditions are substantive with the last one being specifically relational. The first substantive condition, that of having access to a range of relevant options basically says that one cannot choose a deeply deferential role autonomously unless it was a genuine option not choose that role. We can call this the *principle of alternate possibilities of autonomy condition*.[111]

In addition to the substantive condition that a person must have genuine options available in choosing a deferential role Oshana presents a specifically social-relational

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[109] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society". 93.

[110] For these criteria see: Ibid. 94.
Oshana expands these in her 2006 book, but for my purposes these are sufficient. The conditions of personal autonomy in the 2006 book are as follows: Epistemic competence, rationality, procedural independence, self-respect, control, access to a range of relevant options, social relational properties (substantive independence). (Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*. – ch. 4)

[111] This way of putting things is taken from Haji, Ishtiyaque. *Alternative Possibilities, Personal Autonomy, and Moral.* Taylor, *Personal Autonomy*.

substantive condition of autonomy.[112] If a person is to count as autonomous she must be able to have and pursue "values, interests, needs, and goals different from those who have influence and authority over her, without risk of reprisal sufficient to deter her in this pursuit."[113] Call this the *social independence condition*.

Oshana's primary example of a deferential wife, a character she calls Harriet, is a bit different than DW. Oshana's primary targets are formal and procedural accounts, so Harriet is a deferential wife who is definitely autonomous on these views. However, it is clear that DW, as well as Harriet, would be non-autonomous on Oshana's view. On Oshana's account DW would fail to be autonomous even if she were able to engage in other autonomy conferring behaviors such as having substantial control over many of her choices, had critically reflected on and endorsed her deference and had genuine options to choose not to be deferential. In describing Harriett, Oshana says "Harriet has the "right" psychology. Nonetheless *she fails to be autonomous – not because she wants to be subservient, but because she is subservient*. Her lack of autonomy is due to her personal relations with others and to the social institutions of her society."[114] Even if, like Harriet, a woman has chosen to subordinate her

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[112] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society".94. She actually gives a series of "external" criteria, but only the last is specifically social-relaitonal in the relevant sense. The is that if an agent is to count as autonomous she must be able to "defend herself (or be granted defense against) against psychological and physical assault…[and] attempts to deprive her of her economic and civil rights." A further criteria is that outside of particular functions where taking responsibility for the needs, expectations and failings of another are required such as parenting and legal representation, such taking responsibility is incompatible with being autonomous. These are all social relational criteria because they define particular social relations as either constituting or undermining autonomy.

[113] Ibid. 94

[114] Ibid. 90 (emphasis added).

wishes, desires, and preferences to those of another she is not autonomous because of her social situation with respect to the person to whom she defers. It is clear that DW's social situation, regardless of how she came to be in it, is one that Oshana thinks is incompatible with her being autonomous.

Formal Relational

Andrea Westlund stresses another dimension to DW's deference. To illustrate this feature of DW's deference, Westlund asks us to imagine a scenario in which DW's husband has decided to take a job in Minneapolis, which is apparently quite far from where she currently resides and much colder.[115] Her friend questions her about this decision, and tries to get her to share her reasons for consenting to the move, raising critical points along the way, such as "it's so far from your family" and " you get so depressed in cold, gray weather." DW continues to only cite her husband's reasons as her own: "it will make him happy." DW cannot answer why she defers to her husband, she just does. DW treats the fact that her husband desires to move to Minnesota as a decisive reason for her. Westlund uses this example to emphasize the dialogical nature of the critical reflection which is necessary for autonomous choice and action. The DW's inability to take criticisms seriously and answer for herself is thus the primary indication of DW's lack of autonomy on Westlund's formal relational view of autonomy.

[115] Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". 487.

Westlund grounds her argument for her formal relational view in the common practice of holding others answerable for their conduct. We hold people answerable for their conduct in various ways. We hold people answerable for wrongdoing. For example, when a teacher asks her student why he cheated on an exam and demands that he explain himself -- she is holding him answerable. In the case of wrongdoing an appropriate answer consists in a justification, exculpating explanation, or acknowledgement of the wrong done. The student will say he had to cheat or he wouldn't graduate, explain that he did not realize that letting another person look at his test was cheating, or admit that he knew what he was doing was wrong and apologize. But, we don't just hold people answerable for specific choices and actions in cases of wrongdoing. We may also hold someone answerable in cases that do not involve wrongdoing. For example, a person may question my decision to get a PhD in Philosophy. They may want to know why I chose to get my degree, and would expect me to cite reasons for my decision. Westlund's discussion of DW's friend's questions about her move to Minnesota is just such an example. Her friend was not accusing her of wrongdoing, but asking her to answer for her choice.

While we sometimes hold people responsible for specific actions and choices, we also sometimes hold people responsible for what are called their *action guiding commitments*. Action guiding commitments are desires, wants, preferences, reasons, intentions or plans that guide our actions and choices. When someone cites an action guiding commitment as an explanation then we can ask them to answer for that. Take the example of the DW being questioned about her decision to move to Minnesota for her husband's job. We are asking her to give us reasons for her actions. We are asking why she is choosing to act the way she is and often this requires that she explain the guiding attitude, desire, wish or intention that is

leading her to choose to act in the way that she does. We don't just question her choice, we question her commitment to defer to her husband. When we hold other's answerable we raise critical challenges about one's attitudes, desires, wishes and intentions. For example, when we ask a student why she wants to enroll in a certain class we are questioning her desire to learn about a certain topic. On Westlund's view it is this familiar practice of holding others answerable for their action guiding commitments that serves as a model for understanding how we hold ourselves answerable for our action guiding commitments. In short then, we sometimes hold people responsible for specific actions and choices, but we also sometimes hold people responsible for what Westlund and I call their action guiding commitments.

The capacity for being appropriately held responsible then is an important feature of being an autonomous agent on a formal relational view like Westlund's. We hold people responsible for their conduct and we expect them to respond appropriately. If a person is unable to respond appropriately we would find them to suffer from a deficiency of agency.

However, autonomy requires more than the capacity to appropriately respond to being held responsible by another, it also involves holding oneself answerable or what Westlund calls self-responsibility. The self-responsible agent is one who holds herself answerable. A self-responsible agent feels the demand that she answer from within, or as Westlund puts it, she feels the normative weight of critical challenges. A self-responsible agent "has *internalized* the relationship of holding and being held answerable."[116]

[116] Ibid. 496.

According to Westlund, the self-responsible agent will feel the need to answer well when presented with a flesh and blood critic. A self-responsible agent is unlikely to provide a merely adequate response, but will feel obligated to provide the best possible answer they can, because they feel the normative weight of the questions being asked.[117] For example, a student who holds herself answerable will feel guilty if she brushes off her teacher's questions about her absences with merely adequate excuses. Although a merely adequate answer may get one "off the hook," a self-responsible person takes themselves to owe the best possible answer they can give. One who holds herself answerable will feel the need to answer well and answering well requires that an agent's answers meet inter-subjectively sharable standards of acceptability.[118] For example, if I question a student about her missing assignments, only certain answers would meet my expectations. If she tells me she has been sick, that she misunderstood the assignment, or even if she simply admits she did not do them and has no legitimate explanation, these would all be appropriate answers. If the student answered however that she did not turn in her assignments because doing so would have resulted in the world coming to an abrupt end or because her roommate told her not to, I would be unlikely to find these answers satisfactory, at least not without further inquiry. Self-responsible agents want to give answers that are appropriate.

Another feature of a person who holds herself answerable is that she is unlikely to wait until she is actually confronted by another person and will "be disposed to engage in an intrapersonal version of critical dialogue," which allows her to revise and develop her own

[117] Ibid. 497.

[118] Ibid. 497.

action guiding commitments.[119] For example, in reflective moments a self-responsible person will question her commitments, such as her commitment to her career or to her endorsement of a particular political position.

Even when we are holding ourselves answerable to a hypothetical critic, the demand for an answer is external. It is "external" because it "is a perspective on one's current motivational hierarchy (or on components thereof) *from* outside of it – rather than the sort of higher-order but still 'internal' perspective on one's own motives that one affords oneself simply by making one's current endorsements the objects of yet higher-order attitudes."[120] We hold ourselves answerable from the perspective "of an abstract or idealized other," we present ourselves with serious challenges to our commitments, and we demand that we respond.[121] Although this first feature of responsibility for self is intra-personal, she means it's in principle second personal. She really is modeling this on the interpersonal case. It really is a constitutively relational view; autonomy is constituted by social relations on this account.

In short, on Westlund's view agential authority is not found in one's *identification* with her self-governing policy, but rather in one's readiness to answer for her self-governing policies. This involves both the capacity to answer for oneself to critical perspectives and a readiness to hold oneself responsible. The latter requires that the autonomous agent will feel

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[119] Ibid. 497. This readiness to engage in intrapersonal dialogue is the feature of Westlund's view that I am most interested in.

[120] Ibid. 506.

[121] Westlund at times seems to talk about intra-personal dialogue as if it were merely internalized inter-personal dialogue, which is misleading.

the need to answer well when pressed inter-personally by a flesh and blood critic and that she will be disposed to engage in a form of dialogical critical self-reflection.

Westlund's view is both relational and formal. Unlike substantive views, her view is utterly formal. It has no substantive requirements that autonomous choice requires that an agent choose in accordance with some normative criteria. Rather the agent must simply be ready to answer for her choices whatever they are.

DW fails to be autonomous on Westlund's model because she does not meet the key marks of self-answerability. DW "seems not to have internalized the relationship of holding and being held answerable for her action-guiding commitments."[122] We see this defect in DW's agency when we consider the limits of engaging a person like her in inter-personal dialogue. When a friend questions her commitment to deference, DW cannot even give the question proper uptake, she simply reiterates her overriding desire to defer. Remember the example of DW's husband wanting the family to move to Minnesota. Her friend asks her to justify her actions, to explain her reasons for deciding to move to Minnesota, but she fails to feel the normative weight of the question about why she defers to him even when it is not in her best interest. DW not only makes the choice to move to Minnesota by yielding her preferences, wishes, and desires to those of her husband, but she cannot supply reasons for why she does so that are not themselves deferential. DW's deference is so deep that she fails to be a "distinct and separate evaluator of practical reasons."[123] When it comes to her husband's wishes, she cannot or does not give any practical weight to her own preferences

[122] Ibid. 499.

[123] Ibid. 487.

and wishes, if she has any at all. She cannot answer for herself because the only reasons she can give for her move and for her deference are her husband's. This is profoundly frustrating and unsettling.

On Westlund's answerability view of autonomy then the key feature of DW's deference is this lack of perspective from which to answer criticisms. "If someone asks her why *she* has opted to defer, or what considerations *she* can offer in favor of doing so, she appears not to grasp how the first-personal perspective from which she is being asked to defend her deference might be staked out independently of the perspective to which she defers."[124] DW's lack of answerability renders her non-autonomous on Westlund's view.

With the details of the different views of autonomy before us, I will now turn to assessing their ability to explain DW's seeming lack of autonomy.

[124] Ibid. 488.

## CHAPTER 5: AN EXPLANATION OF WHY THE DEFERENTIAL WIFE FAILS TO BE AUTONOMOUS

In the previous chapters I have narrowed in on the kind of deference that the deferential wife (DW) is exhibiting, what I termed *deep deference*. I then sorted through all of the different concerns about DW's deference, which tend to get conflated in the literature. I disambiguated these concerns into three different areas of concern: DW's inability to be a good moral agent, her inability to be self-constituting, and her inability to act autonomously. I then divided the autonomy literature up into four overlapping and interconnected camps of formal, substantive, relational, and non-relational views. I reviewed these different camps of theories of autonomy discussing how each of them would treat DW. In this chapter I turn to the project of determining which of these types of accounts of autonomy best explains why DW's deference is incompatible with her acting autonomously and what it means for her to be non-autonomous. I will begin by articulating what will be the criteria for a best explanation of DW's non-autonomy. I then turn to analyzing each of the camps of views discussed in chapter four with regard to these criteria ultimately arguing that a formal relational theory of autonomy will do the best job of explaining DW's lack of autonomy.

A view of autonomy that can explain the incompatibility of autonomy and deep deference will need to meet several criteria. First, theories on which even the likes of DW would count as autonomous are not helpful because the boundary I am looking for is non-existent. So my first criterion for identifying a theory of autonomy that explains why DW is not autonomous is that it must actually diagnose her as non-autonomous. Second, the view

must be consonant with the idea that autonomy is socially constructed and hindered. Third, it must tell us why deep deference is incompatible with autonomy without being question begging, underdescribed, or depending on historical criteria. Finally, it must do all of this without overdiagnosing non-autonomy, especially in the case of caregivers who may be vulnerable to such diagnosis because of the nature of their roles. While these criteria reflect things I take to be necessary for a good theory of autonomy in general, they are also of particular importance to my project and to fully understanding DW's lack of autonomy. I will now defend these criteria.

First, a good theory of autonomy must diagnose DW as non-autonomous. The reason for this requirement is obvious given that what I am trying to do here is to explain why DW is not autonomous. Of course, given what I have said about DW, this is not just a criterion specific to my project, rather I think there are good reasons in general to be wary of theories of autonomy on which DW would count as autonomous (because she's not). In general you don't want theories of autonomy that are so permissive that anyone would count as autonomous, even someone like DW. Certainly given my project and the fact that the whole point here is to explain why DW is not autonomous, it is utterly imperative that the view of autonomy I am looking for must diagnose her as non-autonomous.

Second, it is very important to me that a theory of autonomy takes into account how socialization, especially oppressive socialization, both constructs and hinders a person's autonomy. I will call this the *social concern*. There are good reasons for theories of autonomy in general to take this worry into account. The foundation of the concern is that oppressive socialization is a threat to autonomy. Racism, sexism, religious suppression, and homophobia can all take away one's basic authority over one's own life. They can eliminate

one's sense of self through degradation, manipulation and coercion and all of this can destroy one's ability to act autonomously. In other words, one's actual social situation can and does affect one's autonomy. Autonomy is both socially constructed and hindered by oppressive social contexts. I think it is very important that we are careful not to disregard the danger of desires and values that are formed by oppressive socialization, and so any good theory of autonomy must acknowledge the ways in which such values can undermine the autonomy of the oppressed. I think it counts against a theory of autonomy if it does not take the social concern seriously.

While I think it is a general strike against an account of autonomy if it does not take the oppressive socialization concern seriously, it is also very relevant to my project. My primary example of deep deference is a heterosexual married woman who defers to her husband in all areas of their joint lives, and traditional marriages, like those of DW, are often thought of as a primary example of an oppressive social context. Feminists of all stripes have long been critical of traditional marriage because it reinforces women's subordination to men.[125] Marriage has historically been used as a tool to economically and politically disempower women, and is still used as a tool of sexist oppression in many parts of the world. The adoption of roles like that of DW are often the result of psychological tools of

[125] Card, Claudia, 1996, "Against Marriage and Motherhood," *Hypatia*, 11(3): 1–23; de Beauvoir, Simone, 1949, *Le Deuxième sexe*, Paris: Gallimard. Translated as *The Second Sex*, H. M. Parshley (trans.), New York: Vintage, 1972; Ettelbrick, Paula, "Since When is Marriage a Path to Liberation?," 1989, *Out/look: National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly*, 6(9): 14–17; reprinted in Andrew Sullivan (ed.), *Same-Sex Marriage: Pro and Con*, New York: Vintage, 2004, pp. 122–128; Firestone, Shulamith, 1970, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, New York: William Morrow and Co; Okin, Susan Moller. 1989, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, New York: Basic Books; Wollstonecraft, Mary, 1792 [1997], *The Vindications: The Rights of Men, The Rights of Woman*, D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (eds.), Peterborough, ON.: Broadview.

sexist oppression like the morality of self-sacrifice, which tells women to value being deferential and sacrifice their interests to those of their husband and family.[126] The reality of sexist oppression and its relation to traditional marriage makes it imperative that I be sensitive to concerns about oppressive socialization in my discussion of DW's autonomy. So it is of particular importance to my project that any theory of autonomy I use to explain why she is not autonomous must be able to take into account oppressive social contexts as well as the social nature of autonomy generally.

In views that attempt to take into account the social concern there is a tendency to be either question begging or at least under-described when it comes to answering why deep deference is incompatible with autonomy. I don't just want the view to acknowledge the social concern, I want the view to be able to explain why certain social situations hinder one's autonomy. It's one thing to know our autonomy is hindered in certain social situation, it's another thing to know why the social situation can do that. The view I am looking for must be able to spell out why particular unequal and dependant relationships are incompatible with autonomy without presupposing such. This is what is meant when I say the view cannot be question begging. Although not directly question-begging, there can also be a tendency to under-describe the criteria for autonomy such that those criteria miss the mark. Views that beg the question directly presuppose that deference is incompatible with autonomy, whereas underdescribed views use another term, or point to a feature of both deference and non-autonomy without explaining how or why that feature is incompatible with autonomy or necessarily connected to deep deference.

[126] Tormey, "Exploitation, Oppression and Self-sacrifice".

Obviously at a general level question-begging is bad philosophy. Any theory of autonomy that somehow presupposes what it is trying to explain, namely autonomy, is not an ideal theory of autonomy. We obviously don't want theories of autonomy that beg the question, but what I have in mind here is more specific.

I don't want a theory that begs the question with regard to the specific question I am asking, which is, "why does DW's deep deference render her choices and actions non-autonomous?" One cannot simply presuppose that deep deference like DW's is incompatible with autonomy in the first place. That doesn't get us anywhere. In order to explain why deep deference is incompatible with exercising autonomy, the argument cannot rely on a conception of autonomy that premises itself on the incompatibility of deep deference and autonomy. For example, any theory that claims that the choice to be "subservient" is not compatible with autonomy is building into the definition of autonomy precisely the question I want to answer without saying why it is the case that that particular content is incompatible with autonomy. Relying on such a view to say that deference undermines autonomy would just be utterly unhelpful.

In order to fully understand DW's deference, the view of autonomy used needs to tell us why a particular social situation, value, or attitude is incompatible with autonomy, so that we can identify exactly where the problem with DW lies. Views which are underdescribed fail to give the right kind of information. Views can underdescribe the incompatibility of DW's deference with autonomy in a couple of ways. First, a view may rely on related concepts whose relation to either autonomy or deference is unclear. Some theorists will give criteria that are related to but perhaps not essentially tied to deference as necessary for autonomy. For example, if we say that deference is incompatible with

autonomy because it is humiliating, then it follows that anything that is humiliating is incompatible with autonomy, but this leaves us no closer to understanding why deep deference that is not humiliating is incompatible with autonomy or really why humiliation and autonomy are incompatible. Another way they may be underdescribed is to simply not give the whole picture or go deep enough in describing what aspect of her deference is incompatible with autonomy. Some views will say that some feature of a subordinate or deferential role is incompatible with autonomy without saying why that particular feature is itself incompatible with autonomy. For example, a view may say having to take on responsibility for other's physical needs is incompatible with being autonomous, but that simply raises the question of why such responsibility is incompatible with exercising autonomy.[127] In this sense these views kick the can down the road. Views which are question-begging or under-described are not helpful to my project because they don't answer the animating questions of my project in a satisfying way.

In addition to not begging the question and being underdescribed, I think that in order to properly understand DW's lack of autonomy the view should not rely on historical criteria. Historical constraints are those that require that one's action-guiding commitments be arrived at through critical reflection, and only those commitments that have been acquired in an acceptable way count as "one's own."

I think that it counts as a strike against any theory of autonomy if it relies on historical criteria. Historical criteria for diagnosing deference are unhelpful in two ways: they

[127] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society". 94

can be both too demanding and not demanding enough.[128] First, they can be too demanding because they require that we know too much about our own and others psychological histories. While historical criteria can be too demanding on the one hand, on the other hand, historical criteria are also not demanding enough. It seems that if one were actually able to establish that their desires had been adopted properly, then one could simply "go on 'auto-pilot' with respect to those commitments from that moment on."[129] One might think that if a woman came to be deeply deferential in some autonomous way then she will still be autonomous now, because she is governed by her commitment to be deferential, but it could be the case that she is somehow estranged from her action-governing policy to defer and it is not really her "own."[130] For this reason, relying only on historical criteria to determine whether or not DW is autonomous may lead to the wrong sort of results about whether or not she is actually governed by her commitment to deep deference or whether or not she is merely in its grip.

Furthermore, historical criteria are utterly unhelpful to the project at hand. What we really want to know is whether or not DW is governed by her commitment to deference and if not why not. We know nothing about DW's past or by what process she came to be deeply deferential and she herself may not be able to clearly give an account of how she came to be deeply deferential, or if she was ever properly governed by her commitment to

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[128] The discussion here is influenced significantly by Westlund "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". 505.

[129] Westlund "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". 504.

[130] Those who rely solely on discussions of the choice to be deferential to diagnose non-autonomy in DW are problematic for this reason, but I will discuss this choice more in the next chapter.

deference. Even if she were able to do so it is unclear whether this should make us think she is autonomous given concerns about whether or not she is on "auto-pilot." What does seem to be the case is that she is not governed by but rather in the grip of her deep deference now. So, we want a view that will give us the right sorts of results and historical criteria confuse matters.

Finally, in an attempt to address concerns about social oppression some views fall prey to another issue – their criteria miss the mark and over-diagnose people as non-autonomous. One way this occurs is that views which take the social concern seriously sometimes put forth the claim that there are some values one ought to hold, like valuing autonomy or independence, and that these are valid for a person independently of whether or not she herself judges them to be of value for her. For example, one might say that a woman who endorses her own subordination has the wrong kind of values, she does not value what she ought to value. While it is clear that being able to criticize oppressive choices and values, especially when they work to perpetuate oppression, is important to honoring the concern regarding social oppression, there is a very real danger to saying that any person who endorses these attitudes and preferences should not count as autonomous. This is particularly true if we think about the fact that many persons, and in particular women, chose to be caregivers, and they do so without any danger to their autonomy. We want to be sure that our view isn't going to over-diagnose autonomy such that care relations are disrespected.

DW defers to her husband, and part of her deferential behavior is to put his needs ahead of her own. While I argue that she does so pathologically, I am sensitive to the fact that many people, and in particular many women, engage in acts of care in which they set

aside their own wants and needs for those of another and that they do this without any threat to their autonomy. We need a view of autonomy that is sensitive to this. I do not want to say that care is incompatible with autonomy. While DW seems to have crossed a line, most deference and care are not incompatible with acting autonomously and so we must be careful to avoid views that tend to over-diagnose non-autonomy.

The reason that over-diagnosing persons as non-autonomous is so dangerous is two fold. First, by counting those who are in subordinate roles as non-autonomous we further silence the public voice of those in oppressive social situations – those who most need a public voice.[131] Silencing a person's public voice is bad from the perspective of social and political autonomy. According to liberalism everyone should have a voice even if the values they expound are contrary to those of everyone else. We don't want to go around marking people off as lacking autonomy willy nilly because it comes at a cost. Just being in an oppressive situation does not necessarily mean you have no voice. For example, in Alex Haley's novel, *Roots,* the character Kunta Kinte refuses to be called by his slave name Toby even though it costs him serious bodily harm.[132] There is no doubt that Kunta Kinte is in a subordinate role, but to say that he is not autonomous is clearly wrong and would simply further reinforce his oppression.

Second, marking oppressed and subordinate persons as non-autonomous makes them more vulnerable to unwarranted interferences in the exercise of their autonomy. When a person is marked as nonautonomous, it may make us more likely to think that forcing her

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[131] John Christman, "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves", *Philosophical Studies* 117, no. 1 (2004): 143-164.

[132] Alex Haley, *Roots* (Random House, 1994).

to do what we think is in her best interest is justified. The exercise of autonomy is the limit condition of such paternalistic intervention, if we count those in oppressive situations or caregiver roles as non-autonomous, then we may invite unwarranted interferences in people's autonomy. Saying that any unequal social role is incompatible with the exercise of autonomy gives other people reasons or permission to intervene with the choices of those in unequal social roles. This is a very real danger.

It is important to note here that we are discussing autonomy as self-governance. We are concerned with DW's inability to exercise her autonomy. Autonomy as active self-governance demarks a clear line in which paternalistic intervention in which we force someone to do what we think is in her best interests cannot be permitted. Thus, it is clear that someone interfering paternalistically with someone who is self-governed is unjustifiable. I will discuss a different sort of limit suggested in the work of Agnieszka Jaworska in chapter seven. For Jaworska, the capacity for autonomy is enough to mark one as having what she calls *full moral standing* and this is sufficient for us to at least give some weight to the desires and wishes of those like DW who lack full blown autonomy, but may still have the capacity for autonomy.[133] This limit is more basic and would seem to obviate this more stringent criterion. However, while interfering paternalistically with those who merely have the capacity for autonomy has a normative cost it is not the same as saying that there is a clear prohibition against interference of any kind, which is at issue when determining whether or not one is exercising her autonomy which is what I am primarily concerned with here.

[133] Agnieszka Jaworska, "Caring and Full Moral Standing", *Ethics* 117, no. 3 (2007): doi:10.1086/512780.

In selecting a theory of autonomy we need a conception of autonomy that can be used as a tool to highlight the role oppressive socialization plays in the internalization of harmful norms but that still avoids over-diagnosing non-autonomy and the dangers of silencing the voices of the oppressed and caregivers, opening them up to unwarranted intervention, further silences the oppressed, and reinforces subordination and deeply deferential attitudes and behavior. Ultimately, we need a view of autonomy that is sensitive to the social concern, but is not question begging, underdescribed, or dependant on historical criteria, and that will not over-diagnose non-autonomy.

Assessing theories of autonomy

Now that it is clear what we need from a theory of autonomy in order to understand DW's lack of it, we can proceed to assess the theories canvassed in the last chapter. I will assess different approaches to autonomy including formal, substantive and relational views, focusing on examples of each where it is helpful. I will ultimately show that the right sort of view of autonomy will be a view that is both formal and relational.

Let's begin by looking at the most common sort of view – formal non-relational structural views. Recall that these are views like that of Harry Frankfurt, where one counts as autonomous so long as her motivational hierarchy has the right sort of structure. The basic idea is that so long as a person endorses or identifies with the desire on which she acts, she will count as autonomous. On formal non-relational structural views DW will count as autonomous just in case she meets the structural requirements laid out by the view. There is nothing to indicate that DW will not meet these requirements. In the various descriptions of the DW it is clear that she is happy to defer. She endorses and identifies with her deference.

Thus she will count as autonomous on these views. So none of these views are helpful because they fail to diagnose DW as non-autonomous.

This brings us to formal proceduralist views, but these are not going to be helpful either. Whether or not DW is autonomous on proceduralist views is less clear than it is on structuralist views. On proceduralist views, in addition to meeting the structural requirement of endorsing, valuing or identifying with her action guiding desire, one must have come to endorse, value or identify with that desire through a process that meets certain criteria, such as being free of coercion or manipulation. On such views, if DW came to be autonomous by the correct process, then she will count as autonomous. This is not to say that DW would necessarily be autonomous on such views. In fact, some proceduralist views may seem to be helpful in diagnosing DW as non-autonomous. If the process by which one came to choose her deferential role was one that involved coercion, manipulation or deceit then proceduralists would not count her as autonomous. Indeed causally relational views are proceduralist views, and they do attempt to take the concern about oppressive socialization seriously by more explicitly taking into account the social processes by which one comes to endorse her commitments. But this implies that DW is not autonomous because her choice to be deferential is non-autonomous, but as we have said the reliance on such historical criteria does not give us a clear understanding of her deference. In addition to being complicated by reliance on historical information, many procedural views rely on historical criteria which can tend towards over-diagnosis – they require no interference from adverse socialization, which most women who live in a sexist society face – so then no women are

ever going to count as autonomous (and perhaps no persons period could ever count as autonomous).[134]

Formal non-relational views of all stripes are not helpful then for a variety of reasons. They either say DW is autonomous, rely on historical criteria, or overdiagnose non-autonomy. So formal non-relational views are out.

This brings us to substantive views. [135] Strongly substantive accounts of personal autonomy place value constraints on the content of what can count as an autonomous choice. Such views tell us that there are some choices that simply cannot count as autonomous. One advantage of substantive views is that they take the social concern seriously. Substantive theorists are critical of traditional theories of autonomy because they do not address the social concern and do not recognize the danger of desires and values that

[134] Counterfactual style procedural views, attempt to trade in this overly high burden by saying that rather than determining whether or not the person actually chose her deference, they focus on whether or not she still would have chosen deference if all things were theoretically equal, but this has its own problems as well. First, DW may very well meet these hypothetical criteria. It may be the case that DW, all things being equal, would have chosen to be deeply deferential, whether or not she actually did choose it. So, in that case the view is out because it says she is autonomous. Furthermore, such hypothetical criteria may still over-diagnose by setting the intellectual bar too high. Having to answer the question of whether or not one's choice to adopt a deferential attitude could in theory have been autonomous or not is extremely difficult if not impossible, especially in the case of DW, who cannot answer any questions about her deference that do not bottom out in her deference.

[135] Note I will only be discussing strongly substantive views here. Paul Benson distinguishes between strong and weakly substantive views. Weakly substantive views do not place any constraints on the content of autonomous choice, rather weakly substantive theories of autonomy require that agents have certain attitudes that reflect that the agent values themselves as an agent. Because there is a spectrum here and the line between weakly substantive and formal views is blurry at best, I will here focus on strongly substantive views, which are clearly distinct from formal views. I will class weakly substantial views like Benson's as more closely related to formal views like that of Andrea Westlund.

are formed by oppressive socialization. They attempt to rectify this by stipulating that being guided by certain desires and values is not consistent with acting autonomously. However, in general, this means that substantive views have a tendency to over-diagnose deferential characters as non-autonomous even if their deference is not deep, beg the question by defining autonomy as incompatible with deep deference, and/or under-describe what it is that makes deep deference incompatible with autonomy. In what follows I will look at several specific views to see these problems in more detail.

Let's start by taking Natalie Stoljar's strongly substantive view as an example. Stoljar's *feminist intuition* tells us that, "preferences influenced by oppressive norms of femininity cannot be autonomous."[136] This theory of autonomy seems to cast the net of non-autonomy too wide. Not enough people will count as autonomous, thus opening up too many people to the risks of autonomy limiting paternalistic intervention. Stoljar uses examples of women who did not use birth control even though they knew the potential risks of an unwanted pregnancy to support the feminist intuition. Stoljar argues that these women's choices not to use birth control were not autonomous because they were deeply influenced by sexist norms of femininity and chastity. However, it seems odd to me to say these women did not make an autonomous choice. Certainly, the oppressive norms were given too much weight, but did these norms completely cut off their ability to choose for themselves? Stojar would say yes, but I am not so sure. One main reason to be concerned is the threat of dangerous forms of paternalistic intervention. If these women are not autonomous and what is really in their best interest is to be on birth control, then marking them as non-autonomous could serve to justify forcing them to use birth control. Feminists

[136] Stoljar, "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition". 95.

of course would never endorse such intervention, but this is exactly why Stoljar's view should give us pause. While Soljar's view attempts to take into account oppressive socialization, it over-diagnoses non-autonomy and could be used to attempt to justify unwarranted paternalistic intervention.

When it comes to answering the question of why DW's deference undermines her autonomy, Stoljar's theory of autonomy is also question begging. Deferring to your husband in all areas of our joint life will always reflect norms of sexist oppression. By saying that such norms are always incompatible with autonomy, we are assuming that deferring to your husband in all areas of your joint life is always non autonomous – we are presupposing precisely the question we are trying to answer. This gets us no closer to saying what justifies our intuition that DW is not autonomous or why deep deference renders her non-autonomous.

To get even more clarity about how substantive views are underdescribed and beg the question, let's take a closer look at yet another substantive view: Hill's diagnosis of DW.[137] Like Stoljar, Hill wants to show that DW cannot count as autonomous.[138] Hill argues that DW would not be autonomous because her deep deference undermines self-respect, which is necessary for autonomy. There are two sorts of problems with Hill's approach to diagnosing DW as non-autonomous. First, he seems to miss the mark by under-describing what is really wrong with deference and second the core of his argument appears to be question-begging. I will look at each of these concerns in turn.

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[137] Hill, "Servility and Self-respect".

[138] Marcia Baron gives slightly different twist, for my purposes I focus on Hill here. Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife".

First, his view seems to be missing the mark. At one point, Hill says that if DW were to avoid being humiliated and mistreated by her husband then her deep deference would not undermine her self-respect. He says that, "if the effort did not require her to submit to humiliation or maltreatment, her choice [to be deeply deferential] would not mark her as servile."[139] This implies that it is not so much being deferential, but being deferential to someone who treats you badly that violates your self-respect that is really the problem. So it seems that what DW cannot do is choose a role that allows someone else to treat her disrespectfully; the real problem is allowing yourself to be disrespected. While this certainly seems problematic, it does not get to the heart of why deferring to another person in all areas of your joint life is incompatible with acting autonomously. If DW's husband does not humiliate or abuse her but only makes all of her choices for her, her autonomy still seems to be impaired. If this is all there is to Hill's view then this doesn't tell us anything about the relationship between deference and autonomy.

Luckily, there is more to Hill's view. However, at the heart of his claims about autonomy there remains a problem. One way to interpret Hill's claim is that a necessary condition for autonomous choice is that the agent chooses in accordance with the value of self-respect.[140] In the last chapter I explained that Hill's view is based on a Kantian conception of autonomy. On the Kantian view having the sort of self-respect necessary for

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[139] Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". 6.

[140] This is the way Jules Holroyd parses out Hill's view. Holroyd, "Substantively Constrained Choice and Deference". There are two ways one could read Hill's view: either as weakly or strongly substantive. This raises some very important questions, given discussions in the literature. However, as Holroyd interprets Hill's view as strongly substantive and her critique is illuminating here and given the focus at present on strongly substantive views, it makes sense to interpret Hill in this way here.

autonomy consists in giving sufficient weight to one's self, meaning the subject must accord appropriate weight to her interests, preferences, or rights. We can take Hill to understand this claim to be based on the idea that "agents have a certain value, and from this value is generated the value that attaches to their interests, preferences and rights."[141] The idea is that in order to choose in accordance with the moral law, one's choice must be in accordance with the value of her own agency. According to the moral law, no one, not even the agent herself is permitted to fail to respect her interests, preferences and rights. The value of self-respect is valuable whether or not the agent values it.[142]

The important aspect of this argument is that one cannot legitimately waive her right to autonomy, but as we will see it is also the aspect that is question begging. Hill says that certain rights cannot be waived. But this raises the question of what sort of rights are those? Surely not all rights derived from the moral law are unwaiveable. I have a right not to be caused pain, but I can waive that right in order to be treated by a doctor.[143] Hill says that the rights that are unwaivable are those that are grounded in an agent's "inner freedom."[144] And of course, what this means is that those rights that are grounded in an individual's capacity for *autonomy* are not waiveable. But as Holroyd quite rightly points out, "if the arguments for

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[141] Ibid. 5.
Note: Holyroyd contrasts this with an interpretation of giving sufficient weight to self as being merely a procedural matter, which, if it were how Hill took it, his account would collapse into a procedural content neutral account.

[142] This substantive requirement is obviously overly demanding and would be subject to a variety of criticisms from a liberal perspective, but my interest here is in Holroyd's very helpful critique.

[143] Ibid. 8.

[144] Hill, "Servility and Self-respect". 13. The language of "infer freedom" is Kant's.

the conclusion that deference and autonomy are incompatible rely on the presupposition of this very claim, then they will be problematically question-begging."[145] So, Hill's argument that DW must not be autonomous because she could not have chosen her role autonomously in the first place appears to be circular.

To sum up, Hill's argument that DW is not autonomous rests on two claims: the first is simply that we have an inherent right not to defer and the second is that that right cannot be waived. The first claim follows directly from the basis of the Kantian account of autonomy as derived from the moral law. Since it is not the problematic premise here, I do not contest its veracity. However the argument in support of the latter claim proves to be problematically question-begging. Since Hill's view is question begging then it is not helpful. So, Hill's account, like Stoljar's, and substantive views in general are not helpful for explaining why deep deference undermines autonomy.

That brings us to relational views. As I said in the last chapter, relational views come in two types – causally relational and constitutively relational. Remember, causally relational views focus on the influence of social factors on the development of an agent's autonomy. They focus on the effects that relationships to others have on the process by which one comes to be autonomous or not. On constitutively relational views social factors play a role in the actual definition of what it is to be a fully autonomous agent. What it is to be autonomous on such views is in some way constituted by one's social relationships. Causally relational views are just a type of proceduralist view, so they will not be helpful for the same reasons proceduralist views in general are unhelpful. So, in what follows when I talk about

[145] Holroyd, "Substantively Constrained Choice and Deference". 8.

relational views I'm talking about constitutively relational views. Like substantive views, relational views take the social concern seriously. Relational views, however, have a key advantage over substantive views in discussing the autonomy of deeply deferential characters. The reason for this is that deference is a relational concept. In deferring you are always deferring to an external perspective. We are trying to get at why DW is not autonomous, and to do this we have to understand what it is about how she relates to her husband that is incompatible with her exercising her autonomy. A constitutively relational view that defines autonomy in terms of social relatedness seems like a good candidate to be able to answer our question. To get a better idea of what sort of relational view we are looking for, let's look closer at two of the most prominent constitutively relational views of autonomy.

Let's first look at Marina Oshana's theory of autonomy. Her theory is both substantive and relational. Her theory of autonomy says that in addition to the formal criteria of critical reflection and procedural independence, other substantive, and specifically substantive relational criteria have to be met as well for a person to count as autonomous. First, she says that in choosing a deferential role in the first place a person must have had a genuine choice to be non-deferential. So her view has a procedural requirement, which in itself makes her view unhelpful. However, there is still good reason to look more closely at her view because her view adds not only substantive but relational requirements too. In addition to the procedural requirement, for a person to be autonomous she must be able to have and pursue "values, interests, needs, and goals different from those who have influence

and authority over her, without risk of reprisal sufficient to deter her in this pursuit."[146] This second requirement is both substantive and relational.

On Oshana's view whether or not the person is autonomous will depend on whether or not she has a certain amount of substantive independence to maintain and pursue her own interests. So it isn't really dependant on the historical criteria anyways. One could answer whether or not DW autonomously chose her role by determining whether she is autonomous right now – and one can establish this first and foremost by focusing on whether the social relational criteria are met. So, that leaves us to ask, does Oshana's social relational criterion tell us whether DW's current choices and actions are autonomous or not? The answer is yes, her view does tell us that characters like DW are not autonomous and that they are non-autonomous because of their actual situation of being dependant on their husbands, the authority their husbands have over them, and their inability to pursue goals and preferences independent of their husband's interests.

Like in the case of Stoljar and other substantive theorists, a very important advantage of Oshana's theory of autonomy is that she takes oppressive socialization and oppressive social situations seriously. Oshana's view is really good at this. However like all strongly substantive views, the substantive aspect of her view is susceptible to the charge that it will over-diagnose non-autonomy. So, we should worry that her view will over-diagnose non-autonomy and will invite unwarranted paternalistic intervention.[147] For this reason it cannot

[146] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society". 94

[147] Christman, "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves".

be the view that will best explain DW's non-autonomy, but there is still good reason to pay attention to what this view offers.

Even if we grant the claim that a view such as Oshana's may silence some by over-diagnosing non-autonomy, it is important that we recognize that in the case of the deferential wife whose subservience is the result of oppression or subordination, what is really wrong with her is that she is silent already. In her response to the charge that her view is overly perfectionist and invites paternalistic intervention Oshana says, "But persons like these, labeled non autonomous on the social-relational account because of the relations in which they stand, do not loose their voice *because* the social-relational account dubs them non-autonomous. The American Negro, like the Taliban Woman, loses her voice because her social-relational status precludes having a voice."[148] Labeling such persons as non-autonomous just reflects their actual condition as lacking autonomy. There is something quite right about Oshana's claim here. Any discussion of the compatibility of deference and autonomy must be able to address the concern that oppressive social situations often actually do render people unable to exercise their autonomy.

So Oshana is getting something important right here. And what she seems to be getting right is the relational part – there are some social relations that seem to be fundamentally incompatible with autonomy. What I find problematic with her view then are the substantive requirements. So what is good about her view is the relational part, but for her even the relational components are substantive. That's why she calls it a substantive-

[148] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society". 101.

relational view.[149] The social relational aspect of her view requires that only certain kinds of relations, those of substantive independence, are compatible with autonomy. This is an issue that can only arise because the relational requirements in her view are substantive.

Furthermore, this issue highlights that she is under-describing what is really going on with those like DW. Rather than providing an explanation as to why certain social situations actually render people non-autonomous, she simply builds it into her definition of autonomy by stipulating a substantive requirement. We want a view that takes into account the real world social situations of those like DW, but it is unhelpful to just say that social situations like hers are always non-autonomous. Intuitively that's right, and it seems that it does have something to do with her actual social situation, but the question is what is it? Why is her social situation not compatible with her being autonomous?

So, what I take the real problem to be here is that Oshana does not do enough to tell us why it is we should think that people in these unequal social situations should count as non-autonomous other than that they are in those social situations. Oshana under-describes what is going on with deferential characters. What is it about the situations they are in that makes it impossible for them to be autonomous? Why does DW's deep deference render her

[149] It is this aspect of her view that John Christman, quite rightly, sees as particularly problematic. According to Christman, her account suffers from a tension between the substantive demands that one only chose certain kinds of relationships and the social requirements of the view. In *Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves*, Christman explains this tension between the substantive requirements and the social relational aspects of Oshana's view. While Oshana's view is fundamentally "social" it is also individualistic and this creates a tension. Like other relational views, on her view autonomy is based on our social relations, but "Oshana's view insists that to be autonomous, she must, as an individual, maintain the ability to 'pursue goals different from those who have influence and authority over her.'" Her social criteria seem to overvalue and require social indapendence. Christman, "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves". 150.

non-autonomous? While Oshana tells us that certain roles are not compatible with autonomy, she does not answer the more fundamental question: what features of these roles make it the case that they are incompatible with autonomy? She does not identify a common attitude or disposition or even a common feature of social situations that is incompatible with autonomy. Simply relying on the claim that such roles are fundamentally incompatible with autonomy by definition does not help us to see *why* they are incompatible. Having an explanation that is not itself dependent on these concrete social situations for the non-autonomy could go a long way to addressing concerns related to over-diagnosis.

What we seem to need then is a view with all of the advantages of a relational view like Oshana's but without the problematic substantive elements. So let's look at Andrea Westlund's theory of autonomy.[150] Remember that for Westlund autonomy is about answerability. On her view, the autonomous agent is the agent who holds herself answerable, who is disposed to engage in ongoing justificatory dialogue about her action guiding commitments and feels the normative weight of answering for her choices and actions. Westlund's view is formal because it has no substantive requirement that autonomous choice requires that an agent choose in accordance with some normative criteria,[151] but it is also constitutively relational. The very concept of autonomy is interpersonal on her view.

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[150] Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?" and Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy".

[151] I realize that there are possible objections to this reading of Westlund. Some may take her view to be weakly substantive and requiring that the agent value justificatory dialogue or require other minimal value conditions be met. I am convinced by Westlund's response to such claims. For her defense see "Rethinking Relational Autonomy."

Whether one is engaging a flesh and blood or imaginary critic the demand that one answer for her action-guiding commitments is external. It is "external" because it "is a perspective on one's current motivational hierarchy (or on components thereof) *from* outside of it – rather than the sort of higher-order but still 'internal' perspective on one's own motives that one affords oneself simply by making one's current endorsements the objects of yet higher-order attitudes."[152] Whether one holds herself answerable from the perspective "of an abstract or idealized other," or is engaged by an actual critic the demand to answer for one's commitments is in principle second-personal. Westlund really is modeling the capacity for autonomy on the interpersonal case – her view is constitutively relational.

Here is the kind of view we have been looking for. A view that is both formal and constitutively relational. Because it is a formal view it should be able to avoid all of the pitfalls of substantive views (over-diagnosing non-autonomy, begging the question, and under-describing what is really going on with deep deference) but because it is still relational it will take the social concern seriously.

Westlund's view is sensitive to the social concern. The answerability view fits well with the idea that socialization both constructs and hinders autonomy. The main criteria for autonomy on Westlund's view is social in nature – if one is autonomous, then one is answerable to the criticisms of other people and other perspectives. The answerability theory of autonomy is in principle dependant on social relations not only for determining if a person is autonomous or not but for helping us to understand how autonomy is constructed from engagement is justificatory dialogue. For example, think of the ways we engage

[152] Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". 506.

children who are not yet fully autonomous. We ask them questions and engage them in a dialogue to try and get them to be able to answer for themselves; we try to encourage the development of their autonomy. Not only is this view sensitive to the ways social situations construct one's ability to act autonomously, it is also sensitive to the ways socialization can hinders one's autonomy. It identifies those social situations that are not conducive to justificatory dialogue as autonomy hindering, and that clearly includes most oppressive social situations. Being able to so easily take into account the social concern is a major advantage of Westlund's view.

Westlund's view is not question begging or underdescribed. Westlund avoids begging the question because the criteria for autonomy, that one be answerable, does not merely stipulate that deference or unequal social relations are always incompatible with autonomy. Indeed it will turn out that many in unequal social situations will be able to answer for themselves. By not relying on substantive criteria she avoids not only circularity, but also can fully explain why deep deference is incompatible with autonomy. Westlund's view tells us why a person should have her own views, interests, etc. without merely claiming that to not have these things is incompatible with autonomy. A person must have a perspective from which to answer, and so she needs to have her own views, interests etc. so that she can answer for herself. It is very likely that many of the same folks that Oshana wants to say are not autonomous, will turn out to be unable to answer for themselves. It is not necessarily that Oshana gets it wrong, it is that she has not fully described *why* a person who does not have her own interests, values etc. is non-autonomous. Westlund's view is consistent with Oshana's but it is telling us why these social relationships are problematic and conflict with autonomy in the first place. Her view also avoids having to rely on any historical criteria.. On

Westlund's view we can say whether or not DW's choices and actions are autonomous without determining whether or not her choice to be guided by her commitment to deep deference was autonomous or not. We can tell just by attempting to engage DW in justificatory dialogue whether or not she is answerable and thus autonomous.

Finally, her view is formal so it does not tell us that the content of certain choices is invalid, and thus avoids over-diagnosing non-autonomy.[153] It may turn out that choosing

[153] One may worry that her view does over-diagnose non-autonomy, not in the case of other deferential characters but in other cases of marginal agents. In particular one may think of her view as running into problems with cases of Alzheimer's patients like those discussed by Agnieszka Jaworska. (Agnieszka Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency: Alzheimer's Patients and the Capacity to Value", *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* 28, no. 2 (1999): 105-38.) At first pass it seems that Westlund cannot account for these problem cases. As a general requirement for a theory of autonomy, we do not want to exclude others on the margins of agency from counting as autonomous, so if this is true, this is could be a problem for an answerability view of autonomy. In her work on the autonomy of Alzheimer's patients Jaworska presents a number of examples of real patients and their behaviors and see if they are answerable. (Jaworska,1999) Mr. Burke who buys a new red truck *defends* his purchase by telling people "a man needs his truck." Mrs. D who comforted other patients at her day program and volunteered for research projects, *explains* her choice by appeal to her dedication to her "fellow man." Dr. B *answers* for why he agreed to be in a research project by telling his interviewer that he thought it was a "real good, big project" and referencing the importance of science. These examples indicate that they are clearly engaging in justificatory dialogue about why they have made the choices they are making. Those choices are, thus clearly autonomous, even on Westlund's model. But we may still worry about those who cannot articulate their reasons for why they have made certain choices. Jaworska presents the example of Mr. O'Connor who was once a deeply religious man who would never have taken his own life, who since the death of his wife wishes to die. He does not seem to articulate his reasons for wanting to die. Does this mean that unlike Mrs. D or Dr. B, he is not autonomous? Let's take a closer look at what means to engage in justificatory dialogue. *In Rethinking Relational Autonomy*, Westlund clarifies what she means by "dialogue." She argues that she is using the term "dialogue" broadly. What is required for autonomy is that "more than one perspective needs to be in play", but this does not require "explicit citation of reasons." (Westlund, 2009).The main requirement is that a person give "proper uptake" to the critical perspective – the autonomous person should feel like they owe a response. This does not, however, require that the person be able to engage in a "high degree of articulacy about their position." Possible ways one may engage in dialogue may be to "provide a life-narrative that manifests one's reasons; provide an interpretation of relevant experiences, putting them in a wider context of meaning; describe actions of an admired

various roles may undermine one's ability to answer for herself and thus be incompatible with autonomy in the long run. In fact the likeliness of this occurring may be what motivates various substantive claims. However, being able to spell out clearly what constitutes autonomous choice and action without ruling out various choices and actions as autonomous is better because it allows for various interpersonal relationships to be compatible with autonomy.

The answerability view of autonomy meets all of my criteria, and it turns out it in fact does do an excellent job of explaining why it is that DW is not autonomous. The successes of the answerability view of autonomy in being able to explain the incompatibility DW's deep deference with the exercise of her autonomy is not surprising. It makes sense that someone who is deeply deferential is going to be incapable of answering for herself.

First of all, answerability is the right sort of link between deep deference and autonomy. The link is that they are both in principle interpersonal. The kind of deference I am talking about is *interpersonal* deference, deference to another person. The answerability view of personal autonomy is itself interpersonal. Its primary feature is the in principle

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other in a similar situation; tell parables or other stories, etc." (Westlund, 2009). However, this list of possible ways of engaging in dialogue does not always seem to be helpful; it does not seem to leave room for Alzheimer's patients like Mr. O'Connor. So, while it is clearly the case that Westlund's view is not as overly restrictive as it first appeared, it seems to have trouble handling all of the cases of marginal agency. While this may seem be a limit to the view, I still believe it is the best view for discussing cases of marginal agency involving specifically deeply deferential agents and is not so prone to over-diagnosis that it does not qualify as a good theory of autonomy. Deeply deferential agents as well as more seriously marginal agents like Mr. O'Connor still have the capacity for autonomy and are thus deserving of some sort of basic respect, but that does not mean they are exercising their autonomy – and that is what we are trying to get at – whether or not agents who are deeply deferential are exercising their autonomy. So, I think the worry about marginal agents would be misplaced.

*interpersonal* engagement of answering. For a choice or action to be autonomous the person must be ready to answer the questions of another person (either real or imagined) about that choice or action.

Furthermore, in practice one cannot be both deeply deferential and answerable. Engagement in interpersonal dialogue presupposes that one has one's own values and commitments from which to answer. And DW does not have other commitments and values. Her only commitment is to defer to her husband. The only answer she can give is that she defers to her husband. It is her only value. The deeply deferential person does not engage in dialogue about what is the best choice or action, she merely does what the other person wants. A person who is deeply deferential does not have other commitments and values, and you need other commitments and values to answer for yourself – they are the source of your answers.

This is why answerability conception of autonomy is so great. It tells us specifically why being deeply deferential is incompatible with autonomy, but at the same time it is not too broad. Answerability won't misdiagnose all personal commitments, or all commitments to deference, but only those that are commitments to deep deference as non-autonomous. Other views misdiagnose the reasons for or under describe why it is that DW fails to be autonomous. They say that it is because she fails to respect the moral law or because she is in an unequal social situation. By highlighting the interpersonal dimension of an attitude necessary for autonomous choice and action, Westlund gives us the tools to see the relationship between interpersonal deference and personal autonomy that is lacking in other views.

Answerability is the view of autonomy that is best suited to diagnosing DW as non-autonomous and gives us a clear understanding of why deep deference is incompatible with autonomy. So now we can see why it is that deferring to all of another person's wants and preferences is incompatible with being autonomous. Being autonomous means being ready to defend one's choices and actions, and this requires a certain sort of interpersonal standing, a sort of interpersonal standing that is incompatible with the lack of other values and commitments of the person who is deep deferential.

Now that we are clear on why DW is not autonomous, we can better answer the other two questions. We now know that the reason that DW is not autonomous is because deep deference is incompatible with being disposed to answer for oneself, so we will be able to explain why the choice to be deeply deferential seems problematic and how we ought to deal with those who are deeply deferential. I will take these questions up in light of what we have learned here in the next two chapters.

## CHAPTER 6: THE CHOICE TO COMMIT TO DEEP DEFERENCE

I just argued in the last chapter why I think Andrea Westlund's formal relational view of autonomy does the best job of explaining why DW is not autonomous. Her answerability view of autonomy excels at this because of its uniquely interpersonal requirement for autonomous choice and action, that the agent be ready to answer for her action-guiding commitments, and the interpersonal nature of deference. While I think that Westlund's view does an excellent job of explaining why DW is not autonomous, there is an aspect of her account that I think is problematic. Westlund brings up an example of a woman who chooses to be a deeply deferential wife like DW, a character we will call Anti-Feminist (AF for short) and suggests that the choice to be deeply deferential is not a problem for her autonomy so long as she can answer for it[154]. However, it seems to me that if we agree that DW's autonomy is compromised by her deeply deferential role, then we should not be content with the suggestion that the choice to be deeply deferential is not a problem for autonomy as well. In this chapter I want to argue that although Westlund does not herself explore this question regarding the choice to be deeply deferential, there is a sense in which her view can help us to diagnose why the choice to be deeply deferential is problematic. Even if the choice for a deeply deferential role is not a non-autonomous choice to begin with, I will argue that it is an autonomy inhibiting choice, and thus problematic from the perspective of one who values autonomy.

[154] Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?".

Let's begin by imagining our new character, AF.[155] AF chooses to be deeply deferential. AF is choosing to commit to defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life. Her choice is based on the same belief that DW holds: "that women ought to put their own interests last and defer to their husbands in all matters relevant to their joint lives."[156] She is making this choice free from manipulation or coercion, she has all of the information, and she knows her rights. She seems to make this choice freely. In other words her choice to be deeply deferential, to choose non-autonomy, is itself an autonomous choice. AF is answerable for her choice to be deeply deferential. When asked about her choice to commit to deep deference AF can provide reasons to support her decision. AF may make sense of her choice to defer to her husband by explaining that her mother was deferential to her father and put the needs of the family first and that this created a wonderful environment for AF to grow up in and she wants to pass that on to her children. Alternatively, maybe AF's mother always fought with her father until she drove him away and always put her own needs ahead of those of her children and this was a horrible way to grow up, so AF is choosing to do the exact opposite. She could also cite her religious upbringing or cultural norms and standards in order to defend her commitment to deference. When making the choice to defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life, AF is ready to engage in justificatory dialogue about her commitment to defer to her husband. When she makes this choice she does so autonomously.

[155] Andrea Westlund introduces a character similar to the one I will be imagining here and also calls her AF, but like DW who is described in different ways by different views, I will make AF my own example.

[156] Ibid. 512.

Once she has adopted her deferential role AF will behave in a similarly differential manner to that of DW. The difference would be that she should still be able to answer for her commitment to deference, because she did so based on her own reasons, reasons that she would give to a would be critic of her choice. She should still be answerable; she should still be autonomous. Unlike DW, AF should feel the normative weight of the demand that she defend her choice to commit to deference, and be able to offer a variety of good answers.[157] If AF is answerable, she can place her commitment to deep deference in the context of her other desires, intentions, and commitments and make sense of the choice to commit to deep deference as something she is responsible for.

But aren't we uneasy with this choice that AF is making? Can't we do better than just saying that it is autonomous? And if saying that her autonomous choice is autonomous is all we can say, doesn't seem like we are missing something important here? Certainly from the perspective of a feminist, there would be good reasons to be concerned about AF's autonomy.

In what follows I will try to address these questions and concerns. In order to get at the heart of my concern about the choice to be deeply deferential, I will explore the intuition that AF's commitment to deep deference is somehow in tension with her autonomy, ultimately concluding that AF's commitment to deep deference will inevitably render her

[157] If AF always gave the answer "because the Bible tells me to" to the question "why be so deferential?" and then digs in her heals, how would AF be any different than DW? Westlund agrees, that she would not, and calls this case AF'. For Westlund AF must be able to do more than merely be able to give justifications that go beyond citing her husband's reasons as her own, she must *remain open* to further justificatory dialogue about her commitment to deference. According to Westlund, then, for AF to be answerable for her commitment to deference she must have reasons for her deference that do not just bottom out in another variation of deep deference. AF must be able to continue to take up and be answerable for her commitment to deference if she is to continue to count as autonomous. Ibid. 513-114.

unable to answer for her deference. I will argue that her commitment to deep deference will inevitably undermine all of her other commitments, which constitute the context of her own personal standpoint, thus robbing her of the context from which to answer for herself and therefore her autonomy.

Personal Commitments

The first thing we should notice is that when we are talking about AF's choice to defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life, we are talking about AF's *commitment* to defer.[158] The kind of choice AF has made to defer is a *commitment* to deep deference. She is not just inclined to defer to her husband or more likely than not to defer to him, but *committed* to it. In order to see why AF's commitment to defer to her husband undercuts her autonomy, we must first look at what it means for AF to be *committed* to deference. Exploring commitments then is the first step in looking more deeply at what is wrong with AF's choice to be deeply deferential.

Both ordinary language and the philosophical literature seem to use "commitment" to refer to many different things. There is what Laruen Fleming calls, in *The Normativity of*

[158] Westlund describes her as being committed to deference, and I have taken this and ran with it. For that, this is a particular interpretation of a particular kind of choice to be deeply deferential, but I think that it is likely that any choice to be deeply deferential really is a *commitment*. It is not something that one just picks up willy nilly. I cannot make an attempt here to defend this claim, but for my purposes it is sufficient to state that the kind of choice to be deeply deferential that I am concerned about here is the *commitment* to be deeply deferential.

*Personal Commitments*, the *motivational* sense of commitment.[159] This sense of commitment marks those goals which one "happens to be strongly disposed to pursue." For example we may say that a lawyer friend is deeply committed to justice, because she spends a lot of time with her clients, cares about their issues, does pro-bono work etc. Fleming contrasts this type of "commitment" with the *normative* sense of commitment in which an agent deliberately binds herself to pursue a particular end. We adopt normative commitments by deploying a normative power in which we bind ourselves to a particular action, course of action, or goal. As Fleming puts it, "to say that I have committed myself in this sense is to say that I have, in some way, *bound* myself, put myself under a normative constraint, to pursue the project in question" and furthermore, that I have done so voluntarily.[160] Having committed oneself normatively creates normative constraints, which require certain courses of action to be taken to conform with the commitment and if one fails to do what is normatively required, they can be held accountable for such a failure. So while normative commitments have normative repercussions, motivational commitments do not.

Normative commitments can be *interpersonal commitments* such as promises. When I promise to return my students' tests by Friday I obligate myself to return their tests by Friday. If I promise the loan officer that I will make my loan payment every month, I am obligated to make payment every month. If I promise my husband to be a better listener, I am obligated to work towards being a better listener. Failure to follow through with an interpersonal commitment like a promise will have normative repercussions. Those who

[159] Fleming, Lauren. "The Normativity of Personal Commitment". Unpublished dissertation. (2009). My discussion of commitments, and in particular personal commitments that follows is based on Fleming's extremely helpful and detailed work on personal commitments.

[160] Fleming, "The Normativity of Personal Commitment."

have made such commitments can be held responsible in a variety of ways. If I do not return my students' tests when I said I would, they can demand an explanation from me or the department may reprimand me for failing to keep my promise to my students. The loan officer may impose a fine or pursue legal action against me if I fail to make payment. In these cases the normative pressures are external. This of course does not mean that we do not hold ourselves responsible as well when we fail to keep such promises. If I did not return the tests on time, or blew off trying to be better a listener I would likely feel very guilty, and may even punish myself. I may decide that I cannot watch my favorite TV show for a month because I failed to return my students exams when I said I would.

But not all normative commitments are promises; nor are they all of the inter-personal type. Another kind of normative commitment is what I will call a *personal commitment*, where one places oneself under obligation *intrapersonally*.[161] Committing oneself to getting a PhD, eating better, being a vegetarian, winning Olympic gold, or being more patient are all examples of personal commitments. Like all normative commitments there are normative repercussions for making a personal commitment. Broadly speaking personal commitments give the that-which-one-has-committed-to an additional importance in your life, more specifically though it gives you new additional reasons for action. In addition to added importance and new reasons for action, personal commitments also have constrained exit conditions; you cannot just give up a personal commitment willy nilly. I will explain each of these normative repercussions in turn.

When someone adopts a personal commitment she takes a stance on a particular end. Adopting an end as a personal commitment gives it additional significance in a person's

[161] Fleming, "The Normativity of Personal Commitments".

life. For example I may care about being a good teacher, but when I make a personal commitment to be a better teacher I give additional importance to my end of being a good teacher. Not only do I have more reason to care about being a good teacher once I have committed to being a better teacher, but I now have an additional reason to spend more time on my lesson plans, to be more cautious in grading, and take part in more enrichment opportunities from the department of teaching development.

Personal Commitments create two kinds of reasons: (1*) First-order positive reasons*: reasons that count in favor of (or against) forming new intentions, desires, commitments, and actions. So, if a person has made a personal commitment to get a PhD it gives them a reason to form a new commitment to apply for graduate school. (2) *Second-order exclusionary reasons*: "reasons to ignore considerations that would otherwise count as relevant first-order reasons."[162] Exclusionary reasons do not just generate weighty reasons that count against other reasons, rather they actually *exclude* other reasons. Exclusionary reasons cancel out the first order reasons they exclude. According to Joseph Raz "exclusionary reasons always prevail when in conflict with first order reasons."[163] Owens calls this claim by Raz the exclusion rule: "The very point of exclusionary reasons is to bypass issues of weight by excluding consideration of the excluded reasons regardless of weight."[164] Personal commitments do not just give a certain self-governing policy added weight in one's deliberation, they create exclusionary reasons and exclusionary reasons remove certain types

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[162] Ibid

[163] Raz, Joseph as quoted in David Owens, "Rationalism About Obligation", *European Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (2008): 403-431. 418.

[164] Ibid.

of reasons from the realm of practical deliberation. For example, eating meat is not just outweighed by a commitment to vegetarianism; it is excluded. If I am committed to vegetarianism, the fact that my host made a fabulous pork roast does not count as a reason for me to eat it. My commitment to vegetarianism excludes the rules of etiquette, the deliciousness of the meal, or other social reasons for eating the roast as counting as reasons for me. Personal commitment actually changes what can count as reasons at all.

Personal commitments have constrained exit conditions. Personal commitments generate new reasons and bind us to a particular end. This is not to say that once we are committed we can never give up a personal commitment. However unbinding ourselves from a personal commitment cannot be done at will and without consequences. Personal commitments are accompanied by some substantive constraints on how and when they can be revoked. Whereas projects we just find ourselves with, intentions, and desires can be relinquished for any reason and without normative consequence, giving up a personal commitment is constrained.[165] With intentions one can either drop their intention or follow through on it. For example: if vegetarianism is an intention, then one is a vegetarian or one eats meat and is no longer a vegetarian, either option is equally good, but this is not the case with personal commitment. If one is committed to being a vegetarian, one cannot simply

[165] This is not to say that there are not theories of intention that see intentions as constrained in certain ways that mere desires are not. For example, personal commitments may sounds similar to Michael Bratman's account of intentions and plans. However, although for Bratman intentions are constrained by norms of consistency and continued satisfaction, the normativity of his intentions are still different than those of personal commitments. If one has the intention to be a vegetarian, then they ought not to eat meat. However, if they find that they really, really want to eat meat, they can simply give up their intention. There is no sense in which it is better or worse to keep the intention or to revise, amend it, or abandon it. That is not the case with personal commitments. Flemming (2009) Bratman, "Reflection, Planning, and Temporally Extended Agency". Michael Bratman, *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

choose to eat meat. Following through on one's commitment is better than just abandoning it. One goes wrong when one fails to follow through on one's personal commitments. If one is going to give up a commitment she must deliberate as to why a commitment is being given up and have a good reason to do so. She must also deal with the normative residue of giving up a personal commitment. One type of normative residue may come in the form of a self-reactive attitude such as guilt.

To sum up, normative commitments are binding commitments. There are two kinds of normative commitments, both inter and intra-personal. Promising is an example of inter-personal commitment. Personal commitments are when an agent obligates herself intra-personally. Personal commitments generate new first order reasons and exclusionary reasons, and have more constrained exit conditions than mere intentions or desires. One actually goes wrong with respect to a personal commitment when one fails to follow through on one's personal commitments. And here is where we find the right model for my discussion of AF; AF's commitment to deference is a personal commitment.

AF's personal commitment to deep deference

AF's commitment to deep deference, like a commitment to getting a PhD or committing to being a more patient person is a personal commitment. AF's commitment is not a motivational commitment, she is not merely disposed to defer. No, she has made a choice to commit to deferring to her husband. She is willing to stand up and defend her choice, so it is not just something she does, it is something she has chosen. AF does not just desire to defer to her husband, although she may. Part of what it is for her to be committed to deference, is that she does it even when she doesn't want to, so it's not just a desire. Her

commitment to deference is not just an intention either. She doesn't just say, I intend to defer to my husband on matters relevant to our joint life, rather she commits to it in all areas of their joint life. She wouldn't think she could just abandon her deference, not without feeling she has a good reason to do so, this would not be the case if it were just an intention. One can give up an intention without normative repercussions. AF's commitment has normative repercussions because it is a normative commitment. AF's commitment to deference is a normative commitment, but it is not a promise to another. AF does not promise her husband to defer to him, rather she makes a personal commitment to be deferential to her husband. AF's commitment to defer to her husband is a personal commitment. She normatively binds herself to deferring to her husband in all areas of their joint life and thus creates new reasons for her own action.

So, AF's choice to defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life is a personal commitment with a particular kind of normativity. Now, let's apply what we know about personal commitments to AF's choice to commit to deep deference to try and see why it is problematic. AF's commitment to deference will create new 1st order reasons for action, it will create exclusionary reasons, and it will also have constrained exit conditions. Let's look at each of these.

First, AF's commitment will create new reasons for action. AF's personal commitment creates two kinds of reasons, 1st order reasons to defer to her husband and 2nd order exclusionary reasons. AF's commitment to deference gives her a reason to defer to her husband. For example if AF's husband wishes for AF to be a better listener, AF's commitment to deference gives her an additional reason to try to pay closer attention when others are speaking. If her husband desires her to wear pink, she not only has a reason to

wear pink but it also gives her a reason not to wear green even if she prefers it. If her husband prefers red meat, she has a reason to serve steak even if she thinks red meat is bad for you.

Second, in addition to these 1st order positive reasons, AF's personal commitment also creates exclusionary reasons – reasons not to act on considerations that do not conform to her personal commitment. Her personal commitment to defer to her husband's wishes excludes certain considerations from her practical deliberation. In particular, AF's commitment to defer to her husband *generates an overriding reason for her to ignore all of her own preferences, wants, desires, and goals.* And this is where I think we get to the heart of the problem with AF's personal commitment to deep deference. AF's personal commitment generates a very unusual exclusionary reason with unusual consequences. In effect, AF's personal commitment to defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life cancels out any first order reasons regarding what is best for her to do in all areas of their joint life. An important feature here is "all areas of their joint life." This clearly encompasses nearly every aspect of their life together including religious affiliations, recreational activities, careers, child rearing, decisions about the home, financial decisions, etc. All personal commitments generate exclusionary reasons, but it is the specific exclusionary reason – an overriding reason to ignore *all* of one's own wants and wishes regarding every area of their shared life with their spouse, which is potentially all of one's life – that causes alarm. It is the comprehensiveness of the scope of exclusion which is so worrisome.

One might worry that any sort of serious personal commitment would lead to non-autonomy because they all create exclusionary reasons that could potentially take on a life of their own. This is not the case. Not all personal commitments, even strong commitments are

going to be autonomy defeating. To illustrate this let's contrast AF's personal commitment with another sort of personal commitment that is equally serious and has some very restrictive exclusionary reasons: a personal commitment to win an Olympic gold medal. Olympic athletes make huge sacrifices and ignore many of their other desires in the pursuit of their ultimate goal – to be the best in the world. A personal commitment to winning the gold medal creates new reasons to practice, eat well, and move near the best training facilities. The commitment also generates exclusionary reasons. A personal commitment to winning the gold often means no staying out late with friends so you can get up early for practice, no junk food no matter how much you crave it, and not being able to live near your family no matter how much you want to. Like AF, the Olympic athlete must ignore many of her own preferences, wishes, and desires. What the commitment to win gold doesn't do is create exclusionary reasons not related to enhancing one's ability to win the gold medal. It does not exclude religious practices, other long-term goals, or continuing to value other things. Furthermore, it is temporary. It has an end goal, and if that goal is achieved or if every effort has been made to achieve it, the personal commitment is discharged without any normative residue. The kind of personal commitment that AF has made is one that cannot be discharged, at least not without normative repercussions.[166] So we see that AF's personal commitment really is different. It is so broad in scope and so complete in its nature that it is fundamentally different than other kinds of serious personal commitments because it creates

[166] One might suggest that AF's personal commitment may be dischargeable upon her husband's death. I actually think this is false. First, her commitment is a personal commitment, not a promise. Second, we often still defer to the preferences and wishes of the dead, even if they are merely hypothetical.

an exclusionary reason to ignore *all* of one's own preferences, wishes, and commitments in favor of those of someone else.

Finally, AF's commitment like all personal commitments will also have restrained exit conditions. If AF finds that she cannot do what her husband prefers, she would have two choices. One, she can still defer even if it goes against some other principle. Or two, she can fail to do what he wishes. If she does the latter, she goes wrong with regard to her commitment. If she fails to live up to her commitment in this way she may feel guilty or punish herself. She may also be subjected to questions from her friends or family about why she has abandoned her personal commitment. They may question why she did not do what her husband wanted. She may have a good answer, she may be exercising her autonomy, but she's not living up to her personal commitment and that has normative consequences.

The important thing to note here is that because of the normative constraints on personal commitments, if AF decides that she can no longer defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life she cannot just cast off her commitment without any repercussions. She cannot just change her mind. Because her commitment to defer to her husband is a personal commitment it has constrained exit conditions. There would be serious repercussions to her giving up her commitment, even more serious than if she were to just go wrong with respect to it. She really is bound to the normative demands of her commitment.

<u>The Threat to AF's autonomy</u>

This brings us back to the question of why AF's choice to make a personal commitment to deep deference seems to be problematic from the perspective of someone who cares about autonomy. In what follows I will argue that in theory, AF's personal

commitment to deep deference will undermine her ability to answer for herself and therefore her ability to act autonomously, and that it does so in three ways. One, it renders her consideration of her own wishes impossible. Two, it will cut off her ability to make new plans and commitments. Three, it will estrange her from her old plans and commitments. Each of these things will work together to undermine the framework of personal commitments that ground AF's answers. They will erode her own individual standpoint from which she can answer for her commitments, including her commitment to deference.

As I indicated above, the key to these dangers is that the exclusionary reason created by a personal commitment to defer to one's husband in all areas of one's joint life gives AF a reason to ignore all of her other considerations. Let's imagine that AF's husband, like DW's, wants to move the family to Minnesota. AF may not want to move to Minnesota, she may have planned to move closer to her own family instead, or wished to remain at her current job, but her personal commitment to defer to her husband in all areas of their joint life completely cuts off these other preferences and wishes as providing reasons for her to choose not to move to Minnesota. AF's personal commitment to deference doesn't make it the case that her husband's wishes outweigh her own, they completely cut off her own wishes as reasons at all.

Her commitment to deference cuts her off from any of her own considerations in the Minnesota case, and in all others relevant to her joint life with her husband. AF's commitment to deference cuts off alternative options because of the specific kind of exclusionary reason it generates – an overriding reason to ignore all of her other inclinations, all of her own preferences. None of her other wishes or desires will carry any weight, they are all excluded by her commitment to defer in all areas of her joint life with her husband.

Not only does her commitment exclude her considering her own preferences in light of what her husband wants, but it can also cut off her ability to make new plans and commitments. This potential problem with a personal commitment to deep deference is even more disturbing for the proponent of answerability. In *Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Housewife*, Marcia Baron, quite rightly, highlights that DW's deference will undermine her adoption of her own preferences, plans and projects going forward if no matter what she prefers she must do what her husband wants. As she says, "The deferential person may cease to develop his or her own interests."[167] The basic idea is, why bother if in the end you have to do what your husband wants to do anyways.

Imagine that AF wants to learn to cook healthier and eat better. As part of this plan AF may buy new cookbooks, take a class, and experiment in the kitchen. But AF's husband likes the food she has always prepared for him and desires that she not change up the menu or the way she cooks the food. Although AF can discuss with her husband all of the reasons she desires to change her cooking practices and attempt to persuade him to see her point, in the end her commitment to deference gives her an exclusionary reason to ignore her own wishes in favor of those of her husband and to acquiesce and continue cooking the way she always had if he is not persuaded by her. In the end her commitment to deference will undermine her new plan if it conflicts with her husband's wishes, and this will be true of any new plans or projects that do not cohere with his wishes.

So, we begin to see that even if AF were to make new plans and commitments on her own, they could always be potentially undercut by the exclusionary reasons created by her personal commitment to deference. Imagine that AF's plans were regularly undercut by

[167] Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife". 396

her husband's contrary wishes. If AF always has to "check-in" with her husband first before making new plans so as not to make plans that do not conform to his wishes, wouldn't it make more sense for her just to do what he wishes and ignore her own considerations even in areas that may not be directly relevant to their joint life?

In this sort of situation where her husband's wishes regularly undermine her own, ultimately, over time AF will no longer make new commitments because she knows they will only be undercut by her personal commitment to defer to her husband.[168] She will in some sense go on auto-pilot, allowing her husband to make her choices and decisions for her. If AF no longer makes new self-governing policies and plans, then AF's future actions and choices will not be guided by her own self-governing policies and plans but by her husband's commitments.

At this point AF is no longer directing and guiding her own future projects and plans, but she could still answer for her commitment to deference. She still has other commitments besides her commitment to deference. She may still have the same values and commitments she had before she committed to deferring to her husband. In fact she should still have the commitments and values that guided her choice to commit to deference. If a critic asks her why she is so deferential, she can say, here are the reasons that I chose to be

[168] Obviously, whether or not this is the case will depend on what AF's husband is like, but that should not detract from the point I am trying to make here. I am trying to show that at least *in theory* AF's commitment to deference is incompatible with her remaining autonomous. Of course in practice this depends on what kind of husband a person has. Of course, that is in some sense up to AF, but ultimately what her husband wants is up to him, it's about his autonomy and not hers, and that's the point. Judith Tormey's work suggests that self-sacrifice encourages selfishness in those who one sacrifices oneself too, so perhaps even the best sort of husband could eventually be corrupted by a situation such as this – although this is an interesting idea it is not one I wish to defend here. Tormey, "Exploitation, Oppression and Self-sacrifice".

deferential and refer to her old values and commitments – her religious values, her belief that this arrangement will lead to marital bliss, etc. Even if she no longer makes new plans or commitments, she still has other commitments and values that make up the framework that constitutes her own personal stand-point. So she can still answer for her commitment to deference.

However, I think that not only will AF's choice to commit to deference put her in danger of going on auto-pilot about her future commitments, but that she also risks becoming estranged from the commitments she had prior to her adoption of her commitment to deference. The exclusionary reasons generated by her commitment to defer to her husband give her a reason to ignore all of her own preferences, wishes, and desires. But why should we think it would stop there? Why wouldn't her personal commitment to defer to her husband not cut off all of her other considerations, including her other action-guiding commitments and values? I think that because of the scope of her commitment to deference, and her already established tendency to ignore her own preferences AF will be inclined to set aside these commitments as well.[169]

Imagine for a moment that the commitments that guide AF's adoption of her commitment to deference are undermined by her personal commitment to deference. For example, if AF's deference is grounded on religious convictions and her husband decides that they are going to leave the church then her commitment-guiding commitment would be in conflict with her commitment to deference. Or, what if AF's decision to defer to her

[169] The reasons generated by her other personal commitments will come into conflict with her commitment to deference, and AF will confront a conflict of commitments, so it is not necessary that her other commitments will be undercut, but I think there are good reasons to believe they will be.

husband is based her commitment to raising her children in the best possible way combined with her belief that being a deferential wife is best for raising children and AF's husband decides he doesn't wish to have children. In either case, AF has a conflict of commitments and it is not clear how they should be resolved. AF is presented with two options: either give up her earlier commitment or give up her commitment to deference. If she chooses to give up the commitment that is the basis of her deference, she will no longer have a basis on which to defend her deference. AF's other choice is to give up her personal commitment to deference, and while this may seem to be the more reasonable choice given the circumstances, as we saw earlier this has serious normative repercussions and may be easier said than done. While one may give up their commitment to deference in a situation such as this and face the normative consequences, I am concerned with a very specific sort of circumstance, the circumstance in which a person makes the choice to commit to deep deference, and I am interested in the consequences of the person following through with that commitment. If AF gives up her commitment to deference, then she is no longer the character we originally imagined. The character I am imagining is someone who is making the choice to commit, and in order to see why that choice may be problematic it makes sense for me to assume that the person follows through with that commitment. This gives a clearer picture of the worst-case scenario, and that shows us why at least in theory, if not always in practice, AF's choice is a bad one.

Concerns about conflicting commitments aside, if AF remains committed to deference, I think that, ultimately, it will be her only commitment. In the same way that her personal commitment to deference has her go on auto-pilot with regard to her future projects, plans, and commitments, it will cut her off from and estrange her from her

previous action-guiding commitments and values, both those that guide and ground her commitment to deference and all of her other commitments. She is committed to deferring to her husband in all areas of their joint life, this means that she has a reason to ignore her own preferences, values, and commitments. Even if she disagrees with him on principle, she will still end up doing what he wants; and if that's the case then why shouldn't she just abandon her own preferences, values, principles, and commitments in favor of her personal commitment to deep deference? What happens is that her personal commitment to deference ends up being her only commitment because it cuts off all of her other commitments. Having only a singular commitment is not only a bad way to live, I think, it makes autonomous choice and action impossible.

If AF's commitment to deference is her only commitment then she can no longer defend it. Answering for a commitment requires referencing other commitments as justification – it requires a stand point that is one's own – a framework of other commitments. Choices and actions are guided by a framework of action-guiding commitments like AF's commitment to deference or her commitment to her religion. In answering for her choices and actions she would refer to her commitment to deference, but in defending her commitment to deference, she would refer to other commitments within the framework, as the commitments themselves are interconnected and embedded in this framework of other commitments and values. Justifications for commitments to certain self-governing policies are found in this framework of other self-governing commitments. If AF has no other commitments, if her commitment to deference is her only commitment then she cannot defend it and she is not answerable for it.

If AF becomes estranged from all of her commitments except for her commitment to deference, then she no longer has a framework from which to answer for herself, and that makes her no different than DW. Any answers AF gives with regard to her deference will themselves bottom out in deference, because she will no longer have a stand-point from which to justify her commitment to deference.

If you adopt a commitment that will lead to only one commitment it is an autonomy destroying commitment. The reason then that the choice to be deeply deferential is problematic is that it leads to only one commitment. And if one only has one commitment then one is not autonomous.

It is important that this diagnosis of what is wrong with AF's choice to commit to deep deference is utterly formal. If it were not formal then we would run into all the problems of substantive theories discussed in the previous chapter such as question-begging, under-description, and over-diagnosis of non-autonomy. With the diagnosis above we are able to get to the same place as substantive theories and say that there is something wrong with the choice to be deeply deferential with regard to autonomy, but without the all the extra baggage and with a better, more robust explanation. The formality of the explanation here also means that this would apply in more cases than just AF as well. This may be just one of many commitments that could lead you to just one commitment, and any others that do so will also be bad for one's autonomy. So we have here a non-substantive reason why adopting a commitment to deep deference is autonomy undermining. Substantive theorists like Baron and Oshana are right when they say that deeply deferential women like DW and

AF are not autonomous because of their actual social situations.[170] If AF's situation is one in which her husband's preferences always trump her own, it means that it is not really up to her what she does with her life. But, I didn't want to have to rely on the substantive criteria that Baron and Oshana do. Being able to spell out how AF's commitment would undermine her answerability tells us why her social situation is a bad one: because it renders her unable to answer for herself, to take up her own perspective, to be her own person.

By giving up her control over her own choices and actions AF gives up her authority over the actual condition of her autonomy. She creates exclusionary reasons that she can no longer have control over as long as she maintains her personal commitment to deference, and that personal commitment itself serves to undermine her ever giving it up by excluding all of her own preferences, wants, and desires from her consideration. While other personal commitments generate exclusionary reasons, AF's commitment to deference is unique because it excludes not just some of her preferences, wants and desires as counting as reasons, but rather all of them because her commitment says that only her husband's preferences, wants, and desires should guide her action. Over time, AF's commitment to deference is an autonomy defeating commitment. The exclusionary reason generated by her personal commitment to deference ultimately undermines her ability to defend that commitment, and if she cannot answer for it, then she is no longer autonomous.

So ultimately, AF's commitment to deep deference will leave her no longer answerable. She will no longer be autonomous. And here we see why the choice to be deeply deferential should be of great concern to proponents of autonomy. The reason we would be

[170] Oshana, "Personal Autonomy and Society". Baron, "Servility, Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife".

concerned for a friend, sister, or daughter who chose to be deeply deferential is that it is fundamentally at odds with one's ability to maintain her autonomy. Even if in ideal circumstances autonomy can be maintained, it is in principle a bad idea.

Going forward I want to turn to the question of what we should do with these women. In the case of AF we cross over from the theoretical and hypothetical to the realm of the practical. What do we say and do with friends, sisters, and daughters when they say they want to adopt a role as a deferential wife? What do we say to the friend who converts to a strict religion and chooses the role of the traditional wife? What do we say to Oshana's "Taliban Woman"? What do we do with women who can no longer answer for their deference? Can we interfere in their lives because they are non-autonomous? Can we force them to be autonomous? Can we forbid people to choose to be deeply deferential? In the next chapter I begin to address these important questions through the lens of answerability.

## CHAPTER 7: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENGAGING THOSE LIKE AF AND DW IN THE REAL WORLD

With a full understanding of what it is to be deeply deferential and why it is incompatible with autonomy we have been able to clarify why choosing deep deference is problematic. The answers to these questions about being deferential and choosing deep deference will help us to answer our final questions: what do we do with those who are deeply deferential? How do we confront those who insist on freely choosing a subservient role that puts them at risk of losing their autonomy? How do we engage real life women like DW and AF? How do we confront someone like AF, who is making the choice to commit to a deeply deferential role? How should we treat someone like DW who has clearly already lost her autonomy?

Imagine if your sister or your daughter told you she was getting married and had chosen to convert to her husband's conservative religion that requires that women completely submit to their husbands. What would you do? How would you engage her about her choice? Would you forbid her to marry? Perhaps, you might kidnap her and try to "reprogram" her. Maybe you could deceive her into believing her prospective husband was unfaithful so she changes her mind about marrying him. None of these seem like viable options, because these methods all disrespect her autonomy and there use will only serve to undermine her autonomy and fail to respect her as an autonomous agent, which contradicts the goal of preserving and enhancing her autonomy. So what do we do in situations like this, situations in which we confront real world AFs?

Here we come to the practical applications of understanding deep deference and its

relation to autonomy. In what follows I will apply the lessons learned in the previous chapters of this dissertation about the natures of deep deference and autonomy, and how they relate to one another to try and answer the question of how we should engage people like AF and DW. I will argue that engagement in justificatory dialogue with those who are or may become deeply deferential is the best way to enhance their autonomy and agency without running the risk of limiting their autonomy by being overly paternalistic.

With those like AF who are making a choice to commit to deep deference, we have every reason to believe they are autonomous and treat them as such. It should be clear in these cases that we must engage them as autonomous persons and cannot limit their choice by force or coercion. We cannot outlaw the choice to be deferential to one's spouse or to strictly adhere to the dictates of a fringe religious or political group. Although we may think that these are very bad choices, they are choices we must respect because the persons who are making them are exercising their autonomy. Even if the choices they are making will serve to undermine their autonomy in the long run, as is likely the case with someone like AF, we cannot interfere with her ability to make that choice. In fact such interference actually serves to undermine her autonomy rather than enhance it. It is counterproductive to disrespect autonomy in order to protect it.

Our previous discussion of autonomy as answerability or the readiness to engage in justificatory dialogue and its relation to deep deference offers a better path. What we can do is engage those like AF in a dialogue about the choice they are making. Readiness to engage in justificatory dialogue is the hallmark feature of autonomous agents. So, critical engagement is a way to enhance the autonomy of those who are in the process of

committing to deep deference. This is not to be confused with lecturing the person about why her choice is bad. Certainly the points raised in the last chapters offer good reasons a critic can offer against the choice to commit to deep deference, but the conversation must be a dialogue. Rather than lecturing and giving reasons, we should push the person to give us her reasons for such a commitment, and continue to ask questions, to engage her in justificatory dialogue. This may not be successful, but it is the best approach one can take.

That covers those who are autonomously committing to deep deference and subservience. They are still answerable so it makes sense to engage them in this way, and it makes sense that we are not justified in interfering with their autonomous choices because their autonomy limits our engagements with them. But what about those who are already deeply deferential, those who are already non-autonomous, who are not disposed to engage in justificatory dialogue? Examples like DW are more challenging. She is not disposed to engage in meaningful justificatory dialogue. She does not hold herself answerable for her commitment to deference. She is not autonomous. What should we do with those like her? How do we engage DW? Can we coerce her because she is non-autonomous? Can we force her to give up her deference and be autonomous? Just like in the case of AF discussed above, these solutions seem contradictory at best – it does not make sense to try to make someone autonomous or more autonomous by doing things to them against their will. Andrea Westlund actually offers a suggestion for how to handle those whose deep deference has clearly already rendered them non-autonomous. She suggests that we treat DW "as if"

she were autonomous, or in other words, treat her in the same way we would treat AF.[171] So it seems that one possible way of attempting to enhance the autonomy of those like DW is to engage them in justificatory dialogue as well.

But, why should we treat those like DW as if they were autonomous? At least on a practical level there seem to be good reasons to do so. We tend to treat people in general as if they are like most other people, and we believe most people are autonomous. So it just makes sense to treat someone "as if" he or she is self-governed. But there are also good theoretical reasons to treat others "as if" they are autonomous as well. Autonomy exists on a continuum and the sort of autonomy I am talking about is the exercise of self-government not the richer notion of self-constitution or the minimal notion of having a basic capacity for autonomy such as the ability to care.[172] DW is not self-governing, but she does clearly care about her commitment to deference. She seems to at least have the capacity for autonomy. Her capacity for autonomy is enough to respect her "as if" she is autonomous. Let me explain further by looking at Agniezska Jaworska's work on the capacity for autonomy and what she calls *full moral standing* (FMS). Jaworska differentiates between what she calls "full-blown" autonomy – the conception of autonomy as exercising self-government – and the more minimal conception of autonomy as the capacity to be the kind of self that could be self-governed.[173] Minimal autonomy is just supposed to tell us that the desire that motivates

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[171] Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?". 499.
[172] Jaworska, "Caring and Full Moral Standing". Friedman, "Autonomy, Social Disruption, and Women".

[173] Agnieszka Jaworska, "Caring and Internality", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74, no. 3 (2007): 529-568. 568. footnote 107. Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency: Alzheimer's Patients and the Capacity to Value". 130. footnote 50.

an agent's action is internal to the agent – that it is her own in the sense that it is not external. This minimal conception of autonomy is the grounds for FMS. Those with full moral standing are owed a basic respect and their wishes carry some normative weight. Unlike with those with full-blown autonomy in which the standards for the permissibility of paternalistic intervention are very high, there is often good reason to still interfere with the choices of those who merely have the capacity for minimal autonomy. However, because they have FMS any interference still has a normative cost. This distinction between full blown and minimal autonomy is helpful here because it gives us yet a richer concept to further understand in what ways we can and cannot engage those like DW. FMS, which is based on the more basic capacity for autonomy, helps us to see why even if DW lacks full blown autonomy (she is in the grip of her deference and not answerable, and so not self-governed) that we should be wary of using paternalistic intervention to get her to stop being deferential, and if we do, it will have normative repercussions. [174] I think DW's FMS gives us a good reason to treat her "as if" she were autonomous by engaging her in justificatory dialogue.

In addition to the idea that DW is owed at least minimal respect because of her full moral standing, there is another sense in which we should treat her as autonomous. We have another reason to treat her "as if" she is answerable. These are the same reasons we have for engaging AF in justificatory dialogue. Engagement in justificatory dialogue is autonomy

[174] Note that just because DW has FMS it does not mean that paternalistic intervention would never be justified it just means that it is not always justified. Children and Alzheimer's patients have FMS and we often have good reasons for paternalistic intervention in those cases, and so it is likely that may be the case with DW as well, but her FMS gives us good reasons to take her wishes seriously even if ultimately we think they are outweighed.

enhancing. It has the potential to make her autonomous.

The potential of justificatory dialogue in helping DW to overcome her current situation and become autonomous is helpfully highlighted in Susan Babbit's discussion of DW.[175] Babbit argues that imagining one's life otherwise is an important epistemological device to get someone like DW to act autonomously. Engaging a person in justificatory dialogue could facilitate this kind of imagining. The questions and critical perspective could open up new possibilities in the imagination, and this could allow DW to see that she really has other options and to see the value in a more autonomous way of being.

So how do we engage someone in justificatory dialogue about her deference if in reality she cannot answer? We can engage her in justificatory dialogue about things other than her deference. We can question her choices and decisions that are based on her husband's wishes. Even if she is not responsive we can keep at her and try to get her to answer. Even if her attempts at answers bottom out in deference, it seems the attempted engagement in justificatory dialogue should enhance her capacities for dialogue. Having to give answers, even if they are not good answers, is a practice in autonomy conferring behaviors. Children are usually not thought to be fully autonomous yet, but one way that we promote their autonomy is to question them about their choices and behavior. The answers they give may not strike us as reflective of a fully autonomous agent who holds themselves responsible for their choices and actions, but we still engage them in this way because it promotes their developing autonomy. Having to justify choices and actions is in general autonomy conducive. This is not to say we can "fix" those who are deeply deferential, but it

[175] Babbitt, "Feminism and Objective Interests: The Role of Transformation Experiences in Rational Deliberation".

does offer us a path towards trying to promote their autonomy without disrespecting autonomy.

I do not mean to over celebrate justificatory dialogue. Some may disagree with my claim that the best way to engage with those who are deeply deferential or choosing subordinate roles is to demand that they attempt to justify their choices. In an article arguing that offering euthanasia to the terminally ill can be harmfully coercive, David Velleman highlights that having to engage in justificatory dialogue about one's decision is a serious cost of legalizing euthanasia.[176] Paula Ettlebrick also thinks that having to defend certain kinds of choices for alternative life styles, such as the decision to remain unmarried, is oppressive and harmful.[177] There are a variety of criticisms levied at attempts to outlaw the wearing of burqas or veiling of the face in public places that are motivated by the idea that such laws are overly paternalistic and unnecessarily interfere with people's autonomy. I think the best way to promote the autonomy of those who are or may become deeply deferential is to engage them in justificatory dialogue, but that does not mean that justificatory dialogue is going to be best in all situations.

Let's take a closer look at Velleman's actual argument about how allowing Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) can be harmful to those who do not want it. Allowing PAS will only

[176] J David Velleman, "Against the Right to Die", *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 17, no. 6 (1992): 665-681.

[177] Ettlebrick Paula, "Since When Is Marriage a Path to Liberation?", *Lesbian and Gay Marriage, supra note* 1 (1989).

harm those who do not want it, and this may very well be a small group.[178] Given the current condition in most of the United States, where PAS is illegal, everyone whether they want PAS or not only has one option – that is Option A: They live by default, and they do not have to justify their decision to continue living, including the burden it places on your family, friends, and society. Now Velleman asks us to imagine that PAS is legal. If PAS is legal then a person who does not want PAS has two options. Option B: They live, but they must justify their choice to stay alive – they must justify their very existence, or Option C: They choose PAS, and they do not have to justify their own existence, but they are dead. But neither of these options are as good as Option A for the person who does not want PAS, and if PAS is legal then Option A is no longer an option at all. So, going from PAS is illegal to PAS is legal takes away the person who does not want PAS's best option and Velleman argues taking away a person's best option harms them and thus there is a great cost to making PAS legal because it harms people who do not want it. But the key here is not just that their best option is gone, but that there is something very bad about having to justify your choice not to utilize PAS. The very act of having to answer to your critics, to have to answer questions about your choice to remain alive is a heavy burden for the few who would not want PAS. It is enough of a burden that perhaps it would be unwise to offer PAS even to those who desperately want it so that they can avoid a great deal of suffering.

Paula Ettelbrick implicitly makes a parallel argument to that of Velleman when she tries to justify her belief that marriage rights are not a path to liberation for lesbians and gay

[178] When faced with a dreadful and painful end to life it is likely that most people would rather opt for PAS, so those who do not want it are likely to be in the minority, but as we will see that even if it only harms a few people, such justificatory dialogue is still very problematic for Velleman.

men.[179] She says that allowing same sex marriage is harmful for individuals who do not want to get married. They will be even further marginalized and will be forced to justify their decision not to be married. She says, "Just as sexually active nonmarried women face stigma and double standards around sex and sexual activity, so too would nonmarried gay people. The only legitimate gay sex would be that which is cloaked in and regulated by marriage."[180] Thus, unmarried sexually active gay men and lesbian women would have to justify the choice to be unmarried, which means that they would be further sexually oppressed. So we see a parallel to Velleman's claim about the legalization of PAS, but this time with regard to the legalization of same sex marriage. The idea is that allowing same-sex marriage harms those who do not want it. For if same-sex marriage is illegal then homosexuals who do not want to marry can remain unmarried by default, and do not have to justify why they are not married. However if same-sex marriage is legalized, then that option is no longer available. If marriage equality is realized the only options available to the homosexual person who wishes to remain single is to either choose not to get married, but have to justify this choice to others and suffer from being considered of even lower status than before or choose to get married. For homosexual persons who do not want to get married, legalizing same sex marriage takes away their best option – to remain unmarried without having to justify their choice. Having to engage in justificatory dialogue about such a serious life choice is again seen as a serious harm.

It also seems clear that removing the harm of having to justify oneself is an implicit

[179] This is just one thing which is implied by her argument, her actual argument is much more complex and nuanced.

[180] Ibid. 259.

motivation for making it illegal to veil one's face and the enforcement of so called burqa bans. If veiling is illegal then the person who does not wish to veil her face can simply do so by default without having to justify her choice to those who think she should veil her face. In the absence of restrictions on veiling a person who did not wish to veil her face would have to either choose to veil her face, or choose not to and then face the demands for justification from those in her community and family who think she should veil her face. So again we see another perspective from which having to engage in justificatory dialogue is seen as harmful.

We should be careful to be sensitive to these concerns that justificatory dialogue can be prohibitively harmful. But these concerns do not obviate my claim that justificatory dialogue is autonomy enhancing. We can balance both concerns about the potential harm of justificatory dialogue in some situations and the value of justificatory dialogue in enhancing the autonomy of those like DW and AF.

I think it is important to take these concerns about engagement in justificatory dialogue seriously, in particular having to justify one's decisions about marriage and face veiling seem similar in nature to the kinds of justificatory dialogue necessary for engaging those like DW and AF. Certainly the choice of whether or not to get married or whom to marry, and the choice of whether or not to adhere to a cultural or religious practice are extremely personal and of great importance to one's identity. It does seem that to interfere in these matters would be to harm someone. But I am not proposing that one interfere. What I am arguing for is that we should engage those making such choices in justificatory dialogue about their choice. While it is likely that having to engage in such defense may be distressful for some people, I do not think that the risk of such distress is prohibitively harmful in the

case of those like DW and AF. We must be aware of these burdens, and thus be more sensitive in our questioning of those like DW, AF, lesbian women and gay men who do not wish to be married, or women who choose to wear a veil or burqa, but that does not mean that we cannot ask uncomfortable questions. Uncomfortable questions are one thing, inappropriate or unwarranted questions are another.[181]

There will be cases where one does not need to justify themselves. Sometimes we don't have the authority or standing to demand answers from people. I don't think just anybody can question AF about her commitment. Her sister, her mother, and her close friends may have the standing to engage her in justificatory dialogue about her choice to defer to her husband, but strangers do not. There are some choices which it is arguably inappropriate and unwarranted for anyone to question a person about.[182]

Although we must be aware that sometimes justificatory dialogue is burdensome and sometimes the demand that one answer is uncalled for, the best sort of engagement with those who choose subordinate social roles or are suffering from a lack of autonomy is still going to be to question them about their action guiding commitments. We must engage in dialogue with those who chose subservient roles and behaviors even if they are impervious to our questions. And although their imperviousness may frustrate us more often than not, this is the best we can do without causing more harm than good.

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[181] I would like to argue that questions about why one is not married, are inappropriate and unwarranted no matter what, whether asked by a well intentioned aunt, a nosy co-worker, or even one's mother, but I am afraid such assertions would take me to far afield at this juncture.

[182] A discussion of what these choices might be is beyond the scope of my project at this time.

It is my hope that we have been able to come to a better understanding of deference, autonomy, and how they relate to one another. I was able to sort out a number of theoretical issues. It was able to lay out a clear conception of exactly what it means to defer, and articulate what I take to be a particularly interesting, important, and often misunderstood form of deference, deep deference. I explained why being deeply deferential is incompatible with acting autonomously by drawing attention to the shared interpersonal nature of both deep deference and autonomy, and thus using an interpersonal account of autonomy to lead to a clear understanding of why it is that we think that a deeply deferential character like DW is not autonomous. With this understanding of why deep deference and autonomous action are incompatible I was able to argue that the reason we think that the choice to be deeply deferential is problematic from the perspective of autonomy is that theoretically it will ultimately undermine one's ability to continue exercising her autonomy. Now we see the importance of resolving these theoretical issues, they serve as a practical guide for dealing with very serious real-world problems. Sadly, many people, and in particular women, still live in deeply oppressive contexts. It should be our goal to empower all persons, especially those in social contexts where the exercise of their autonomy was never allowed to develop, to exercise their autonomy and bring about an end to their oppression. With the clarity and insights gained here we hopefully have laid some groundwork for how to move forward with such an endeavor.

We have made great strides in understanding deep deference and by introducing a theoretically sound practical way to try and help enhance the autonomy of those who are deeply deferential. What is left to do? There are of course still many questions and issues related to how best to empower those who lack autonomy or whose autonomy is threatened.

What more would it be helpful to understand as we try to spread autonomy and end oppression? While it is clear that such an engagement must involve engagement in justificatory dialogue, it still remains unclear how best to engage people in such critical dialogue. For one thing, we must be careful to be sensitive to different cultural perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate forms of dialogue and will need to find ways to engage those who do not value critical dialogue. A second issue, would be how to affect change on a large scale. Certainly engaging individuals in justificatory dialogue is autonomy enhancing as I have argued, but how can we use this knowledge to affect change at an institutional level? Finally, while we have a clear picture before us of deep deference, many who are oppressed are not deeply deferential but rather lie in a gray area between clearly permissible and clearly problematic deference. What can be said about the autonomy of the "Tea Partiers" and the Mr. Bingleys? An explanation of why their autonomy seems to be compromised, but not so completely or absolutely as DW's is still needed. These questions are ones that we must continue to explore. It is my hope that understanding the importance of critical dialogue in constructing autonomy will be a helpful guide in beginning to shed light on answers to these important questions.

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