important only to other traditions, and feminists will gain strength from acknowledging their common ends.

One goal of SAF has been "to provide a forum for discussion of issues in feminism by methods broadly construed as analytic." The organizers of and participants in the "Feminism as a Meeting Place" panel have taken SAF from a forum that merely co-existed alongside other forums for feminist philosophical discussion, to one that is united with them, in pursuit of our common goal. They did it gracefully and respectfully, with an eye toward progress, and for this, as President of SAF, I thank them. Also, I thank Sara Goering from SWIP, who graciously agreed to co-sponsor the session. Finally, I thank Virginia Klenk, the first President of SAF, who organized the Society, and Ann Cudd, who also served two consecutive terms as President after Ginger, for their fine service. I hope we do more joint sessions like this one, since open-mindedness and tolerance are the bedrock of knowledge and progress.[4]

Endnotes

1. Louise M. Antony and Charlotte Witt, *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason & Objectivity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1st edition, 1993).
2. For a complete list, see our Website at www.ukans.edu/~acudd/safhomepage.htm.
3. Thanks to Ann Garry, a founding member of SAF, who suggested this idea, and to Heidi Grasswick for the session title.
4. In addition to Ann Garry and myself, the session organizers included Lisa Bergin, Sharon Crasnow, Ann Cudd, and Heidi Grasswick.

Rethinking Autonomy in an Age of Interdependence: Freedom in Analytic, Postmodern, and Pragmatist Feminisms

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In an era of growing interdependence, the concept of autonomy may no longer anchor our basic human needs. Shifting alliances and enmities across local and global communities carry unavoidable consequences for individuals. These shifts remind individuals of the need to establish the right kind of connections, and diminish (but do not exclude) the relative importance of autonomy. Despite these emerging social practices, feminists in the Anglo-American tradition hold on to autonomy as the central concept of moral philosophy. In fact, the focus on autonomy marks the major distinction that I see between Anglo-American feminists and feminists in the continental and pragmatist traditions. The defenders of autonomy acknowledge that the conventional notion fails to reflect the social embeddedness of the individual, but they also believe that the notion is pivotal for subjectivity and freedom. In the anthology, *Relational Autonomy*, a group of theorists set out to demonstrate how the old concept can be revamped to suit a new world.[1] The editors, Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, argue that a revised concept must acknowledge that the individual is "formed within...social relationships and shaped by...intersecting social determinants."[2] And while these editors note that postmodern philosophies aim to cast doubt on this central liberal concept, they conclude that "there is no...critique of contemporary accounts of autonomy from any of these perspectives."[3]

I would like to take up their challenge from the insights of postmodern feminism and Black feminist pragmatism. The challenge to analytic conceptions of the individual begins, but does not end, with the multicultural concerns that the analytic feminists articulate. Increasingly, massive forces of globalization shape our economic and cultural world. In competition for global markets, corporations are evolving structures that emphasize communication and relationship-building over individualism. These networks are warped by inequalities based on distribution of social and economic capital. I would not question autonomy as *one* vital dimension of the individual. Emerging social practices, however, cast doubt on autonomy as the *pivotal* feature of the moral and legal person.

I argue that proponents of human rights need to situate the discussion of autonomy within a larger economic and cultural vision. This larger vision would shift the central axis of moral and legal theory from the autonomy/heteronomy dichotomy to the role of social bonds, and the dangers of their violation, for individual well-being.

Reconceptualizing Autonomy as Relational

Despite the importance of autonomy, there is no consensus on its meaning. In order to avoid the excessive individualism of the libertarians as well as the excessive rationalism of Rawls, Mackenzie and Stoljar offer a more nuanced definition. As they explain, "autonomy, or self-determination, involves, at the very least, the capacity for reflection on one's motivational structure and the capacity to change it in response to reflection. This view is underpinned by the intuition that there is an important difference between those aspects of an agent's motivational structure that she unreflectively finds herself with and those aspects that... she regards as *her own*."[4]

Defenders of autonomy argue that their theories can accommodate human sociality. They observe that we are "second persons," maturing as individuals only through relations of dependency on caring and nurturing others. This is a significant point but it does not capture the full meaning of social connectedness for the individual. Most of the time, relations with others focus on a range of stakes (including claims to status, contests for honor, and a sense of belonging or acknowledgment) that should not be flattened out to the single, quasi-biological dimension of nurturing or care. Later I will return to this richer notion of sociality through feminist conceptions of eros and friendship.

Autonomy theorists also acknowledge that "persons, and hence their characteristics..., are constituted...by the relations to others in which they stand."[5] The editors interpret this claim as having two meanings.

First is the psychological meaning. Stoljar and Mackenzie argue that social relations may produce elements of the psychological makeup of a person without compromising autonomy. But then I would wonder if the socially constituted self is not in some vital way heteronomous. Autonomy theorists seem for the most part to restrict these aspects of the self that are inevitably affected by social-constitution to self-trust, and especially, self-esteem. They seem to believe that if the mature individual acquires self-esteem, then she can make choices or otherwise act apart from social norms.

But this view of sociality strikes me as too narrow. Cultural identities, such as those between analytic, continental, and pragmatist traditions of philosophy, reflect the fact that we need, as social beings, to develop our personal preferences through connections with others who share similar habits, training, and perspectives. Without these connections, we would experience emptiness at the core of the self. We do not want to experience our distinct values alone and without acknowledgment from others. We cannot create our deepest values without drawing upon outside sources of meaning. We may struggle to change our cultures, but we often want to uphold our cultures (including our cultures of philosophy) because we draw significant meaning from these external (not just internal) sources of who we are. Heteronomy nourishes the individual and expands the soul.

Autonomy theorists seem to flatten out the dynamic of the social world (full of hostilities and friendships) into secondary characteristics (such as self-esteem) of the individual. If this is true, then I think it is because of the conceptual limitations of the liberal tradition anchored in Locke and Kant. Isaiah Berlin articulates the two basic directions of liberalism in terms of what he calls negative and positive freedom.[6] Negative freedom names the need to be free from external coercion. Positive freedom entails the hypothesis that there are true goals that define an ideal self; the individual is free only when the ideal self exercises control over false desires.

Berlin also sketches a third but barely noticed concept of freedom. Social groups enduring subordination from colonization, imperialism, or racism focus less on freedom from external control than on the need to be treated as equal members of a society to which one feels a sense of belonging. Oppressed people conceptualize paternalism differently from liberals, who believe that paternalism is a kind of tyranny. The paternalism that subordinated people endure includes what Berlin describes as the "insult" of domination. I will return to this third concept, or "social freedom," as both a freedom from "insult" and as a positive need to "belong," in the discussion of Black pragmatism.

Stoljar and Mackenzie acknowledge a second and, I think, more promising, meaning to the claim that persons are constituted through social relations. While the psychological claim focuses only on the ways in which others may influence our sense of self (or at least our self-esteem), a second, metaphysical charge asks whether social relationships constitute the identity of the person. The editors dismiss this charge as of limited relevance to the debate on autonomy: "After all, the metaphysical question of the essential nature of persons is separate from and perhaps prior to the question of the nature of a person's characteristics and capacities, including her autonomy."[7] I want to argue, however, that an ontology that would center individual identity on social relationships displaces the autonomy/heteronomy dualism from the major axis of moral and political debate.

Postmodern Feminism and Black Pragmatism

Foucauldian analyses of subjectivity developed by theorists such as Judith Butler and Ladelle McWhorter unmask the ways in which the autonomy of the subject is an effect of a panoptican society bent on procedures of normalization.[8] The "autonomous" subject in fact serves as the docile tool of regimes of power — regimes that imprison the body in the soul, to use Foucault's phrase. Post-Hegelian feminists, including Luce Irigaray and Kelly Oliver, locate autonomy as a symptom of a narcissistic quest for mastery.[9] In place of autonomy, Irigaray offers a lyrical vision of a society that acknowledges its debt to mothers, and that cultivates meaningful relationships between lovers. Oliver replaces autonomy with an ethics of witnessing the Other.

These two traditions of postmodernism can be viewed as radicalizing negative and positive conceptions of freedom, respectively. For Foucauldians, negative freedom from external coercion cannot rest on the exercise of choice alone. The choices of the individual accommodate the norms of society unless one engages in radical practices of transgression or what Butler terms "reiteration." On the other hand, post-Hegelians such as Irigaray and Oliver might agree with Kant and Hegel that individuals require positive ideals (or norms) of subjectivity. While Kant and Hegel anchor the ideal self in rational autonomy, Irigaray and Oliver root the subject in the yearning for communication between lovers, or other forms of libidinal connection.

Rather than further investigating the post-Freudian theories of eros at the heart of postmodern feminism, I want to turn to a distinctly African-American contribution to what Berlin sketches as the third meaning of freedom. In *Fighting Words*, Patricia Hill Collins defines as a "visionary pragmatism" a theory of justice that fosters an "intense connectedness."[10] Along with others, she cites Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*, as an exemplar of this emerging vision. To bring the novel to the center of normative theory, she draws upon an essay by Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic."[11] As Collins explains, Lorde theorized that oppressive racial systems "function by controlling 'the permission for desire' — in other words, by harnessing the energy of fully human relationships to exigencies of domination."[12] It is this concept of oppression that Collins finds in *Beloved*. As Collins explains, for the characters of Morrison's novel, "freedom from slavery meant not only the absence of capricious masters...but...the power to 'love anything you chose'."[13]

How can we conceptualize the novel's vision of freedom? Lorde's essay offers two significant elements of this freedom. First, Lorde locates at the core of the person, not the cognitive capacity for reflection per se, but an "erotic" capacity for creative work and meaningful social bonds. In contrast with the view of the erotic as overly sexualized, Lorde explains, "[t]he very word *erotic* comes from the Greek word *Eros*...personifying creative power."[14] A liberal theory might focus on the damage that oppression does to the individual's capacity to reflect and make choices for himself. No doubt oppression can and does inflict this kind of harm, and for this reason, among many it is wrong. But the experience of oppression can also sharpen one's critical insight into fundamental choices. Lorde focuses on the damage that oppression can do to the erotic core of the emotive self. Oppression renders the individual unable to feel properly, and it is this emotional (not abstract, cognitive) incapacity that defines for Lorde the central threat.

A second important contrast concerns the basic direction of the psyche. The liberal view cherishes the capacity of turning inward, to reflect upon one's motives and beliefs. Lorde does not exclude reflection, but emphasizes different capacities at the core of the person. The individual grows as a person from a creative engagement that begins with, and culminates in, relationships with others. The idea of expanding the self by turning outwards appears repeatedly in American visions from Dewey and Du Bois to Toni Morrison. In *Beloved*, Morrison describes love through the image of a turtle able to stretch its head outside of the "bowl" or shell, described also as a "shield."[15] As Lorde explains, the Greek term "eros" names, not a turn inward, but a centrifugal pull of the self outwards. The individual grows with, not in distance from, the community.

A liberal, analytic conception of a relational theory of autonomy acknowledges that social relations play a role in individual well-being, but consigns them to the background, as props for the development and maintenance of the self-reflective subject. The primary focus of the liberal subject is on a first-person narrative of self-ownership. A pragmatist vision of the individual focuses on the social emotions of individual development, and unfolds in a drama of the self in relation with others. Social relationships move to the foreground of the plot.

Lorde's poetic discourse on erotic drive takes us some way towards understanding visionary pragmatism. This ethic of eros, however, will strike the defender of autonomy as sentimental, and in part for good reason. Morrison herself cautions against over-emphasizing the importance of love in her novel. Lorde's essay, written in the cultural climate of the 1970s, articulates libidinal sources of creativity and selfhood, but does not lay out in full the sense of connection that defines the center of Morrison's novel.

In "Home," Morrison explains that the "driving force of the narrative is not love…[but] something that precedes love, follows love, informs love, shapes it, and to which love is subservient."[16] The contrast between love and that which precedes love indicates what is missing from interpretations of the novel that, perhaps, are overly influenced by Lorde. Collins glosses freedom as "the power to 'love anything you chose'"; but Morrison had not written the word "power." Morrison's text reads: "a place where you could love anything you chose…*that* was freedom."[17] Instead of power, she had written of freedom as though it were a place.

The driving force of the narrative is not love, Morrison notes, or at least not "the fulfillment of physical desire."[18] To be sure, Morrison is echoing concerns of Collins among others: the love that the novel explores is not the sentimental, romantic image that we sometimes oppose to enlightened self-interest. The driving force of her novel is not love, but precedes love, as a "necessity": "the necessity was for connection, acknowledgment, a paying-out of homage still due."[19] The repetition of the word "necessity" indicates a fundamental desire that is itself not a choice because it is not an option. Acknowledgment is a basic human need.

Spiritually, we understand the connections that we enjoy in terms having less to do with the sublimation of libidinal desire, as Lorde's essay would suggest, than with a sense of debt, or homage due. The term 'home' names better than does the term 'love' that sense of connection that compels the self to encounter sources of meaning and commitment outside itself. Place as a sense of origin and belonging names what a people in diaspora may seek.

In order to avoid the excessively physical and sexual connotations of eros, we might name the force that Morrison describes as "social eros." The Greek term fits with Morrison's return to ancient Greek and African cultures in order to articulate the American sensibility that she explores in her novels.[20] She explains that "[a] large part of the satisfaction I have always received from reading Greek tragedy, for example, is in its similarity to Afro-American communal structures (the function of song and chorus, the heroic struggle between the claims of community and individual hubris) and African religion and philosophy."[21]

But if social eros replaces autonomy on the central axis of normative theory, then what term best names the harm that oppression does? Morrison meditates on "the concept of racial superiority," and she describes this concept as "a moral outrage within the bounds of man to repair."[22] "Moral outrage" is a common translation for the Greek term "hubris." In "Unspeakable Things Unspoken," she points out that the struggles between community and hubris define the plot of tragic drama. In Greek tragedy, it is often the function of the chorus (representing the voice of the *demos*, or the common working people) to warn against hubris.

According to Aristotle, hubris is an "insult," or "a form of slighting, since it consists in doing and saying things that cause shame to the victim…simply for the pleasure involved…The cause of the pleasure thus enjoyed by the insolent man is that he thinks himself greatly superior to others when ill-treating them."[23] Today in the context of both domestic and international politics, we might think of hubris as an act of arrogance, or a crime of humiliation. The ancient Greek *demos* (or working poor) enjoyed moral and legal codes against hubris, and they thought of these codes as ways to control the excesses of powerful elites. The enlightenment philosopher who defines freedom through the needs of the middle class borrows much from classical sources but overlooks the political tools of the working poor and those who otherwise lack the status of the elites. Morrison returns to ancient sources of democracy through her interest in classical tragedy, and, like other moderns, she eschews the ancient male-centered polis based on honor and status. But if the modern liberals were right to reject the culture of honor, they occluded from their vision the social ethos of ancient democracy. Morrison's pragmatic vision awakens the spirit of a different kind of democracy — and what Berlin calls a third type of freedom. The central axis of moral and legal discourse that she explores is not autonomy and heteronomy. Morrison's central focus is on friendships in communities and among diverse peoples, and on the arrogance that tears these bonds apart.

Endnotes

I am grateful to Anita Superson, Ann Cudd, Donald Koch, and Bill Lawson for very helpful remarks on an earlier version of this essay.

1. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., *Relational Autonomy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
2. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 4.
3. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 4.
4. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 13.
5. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 7.
6. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays in Liberty*, ed. Isaiah Berlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 118-172.
7. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 8.
8. See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies and Pleasures* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000).
9. See Kelly Oliver, *Beyond Recognition* (Bloomington: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); and Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
10. Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 188.
11. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 53-59.
12. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 182.
13. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 166.
14. Lorde, *Sister*, 55.
15. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred A. Knoft, 1987), 105.
16. Toni Morrison, "Home," in *The House that Race Built*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Random House, 1998), 7.
17. Morrison, *Beloved*, 105.
18. Morrison, "Home," 7.
19. Morrison, "Home," 7.
20. Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," in *The Black Feminist Reader*, ed. Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 24-56.
21. Morrison, "Unspeakable," 25.
22. Morrison, "Unspeakable," 39.
23. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985). See especially Irwin's glossary entry for "wanton aggression," which is how he translates "hubris," p. 432.