Relational Approach to Liberal Practices

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I. Irony of Liberal Universalism

Individual autonomy is often perceived as one of the central characteristics of liberalism by both liberals themselves and non-liberals who criticize them. The mainstream liberal models assume that an agent is autonomous regarding some values when upon critical reflection on those values, she authentically identifies with them and does not feel deeply alienated from them. This assumption can be found in both perfectionist and political liberalism, although it is expressed differently. Perfectionist liberals care about whether or not an agent is autonomous in regard to moral values or life projects that shape the agent's life.[1] Political liberals do not think that all agents should be autonomous in this perfectionist sense but think that an agent should be autonomous in regard to the core values of the political institution she partakes in.[2] Individual autonomy may not be the ultimate ideal for all liberals, but any liberal would agree that guaranteeing a certain degree of individual autonomy is constitutive of a well-functioning liberal society. On the other hand, individual autonomy is also a site of contestation for those who want to question the validity of liberal universalism. Their general argument is that individual autonomy is a concept that has been developed by interacting with European and North American experiences and therefore does not adequately fit with other societies which have different cultural and religious traditions. For instance, Joseph Chan points out that the Confucian model cannot accept the liberal assumption that individual autonomy is intrinsically valuable. Under the Confucian model, individual autonomy is treated as only one of the many moral values that can be pursued to the extent that it does not conflict with the Confucian understanding of a good life.[3] The

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[1] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1986.

[2]   John Rawls, *Political liberalism*. New York:Columbia University Press, 1993; Martha C. Nussbaum, "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 39, no. 1, (2011).

[3]   Joseph Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, Princeton:Princeton Universtiy Press, 2014, pp 151-157.

Confucian model can righteously limit the autonomy of sons and daughters under the name of filial piety and limit the autonomy of citizens if they propagate heretic ideology which attempts to subvert the basic structure of Confucian society.[4] And according to Chan, this is a fundamental difference between the liberal position on individual autonomy and the more modest endorsement of autonomy that Confucians can accept. And Chan is not the only one who is critical of liberal conception of autonomy. In fact, the debate between liberals and communitarians of different non-liberal cultural backgrounds often revolves around the universal validity of individual autonomy.

Therefore, it is reasonable to characterize liberalism as a philosophical doctrine, a way of life, or a set of social and political institutions designed to guarantee the autonomy of all individuals. In this paper, I argue that liberalism leads to a paradox due to its imperialistic history. Liberals usually assume that individual autonomy is a kind of mental faculty that all human beings possess equally. However, the capacity for autonomy is not a capacity that all human beings are born with but rather a capacity that develops over time. It requires training as well as favorable social conditions. Because acquiring the capacity for autonomy is not natural, autonomy can be promoted or restricted. To argue that we need to promote the autonomy of all individuals or treat each individual as an agent capable of exercising autonomy is a moral claim which considers individual autonomy not just as a mental faculty but as a moral ideal. From now on, I label this understanding of individual autonomy as "the ideal of autonomy." An individual can either adopt or reject the ideal of autonomy just as any other moral ideal, and when she adopts it, she can adopt it with or without critical reflections on the ideal. This means that it is possible to *adopt the ideal of autonomy non-autonomously.*

Whether the norms and life projects that seemingly contradict the ideal of autonomy can be adopted autonomously has always intrigued the theorists of autonomy. In fact, the debate between procedural and substantive autonomy is centered around this problem. For instance, Gerald Dworkin, as a proceduralist, argues that a person who wants to conduct his or her life in accordance with what her mother, friends, leader, or priests tell her to do can be autonomous if she arrives at this decision freely, backed by reasons.[5] Substantive theorists reject this line of argument thinking that it is an oxymoron. However, from my knowledge, the reverse problem, *i.e.*, whether the ideal

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[4] Ibid., pp 149-157.

[5] Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*. New York:Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp 21-23.

of autonomy can be adopted non-autonomously, had not been a subject of serious academic debate. My focus is on this reverse problem, especially in the context of imperialistic history.

Non-autonomous adoption of autonomy, of course, may happen outside the context of imperialism. One of the common remarks I received in the early stage of my project was that a similar situation could be found within "the West" as well.[6] For instance, a college student from a small rural town whose family cherishes religious and communal values may uncritically adopt individualistic life projects shared by her college friends to adapt to the new environment and overcome peer pressure. However, while there are some similarities between the above case and the case that I am trying to address, there is a crucial qualitative difference between the two. In societies that experienced imperialism, people's views on liberalism are entangled with the inferiority complex, and is influenced by imperialistic construction that "non-Western" culture, history, and social structures are backward compared to the modern and enlightened "West." Under this context, adopting liberal ideals is inevitably associated with losing what is "our own" and becoming "Western." My point here resonates with W. E. Du Bois's assertion that the post-colonial world is haunted by the ideology that anything great, successful, and superior in the history of mankind is purely white. Du Bois argues that "any progress by colored people was attributed to some intermixture, ancient or modern, of white blood or some influence of white civilization."[7] Du Bois also suggests that the consequence of this was double consciousness and the inferiority complex of the people of color: the people of color could only see themselves through the lens of white people and therefore they had to prove that they are "white" enough to be part of the modernity.[8]

It is important to note that the ideal of autonomy is more than guaranteeing freedom of choice but is about self-authorship, *i.e.*, ensuring an agent becomes the author of the value-acquiring and value-making process that affects her. It is about exercising critical agency to avoid simple imitation of the standards set by others, or it is about defying paternalistic power over my agency. Liberals sometimes take a universalist position regarding the ideal of autonomy, and this justifies the imposition of the ideal on other societies. However, because individuals in these societies are

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[6] I acknowledge that the categorization of "the West" and "the non-West" is arbitrary. But for now, I am referring to the common usage of the term which we encounter in our everyday conversation.

[7] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, New York:Oxford University Press, p 13.

[8] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, pp 13-14.; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil,* New York:Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920, pp 29-34.

aware of the fact that liberalism has been imposed on them, it is difficult for them to dispel the widespread narrative that they are imitating "the West" when they adopt liberal ideals such as autonomy. This means that they cannot have full authorship over liberal ideals even when they came to endorse and practice them, and therefore cannot participate in the value-acquiring and value-creating process that affects them. In this sense, their capacity for self-authorship is undermined. This, I argue, is an irony of liberal universalism: *while liberalism aims to foster the autonomy of all individuals, it undermines the capacity for self-authorship, a crucial component of individual autonomy, when it is tied to imperialistic history*. I think this is a problematic situation not just for communitarians but also for liberals who take autonomy seriously because a kind of paradox is generated within their theory. How, then, can "non-Western" individuals claim authorship of the ideal of autonomy? How can they adopt "the ideal of autonomy" autonomously? Is it ever possible?

Nonetheless, I don't think it is useless to quarrel about autonomy. There is a powerful aspect of autonomy crucial to an individual's well-being: that is, the capacity to interact critically and creatively with her surrounding in contrast to remaining as a passive recipient. The liberal commitment to equal respect demands us to treat all individuals as an agent who can develop and exercise such capacity. Autonomy still offers a powerful conceptual tool that can be used to problematize why certain cultural and institutional practices prevalent in a given society is oppressive and unjust to the affected individuals. Therefore, autonomy is still an appealing normative concept. The purpose of this paper is not to abandon autonomy but quite the opposite. I want to revitalize the concept by complementing it in a direction that resolves the ironical consequences caused by liberal imperialism. I want to construct a conception of autonomy that can be used as the basis of liberalism but is equally accessible to individuals situated in different cultural and historical contexts.

I think the existing theories of relational autonomy can be a good starting point. The irony of liberal universalism is closely related to the specific aspect of the classic conception of autonomy: that is, its unclear position toward the effect of socio-relational factors on the capacity for autonomy. While classic theorists are particularly cautious about how socio-relational factors may divert an individual from her true desires, they do admit that autonomy cannot be acquired in a vacuum. They do admit that interaction with other agents and social structures is necessary to a certain degree for the person to develop agency in the first place. Unlike the popular

communitarian critiques, which describe individual autonomy as the source of rugged individualism, liberal theories of autonomy do not reject the fact that people use socio-relational materials to build themselves and their life projects. The real problem with the classic conception of autonomy is that they do not provide a clear explanation of how it is possible to distinguish the benign socio-relational factors that constitute our understanding of self from the socio-relational factors that restrict the capacity for autonomy. Some cases can be undoubtedly obvious, especially when we can specify the agent and the intention behind these factors. However, many times, socio-relational factors that affect the self-construction process are structural and operate in very ambiguous and opaque ways, which are difficult to comprehend fully. For instance, let's assume a young woman who has lived in a society where two values systems, Confucianism and liberalism, conflict and coexist. How can we find out which factors distort her self-conception more, liberal imperialistic hegemony or Confucian traditions? If we follow the classic conception of autonomy, this is the question that should be answered to make a proper assessment of whether the person's adoption of liberal ideals was autonomous. However, due to their reluctance to delve into deeper discussions on how socio-relational factors operate within people's capacity for autonomy, I am skeptical that the classic theories of autonomy can provide clear answers to such questions. Theories of relational autonomy, on the other hand, place different levels of social relations, from personal relations to broader structural relations, at the foreground of autonomy theorizing.

   The subsequent chapters of this paper consist of three sections. First, I provide a brief overview of the different conceptions of relational autonomy. Relational autonomy by no means has a single definition, even more so than the classic conception. Different conceptions of relational autonomy are tied very loosely to each other by the assumption that social relations are an important factor of autonomy because individuals are socially embedded beings.[9] Second, I explore which of these conceptions is suitable for the purpose of my project and then propose my definition of autonomy. Therefore, it is necessary to spell out their differences. Lastly, I discuss why this modified conception of autonomy is more suitable for understanding the liberal practices in the globalized world than the classic conception. I illustrate my point by using the South Korean family law reform movement, which aimed to secure women's autonomy from the discriminatory elements

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[9] Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured," In *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2000.; Andrea C. Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy," *Hypatia* 24, no.4 (2009), p 26.

of family law, such as the hoju system and the marriage ban between a couple with the same surname and family origin.

II. Conceptions of Relational Autonomy

The idea of relational autonomy can be traced back to post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, object-relations theory, to be more specific. Nancy Chodorow argued that object-relations theory provides a perspective of individuality very different from that of classic Western individualism. Chodorow argues that object-relations theory attempts to reconstruct our understanding of wholeness and autonomy by challenging individuality based on "rigid notions of autonomous separateness.[10]" Object-relations theory provides an alternative account of individuality which is based on the idea that the self is constructed intersubjectively in a relational matrix and, therefore, always includes aspects of the other.[11] The process of self-construction starts from an infant's early relationship with her primary caretaker.[12] According to the object relations theory, boys and girls follow two different models of autonomy because they develop a different relationship with their mother: a boy follows the reactive model of autonomy based on separation, isolation, and independence because he learns in this period that he is different from his mother. A girl follows the relational model of autonomy developed through mutual affirmation and the feeling of empathy because she learns in this period that she is the same as her mother.[13] While the conceptions of relational autonomy widely discussed today have come a long way from the object-relations theory and are presented within the framework of analytic philosophy, psychoanalytic theory is where the idea was originated.

Feminist theorists inspired by object-relations theories challenged the classic conception of autonomy, arguing that the conception is largely based on the male experience. It is a widely shared intuition that male socialization is associated with autonomy as independence, while female

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[10] Nancy Chodorow, "Toward a Relational Individualism," In *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought,* Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1986, p 207.

[11] Chodorow, "Toward a Relational Individualism," p 204.

[12] Chodorow, "Toward a Relational Individualism," p 203.

[13] Nancy Chodorow, *Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender,* Berkeley:University of California Press, 1978; Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Autonomy? Or Freedom? A Return to Psychoanlytic Theory," In *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2014, pp 65-66.

socialization is associated with dependence on family and other personal relationships. For this reason, some feminist theorists argue that the classic conception of autonomy cannot explain female socialization without characterizing women's experiences as inferior to that of men. They think that feminists need to reconceptualize autonomy by reassessing the meaning of emotional attachment and dependence to resist such stigmatization and valorize women's experiences as well as their identities.[14] On the other hand, other feminist theorists are more cautious about celebrating social relations because relationships have been one of the primary sources of oppression of women. They are especially worried about the fact that private relationships and social institutions based on patriarchal norms have confined women to specific life projects and affected their ability to think about the possibility that they could live otherwise.[15] These two contradictory arguments actually agree on the same assumption that social relation is an important conundrum in theorizing autonomy and have enriched the discussion around autonomy.

As I mentioned in the previous section, relational autonomy refers to a cluster of ideas rather than a coherent set of definitions. Debates around relational autonomy have sophisticated in recent years, and there are different views about how exactly the relational factors should be included in autonomy theorizing. There are three common classifications used to distinguish different conceptions of relational autonomy: (a) *causal* or *constitutive*; (b) *internalist* or *externalist*; (c) *procedural* or *substantive*.

Causal or Constitutive

Conceptions of relational autonomy is often classified as either *causal* or *constitutive*. For instance, John Christman distinguished the conceptions of autonomy that interpret socio-relational conditions as definitive of autonomy from the conceptions of autonomy that see social relations only as supportive of autonomy.[16] This is an important distinction. Some relational theorists focus mainly on what kind of social relations are supportive or harmful to developing and exercising

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[14] Examples of feminist theorists who valorize female experience are as follows: Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, *Autonomy* Cambridge:Harvard University Press, 1982.; Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations: A Relational Theory of Self, and Law*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2011.; Christine Tappolet, "Emotions, Reasons, and Autonomy," In *Autonomy, Oppression, and Gender*, 2014, pp 163-180.

[15] Examples of feminist theorists who display worries about oppressive social relations are as follows. Linda Barclay, "Autonomy and The Social Self," In *Relational Autonomy*, 2000, pp 52-71.; Natalie Stoljar, "Autonomy and The Feminist Intuition," In *Relational Autonomy,* 2000.; Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Autonomy? Or Freedom? A Return to Psychoanlytic Theory," 2014.

[16] John Christman, "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves," *Philosophical Studies* 117 (2004), p 156.

autonomy. Their theoretical focus is on explaining the nature of this causal relationship. This is different from arguing that social relations are one of the *defining* conditions of autonomy. If autonomy is causally relational, this means that autonomy and an autonomy-enhancing environment, such as structural independence and mutual recognition, can be *conceptually separated.*

It is important to spell out how the causal conception is different from the classic conception. Relational theorists sometimes equate the classic conception with autonomy as self-government, which is exercised by isolated individuals who resist external influence when developing their identity and making important life decisions. Relational theorists argue that, in contrast to the classic conception, relational autonomy is committed to the fact that we are all social beings and are interconnected to each other. However, this is an oversimplification of the classic theories of autonomy. As I mentioned in the previous section, many classic theorists of autonomy admit that autonomy cannot be developed in a vacuum. J. S. Mill acknowledges that it is inevitable for any individual to be influenced by culture and custom.[17] Raz also emphasizes that autonomy depends a lot on the general character of culture and social environment.[18] Many classic theorists of autonomy, maybe with the exception of those who follow strictly Kantian conception, are aware of the fact that full development of autonomy is influenced by the external factors that surround her. They do not champion the life of an isolated man.

Nonetheless, causal conceptions of autonomy have at least two differences from the classic conception. The first is its theoretical emphasis. One of the distinctive characteristics of theories of relational autonomy is that they make a painstaking effort to verify the positive influence of social relations on autonomy. While classic theorists may not deny that some external socio-relational factors are conducive to autonomy, this is not their primary concern. In contrast, relational theorists are particularly devoted to these issues. Second, many relational theorists understand autonomy as a multi-dimensional capacity and argue that emotional and bodily faculties play a crucial role as much as rational capacity. Classic theorists often assume body and emotion as something that an autonomous agent should overcome or assume that they play only a marginal role in developing and exercising autonomy. It is common for relational theorists to deny

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[17] J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Indianapolis:Hackett Publishing Company, 1978, p 87.

[18] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p 394.

such an assumption. For instance, Jennifer Nedelsky has emphasized that a capacity for autonomy is more than the rational capacity of critical self-reflection and encompasses affective and embodied dimensions of the self.[19] Diana Meyers emphasizes that emotional attachment to social relations such as love is important for understanding what an agent truly wants and, therefore, an integral part of autonomy competency.[20] These modified interpretations of capacity for autonomy are an effort to reconceptualize autonomy towards the direction that better reflects how people in the real world actually maneuver through the complex network of social relations.

Constitutive conceptions modify the classic conception more radically towards the relational direction by arguing that socio-relational conditions are an inseparable dimension of the definition of autonomy. For instance, Marina Oshana defines autonomy as having "a *de facto* power and authority to manage matters of fundamental importance to her life within a framework of rules that she has set for herself."[21] For Oshana, to have a *de facto* power is to be in "a stable social status" which makes practical self-determination possible.[22] This implies that an agent is not autonomous even if she exercises agency on some decisions of her life unless she is located in a social structure that allows her to wield *de facto* power over important life decisions. Oshana, by definition, equates autonomy with a particular kind of socio-relational condition.

Other examples of constitutive conceptions are autonomy as answerability, proposed by Andrea Westlund and Paul Benson. Westlund defines autonomy as a disposition to hold oneself answerable for her action-guiding principles to the external critical perspectives. The interlocutor who provides critical challenges does not have to be an actual person, and the dialogue does not have to involve a face-to-face conversation. In fact, most of the time, this process consists of internal dialogue with imagined others. However, it is important to note that this imagined interlocutor is not any random individual but a person who is situated in a meaningful relationship with the agent in the given context. This relationship can range from a personal relationship, such as a mother, husband, and friend, to a broader relationship, such as a fellow citizen or a member of a cultural community. What is important is that it should be possible to explain why this imaginary dialogue

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[19] Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations*, 2011

[20] Diana T. Meyers, "Personal Autonomy and the Paradox of Feminine Socialization," *The Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 11 (1987), pp 619-628.

[21] Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, New York:Routledge, 2006, p 2.

[22] Marina Oshana, "Is Social-Relational Autonomy a Plausible Ideal?" In *Personal Autonomy and Social Oppression: Philosohpical Perspectives*, New York:Routledge, 2015.

matters to both persons involved.[23] Westlund's definition, at first glance, has some similarities with autonomy as a critical reflection because it emphasizes the agent's reflective capacity. However, it is important to highlight that for Westlund, a kind of reflectiveness that enables autonomy is irreducibly dialogical, relational, and situated. Her account for autonomy is constitutively relational because it incorporates socio-relational contexts as a necessary condition to identify a kind of critical challenge to which an autonomous agent should be answerable.[24] Paul Benson also proposes having authority to speak or answer to others for one's choices and actions as a definition of autonomy. According to Benson, autonomous agent's voice is secured irrespective of whether her actions actually reflect her authentic desires, if she regard herself being in an appropriate position to speak for her decisions in response to potential criticism. Similarly, autonomous agent's authority arises from whether an agent regard herself as a potential answerer for her decisions, irrespective of her being influenced by oppressive social norms or her social opportunity being impeded. As Westlund, Benson's agential ownership by definition needs 'others' who raise questions to the agent, and therefore is constitutively relational.[25]

Internalist or Externalist

The second common classification is the distinction between internalist and externalist conceptions. This distinction is based on whether autonomy is defined by *internalist* conditions or *externalist* conditions.[26] Internalist conceptions define autonomy as a particular psychological capacity. Many classic theories of autonomy can be classified as internalist conceptions. For instance, J. S. Mill defined autonomy as a capacity to critically reflect on traditions and customs and to make choices about moral actions and life plans in accordance with her own judgment.[27] Similarly, Gerald Dworkin defines autonomy as a capacity to critically scrutinize first-order desires, change them, and make them effective in her action.[28] Both Mill and Dworkin provide internal psychological conditions as a definition of autonomy.

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[23] Andrea C. Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy," *Hypatia* 24, no.4 (2009): p 39.

[24] Andrea C. Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy," pp 26-49.

[25] Paul Benson, "Feminist Commitments and Relational Autonomy," *Autonomy, Oppression, and Gender*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2014, pp 87-113.

[26] Internalist conceptions are sometimes equated with causal conceptions, and externalist conceptions are sometimes equated with constitutive conceptions. However, as Westlund has shown, not all constitutive conceptions are externalist.

[27] J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, 1978, p 88.

[28] Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, p 16.

Relational theorists modify these psychological conditions toward the relational direction. For instance, Nedelsky defines autonomy as a capacity to interact creatively with all the relationships that shape an agent, *i.e.*, a capacity to reshape and re-create both the relationship and the agent herself.[29] She points out that all individuals are situated in the nested structural relations, *i.e.*, various layers of social relations that intersect and interact with each other, and argues that her definition of autonomy is a better description of how individuals deal with the nested structural relations compared to the classic conception. Westlund's definition, a dialogical capacity to hold oneself answerable to meaningful others, is another example of an internalist conception of relational autonomy.[30] Like Nedelsky's, her definition of autonomy has some similarities with the classic internalist conditions such as critical reflection and self-direction but is modified in a way that can better respond to the situatedness of a relational self. Catorina Mackenzie proposes that autonomy involves imaginative skills, a kind of self-reflection an agent makes by sifting through and evaluating experiential memories she lived through. According to Mackenzie, an autonomous agent can exercise this capacity and imagine oneself otherwise.[31] Mackenzie also proposes this imaginative capacity as an alternative to the overly rationalized capacity of critical reflection.[32]

Externalist conditions, on the other hand, incorporate social conditions that are external to an agent's psychological capacity into the definition of relational autonomy. Among the classic conceptions, the Razian model follows the externalist account in some respect. Raz's definition of autonomy consists of three dimensions, mental abilities, an adequate range of choices, and absence of coercion and manipulation.[33] Among the three dimensions, an adequate range of choices can be interpreted as an externalist condition, a matter external to the agent's psychology. According to Raz, an adequate range of choices implies choices between meaningful options and choices between different kinds of goods. This means that choices between trivial options and choices between good and evil are not sufficient for autonomy.[34] Such an analysis shows that the Razian model can be interpreted as an externalist conception.

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[29] Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations*, 2011, p 45.

[30] Andrea C. Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy," *Hypatia* 24, no.4 (2009), p 33.

[31] Catriona Mackenzie, "Imagining Oneself Otherwise" In *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspective on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2000, pp 124-150.

[32] Catorina Mackenzie, "Three Dimensions of Autonomy: A Relational Analysis," *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2014, p 33.

[33] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, 1986, pp 372-377.

[34] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, 1986, pp 383-384.

Among the relational theorists, Marina Oshana is the most prominent example of externalist conceptions.[35] According to Oshana, being autonomous is having "a *de facto* power and authority to manage matters of fundamental importance to her life within a framework of rules that she has set for herself."[36] And for Oshana, to have a *de facto* power is to be in "a stable social status" which makes practical self-determination possible regardless of the psychological state of an agent.[37] Oshana illustrates her position with the cases of social reformers who struggle against their oppression. For instance, she argues that Martin Luther King gained autonomy "only when national and international circumstances forced a seismic shift in attention to the (civil rights) movement he presented."[38] Before this shift, King may have made autonomous choices from time to time in some domains of his life but could not make practical self-determination in important domains of his life. In other words, he could not wield global autonomy, and this is not a satisfactory state for Oshana. She also argues the successful struggles of social reformers should be understood as an exception or outlier, and there is no need to regard an exception or outlier as a definition of autonomy.[39] All of these show that Oshana's theory is very strictly externalist. Natalie Stoljar also defends externalist conditions of relational autonomy. Stoljar is critical about how an internalist approach can overlook the cases like preference adaptation, the cases where an agent's preferences are formed as a result of oppressive external factors. Therefore, in her view, the presence of a proper kind of social relations is a necessary condition for autonomy.[40]

Procedural or Substantive

The third classification is the distinction between procedural or substantive conceptions. Substantive conceptions prescribe certain substantive values and norms as incompatible with autonomy. More specifically, they are cautious about socio-cultural norms that consolidate hierarchical relationships and think that such norms go against the whole purpose of autonomy. According to substantive theorists, hierarchical norms permeate different levels of social relations, effectively constraining the mental faculties and the range of options necessary for an agent's

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[35] Natalie Stoljar, "Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism," *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no.1 (2017): pp 27-41.

[36] Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, New York:Routledge, 2006, p2.

[37] Marina Oshana, "Is Social-Relational Autonomy a Plausible Ideal?" In *Personal Autonomy and Social Oppression: Philosohpical Perspectives*, New York:Routledge, 2015.

[38] Marina Oshana, "Is Social-Relational Autonomy a Plausible Ideal?" 2015, p 12.

[39] Marina Oshana, "Is Social-Relational Autonomy a Plausible Ideal?" 2015, p 11.

[40] Natalie Stoljar, "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition," *Relational Autonomy*, 2000; Natalie Stoljar, "Relational Autonomy and Perfectionism," *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 4, no.1 (2017): pp 27-41.

freedom and well-being. Therefore, even when an agent seems to willingly endorse the hierarchical norms, substantive theorists argue that this is because the agent internalized existing oppression.

This problem is sometimes framed as "adaptive preference formation," the unconscious accommodation of desires to feasible options. If an agent voluntarily endorses social norms which seem to constrain her mental abilities and maintain discriminatory relationships, this may be the result of adaptive preference formation, not because that is her true desire. If this is so, she may choose to live otherwise when more options are given to her. For this reason, many substantive theorists think that endorsement of hierarchical norms is an adaptive preference and is a sign of a defect in one's autonomy. This view is sometimes challenged by theorists who worry that such analysis might belittle the life of an agent who is perfectly capable of weighing different options and making reasonable choices under the given circumstance. As a response to such criticism, substantive theorists differentiate autonomy from agency. They do not deny that the agents who adapted to hierarchical norms exercise agency, but they still argue that this is not sufficient for autonomy.[41]

Oshana is a prominent example of a strong substantive account for autonomy. Oshana provides an example of a happy slave who made an unhampered decision to become a slave and is satisfied with the life she chose. According to Oshana, the content of the slave's decision goes directly against the kind of life we expect from autonomy; therefore, it is an oxymoron to argue that she is autonomous. While procedural theorists assume that a content-neutral account can logically filter out extreme cases like voluntary enslavement, Oshana thinks that they failed to defend how this is possible without relying on some kind of substantive standard.[42] Stoljar is another example of a substantive theorist. She argues that the relational theories that follow the feminist intuition should prefer substantive conceptions compared to procedural conceptions. The feminist intuition tells us that a woman who goes through feminine socialization, internalize oppressive and misguided norms, and form preferences influenced by pernicious aspects of the oppressive context. For Stoljar, the problem of procedural conceptions which equate autonomy with the process of critical reflection is that they cannot explain properly how oppressive socialization can pervert this process. She thinks that a strong substantive standard is needed to assess whether or not agent's critical

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[41] Natalie Stoljar, "Autonomy and Adaptive Preference Formation," *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2014, p 249.

[42] Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society*, New York:Routledge, 2006, pp 53-60.

reflection is uncoerced and unmanipulated.[43]

On the other hand, procedural theorists think that hierarchical norms should be understood as one of the materials an agent can use to make important decisions in her life, just as egalitarian norms. The content of the norms is not the deciding factor of whether autonomy is constrained. As long as the agent can consciously authorize her decision, she is capable of exercising autonomy regardless of its content. Procedural theorists typically agree that the classic model of the authorization process, such as uninfluenced choice or self-control, should be modified toward a relational direction. However, as I mentioned earlier, they modify this process in various ways. Nedelsky thinks that an agent authorizes certain values and norms by interacting creatively with the web of relations she is situated in. This creative interaction goes beyond rational critical reflection and encompasses an ordinary reason-giving process of the affective and embodied dimension of ourselves.[44] Westlund proposes answerability for one's action-guiding principles as the sign of authorization. If an agent can give justificatory answers to legitimate critical challenges against her decisions, then it is sufficient to conclude that she has authorized them. It is important to note that Westlund confined legitimate critical challenges to challenges that are proven to matter to both the agent and the challenger. This means that the content of the authorization process is always context-based and should be relationally situated.[45] To sum up, according to the relational theorists who take a procedural approach, an agent's autonomy depends on whether she authorized the given values and norms to make up her decisions and life plans and this authorization process is multi-dimensional, situated, and relational.

By placing the authorization process, not the content, at the center of autonomy, procedural theorists try to get a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be autonomous in a seemingly oppressive situation. First, they think there is a significant difference between a person who has consciously authorized hierarchical norms and a person who has drifted or even been forced into following these norms. They argue that while the latter clearly lacks autonomy, it is unfair to deny that the former is exercising some degree of autonomy. Second, procedural theorists try to raise a more subtle question about the meaning of oppression. If an agent authorizes certain

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[43] Natalie Stoljar, "Autonomy and Feminist Intuition," pp 94-110.

[44] Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations: A Relational Theory of Self, Autonomy and Law*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2011.

[45] Andrea C. Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy," *Hypatia* 24, no.4 (2009), p 39.

norms as her own and is satisfied with them, on what grounds can we say these norms are oppressing her? Apart from extreme cases which seriously undermine the well-being of an agent, a more benign version of hierarchical norms might not be seen as oppression at all to some agents. For these agents, hierarchical norms are just one of the materials which they can use for self-creation.

It is important to note that relational theorists seldom take a purely procedural position. This is because they take seriously the fact that some social relations hamper the capacity for autonomy. Therefore, some argue that it would be more accurate to use the label "weak substantive" than "procedural." Diana T Meyers makes interesting remarks on this matter. Instead of using the common procedural-substantive classification, Meyers proposes the Double Axis thesis: the thesis that how theories of autonomy deploy values can be placed on the coordinates with two conceptual axes, the Directivity Axis and the Constitutivity Axis. The Directivity Axis is the axis about whether autonomy theory prescribes or proscribes certain types of behavior. Theorists of autonomy can be classified as value-neutral, value-laden, and value-saturated: value-neutral theories are similar to pure procedural theories, which "assess autonomy on the basis of the motivational structure;" value-saturated theories are similar to substantive theories, which "demand that autonomous individuals repudiate particular disvalues or fulfill particular values;" value-laden theories are located between the two theories, and are "less prescriptive than value-saturated theories and more prescriptive than value-neutral theories." Value-laden theories do not restrict certain types of actions like value-saturated theories but introduce psychological values such as self-confidence and self-worth as constitutive of autonomous choice and action. The Constitutivity Axis is another axis on the coordinates and is about how the process of autonomous choice utilizes a set of background values. Meyers argues that all autonomy theory that talks about the procedure of autonomy are value-utilizing, although they differ on the specifics of how we design such a procedure.[46]

The reason Meyers separates Constitutivity Axis from the Directivity Axis is that she wants to articulate the differences among the theories that are often categorized as "weak substantive" theories. Meyers argues that there are differences between a value-neutral (*i.e.,* procedural)/value-

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[46] Diana T. Meyers, "Feminist Debate over Values in Autonomy Theory," *Autonomy, Oppression and Gender,* New York:Oxford University Press, 2014, pp 114-140.

utilizing theory and a value-laden theory, although they are all classified as weak substantive theories. While the latter incorporates non-procedural values such as self-confidence and self-worth as defining characteristics of autonomy, the former relies only on the values directly related to the process of autonomous choices, such as rational dialogue or interpersonal accountability. For instance, although Benson and Westlund both propose answerability as the primary concept of autonomy, Meyers classifies Benson's account as value-laden while classifying Westlund's account as value-neutral/value-utilizing. According to Meyers, Benson's focus is primarily on whether an agent *regards* oneself as a potential answerer of critical questions, *i.e.,* on the positive attitudes toward oneself such as self-confidence and self-worth, whereas Westlund does not assume these psychological conditions as necessary conditions of autonomy.[47]

III. Relational Conception of Individual Autonomy

In this section, I explore which of these conceptions is more suitable for the purpose of my project and then propose my definition of relational conception of individual autonomy. This means that the existing conceptions of relational autonomy will be examined under the two criteria. First, it should be compatible with liberalism. I want to emphasize that my project is profoundly a liberal project: my interest lies in constructing a liberal model that is more accessible and less alienating in the current globalized context. And since I am interested in constructing a conception of autonomy that can be used as the basis of the liberal model, I focus on complementing the classic conception rather than a complete replacement. Second, it should be useful to address the irony of liberal universalism I articulated in the first section.

First of all, I focus on internalist conceptions rather than externalist conceptions. Autonomy which serves as the basis of the liberal model is an individualistic concept described as a mental capacity that an individual possesses. The key is that all individuals should be treated equally as a person who have the potential to develop this capacity. This is the ideal of equal respect, an essential tenet of liberalism. If a theory assumes that some groups of individuals are by nature less capable of developing the capacity for autonomy than other individuals, then that theory cannot be

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[47] Diana T. Meyers, "Feminist Debate over Values in Autonomy Theory," 2014.

classified as liberal. This shows that a liberal conception of autonomy is primarily about internal psychological conditions.

The role of external social conditions in a liberal conception of autonomy is much more complicated. Some liberals include external social conditions in their definition of autonomy. For instance, I have pointed out that Raz incorporated an adequate range of options into his definition of autonomy, and this can be construed as an external social condition. John Christman made an interesting remark about why Raz's externalist approach may have some problematic implications. Liberalism assumes that a good political institution is run by autonomous citizens. Christman worries that citizens who reject social conditions laid out by externalists might be regarded as not autonomous and, therefore, not appropriate to participate in principles of justice and the democratic decision-making process.[48] Similar arguments can be made about citizens who are structurally deprived of these social conditions. However, since autonomy is the conceptual basis of a liberal political institution, it should be equally accessible, at least at the conceptual level, to all citizens regardless of the content of their social conditions. Christman makes the same remark about Marina Oshana, who supports externalist conceptions of relational autonomy. I think Christman made a fair point about the role of autonomy as the basic concept of a liberal political theory. Since I am also interested in a definition of autonomy that can serve as the basis of a liberal political institution or conception of justice, I follow internalist conceptions of autonomy and treat it as a concept that refers to a particular kind of mental faculties that people use to develop self-understanding and construct a political institution. I do not intend to deny that liberal theorists care about what kind of social conditions would be desirable for an individual to develop and exercise her capacity for autonomy. However, this discussion can proceed without treating these social conditions as *defining* conditions of autonomy.

Second, I focus on constitutive conceptions over causal conceptions. Constitutive conceptions assume that relationality should be considered a defining condition of autonomy. This is an important point that is crucial to the overall purpose of my project. My aim is to construct a liberal model that adequately captures the various experiences of individuals who live in vastly different social-relational contexts. The stereotypical image of an autonomous agent in classic liberal

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[48] John Christman, "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves," *Philosophical Studies* 117 (2004), p 156.

theories is an agent who overcomes the hierarchical socio-cultural norms and chooses an unconstrained liberal way of life. However, this image makes sense only when the agent is situated in a particular social and historical context where liberal values such as autonomy and freedom was not imposed on her. But this is certainly not the case for some individuals. To better illustrate my point, I will add details to the example of a young woman I suggested in the first section.

This hypothetical agent, Mikyung, is a South Korean woman born in the 1960s and raised in a family devoted to Confucian values. When she was a child, she lived in a large family and saw her mother taking care of the family, including her paternal grandparents. Her family raised her, both explicitly and implicitly, to think that wife taking care of in-laws is a desirable cultural practice and, therefore, she should do the same when she marries in the future. But as she grows up, she is exposed to messages that this is an outdated tradition. The media depicts the life of "Western" or "Westernized" women, which symbolizes women living an independent and individualistic life, as something more advanced and sophisticated than the life of Korean women who follows traditional customs. She also realizes that Korean society is changing rapidly and witnesses that many of her friends start to live a life in accordance with the "Western" model. When she was planning to marry, she found out that her fiancé was considering living with his parents, arguing that it is a filial duty to do so. She likes his parents, and as being raised in a large family, she is accustomed to such a life. However, she eventually rejects his demand.

Here, it may seem like Mikyung chose a life that increased her autonomy. In some respects, she can be seen as the typical example of an autonomous agent who successfully distanced herself from the oppression of culture and chose an unconstrained life. However, when we consider the particular socio-relational contexts she was situated in, it becomes unclear whether her rejection of Confucian customs and living a more liberal way of life was a truly autonomous decision. She might not see any problem with Confucian customs but chose a liberal way of life because the life her friends seemed more sophisticated and successful than hers, and she wanted to live like them. Or she may come to firmly believe that Confucian cultural traditions are fundamentally oppressive and outdated, but this might be due to the imperialistic ideology prevalent in society. These are all quite at odds with an autonomous agent. In other words, to know whether Mikyung's decision was autonomous, we have to take into account what kind of socio-relational contexts in which she is situated. This shows that the relationality in which the agent was involved when she acquired and practiced certain values should be considered constitutive of our understanding of autonomy.

However, I want to clarify how exactly relationality can be built into the liberal conception of autonomy. For instance, although Oshana's externalist conception is considered a primary example of a constitutive conception, I have already explained that I will not take this approach. In fact, I am interested in how Westlund and Benson incorporate relationality into the internalist conception of autonomy. As I explained in the previous section, they define autonomy as answerability, the capacity to answer critical questions about one's own decisions posed by meaningful others. Autonomy as answerability incorporates relationality as a crucial dimension of autonomy through the idea of having a dialogue with meaningful others. This dialogical process is inevitably situated because identifying who is meaningful to others and what questions can be considered legitimate requires consideration of an agent's social-relational contexts. The internalist and constitutive conception of relational autonomy is useful to complement the classic conception by providing a more explicit account of how liberal theories of autonomy should treat the socio-relational factors.

Third, I am interested in procedural or weak substantive conceptions of autonomy rather than strong substantive conceptions. The problem with strong substantive conceptions is that it has a risk of ignoring meaningful cultural and historical differences and treating them with paternalistic attitudes. For instance, theorists who take a strong substantive position tend to assume that a person who embraces a subordinate position or participates in cultural practices that restrict her freedom cannot be autonomous even if she voluntarily makes such decisions. They usually interpret that a person makes such decisions because she internalized oppressive socio-cultural norms. I understand their worries and do not deny that there are cases where the person's agential faculties are severely damaged. However, I am against prescribing certain values, especially values that have a Eurocentric origin, as a necessary condition of autonomy because such an approach is not helpful in analyzing the complicated role social-relational contexts play in an agent's decisions. For instance, while it is highly likely that a women's autonomy would be undermined when she practices Confucian filial duty and take care of a large family, this is not because the content of this Confucian practice is always incompatible with autonomy but because there is a possibility that these women's mental faculties may have been deteriorated. Therefore, my definition of autonomy will be about whether an agent's authorization process is properly functioning, not the content of the decision.

Keeping these in mind, I propose the following definition of autonomy. I will term my definition as a relational conception of individual autonomy.

Autonomy is a capacity to direct one's life in a way that fits well with her self-conception. This includes the capacity to create the conception of herself by appropriating the existing norms or life projects and giving legitimate reasons why she appropriated them.

The five main characteristics of this definition are as follows.

(1) Autonomy is a multidimensional capacity that consists of both rational and emotional faculties.

(2) Autonomy is a capacity that all individuals equally possess.

(3) To appropriate is to interpret the existing norms or life projects by relating them with her experiences and social-relational contexts. This is distinguished from simple imitation of the existing norms or life projects.

(4) The reasons for appropriation are legitimate when they meet two conditions. (a) when they can be presented as an agent's own will; (b) when they are intelligible to other agents who understand her socio-relational contexts. Autonomy is a situated capacity in this sense.

(5) The content of the agent's self-conception is constantly reinforced or reconstituted through the agent's interaction with her social-relational contexts. This process is never completely finalized.

As I explained in the previous chapters, individual autonomy in liberal theories is a concept of self-authorship. It is an idea about how to become an author of one's life. Becoming an author of one's life is to direct one's life in a way that fits her self-conception. This general description of autonomy is what I share with the classic theorists. However, the relational conception I suggest provides different perspectives on what it means to direct one's life towards her self-conception.

First, it is important to note that the capacity for autonomy, *i.e.,* the capacity for appropriation and reason-giving, is multidimensional, consisting of both rational and emotional faculties. Relational theorists are skeptical about reflecting capacity that is solely based on rationality. The process of critical reflection proposed by classic theorists is largely construed as exercising reason which all human beings equally possess. Through reason, an agent critically appraises which existing norms and life projects are persuasive and sound. Relational theorists do agree that reflective capacity of some kind should be exercised for an agent to be autonomous. However, they think that this relational capacity is not purely rational but includes affective dimensions. Moreover, I agree with Nedelsky that it is important to underscore the ordinariness of this capacity.[49] It is true that critical reflection based solely on reason is a capacity developed and exercised by individuals who chose to live a particular way of life. It requires conscious and

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[49] Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations,* 2011, p 48.

deliberate training and is very different from how most people make decisions in their life. The capacity for autonomy should provide an adequate description of our ordinary decision-making process.

It is important to point out that an agent's self-conception can be ambiguous and is never finalized. Classic theorists assume that an agent can have a relatively accurate conception of herself. For instance, the Dworkin-Frankfurt model assumes that any human being has second-order desires, *i.e.,* desires to have particular desires, and assumes that the agent knows their second-order desires. Neither Dworkin nor Frankfurt provides sufficient explanations about how the second-order desires are formed in the first place and whether it is really possible to know them accurately. It is sort of given in the model. In contrast, relational theorists think that an agent has to go through a complex web of socio-relational contexts to acquire a conception of herself. For instance, Diana Meyer argues that one's community of origin and social norms are embedded in the person's cognitive and motivational structure. This means that the intelligibility of the person's desires is always "autobiographically situated," and therefore tracing one's group membership is necessary to get accurate self-conception.[50] Nedelsky also emphasizes that all human beings are both constituted by, and contributed to, changing or reinforcing the relationships they are part of.[51] This simultaneous interaction between self and the world is a common assumption shared by most relational theorists.

Moreover, there are reasons to be critical about the possibility of a fixed and integrated self-conception. I agree with Diana Meyers that many individuals have intersectional identities, whether or not they are conscious of them. The identity of each individual consists of different dimensions of group-based identities: ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, and sexuality, to name a few. There are various ways these dimensions interact with each other; they may integrate well or create tension; they may be equally important to the agent, or some may be much more important than others. Due to these complexities, an intersectional identity is sometimes too opaque to serve as the basis of the classic conception of autonomy. And this becomes more difficult in the era of globalization. How would one be sure what her authentic self is when her identity is as complex as such? For this reason, Meyers objects to a Frankfurtian conception of an authentic self: a self

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[50] Diana T Meyers, "Intersectional Identity and Authentic Self?: Opposite Attract!" In *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspective on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2000, p 160.

[51] Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations,* 2011.

that has successfully integrated different dimensions of her identity into a single ordering. She argues that self-conception is "an open-ended process of reflection, reconsideration, revision, and refinement," which is neither finalized nor wholeheartedly integrated.[52] Nedelsky also makes a similar argument that finding what is one's own is not uncovering a fixed true self but engaging in an ongoing lifelong process that can be neither arrived at nor achieved.[53]

This ongoing ambiguity about self-conception requires a change in what it means direct one's life in a way that fits one's self-conception. Classic theorists use the language of choice. The language of choice evokes the image of an independent person who can clearly distinguish her authentic core from the existing norms and life projects. Her authentic core, which is developed prior to her choice, serves as a critical lens that she uses when making a choice. In contrast, a relational approach to autonomy reveals that this typical image of an independent choice is illusionary: since they do not believe in the presence of an authentic core, they also deny the possibility of independent choice. In fact, acquiring self-conception and making life decisions occur *simultaneously* when an agent tries to *appropriate* the existing norm or life projects.

An appropriation is a form of authorization process that an agent goes through to make certain norms or projects *her own*. It is a psychological process that can be distinguished from simple imitation: it implies that the agent is interpreting existing norms and life projects in her own way, by relating them with her experiences and socio-relational contexts. Many relational theorists propose some forms of appropriation as a sign of autonomy. Nedelsky's creative interaction is about how an agent reshapes and re-creates her relationships, *i.e.,* how she appropriates her relationships. Westlund's answerability also includes the act of appropriation: if an agent fails to appropriate the norms and is simply following the norms, then she would not be able to answer critical challenges posed by meaningful others. Catorina Mackenzie is another example. Mackenzie suggests an idea called imagistic thinking: a kind of self-reflection an agent makes by sifting through and evaluating experiential memories she lived through, externalizing and appropriating those she thinks are significant to her.[54]

But an agent should do something more than appropriation to make certain norms or projects

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[52] Diana T Meyers, "Intersectional Identity and Authentic Self?: Opposite Attract!" 2000, p 168.

[53] Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations,* 2011, p 50.

[54] Catorina Mackenzie, "Imagining Oneself Otherwise" In *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspective on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, New York:Oxford University Press, 2000, pp 124-150.

her own. If a person impulsively appropriates particular norms or projects but is not able to give reasons why she made such a decision, it is insufficient to say that this person made her life her own. To make her life her own, she should be able to justify her decisions. Another defining condition of relational autonomy, *the act of reason-giving*, implies that the agent has gone through the psychological process to justify her decision and successfully authorized it. Relational theorists who suggest an internalist conception include this process in their conception of autonomy. Nedelsky admitted that, unlike freedom, autonomy has the element of reason-giving.[55] Westlund and Benson's answerability equates relational autonomy with the reason-giving process. Mackenzie also talks about how an agent deliberates with herself when making important decisions on how to define oneself, and this implies a reason-giving process.

Moreover, the reasons an agent provides should not be any reasons but *legitimate* reasons. Some criteria to narrow down the scope of the reason-giving process is necessary for autonomy to be used as a meaningful conceptual tool. I suggest two conditions. First, it should be possible to present an agent's reasons as her own will. This condition rules out the cases where the agents forcibly or unwillingly appropriate certain norms and projects. Let's assume a daughter who has to sacrifice her career to take care of her sick mother. The daughter may genuinely wish to take care of her mother even when she has to give up a better job opportunity. Or the daughter may not want to give up the opportunity but has done so because she has been pressured to do so. There is a significant difference between these two cases with respect to how the daughter will present the reasons for her decisions. In the former case, the daughter will answer that she appropriated filial duty because family is the most important thing in her life, and she is genuinely happy to take care of her mother. In the latter case, the daughter will answer that she appropriated filial duty because she is afraid her family will shun her and scorn her as a bad daughter. In the former case, her reason is presented as her own will; in the latter case, it is not.

The second condition is intelligibility: an agent's reasons should be intelligible to other agents. This means two things. First, if an agent provides a reason that is not intelligible to anyone, it is impossible to decide whether or not the agent is autonomous even when she provides reasons. However, the agent's reasons don't have to be intelligible to everyone. It is highly likely that an agent's reasons are more intelligible to people who understand her personal situation as well as the

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[55] Jennifer Nedelsky, *Law's Relations,* 2011, p 61.

social, cultural, and historical contexts of her community. This means that her reasons might not be intelligible to someone who lacks an understanding of these socio-relational contexts. Yet, to the extent that her reasons are intelligible to others who understand her socio-relational contexts, her reasons meet the conditions of intelligibility. In this sense, the process of reason-giving is inevitably relational and situated. This condition is inspired by Westlund's understanding of meaningful others. Westlund argues that for an agent to be autonomous, she need not be answerable to all critical questions but only to questions made by meaningful others. This requires clarifications of why asking these critical questions is important to both the agent and the interrogator. Therefore, if someone is categorized as meaningful others, it is highly likely that they will regard the agent's reasons as intelligible because they share certain social-relational contexts with her. In this sense, the condition of intelligibility implies that relationality is constitutive of my definition of autonomy.

As I have mentioned previously, I reject a conception of autonomy that is strongly substantive. It is logically possible for a person to appropriate hierarchical norms and provide legitimate reasons why she decided to appropriate those norms. As long as she appropriated those norms in her own way and provided legitimate reasons that are intelligible to meaningful others, she is autonomous. This implies that what matters is her ability to answer to people who she has an important relationship with, let that be intimate relationships or broader social relationships, and she doesn't need to be fully answerable to people who are situated in a completely different time and space. Nevertheless, I do not defend a purely procedural account. Surely, a purely procedural account may go against the ideal of equal respect, the fundamental of liberalism. Therefore, the relational conception of individual autonomy I proposed incorporates the ideal of equal respect: the underlying assumption is that all individuals should be treated equally as an agent capable of developing and exercising this capacity.

IV. Relational Approach to Liberal Practices

In this section, I discuss why the relational conception of individual autonomy is more suitable for understanding liberal practices in the globalized world than the classic conception. I illustrate my point by using the South Korean family law reform movement, a 60-year-long activism for

women's autonomy that continued from 1948 to 2006. The reform movement encompassed a wide range of major and minor legal reforms such as the right to marry, marriage equality, divorce, the right of inheritance for women, parental rights, and adoption. Among these achievements, the two legal provisions were the subject of great controversy: the hoju system and the marriage ban on the couple with the same surname and family origin. The hoju system is a system of family law that constitutes and documents a family centered around a *hoju*, a family representative who has certain legal authority over one's immediate and extended family members. When the hoju system was codified into the new civil law in 1958, a hoju had substantial legal authorities, such as a right to decide who would enter and exit the family and a right to designate their place of residence. A hoju also had the privilege to inherit a 50% additional amount of one's original legal share of the inheritance and was titled to the family property with unclear ownership. Supporters of the hoju system argued that these special rights were attributed to the hoju's duty to support family members, especially elderly parents. Nevertheless, the major problem of the hoju system was that a hoju was succeeded by the eldest son of the previous hoju, if absent, to other sons or grandsons according to seniority. A female family member could become a hoju only in a very exceptional situation when there is no male member in the whole family, including minors. The fact that an adult female had lower priority in becoming a hoju, even more so than a male adolescent, restricted women's autonomy severely, reproducing a perception that women are less worthy compared to men and that their lives can be fully recognized only when they are dependent on men. While the hoju's legal authorities have been reduced over time, the hoju system remained until 2005, depriving women of the right to become the legal head of the household. This caused tremendous complications for individuals who are unable or unwilling to have a traditional form of family, such as divorced or single-parent families, children raised by their grandmother, and other forms of alternative families that are not blood-related.

Another symbolic provision of family law was the marriage ban on a couple with the same surname and family origin. In South Korea, one's family origin is documented with one's surname. Family origin is believed to be the place of origin where one's paternal ancestral clan comes from. Until 2005, South Korean law banned marriage between a couple with the same surname and family origin and treated it as a type of incestuous marriage. This legal ban had many irrational aspects of applying to contemporary society. A surname and family origin started out to be an exclusive property of aristocrats and gradually expanded to commoners, and this expansion

sometimes involved buying or forging aristocratic surnames and family origins.[56] This means that for the people who live in contemporary Korea, their surname and family origin only had a symbolic meaning and did not indicate real biological ties. Also, only the paternal ancestral line was documented, which leads to the question of why the maternal line is not considered if an incestuous marriage is a real concern. The problem becomes clear when we look at the real data. In 2000, More than 4 million people had Kim of Kimhae as their surname and family origin, and this was about 9% of the whole Korean population. This shows how banning marriage based on surname and family origin severely restricted people's right to marry, one of the important aspects of living an autonomous life, without reasonable grounds.

The reason these two legal provisions were controversial was because they were presented as the symbol of authentic Korean cultural and national identity by Confucian conservatives. The cultural integrity thesis, the idea that incorporating liberal egalitarian ideals into family law can be equated to rejecting cultural traditions and betraying national identity, was the primary argument of the opponents from the beginning to the last day of the movement. This line of argument was proposed by Byeong-ro Kim, the drafter of the first civil law, picked up by *yurim*, the Korean Confucian community, which was the primary opponent of the movement.[57] Their arguments are well synthesized in the minority opinion of the Constitutional Court's decision on the two provisions.

> Family law, by nature, reflects the traditional customs, and it is up to legislators to decide to what extent the customs should be codified or not […] the marriage ban aims at protecting social order by codifying and coercing traditional marriage customs and is closely related to the constitutional ideal of inheriting historical facts and cultural traditions. Moreover, the citizens' right to pursue happiness and freedom of marriage can be limited by law within the boundaries of traditional culture.[58]

> The hoju system under the current law inherits our authentic and reasonable patriarchal traditions and has only very basic elements to sustain the succession of paternal line, and thus, in the area of family law, judging our cultural traditions based on the formulaic standard of

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[56] Hwaboon Lee, *60 Years of Family Law Reform Movement*, Seoul:KLACFR Press, 2009, p 191.

[57] Following documents can be found in the appendix of *37 Years of Family Law Reform Movement*, Seoul:KLACFR Press, 1992: Byeongro Kim, "Purpose of Civil Law (1957)," pp 468-475.; Statements for Rally (September 16th, 1984)," pp 593-594.; Sooyoung Kim, "Denouncing Statement (September 16th, 1984)," pp 594-595.; "Resolution (September 16th, 1984,)" p 595.; Joonghun Park, "Suggestions (April 29th 1986)," p 636.; Kyungsoo Kim and Jungja Kim, "Resolution of Ten Million Yurim (1986)," p 637.; "Resolution (April 23th 1986)," p 638.

[58] Request for Violation of the Constitution on Civil Law Article 809 Section 1 (95헌가6등), July 16th, 1997.

equality will cause complete denial and dissolution of traditional family culture.[59]

If we follow the conservative position, it leads to the conclusion that the participants of the movement was demanding the change because they were influenced by imperialistic ideology of liberal hegemony. And while I do not agree with the cultural integrity thesis, this is something to think about. It is undeniable that participants of the movement, especially in the early stage of the movement, sometimes made arguments that seems to internalize the imperialistic ideology. For instance, Taeyoung Lee, the primary figure of the reform movement, argued that the "beautiful and laudable customs"[60] claimed by traditionalists are anachronistic and described the predominance of men over women as one of the major characteristics of Korean cultural traditions. Moreover, she argued that like "western women" who "made an effort to claim their freedom and rights as human being," Korean women should also "forgo their lazy, ignorant and superstitious lifestyle."[61] Such rhetoric seems to characterize Korean cultural traditions as backward and assumes that Korean society is in the position of following Western modernity. Other activists also often used the negative expressions such as "obsolete" and "anachronistic" to describe Korean cultural traditions, and they even sometimes lamented that it is a national disgrace that the two provisions still persist.[62] This view is reflected in the movement's early strategy which focused on "enlightening" female working-class citizens.

Due to the fact that its participants were initially affected by imperialistic ideology, the reform movement falls into the irony of liberal universalism. In other words, they aimed to make legal changes that increase their autonomy but their decision to pursue autonomy may not have been autonomous in the first place. The problem I have with the classic conception of autonomy is that it cannot give a clear answer to this problem. When we examine the family law reform movement through the lens of the classic framework of autonomy, one has to prove that the participants who framed and organized the movement were not manipulated by the imperialistic ideology when they acquired their beliefs on liberal values. However, this is a very difficult move. First, it is simply

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[59] Request for Violation of the Constitution on Civil Law Article 781 Section 1 (2001헌가9등), February 3rd 2005.

[60] A beautiful and laudable customs, *Mi-poong-yang-sok*, is an idiomatic expression frequently used to describe the Korean traditional customs.

[61] Taeyoung Lee, "Improvement of Family and Status of Women," *Saegajung* 10, 1963, pp 10-15.

[62] Following documents can be found in the appendix of *37 Years of Family Law Reform Movement*: Sookjong Lee, "Suggestions (July 31st, 1973)" pp 524-525.; Taeyoung Lee, "Petition for Family Law Reform (July 9th, 1984), pp 587-590.; "Suggestions to Legislation and Judiciary Committee IV (February 24th, 1989)," pp 717-718.

anti-historical to deny that they were under the influence of the imperialistic ideology prevalent at that time and even today. Second, it is counter-productive to engage in an ambiguous discussion of to what extent we can say that their adoption of the liberal ideal was the consequence of manipulation and to what extent it was their own beliefs and desires.

On the other hand, if we examine the movement through the relational conception of autonomy that I proposed, a new way to interpret the situation opens up. The relational conception will focus less on whether the initial value-acquiring process was manipulated, and more on how the participants appropriated the ideals through their own experience and answered the critical questions posed by meaningful others. If the reasons behind the family law reform were only about an ideological problem that cultural particularities have to be assessed under the criteria of liberal modernity, then this movement is certainly problematic: not because the participants were affected by imperialistic ideology, which I think was inevitable, but because they were unable to reproduce or contribute to the ideals with their own take, and adopted them as a fixed set of normative criteria that should be approximated to become a part of modernity, advanced countries, global trends and *etc.* In other words, they lacked authorship of the value they endorsed. For the reform movement to be construed as the full exercise of autonomy, the participants should have been capable of situating, mixing, and transforming liberal ideals in accordance with their experience, as well as answering critical questions posed to them.

In fact, this was what happened in the later stage of the movement. South Korea's successful democratization and the growth of civil society in the 1990s to early 2000s influenced the movement in important ways, and the actual voice of the affected citizens has become more central to the movement.[63] One primary example of this shift was a voluntary social meeting of ordinary citizens called *Hopaemo* (Civic Gathering for Abolishment of the Hoju System) emerged in the late 1990s. Hopaemo was organized through the internet and took fundamentally different methods compared to the previous waves of the reform movement. The previous waves of the reform movement were largely shaped by established law professionals, activists, and academics. However, Hopaemo was an online network consisting of ordinary citizens who voluntarily participated and shared their firsthand or secondhand experiences regarding the specific harm and

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[63] Hwaboon Lee, *60 Years of Family Law Reform Movemen*, p 157; Kyungok Jeon et al., *Sociopolitical History of Korean Women III*, Seoul:Sookmyung University Press, 2006, pp 335-339.

sufferings of the hoju system. These spontaneous public debates that emerged in cyberspace were very effective in persuading the necessity of the reform to the general population.[64] Also, the discourse around the reform was transformed into a practical and situated debate in contrast to an ideological debate of traditions vs. modernity. The participants of the discourse in this period began to perceive the family law reform not just as a matter of symbolic interest but as a matter of practical interest critical to themselves and their fellow citizens. While the activists in the previous stage understood the family law reform within the discourse of modernity and cultural integrity, these new participants situated the problem in various contexts that their society has experienced, such as colonialism, authoritarian control of the government in citizens' lives, and pluralization of for families. And most importantly, they understood these problems as "their own problem."[65]

Moreover, the reform movement tried to overturn the cultural integrity thesis proposed by Confucians. First, they showed that the marriage ban and the hoju system are not at all authentic Korean traditions but customs and institutions created under foreign influence, such as Chinese Confucianism and Japanese colonial rule. Activists highlighted the historical fact that the marriage ban was imported from China during Chosun dynasty. Before the Chosun dynasty, marriage between the same surname and family origin was not viewed as greatly immoral, and even incest was common in the noble class. They also argued that the hoju system was actually the result of the Japanese colonial government applying their headship system to Korea by adding several Korean customs, such as the eldest son's authority to organize ancestral rites and inherit the ancestors' property, as adjunctive rights. In other words, the hoju system was a new legal institution created through the assimilation of Korean patriarchal customs into the Japanese legal framework.

These efforts to disentangle the discriminatory elements of family law from the authenticity of Korean identity were crucial to undermine the self-deprecating and counterproductive assumption that relates authentic Korean culture with oppression and backwardness. In addition, the activists understood the adoption of liberal ideals as a creative and productive succession of cultural traditions and national identity. This argument emerged during the third reform by women's groups as a response to conservative critique. They argued that one of the main goals of the family law

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[64] Hyun-Ah, Yang. *Comprehending Korean Family Law,* pp 314-315.; Ki-young Shin, "The Politics of the Family Law Reform Movement in Contemporary Korea: A Contentious Space for Gender and the Nation," *The Journal of Korean Studies* 11 no. 1 (2006), pp 93-126.

[65] Hyun-Ah, Yang. *Comprehending Korean Family Law*, p 317.

reform was to pass down and develop Korea's own "beautiful and laudable customs." This is because only when a family institution is based on reasonable marital relations and mutual respect among family members, it contributes to fostering good cultural traditions and national identity. Reversely, they argued that a family institution that aggravates strict hierarchy and discrimination obstructs the development of good cultural traditions and national identity. Moreover, they argued that the reform could help people develop a creative perspective on how values change and transform, which benefits future generations.[66]

This shift in the rhetoric from the ideological problem of modernity and enlightenment to the problem of individuals' practical well-being and the creative development of culture and national identity can be synthesized into the following dialogical process.

Question A. *Why did the participants of the family law reform movement adopt liberal ideals and struggle to incorporate them into family law?*

They experienced that the reform was crucial to the practical well-being of themselves and their fellow citizens. For instance, abolishing the hoju system was crucial for individuals who were unable or unwilling to have a traditional form of family. They experienced or witnessed that the existing family law was reproducing social and institutional structures that obstruct these individuals from living an ordinary life, causing unreasonable difficulties. They also experienced or witnessed that abolishing the marriage ban was crucial for the happiness of some individuals who sincerely love each other and, even more critical to the well-being of their children.

Question B. *How did they respond to the criticism that their pursuit of liberal ideals through abolishing the existing law that reflects traditional customs was an uncritical submission to "the Western civilization?*

They contemplated this problem and provided two responses. First, they debunked the cultural integrity thesis by showing that both the hoju system and the marriage ban, the two central provisons presented as the symbol of authentic Korean identity, were, in fact, the product of foreign influence. Consequently, they proved that authentic Koreanness could be protected through strict adherence to the existing form of family law is a myth. Second, they argued that incorporating an egalitarian ideal is actually a better way to inherit and develop cultural traditions and foster creative perspectives on values for future generations.

As we can see, the participants of the reform movement were able to present their pursuit of liberal ideals as their own will and were answerable to the critical questions posed by meaningful others. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that they provided legitimate

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[66] Jangsook Kim, Yungshim Doh, Yungsook Park, Yungsoon Shin, Kyungja Yang, and Yoonja Lee, No. 130173 Revision of Civil Law, proposed on October 17th, 1988.

reasons for their decisions. Moreover, this whole process inevitably involved appropriation: the participants interpret liberal ideals and situate them under the particular social and historical contexts they have as Korean women. They did not simply accept the ideals as a kind of standard criteria of modernity but adopted them through their experience, adding their own perspective to them. Consequently, when we take a relational approach to autonomy, the family law reform movement can be understood as the participants' full exercise of autonomy.

Before closing the discussion, I want to make brief remarks on why all of this matter. I expect the relational perspective can help us to rethink the liberal struggles that exist in a society that experienced the liberal imposition in a more positive and productive way. More specifically, I hope we can dispel the perception that constantly marginalizes these struggles from the liberal discourse: the perception that the pursuit of liberal values under the context of liberal hegemony necessarily contradicts cultural traditions or national identity. This perception is not just common rhetoric of traditionalists and conservatives but something that haunts liberals as well in various ways. For instance, this perception sometimes evokes negative feelings toward her own cultural or political community, thinking that it is backward, oppressive, authoritarian and etc. Or it makes people think that liberal values are obtained by departing from or becoming less like what has been attributed to their culture, ethnicity, country and etc. However, this is a distorted way of thinking about how people have been practicing liberal norms and life projects. Many times, what has been done was actually relating the experiences of themselves and people around them with the new ideal which they have encountered; molding and situating the ideal in a way that can make sense in the given socio-cultural structures; and transforming both the existing characteristics of her society and the new ideal by merging them together. I hope that the discussion around liberalism in the globalized world can focus more on this creative process.

Moreover, I hope we can dispel the common perception that adopting liberalism is approximating the fixed sets of normative or political principles already developed outside the given society. If we truly believe that liberalism cherishes how each individual becomes the author of her own life by living in accordance with her self-constructed principles, then the primary focus should not be on how the canonical ideas of liberalism are well applied in each society. Rather, it should be on how members of the society relate and interact with liberal ideas: how they interpret liberal values as well as why they think they want and need them.

Understanding liberalism in this situated sense opens up the possibility of the agents who have been marginalized from liberalism becoming full and equal participants of the liberal discourse.