Autonomy and Options

People who realize autonomy lead their lives, at least to some substantial extent, on their own terms. They are, as it is sometimes put, "part authors of their lives." Autonomy, I assume here, is a component or element of well-being. We are made better off, at least in one respect and subject to sundry qualifications, if we realize autonomy in our lives than if we do not. There are other ways of thinking about autonomy, to be sure. Many believe that autonomy has value independently of any contribution it may make to our interests. It is widely thought, for example, that a physician must respect her patient's autonomous decision to refuse life sustaining treatment, even if receiving that treatment decidedly would be in that patient's best overall interests. Autonomy demands respect, on this view. In this paper I set aside this respect-centered view of autonomy. My concern is with autonomy's contribution to our well-being.[1] Viewed through this lens and this lens only, if autonomy, or conditions conducive to its realization, do not serve the interests of the person in question, then it has no value. My concern is narrower still. For I am concerned here with only one condition for the realization of autonomy understood as a component of well-being. This condition concerns a choice environment that presents one with what Mill termed "a variety of situations" and what later writers have referred to as an option set. On the assumption that autonomy can make our lives go better for us, the plan of this paper is to investigate what kind of option set, or what range of choice, is best for us.

I will not offer a detailed proposal or formula for determining when option sets are either adequate or optimal for us. Instead, I will focus on a range of factors that bear on these determinations. To foreshadow my conclusions, I will argue that option sets are best conceived in terms of optimality, not adequacy, and that the conditions of both optimality and adequacy for option sets are considerably more demanding than they are commonly taken to be, that there is no plausible case for providing all members of society with an adequate or optimal range of options, that access to bad options (options that are immoral in some respects) can, pace Raz, be necessary for option sets to be adequate at least for some, that an autonomy-supporting choice environment has a conservative dimension that stands in tension with the creative destruction of the market order and a welcoming embrace of technological and cultural change, and, finally, that the impact of interpersonal interference, as contrasted with natural obstruction, on the value of our option sets is not as significant as commonly maintained.

I. Framing the Issue

Some think that autonomy is good for you only if you go for it, or perhaps would go for it under favorable conditions. I suspect that it is true that if you value living autonomously and if you succeed in living autonomously, then the fact that you value doing so contributes to your welfare. But this paper assumes a more objective understanding of autonomy's value. We are made better off, at least in one respect and subject to various qualifications, if we realize autonomy in our lives, irrespective of our attitudes toward this accomplishment. Autonomy is, or so I assume here, an objective prudential good, one whose contribution to our welfare may be augmented, but is not conditioned on, our valuing it or desiring it.

Most people do not adopt as a life goal the project of living autonomously. They do not set out to achieve autonomy. Reflecting on their past decision making, they may take pride in the fact

that they lived their lives on their own terms. With Sinatra, they may say with considerable satisfaction at least "I did it my way." This attitude most commonly reflects the recognition or conviction that autonomy has prudential value, not the thought that realizing it is itself a goal. Most people realize autonomy, when they succeed in doing so, not by pursuing it directly but by pursuing other goods or things that they take to be good. But they will not realize autonomy, even if they are very successful in realizing these other goods, if they do not pursue these other goods in certain ways and under the right conditions. That is why some have been tempted to characterize autonomy as a kind of master good. Mill, in describing individuality, claims that a person's own "**mode of laying out his existence** is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode."[2] We need not go as far as Mill to accept the more modest point that autonomy's value is adverbial. It is realized in how one lays out one's existence.

Someone might hold that autonomy is an objective prudential good, one that has the adverbial character just mentioned, but then insist that it is the only objective prudential good. While possible, such a view is not very plausible. If one is prepared to grant that there is at least one objective prudential good, then one should be prepared to grant the existence of other such goods, such as knowledge and achievement, for example. The best arguments for skepticism about objective prudential value sweep broadly, targeting all claims, not all claims but one.[3] Be this as it may, having assumed that autonomy is an objective prudential good, I will assume further that there are other objective prudential goods. And I will assume still further that these objective prudential goods, or more precisely options to engage with them, can be and sometimes are incommensurable or on a par, such that no objective determinate ranking of them is in the cards. Given these assumptions, one way by which people can realize autonomy in their lives is by making choices amongst a range of these options of incommensurate objective value. Following Robert Nozick, I will refer to this possibility as "creative pluralism." In Nozick's words, it obtains when there is not "one uniquely correct objective ranking of [objective values], one optimal (feasible) mix of them, one fixed desirable schedule of tradeoffs among them . . ."[4]

"Individuality, Nozick continues, "is expressed in the interstices of the objective rankings of value, in the particular unified patterning chosen and lived; this itself will be objectively valuable . . ."[5] What Nozick calls "individuality" here fits what I want to say about autonomy, at least in the circumstances depicted. I highlight this possibility of creative pluralism here not because it characterizes autonomous agency as such, but rather, as we will see later in this paper, because it bears on the issue of how to understand autonomy's value and hence on how to characterize adequate or optimal option sets.

Nozick's use of the term "individuality" points to a further issue that invites clarification. As I understand him, Nozick, like Mill before him, construes individuality as a form of self-development. As such, it is an ideal of personal excellence. And one might think, although I do not say here that Nozick thought, that ideals of personal excellence are not prudential values. Their realization is good, but not necessarily good for those who realize them. The same idea can be expressed about autonomy. One writer, for example, proposes that autonomy is "an excellence, to which people can approximate in varying degrees, and the perfection of which is a rarely realized ideal."[6] Described in these terms, the achievement of autonomy might be no part of our well-being, augmenting only the value or excellence of our lives.

My concern is with autonomy understood as a component of welfare or well-being and not as an ideal of excellence. To be sure, realizing excellence in one's life contributes to one's good, but the well-being comes first, as it were, on the understanding I have in mind. The notion that realizing autonomy could be a form of personal excellence that is not registered in well-being terms, however, is an idea to which I will return.

A final clarification is in order. Autonomy is a property that can apply, in the first instance, to the choices and decisions that we make. The patient mentioned above can autonomously refuse the life-sustaining treatment offered to her. But it is common for philosophers who are concerned with autonomy's contribution to our well-being to apply it to a life as a whole, or to substantial stretches of a life. Mill, for example, speaks of realizing individuality in one's whole mode of living. We do not, he insists, realize it in one choice or decision that we make, however momentous that choice or decision may be.[7] This insistence, however, stands in tension with what he says about women and the institution of marriage in the Mormon church. Polygamous marriage, we are told, is a form of slavery for women, "a riveting of the chains of one half of the community."[8] Yet women freely enter into it (according to Mill[9]) and thus the life that they lead is a life that they have chosen.[10] Yet that freely chosen life is not an autonomous life. The ideal of individuality does not license the decision to relinquish one's individuality.

The tension in Mill's position points to the need to distinguish two conceptions of an autonomous life.[11] On the first conception, living an autonomous life requires that one make one's own decisions about how to live on an on-going basis. On this conception, the Mormon women who freely enter into polygamous marriages do not live autonomous lives. By contrast, on the second conception, living an autonomous life requires only that one autonomously chose to live it. Since the Mormon women (by assumption, if not in actuality) autonomously chose to take on the chains that polygamous marriage imposes on them, their resulting unfree lives are autonomously chosen lives.

This paper assumes the first of these conceptions. Insofar as we value autonomy as a contributor to welfare or well-being, we should conceive of it as an on-going style or pattern of living. After all, an autonomously chosen life of the sort undertaken by the Mormon women brings with it a considerable loss of future autonomy, and we need to register the well-being cost that comes with this loss. The conception of an autonomous life assumed here had better not have the implication that autonomous people can never limit their future options, for one important way by which we lead our lives on our own terms is by making binding commitments. But such a view must imply that there are autonomy-based limits to the binding commitments that we can undertake. And such limits naturally bear on the question of what kinds of option sets must be available to us if we are to lead autonomous lives.

To recap: the assumptions, unargued for here, that frame the discussion that ensues include the following. Autonomy is:

a. A component or ingredient of human well-being[12]
b. An objective prudential good, one among many; and
c. Instantiated or realized in styles or patterns of living that extend across a life, or substantial portions of it

I also have assumed that what Nozick refers to as "creative pluralism" substantially obtains.

d. Not only are there plural objective values that bear on prudential choice, but also these values, and the options that realize them, can fail to be determinately rankable, at least in some significant choice situations.

Naturally, some will think the inquiry pursued in this paper is misguided from the start. They will reject some or all of the assumptions that frame the inquiry. Accordingly, the investigation here can be understood to be conditional. If the assumptions I have made are correct, then what follows about the nature of the option sets that autonomy requires for its realization?

I. The Necessity of Options?

Not everyone thinks that autonomy strictly requires options. Some think that autonomy is manifested by an agent when he exercises certain capacities and exhibits a certain kind of psychological structure.[13] Call this P-autonomy. I will have little to say about P-autonomy in this paper, even though I agree that it is a necessary part of autonomy as I understand it. The issue is not whether P-Autonomy is necessary for autonomy, but whether it is sufficient.

Someone might realize P-autonomy while being the victim of extreme manipulation. To see this, we need only place a person who is stipulated to have exemplary P-autonomy, however this notion is best characterized, in an environment in which he is subjected to manipulative control by another, control that shapes and steers the person's exercise of his psychological capacities. Intuitively, such a person is not leading his life on his own terms, but is subject to the will of another. That is why many insist that not only manipulation, but also coercive control (which may not affect or shape one's P-autonomy at all), compromise autonomy.

It is tempting to say, in response, that autonomy requires P-autonomy and a certain kind of independence from others. Autonomy, on this view, has both psychological conditions and environmental conditions, but it does not require option sets. Is this plausible? Raz's example of a man who has fallen into a pit is illustrative here.[14] Let us imagine that the man in question has not been coerced, tricked or manipulated by another into falling into the pit. His unfortunate condition, let us assume, is the result of his own bad fortune. Can such a man lead his life on his own terms? Presumably not. Circumstances deprive him of meaningful choice. But if bad fortune generally, and circumstances other than those brought about by interfering others specifically, can compromise autonomy, then we will need some broader account of the environmental conditions that facilitate the realization of autonomy. The option requirement can be seen to be a key part of that broader account.

The man in the pit is in a bad predicament. It is hard to see how anyone could be satisfied with the life it provides.[15] Still, for that very reason, the most compelling explanation of his lack of autonomy will advert to his P-autonomy. We value robust option sets in large part because they enable us to get what we want or value, or what we have reason to want or value. But imagine now someone who has no options, or very few options of any significance, but who is fortunate to lead the kind of life they want to lead. Their life is acceptable to them, but it is not one that they have chosen. Appealing to a distinction from Sen, let us imagine such a person having robust counterfactual freedom (that is, if they had a choice for something, they would go for it, they get it,

and they get it in virtue of the fact they would go for it if they had the choice), but no control themselves over whether they get it.[16] Such a person lacks control over their life. They cannot shape it themselves, even though it largely conforms to what they value and care about.[17] Insofar as we judge such a life to be deficient in that it lacks a certain kind of control, and the options needed to make such control a real possibility, we think that living a self-satisfied life is not all there is to living a life on one's own terms.[18]

Might the options that are needed for such control be merely in the mind's eye? You might think that you have a range of choice before you when in fact you have none. You deliberate over the options and choose the one that you think is best. Fortunately, the option you chose is the only one you had. I am not thinking here of a deterministic world. Autonomy, as I am understanding it, does not require libertarian free will. You were just mistaken in thinking you had options. Upon learning of your mistake, you judge that your choice lacked something significant. You made the decision you would have made had you had options, but autonomy is a matter not only of what you did, but of what you could have done had you decided differently, and that points to a further way by which options contribute to autonomy.[19]

II. Robustness

Since it will prove to be a challenging task to say in a convincing and informative way exactly what makes an option set adequate for the realization of autonomy, we might try to avoid some of the tricky issues here by adopting the maxim: "more is better." If we care about helping people to lead autonomous lives, then we should endeavor to provide them with as many options as we can.[20] If we say this, then we will need to figure out how to balance number against variety. For sometimes it will be better to favor greater variety over greater number, but less variety. Without pretending that it is easy to do so, let's suppose that we have figured out how to balance these two dimensions of an option set. We have assigned numerical values to increments in number and increments in variety and found a way to commensurate the different numerical values. The combined score gives us a measure of what I will call the *robustness* of an option set.

The proposal, then, is that if we care about helping people to lead autonomous lives, then we should endeavor to provide them with as robust an option set as we can. This proposal invites an immediate objection. Must we not attend to how the provision of options to some affects the option sets of others? Yes, but for now it will be instructive to consider people's autonomy interests in isolation from the autonomy interests of others.

The robustness proposal can be rejected for a variety of reasons[21], two of which I will highlight here. The first reason follows from the point briefly alluded to above that we have an autonomy-based interest in having the ability to restrict our options in the future. Liberal and egalitarian marriages, unlike the polygamous marriages that concerned Mill, restrict the future options of those who enter into them, but not in a way that undermines their autonomy. But if we had reason to ensure that people have access over time to maximally robust option sets, then such marriages also would be problematic. Presumably, while both the polygamous marriages of the Mormon women and the liberal and egalitarian marriages envisioned here foreclose future options, only the former do so in a way that leaves their participants without sufficient options.

So, even if we started with the thought that people should have access to a maximally robust option set, we would need to allow that over time a merely adequately robust option set would suffice for their continuing autonomy. We would need to allow for this if we include, as presumably we must, options to foreclose future options in the option sets of the people in question. That is the first reason for backing away from the robustness proposal. The second reason follows on its heels. It invites us to think about the quality of an option set, where quality is not reducible to robustness. To get a feel for what I have in mind here, consider options that I will call *enticing*. These are options that, if made available to a person, tend to be taken up by the person. They have an attractive power that distinguishes them from other options. Taking up an enticing option may further one's autonomy, but it may not. The opportunity to hear the songs of Ulysses' sirens is an enticing option, but it is one that we had better avoid. Granted, the example here is extreme. On the fable, human beings simply cannot resist the sirens' songs; they overwhelm our decision-making capacities. But many options entice, even if they do not possess this overwhelming power. Again, the fact that an option entices one does not mean that it must be a threat to one's autonomy. The point is only that it can be such a threat. We can judge for ourselves and for others that having access to some enticing options will not serve our autonomy, but thwart it. We can know that such options predictably will lead us astray. They will entice us to go down paths that we do not wish to go down, at least when we are considering the matter before we are in the option's grip.

The possibility that certain options can entice one to do things that frustrate one's efforts to live one's life on one's own terms is familiar enough, but the issue it raises is a challenging one for an account of autonomy. We know that our plans for our lives are deeply influenced by the options we have confronted in the past. We have an autonomy-based interest in being able to carry out the plans that matter to us and to resist temptations to depart from them. But we also have an autonomy-based interest in being open to change and to living under conditions that allow us to consider and revise our plans in light of new information and new circumstances, including exposure to new ways of living and new options, some of which will entice us. I will return to this issue below. For now, all that needs to be said is something that should not be too controversial. At least sometimes adding an enticing option to a person's option set will not serve, and may set back, his interests in realizing autonomy, even though adding the option to the set will increase its robustness. In such cases, insofar as we are concerned with the person's autonomy, we will prefer that he have access to the less robust, but higher quality, option set. And if this is right, then we go wrong in following the robustness proposal, at least for cases of this kind.

Thus far I have not said much about the notion of *quality* as it pertains to an option set. People need options that they perceive to be worth pursuing. If I judge most or all of my options to be of limited value or not worth taking up, then I cannot lead my life on my own terms. The trivial options available to the man in the pit presumably are of this character. But here, as elsewhere, perception is not all that matters. You can realize autonomy if you go for the less valuable over the more valuable, and even if you go for the worthless over the valuable. So long as you perceive the options you have access to be worthwhile, and your will is your own, then you can realize autonomy. But the actual, as opposed to the merely perceived, value of your options matters as well. With this in mind, it will be helpful to distinguish two dimensions of quality. The first dimension is perspectival. Taking my evaluative outlook into account (both now and perhaps how it can be expected to be in the reasonably near future), we ask how well the option set

serves it. The actual value of the options is foregrounded on the second dimension. Here we ask about the real or objective value of the options included in the set. The quality of an option set is a function of the two dimensions.

I have argued that it is a mistake to think that the more robust an option is, the better it will serve our autonomy. To assess option sets, we must look beyond robustness and consider quality.[22] But the perspectival and objective dimensions of quality are both important, and they interact in complex ways. No matter how objectively good your option set is, if it contains no options that engage you, it will not serve your autonomy. Now imagine two option sets of equal perceived quality, but differing in the objective value or worthwhileness of the options they contain. The first of these option sets, let us suppose, contains options of lesser value than the second. Given these stipulations, we can judge the second option set to be of higher quality than the first, even though both option sets serve our interest in realizing autonomy equally well.

But why, it might now be asked, does the objective dimension of quality, important as it may be for other purposes, bear on the issue we are addressing in this paper? Our concern is with the realization of autonomy, not necessarily with the pursuit of valuable activities. The reply to the question begins with the reminder that we are in this paper concerned with autonomy's contribution to our well-being. Given this focus, we need to attend to any and all conditioning factors that pertain to this contribution. In particular, we need to attend to the following (purported) conditioning factor.

> The Autonomy / Value Link: Autonomy is valuable only if it is directed at, or exercised in the pursuit of, the good or worthwhile.[23]

The Autonomy / Value Link is an arresting claim. We will consider it more carefully below. The point for now is that, if there is any truth to it at all, then the relevance to our concerns of what I have been referring to as the second dimension of quality becomes apparent. The quality of an option set insofar as our concern is with autonomy's contribution to well-being will be a function of its actual as well as perceived value.

We have plenty of reasons, accordingly, to be suspicious of the robustness proposal. But leaving it behind leaves us with the problems it allowed us to avert. If option sets conducive to autonomy are not simply a matter of 'the more robust the better' we need to ask what is necessary for an option set to serve our interests in autonomy. Turn now to the claim that autonomy only requires that we have access to a sufficiently good set of options.

III. Self-Development

I claimed above that autonomy requires that we have control over the shape or course of our lives, or substantial stretches of them. But no one has perfect control over their life. We are all steered and shaped to some degree by circumstances beyond our control. What counts as adequate or sufficient control for autonomy is, as Raz observed in his discussion of the issue, "an enormously difficult problem."

Raz did not offer a solution to the problem, but he gestured toward one. I will call it the self-development proposal, since it construes adequacy of options in terms of opportunities for the

development of our powers and capacities. On this proposal, there is a general abstract test for determining whether an option set provides a person with an adequate range of options.

> To be autonomous and to have an autonomous life, a person must have options which enable him to sustain throughout his life activities which, taken together, exercise all the capacities human beings have innate drive to exercise, as well as to decline to develop any of them.[24]

Human beings have "innate drives to move around, to exercise our bodies, to stimulate our senses, to engage our imagination and our affection, to occupy our mind."[25]

The self-development test is not culture bound, but Raz is quick to emphasize that to "a considerable degree culture and civilization consist in training and channeling these innate drives." Accordingly, the test will need to "cashed in terms of the options available in a particular society."[26]

Three problems with the self-development proposal can be noted here. First, without considerable supplementation, the test Raz articulates lacks critical bite. Non-autonomy supporting societies satisfy it. Take the Old Order Amish community. It provides its members with options to move around, exercise their bodies, stimulate their senses, engage their affection and imagination and occupy their minds. But this community surely qualifies as a non-autonomous subgroup in a modern society, one that presumably fails to provide its members with a sufficient or adequate range of options. To be fair, the innate drives that Raz lists need not be read as exhaustive, and a fuller list may give the test more critical bite. The first problem with the self-development proposal, then, is not insuperable. Perhaps the list can be completed in a way that yields plausible verdicts, but we should be at least a little suspicious about whether it can be so completed.

The second problem cuts deeper. The test focuses on generic human drives, but just as these drives will be trained and channeled by social culture, they will also manifest, or take different forms, in different individuals. In thinking about the options a person needs to live his life on his own terms, should we not attend to his individual nature and not solely to the generic drives he shares with others?[27] Raz may not disagree, for he claims, at one point, that "the autonomous person must have options which will enable him to develop all his abilities, as well as to concentrate on some of them," and, possibly, the reference to "his abilities" is meant to include more than the generic abilities he shares with others. But, if so, then the test will need to be considerably informationally richer, taking account not only of differences between societies, but also between different persons living in the same society, and will need to be applied in a piecemeal way to individuals. Rather than asking, does this society provide its members with an adequate range of options, we will need to ask, how well does this society do in providing each of its members, taken one by one, with an adequate range of options. We will return to this point.

The third problem surfaces, even if it is conceded that the first two problems have been adequately addressed. Very often, adequacy is merely adequate, and not optimal. Suppose that Henry has been provided with an adequate range of options, but that we could provide him with an additional option that would engage his interest. If we care about his autonomy, then we have reason to provide him with it.[28] More choice is not always better, but sometimes more than

adequate choice is better – the robustness proposal had this much right. Take a merely adequate option set, then make it more robust. At least sometimes, this wider option set will be a better option set (from the standpoint of autonomy). Whether we should, all things considered, provide Henry with that additional option will depend on other considerations, such as the cost its provision to him would impose on us and others. We will come to this issue in due course, but for now our concern is with providing Henry with the best option set he can get, given his well-being interest in realizing autonomy. And that concern is not well served by the self-development proposal, given its ambition to articulate the requirements for a (merely) sufficient range of options.[29]

IV. Basic Options

A different proposal for characterizing the adequacy of an option set seeks to identify a set of basic options that should be made available to all. These options are basic in the sense that they are (purportedly) especially important to us in our efforts to lead our lives on our own terms. They concern matters that are not trivial, like having different items on a dinner menu, but "choice in the basic issues of life, in one's most important commitments."[30] Here is one representative statement of the idea.

> There are certain types of choices, certain key areas of decision-making, which have a special importance for individual integrity and self-constitution. Particular theorists may differ as to what these key areas are, but, over the centuries, a certain liberal consensus has evolved: individuals' political activities, their intimate relations with others, their public expressions of opinion, their choice of associates, their participation in self-governing groups and organizations, particularly political organizations and labor unions, their choice of an occupation – all these have been regarded as particularly important in people's definitions of themselves.[31]

The basic options proposal can be broken down into two stages. First, identify the relevant general categories of choice – the "key areas of decision-making" – that are integral to autonomy; and then, second, ensure that that the option set includes a significant number and variety of particular options that fall under each of these categories. At this second stage, attention no doubt will need to be paid to the traditions and practices that obtain in the societies in question. The options that are provided need to be meaningful to those who are given access to them, and the meaningfulness of options is partly a matter of local convention. We should not expect that the specification of such options will be straightforward or uncontroversial. There will be rival constructions over how best to do this, but that fact need not detain us. For our concern is not with any particular construction, but with the general approach.

The basic options proposal seeks to identify general types of options that are crucial to realizing autonomy for all, or almost all, people. Is the proposal too conservative? Those with very unconventional plans of life may find that the "key areas of decision-making" that are designated by any such liberal consensus will fail to include the kinds of options that are important to them. Imagine, for example, someone who after reading Walden Two forms the Thoreau-like plan to live for a significant period of time alone, communing with undisturbed nature. Such a plan presumably could be valuable and worth doing, but options to take it up are unlikely to be found

under the key areas identified by the liberal consensus on any of its particular constructions. But while I think that there is something to this worry, its significance can be doubted. For the vast majority of us, we form our plans and adopt our projects and pursuits against the backdrop of the set of options made available to us by the practices and conventions of our social world. Plans to lead radically unconventional lives, unless they are particularly creative variations on the conventional patterns, threaten to be absurd or senseless. The more formidable challenge comes from the opposite direction. Far from being too conservative, the basic options proposal is insufficiently attentive to conservative concerns. Here is the point I want to press. Generally speaking, to know whether people have access to a sufficient range of options, we must know quite a lot about the goals, plans and projects that they have adopted. With regard to cultural change, this point has long been recognized. Rapid change can undermine a group's context of choice, making it difficult or impossible for them to lead the lives that are central to their understanding of what is valuable and meaningful.[32] Applied to individuals the point also holds. Take a simple example. Suppose that a man has organized his life around family farming. For him to lead his life on his own terms he must continue to have the options that this way of life provides. If market pressures drive family farms out of business, then he will no longer have access to these options. Does he now cease to have access to an adequate range of options? In some cases, the answer is plausibly yes. Raz put the point well.

> The longer and the more deeply one is committed to one's projects the less able one is to abandon them (before completion) and pick up some others as substitutes. But even if such a change is possible, denying a person the possibility of carrying on with his projects, commitments and relationships is preventing him from having the life he has chosen.[33]

For this reason, an autonomy-supporting environment has a conservative dimension. Too much rapid change undermines the conditions of autonomous self-direction, denying people options that they must have, given their past commitment and investment in them, to lead their lives on their own terms.

Some terminology will be helpful at this point. Call options that one must have access to in order to live the life one has chosen *vital options*.[34] Different people with different personal histories and different past investments in projects and plans may need to have access to different vital options if they are to lead autonomous lives. The basic options proposal is blind to this reality, and hence cannot provide the full story about the range of options that must be secured if people are to realize autonomy in their lives.[35]

The basic options proposal also suffers from the problem I pressed against the self-development proposal. A basic option set may be sufficient for autonomy, but there is no reason to think it must be optimal for autonomy. Further, the blindness to the significance of vital options that the proposal exhibits is a special case of the general point pressed above that the value of option sets must be assessed in a piecemeal fashion, taking into account variations between people. This presents a problem for those committed to providing all members of a society with an adequate range of options. An autonomy-supporting environment must be open to change. It must not ossify existing ways of living and prevent the emergence of new patterns of choice. At the same time, such an environment must not be blind to vital options, which in turn may require it

to sustain options that would otherwise wither away. The two problems pull in opposing directions. Efforts to preserve valued options can run up against efforts to welcome and support new ways of living. Taking the full measure of this problem – the problem of balancing stability and change – may reveal that there is no option set that is adequate for the autonomy for all the members of a modern society.

V. Options and Time

I noted above that option sets for an agent can change over time, and that the options one takes up at a time can augment or diminish options one will have in the future. This introduces complications in the assessment of option sets. Here is one such complication. An option set for a person can be optimal at a time, or over a stretch of time, in virtue of the fact that it contains an option, or options, that allow one to foreclose options in the future such that one's option set at a future time, or stretches of time, is not optimal. Options to go down certain paths that lock one into certain patterns of living, the value of which one may come to doubt, and options to damage or destroy one's capacities for autonomous choice fit this mold.

I have claimed that autonomy is realized over a lifetime or over substantial stretches of a lifetime. But the two can come apart. What serves one's autonomy best over a stretch of time can frustrate or set back one's autonomy over a lifetime. When that occurs, what should take precedence, one's autonomy interests over a stretch of time or over the lifetime? Since autonomy, on the view we are investigating, is valuable as a component of well-being, and since concern for a person's well-being is properly focused on her life as a whole, we ought to consider her autonomy's interests at stages within her life as valuable as contributors to her lifetime autonomy.

This counsel, if correct, does not resolve the complication we are considering, but it does at least guide efforts to resolve it. Generally speaking, and insofar as our concern is with a person's autonomy, we ought to favor a sub-optimal option set for her at a time, or over a stretch of time, if doing so would contribute to making her life more autonomous over a lifetime than it would be if she had access to the optimal option set at that time. I have stressed that the value of an option set to an agent's autonomy is a function of more than its robustness. The number and variety and objective worthwhileness of the options in an option set all matter, but there is also the subjective dimension to consider. To be autonomous agents must have access to options that appeal to them or engage their interests, and their past investment and commitment to options makes them more vital to their autonomy. Since what attracts us or engages our interest often changes over time, and since our investments in options wax and wane over time, the determination of an optimal set for an agent over a lifetime is a daunting task. From a god's eye point of view, with access to all information, actual and counterfactual, we could perhaps make the determination. In practice, we must rely on rough and ready judgments about when access to optimal option sets at a time do not serve an agent's interests in realizing autonomy over their lifetime.

VI. Reconceiving Adequacy

Most writers who discuss the idea of an adequate set of options for autonomy seem to assume that the set should be adequate for all the members of a society. Thus far my discussion casts doubt on that assumption. It does so in two main ways. First, it urges a shift from a concern

with adequacy to optimality. Why settle for a merely adequate set of options if one could have access to an optimal set? Second, it has highlighted the significance of the subjective dimension to autonomy. Option sets that are adequate for some may not be adequate for others, given their different evaluative outlooks and histories. Once the subjective dimension is given its due, the prospects for securing an adequate set of options for all in a society who are capable of autonomy look dim. This may suggest, however, that I have been thinking about adequacy in the wrong way. Rather than focusing on our interest in options, we should put the spotlight on our claims to options.

The plans and projects of people, including the vital options that are integral to those plans and projects, are likely to conflict in ways that require balancing and adjustment. This is perhaps easiest to appreciate in cases where one person's plans and projects require that another's plans and projects be frustrated. However, for now, let us put such cases aside, as we will address them later when we consider the autonomy / value link in more detail. Let us assume for present purposes that the plans and projects of the people in question do not have, as part of their content, the purpose of frustrating the plans of others. The family farmer discussed above plainly fits this description.

The family farmer has an autonomy-based interest in having access to the options that enable him to carry on with his valued occupation. It does not follow that he has a claim to have access to such options. How then does an autonomy-based interest in an option relate to an autonomy-based claim to that option? If autonomy is a component of welfare, then we have a welfare-based interest in having access to an adequate or optimal range of options. This interest can ground a claim to have access to this range of options, but it will do so only if the interest is sufficiently important or weighty to justify imposing duties on others to provide us with these options. Claims to options, accordingly, are grounded in interests that are not defeated by the interests of others. The notion of an autonomy-based claim, as understood here, is thus close to what others have referred to as a right. "[T]he case for rights," as Scanlon has put it, "derives in large part from the goal of promoting an acceptable distribution of control over important factors in our lives."[36] I do not wish here to tie our discussion to a particular understanding of rights. Nor do I wish to deny that we can have rights to things that have nothing to do with exercising control over our lives. So, my use of claims here, and in particular claims to options, should not be taken to prejudge these issues about rights. The important point is that once the focus has shifted from our interest in having access to certain options to the issue of what constitutes "an acceptable distribution of control over important factors in our lives" we need to find a way to balance the interests of different parties to arrive at judgments of who has a claim to which options.

No method of balancing will be proposed here[37], but some such method is required for a society to do well in fairly responding to the autonomy-based interests of its members. Employing such a method, we can say that an optimal set of options for an agent in a society is one that provides him with the best set of options, with respect to his interest in realizing autonomy, that is consistent with honoring the fair claims of others in his society. When every member of the society has access to their optimal set of options so construed, then, we can say further, that all members of the society have access to an adequate set of options.

This re-conception of the notion of adequate option sets, while it might be a useful way to think about the claims people have to have access to options, is misleading in a crucial respect. The adequate set of options for an agent, on this construal, leaves it open whether the option set will be adequate in any other meaningful sense. Those who have access to an adequate option set so conceived may not have access to the options they must have to lead an autonomous life, as the options they need may be too expensive or costly to justify duties on others to provide them.[38]

Enthusiasts of capitalism celebrate the efficiency of the market, and try to persuade us that the 'creative destruction' of market competition serves the common good. They may be right. With this in mind, we may be tempted to discount the interests of our family farmer. His vocation and his way of life are no longer economically viable and must give way to more efficient modes of agricultural production. However, if this is what we say, then we should recognize that we are privileging the economic interests of the community over the autonomy of some of its members. Similarly, when considering the rights of various sub-groups within modern societies to forms of cultural protection[39], we may conclude that, while the members of such groups have an autonomy-based interest in having access to the options that their culture provides them, this interest may not be sufficiently strong to justify imposing duties on others to provide them with the requisite forms of cultural protection. Once again, if this is what we say, then we should acknowledge that some members of our society will not have access to the options they need to lead their lives on their own terms.

The awkwardness of granting that not all members of one's society have a claim to have access to an adequate range of options likely explains the appeal of viewing an adequate range of options in terms of a set of basic, generic options, which can be extended to all. But this way of viewing matters covers up the point that I have been emphasizing here; namely, that an adequate range of options can require access to particular vital options, over and above the set of basic options that are available to all. Moreover, and relatedly, this way of viewing matters can lead to substantive errors. For while it is true that an autonomy-based interest in having access to a particular vital option may not be strong enough to ground a claim to it, it obviously does not follow that it could never be strong enough to do so. The societies in which our family farmer and sub-group culture members live, after all, may be required to sacrifice a measure of economic efficiency and some of the benefits that come from a more culturally cohesive society in order to order to accommodate the autonomy interests of these members. The extent to which a society is willing to pay these costs will reveal its commitment to autonomy as an ideal. When it is unwilling to pay this cost, it should not comfort itself by holding that in providing all with access to options that they could reasonably demand of others, it has provided all with the options they need to lead autonomous lives.

VII. Immoral Options

Considering claims to options naturally invites us to think about the value or worthwhileness of the autonomy-based interests that the options purport to serve. I noted above that people can form plans and projects that require for their successful execution the frustration of the plans and projects of others. This, in turn, has been taken to establish a limit to our interests in realizing autonomy. Here, for instance, is Mill.

> The only freedom that deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it.[40]

However, as Mill no doubt would have agreed, this construction requires us to distinguish legitimate or acceptable plans of living from those that are rightly impeded. The police officer may find his good in frustrating the evil plans of the criminals he pursues. If so, the freedom realized in his pursuits certainly deserves the name.

In contemplating such cases, it might be thought that the freedom of the criminal is on the scales, but is outweighed by the interests of others. Employing the distinction pressed in the previous section, it might be held that the criminal has an autonomy-based interest in carrying out his evil purposes, but that this interest could not justify any claim to have access to the options to do so. But it is doubtful that this was Mill's view of the matter; and, more generally, it is not a popular view among writers on autonomy. Here, once again, is Raz on the Autonomy/Value link.

> Autonomy is valuable only if exercised in pursuit of the good. The ideal of autonomy requires only the availability of morally acceptable options.[41]

Autonomy may require the availability of morally unacceptable options, at least for those whose plans and purposes, and past investments in those plans and purposes, make them vital options for them. But, even granting this, one could agree with Raz that exercises of autonomy that involve the pursuit of the morally unacceptable options is valueless. One's welfare is not advanced by successful engagement with such options. This fact, if it were indeed a fact, would then explain why we do not have autonomy-based interests in having access to immoral options.

Should we accept the Autonomy / Value link? Not surprisingly, much will turn here on how we understand the idea of immoral options. In common parlance, some options are valueless, but not immoral. A person spends his time splitting pebbles on a beach. This activity presumably has no value or point. Indeed, the person might not even enjoy the activity, but finds that he wants to do it anyway. Could the pursuit of this pointless activity contribute to the person's autonomy? Could the person have an autonomy-based interest in having access to the option to do so?

On Raz's formulation of the Autonomy / Value link, the answer to both questions is no. The person, Raz imagines, must be thinking that there is something good about counting pebbles on a beach. But, in fact, there is nothing good about it; and hence the person does not really desire to do so. The person wants to count pebbles on the beach under the false description that this is something that is worth doing. Under the true description of its worthwhileness, it is not in his interests to do it.[42]

This line of analysis is, I believe, substantially correct. But two caveats to it should be mentioned. First, it is possible that the pebble counter gets a benefit from the activity that he desires to engage in, even though it is objectively worthless. After all, he may not view the activity as one he has reason to engage in. He may instead simply want to do it; and if there is value – subjective value – in getting what you want in such cases, then he may benefit from it. This possibility raises large issues, and we need not address them here. As mentioned at the outset, our concern is with autonomy understood as an objective prudential good, one that is realized in the

pursuit of or engagement with objective goods or goods perceived to have objective value. For our purposes, we need not affirm or reject the possibility of subjective prudential value. Second, while engagement with pebble counting would not benefit the person in our example, his having access to the option might benefit him. It is possible that his autonomy is enhanced when he both chooses to do something worthwhile and chooses *not* to do something worthless.[43] The point here is clearest when we consider contexts in which the person in question has access to options that are all good, except for one worthless option. A deliberate decision to forgo the bad option in favor of one of the good options plausibly enhances his autonomy.

People, of course, always have opportunities to choose poorly. We don't need to make special efforts to ensure that they have opportunities to do so. Still, increasing opportunities for poor choice might increase one's autonomy, at least up to some point. Nevertheless, and generally speaking, when people have access to a robust set of valuable options, the addition of extra worthless options will not increase the quality of their option sets. Recall that people have an interest in leading valuable autonomous lives and not maximally autonomous lives, when the two come apart. The quality of an option set, as we argued above, is not simply a function of its robustness. Indeed, the quality of an option set can be decreased by increasing its robustness. The option set that is best for us indexed to quality.

When immoral options are construed to be worthless or valueless options the Autonomy / Value link appears to be on firm ground. But immorality, as noted above, commonly connotes more than worthless choice. It concerns the wrongful treatment of others. And we can wrongfully treat others in the pursuit of (otherwise) worthwhile ends. Indeed, the notion of bad or immoral options is a little misleading here, for options typically present us with possibilities, which, in turn, can be pursued in better or worse ways. To illustrate: consider Bernard Williams' portrait of the French post-Impressionist painter Paul Gauguin.[44] On Williams' telling, Gauguin has the opportunity to leave for Polynesia to paint his masterpieces. He decides to do so, abandoning his family for the sake of his art. His abandonment of his family is immoral, and the option to do so, given the Autonomy / Value link, does not contribute to his autonomy. This last judgment is, I think, incorrect. Gauguin has an autonomy-based interest in having the opportunity to leave his family and pursue his artistic endeavors.

Williams' response to the example is worth pondering. Gauguin's decision to leave his family can be justified, Williams claims, but only if he succeeds in his artistic pursuits, and his success in these pursuits is partly a matter of luck. Gauguin takes a risk. Assuming his success could justify his decision, then it can be good for him to take the risk. Good choices are not always the safest choices.[45] Hence, it might be a valuable exercise of his autonomy to take the risk, even if it does not pan out in the end. Be this as it may, Williams illuminatingly clarifies the nature of Gauguin's choice. Even if he succeeds in his artistic endeavors, and even if his success would justify his choice, it would remain the case that he could not justify his choice to those he has let down. If morality concerns in the first instance how we treat others, Gauguin's decision to leave his family, even on the happy telling in which he succeeds admirably in his art, remains immoral.

My view, which here accords with Williams' view, is that it can be the case that Gauguin makes the right decision, even though it is the morally wrong decision. This, of course, can be

resisted. More weakly, and less contentiously, it can be maintained Gauguin's autonomous decision to leave his family and pursue his art could contribute to the prudential value of his life, even if it were the wrong decision for him to make, all things considered. And this weaker claim is sufficient to cast doubt on the broad claim that access to immoral options cannot contribute to valuable autonomous agency.

Here the distinction between an autonomy-based interest in an option and an autonomy-based claim to that option is, once again, germane. One does not have a claim to treat others wrongly, and, by implication, one does not have a claim to have access to an option that is bound up with one's wrongful treatment of others. But it does not follow from this that could not have a substantial autonomy-based interest, one that bears directly and significantly on one's well-being, in having access to options of this kind. Indeed, given the past investment a character like Gauguin has made to his artistic projects, options to pursue them are likely vital options for him, options that he must have access to if he is to lead his life on his own terms.

In pressing this point it is not necessary to deny that immorality detracts from the welfare value of the goals and projects that manifest it. Had Gauguin pursued the same projects in circumstances in which it was not necessary for him to abandon his family, let us grant, the successful completion of these projects would have contributed greater value to his life. His welfare, on the objectivist conception we are assuming in this paper, plausibly would be enhanced more by the success of valuable projects that involved no immorality than otherwise equally valuable projects that did. The Autonomy / Value link holds that autonomy is valuable only if exercised in pursuit of the good. But one can pursue the good in bad ways. When one does so, one may not pursue the best life one could pursue, but from the fact that autonomy is valuable only if exercised in pursuit of the good we should not infer that autonomy is valuable only if exercised in pursuit of what is best. The Autonomy / Value link, accordingly, does not support the claim that access to immoral options is not, or could never be, required for people to have access to an adequate or optimal range of options.

VIII. Force and Circumstance

Options can be foreclosed or made ineligible to people in different ways. A naturally occurring pandemic can force you to cancel your travel plans. A government seeking to control the movement of its subjects can force you to cancel those same travel plans. Does it matter how your option to travel gets foreclosed? Of course it does; but does it matter along the dimension that we are here investigating? It is widely thought that a reduction in our options due to the intentional behavior of others is worse for our autonomy than an equal sized reduction of such options due to natural events. But why should this be? Is not our autonomy set back by the reduction of the needed options, irrespective of how the reduction comes about?

Suppose that you are reluctant to park your car in a certain spot because a stranger has told you that if you were to do so then there would be a high risk that the car would be damaged. If you first thought the stranger was issuing a credible threat, but then later learned that he was merely issuing a credible warning (there is construction going on directly above the spot), should you conclude that your range of options with regard to parking your car is now better than you previously had thought?[46]

It is often said that a threat from another invades one's will in a way that a limitation on one's options from natural circumstance, or from a warning, does not. When I comply with a credible threat, it is no longer true that what I do is my own doing. I am, as the phrasing goes, subjected to the will of another. But we need to be careful here. First, threats can be either justified or unjustified. If you threaten to harm me if I do not stop assaulting an innocent stranger, then it is more accurate to say that you are attempting to enforce morality than that you are trying to subject me to your will. So, it is unjustified threats, and not threats as such, that engage the concern about being subjected to the will of another. Second, fully justified threats and predictions and warnings about what will happen to me if I take up this or that option can also make it true that I do not act on my own will.[47] Circumstances can compel choice. And the positive demand – 'I need to act on my own will if I am lead to my life on my own terms' – is plausibly more fundamental to autonomy than the negative demand – 'I need to avoid being subjected to the will of another if I am to lead my life on my own terms.'

Threats and warnings, of course, have a different social significance. You properly resent an unjustified threat, but you do not aptly resent a credible warning given to you in good faith. Our present question is not do threats and warnings differ in morally significant ways, but rather the narrowly specified one of whether the origin of, or means by which, an option gets foreclosed affect the degree to which its elimination reduces the adequacy or optimality of the option set to which it previously belonged? Here is one reason to think that credible warnings given in good faith restrict one's options to a greater degree than corresponding unjust threats. Suppose not unreasonably that we always have a reason of at least some non-negligible weight to resist an unjustified threat. Then this reason can figure into our practical deliberations, reducing the 'force' of the threat – here defined as the degree to which the threat properly affects one's all-in reason to comply with it. There is obviously no such diminishing factor present in the case of good faith warnings.

Be this at is may, most writers on autonomy have thought that unjustified threats are worse, not better, than corresponding warnings when it comes to their impact on our options; and it is this thought that we now need to explain. Start with the claim that it is bad for us to be the victims of wrongful interference that reduces our options and the badness is not fully accounted for by the impact that the interference has on our option sets. This claim is very plausible. You might wrongly restrict or remove an option from me that I do not much care about and that is not important at all to my efforts to lead the life I want to lead, but your interference is an invasion that is rightfully resented. If you protest that your interference did not reduce the quality of my option set, then I should not be impressed. It would be natural for me to point out that you have wronged or disrespected me and that this is the salient feature of your interference, not its impact on my options. I suggested at the beginning of this paper, in note 2, that we may have an interest in being respected. If that were right, then the wrongful restriction of options reduces our well-being in two ways. It reduces, or may reduce, the quality of our option set, and it sets back our interest in being respected by others.

Even if all this were granted, we don't yet have the explanation for which we were looking. Recall that our question is narrowly focused. Why should we think that wrongful restriction is worse than non-wrongful restriction, or restriction by natural circumstances, when it comes to assessing the adequacy or optimality of an option set? Autonomy is an objective human good, but

it is also (typically) a social good. We realize it by cooperating and interacting with others, and its contribution to the goodness of our lives is augmented or diminished by the quality of the social relations in which its realization is embedded. Given this, one option set might have greater quality than another in virtue of the relations it enables us to have with others. An unjustified credible threat of interference from another that reduces one's option set has two negative effects on one's option set. It closes off the options that it targets, thereby reducing the range of one's option set. But, in addition, it makes it true that when one engages in the non-targeted options one's engagement with them takes place under the shadow of the unjustified interference. The shadow of the interference – the pall it casts over the options that one confronts – plausibility affects, and affects negatively, the quality of those options. That is why an unjustified threat, or other form of interference, with one's options makes one's option set worse than it would have been had the same reduction in the range of one's options come about by natural events.[48]

I don't wish to overstate the significance of the points I have just made. Call the difference that unjustified interference makes to the quality of an option set over and above its impact on its range the *differential*. The size of the differential is affected by the significance to the agent of the social relations that are implicated by the interference. If I am unjustly interfered with in a one-off interaction with a random stranger, then the interference will have very little impact on the social relations that matter for my life. The differential here will be quite small. Perhaps there is some prudential value to be had from living in a social world where everyone complies with their duties not to interfere with one unjustly, and to the extent that the random stranger frustrates the realization of this value then he makes my life go a little less well. But if the interference comes from a source that is more intimately bound up with my life – an employer, a spouse, etc.[49] – then its impact on the social relations that affect the quality of my life, and hence the options implicated by those social relations, will be very significant indeed.

Some writers claim that we have very significant social relations with our all fellow citizens and the officials who govern us. They speak grandly of "civic trust" or "civic friendship", for example, and they argue that unjustified or illegitimate state action erodes important social ties. I find such claims hard to credit, at least for large, modern societies. For most of us are interactions with our government is largely impersonal. We properly resent unjustified interference into our lives and wrongful restrictions of our options by those who govern us, but we make no mistake if we view the differential such restrictions impose on our option sets as vanishingly small. Wrongful legal restrictions on our options can be sensibly viewed as no more significant than natural obstacles in our environment that we must take note of and plan around as we go about leading our lives on our own terms.[50]

IX. Conclusion

We have been investigating what makes an option set best for a person insofar as we are concerned with its contribution to his autonomy, where autonomy is itself understood to be an objective prudential good. I have offered no grand formula, no set of necessary and sufficient conditions for an option set being either adequate or optimal along this dimension. Nevertheless, or so I have tried to show, progress can be made by attending to various factors that affect the value or quality of option sets. Attention to these factors brings out the formidable challenges that

confront the liberal project of ensuring that people have the options they need to lead autonomous lives.

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[1] True, we might have an interest in being respected. I return to this possibility at the end of the paper.

[2] J. S. Mill, On Liberty, [Robson edition, University of Toronto Press], p. 270.

[3] But see H. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 90-91 (coming perilously close to holding that we have an objective interest in loving some things, even if we have no objective interest in loving any particular thing.)

[4] R. Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, p. 448.

[5] Ibid.

[6] S. Benn, *A Theory of Freedom*, p. 176.

[7] Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 299-300 (discussing contracts to alienate one's freedom).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Mill's assumption here can be challenged, of course. My concern is not with the conditions of choice that these women actually confronted, but with the theoretical issue that this example presents. For this purpose, it is helpful to stipulate that the women in question made autonomous choices to enter into polygamous marriages.

[10] Mill's attitude toward polygamous marriage is likely more subtle than these remarks suggest. See D. Enoch's discussion of the issue in "False Consciousness for Liberals, Part I: Consent, Autonomy and Adaptive Preferences," *Philosophical Review* 129/2 (2020), pp. 159-2010, at 172-174.

[11] The distinction I have in mind here is drawn by Feinberg who distinguishes "autonomous living" from "an autonomously chosen life" in his own discussion of Mill's views on the polygamous marriage example. See *Harm to Self* (Oxford: OUP, 1986), pp. 78-79.

[12] A further assumption I am making is that well-being is a normative concept that plays an important role in our practical thought. That assumption can be challenged (see, for example, Part One of Scanlon's *What we Owe to Each Other*), but its defense would take us far afield from our present concerns.

[13] For example, autonomy is sometimes taken to require the capacity for second-order reflection and the appropriate exercise of that capacity – roughly, one is autonomous if one reflects on and identifies with one's first order desires and preferences. See G. Dworkin, "The Nature of Autonomy."

[14] J. Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, pp. 373-74.

[15] In Raz's example the pit contains a supply of food and water necessary for sustained life.

[16] A. Sen, *Inequality Reexamined*, pp. 64-65.

[17] The person in question might value the kind of control that they do not have and thus their life would not be acceptable or fully acceptable to them. But if they value such control then they agree that such control adds to the goodness of a life. (I assume here that to value something includes believing that it is valuable.)

[18] Compare with Enoch. A "person's life is especially her own, she's especially the author of her life-story, if her life is shaped *both* by her choices *and* by her values, and furthermore if it's shaped by her values precisely *because* it is shaped by her choices." D. Enoch, "Autonomy as Non-alienation, Autonomy as Sovereignty, and Politics," *Journal of Political Philosophy* (2022), pp. 143-165, at 151.

[19] Compare with Hurka on the value of choice. "When [an autonomous agent] makes choices, she has two effects: realizing some options and blocking others . . . By letting her determine what she does not do as well as what she does, her autonomy makes her more widely active and practically efficacious." *Perfectionism*, p. 150.

[20] This would require us to formulate a method for individuating and counting options, which is no easy task. For helpful discussion see M. Kramer, *The Quality of Freedom*.

[21] See G. Dworkin, "Is More Choice Always Better?" in *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), pp. 62-81.

[22] Here is another way to put the point. Autonomy is a prudential good. Autonomy comes in degrees. From the fact that autonomy is a prudential good, it does not follow that maximal autonomy is a prudential good. If there is a point beyond which increased autonomy does not benefit us, then we have no autonomy-based interest in having access to options that make the realization of this additional non-beneficial degree of autonomy possible.

[23] For a clear statement of the Autonomy/Value Link see J. Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: OUP, 1986), p. 411. A corollary to the Autonomy/Value Link should also be mentioned: Autonomy is more valuable to the extent that it is directed at, or exercised in the pursuit of, the better or the more worthwhile.

[24] Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 375.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Feinberg helpfully contrasts self-development with self-fulfillment. The former fixes on our generic nature, the latter on our individual nature. He observes: "If we are told by philosophical sages to act always so as to unfold our generic human natures, we have not been given very clear directions at all. Any number of alternative lives might equally well fulfill one's generic nature, yet some might seem much more "fulfilling," in a perfectly ordinary and intelligible sense, than others." ("Absurd Self-Fulfillment," p. 318).

[28] Assume that the additional option would not entice Henry in ways detrimental to his autonomy and that adding it to his option set would not distort or overwhelm his decision making in any significant way.

[29] The self-development proposal might be keyed to optimality, not adequacy. We might answer the question of what is the best option set for a person by seeking to determine the set of options that would best facilitate his self-development. But this maneuver points to a fourth problem with the self-development proposal. It risks conflating autonomy with self-development. The autonomous life may score high in self-development, but it need not do so. Given this, it is hard to see why an optimal set of options for autonomy would dovetail with the optimal set for self-development.

[30] C. Taylor, "Atomism," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), pp. 187-210, at 204.

[31] J. Waldron, "A Right to do Wrong," in *Liberal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p. 81.

[32] W. Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 1989).

[33] Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 411.

[34] S. Wall, "Collective Rights and Individual Autonomy," *Ethics* 117/2 (2007).

[35] The basic options proposal, it may be thought, can speak to the example I have presented. After all, "choice of occupation" is even mentioned on the list of general categories quoted above, and the family farmer's way of life, it may be said, is bound up with his occupational choice. But the point I am pressing is not that vital options cannot be understood to fall under in some sense the general categories of choice identified on the basic options proposal. The point is rather that the basic options proposal does not capture the significance of particular options for particular people that may (or may not) fall under the general categories of decision-making that are posited. You can provide a person with an adequate range and number of occupational choices on the basic options proposal without providing him with the particular occupational choice he needs to realize autonomy in his life.

[36] T. M. Scanlon, "Rights, Goals and Fairness," p. 147.

[37] Two pointers can be briefly mentioned. First, the difficulty and costliness of abandoning a vital option and taking up some alternative option, bears on the strength of one's claim to the option. Second, the extent to which one's interest in having access to the option lines up with the interests of others to have access to it bears on the strength of one's claim. For while one's interest in having access to the option does not depend on how many others also have the interest, the strength of one's claim to have access to it can depend on the cumulative interests that recognition of the claim would serve. On the first point, see A. Patten, *Equal Recognition* , pp. 69-103. On the second point, see Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 209.

[38] Criminals who have been justly convicted and justly sentenced to long terms in prison will not have access to an adequate range of options. We can say that they have forfeited their claim to have access to such options. We should not say that they have access to an adequate range of options because they enjoy access to the (limited) options to which they are entitled.

[39] W. Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*.

[40] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 12.

[41] Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 381.

[42] Ibid., pp. 316-17 (discussing the reason-dependence of goals).

[43] This is a consequence of the point we pressed in section II. Autonomy can be enhanced by having options that one deliberatively forgoes. Following Hurka, a number of critics of Raz have registered this point. See M. Kramer, *Liberalism with Excellence* (Oxford, OUP: 2017), pp. 204-205, 237, for example.

[44] B. Williams, "Moral Luck," in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge, CUP: 1981), pp. 22-26. As Williams emphasizes, his portrait of Gauguin does not purport to be an accurate account of the historical figure.

[45] On this point see R. Dworkin's discussion of another fictional painter in *Justice for Hedgehogs*, p. 199.

[46] For the example see P. Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, p. 131 (who uses the example to make a different point).

[47] H. Frankfurt has put the point well. "A man's will may not be his own even when he is not moved by the will of another." ("Coercion and Responsibility," in his *The Importance of what we Care About* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), pp. 26-46, at 46.)

[48] Or, for that matter, by the justified interference from others.

[49] Discussions of domination in the neo-Republican sense highlight examples of this kind.

[50] That is one reason why the significance of unjustified governmental restrictions on our options is tempered by the rule of law. If we can predict how the wrongful restrictions will be applied to us, then we can plan around them. See Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*.