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Personal Autonomy and the Need to Know

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The word “autonomy” comes from an ancient Greek word; the literal meaning is “living by one’s own laws” (Swaine 217). Modern philosophers distinguish between personal autonomy and moral autonomy. Immanuel Kant is one of the philosophers who emphasizes that autonomy requires acting morally and rationally. In Kantian moral theory (Sullivan 28-29), autonomy refers to the capacity of an agent to act in accordance with objective morality rather than under the influence of desires. But personal autonomy is the capacity to decide for oneself and to live one’s life according to reasons and motives that are taken as one’s own and not the product of manipulative external forces. This paper aims to discuss what autonomy is, to explore how constraints to individuals’ freedom of accessing relevant knowledge could violate their autonomy and to explain why autonomy is essential to human flourishing. Autonomy requires the freedom to form one’s own moral will based upon one’s own reasoning as well as the freedom to put that will in practice. To avoid violating people’s autonomy, authorities should not add too many constraints to people’s actions, as long as those actions are not harmful to others’ interests.

Kant maintains that being autonomous is not the satisfaction of one’s animal desires but acting according to moral responsibilities (Korsgaard xviii). In *an Introduction to Kant’s Ethics*, Sullivan writes that “For Kant, the term ‘autonomy’ denoted our ability and responsibility to know what morality requires of us and to act accordingly” (127). In other words, only ethical individuals are truly autonomous.

I agree with Kant that being autonomous has to involve more than mere fulfilling of animal desires. I also agree that fulfilling moral obligations is a big consideration for autonomy. However, Kant is mistaken in emphasizing rationality and excluding the importance of human desires. Kant demonstrates how humans should act and why humans should fulfill moral

obligations (Korsgaard XV). From my understanding of Kant's theory of moral autonomy, he claims that people should always act according to moral obligation because that is our duty. His logic is unconvincing to me because he does not explain where our duty comes from and where our motivation to conduct our duty comes from. In my opinion, our understanding of our moral duties comes from participating in a moral community and realizing that moral community is needed for human beings' flourishing. And, people acquire this wisdom from inherited knowledge through generations and observations about their current life. In my perspective, the desire to flourish is the fundamental motivation that drives people to act morally. Since the desire to flourish is so important, I think it is wrong to say that desires are not relevant to autonomy.

I believe that acting ethically is one of the conditions for autonomy, but autonomy also requires 1) freedom to form one's own moral will based upon one's own reasons and 2) freedom to put that will in practice. Autonomy involves higher-level desires and agents' reflective judgment. And, reflective judgments can only be established as result of agents' critical contemplation. In practice, the external environment, education, and agent's personal experience and belief all work together and affect an agent's reflective judgment.

To understand the role of desire in autonomy, it is helpful to consider Harry Frankfurt's bi-level theory. The bi-level theory claims that human beings have two levels of desires, "desires of the first order" and "desires of the second order" (Frankfurt, 7). Desires of the first order are desires to do or not to do one thing or another; desires of the second order are desires about one's first-order desires (Frankfurt, 10-12). For example, the fact that one wants to smoke a cigarette is a first-order desire. After knowing that smoking is not good for oneself, then one wants to not to want to smoke, which is a second-order desire.

Autonomy is connected to having the moral freedom to form second-order desires and the freedom to act on them. However, in practice, agents do not always have these freedoms. There are many factors that prevent people from becoming autonomous. One of the most typical factors stopping agents from becoming autonomous is lack of access to relevant information. Unfortunately, authorities often conceal true and complete information from people to control them. Sometimes, authorities disturb agents' autonomy by delivering wrong information to them. In this case, an agent's second-order desires are very likely to be affected by this wrong information. For example, an agent will not want to quit smoking if information from authorities all suggests that smoking is a good hobby. The agent would never be able to know the truth about smoking. He would be very likely to form a problematic second-order desire to want to keep the habit of smoking.

The influence of authority can easily impact agents' second-order desires and affect their autonomy. Therefore, I do not think authorities should enforce too many constraints on people as long as those people are not harming others.¹ David Garren agrees. In *Foundations of Freedom*, Garren argues that a competent adult must not be constrained, either by law or custom, from acting according to his autonomous desires as long as the agent's action does not harm other people. In other words, Garren and I both believe that authorities should not restrict an agent's actions if these actions do not harm others because too much control on agents' activities could problematically harm their autonomy.

However, Garren goes on to argue that there are two exceptions when authorities should conduct constraints on people's moral actions: 1) an adult individual may be stopped from

¹ Activities that do not harm others' interest should all be considered as moral. In *On Liberty and Foundations of Freedom*, John Stuart Mill and David Garren both agree with this idea.

entering a dangerous circumstance when he does not seem to realize the danger he is about to step into (although if he knows about the dangerous situation and still chooses to get involved, he must be permitted to do so), and 2) authorities are permitted to stop agents from doing things that will deprive them of their freedom, such as selling themselves into slavery. Even though the agent wishes to do so and is fully aware of the harms that will occur to him, authorities can stop them from doing so. (797).

I cannot understand why Garren holds very different attitudes towards the first instance and the second instance. In my perspective, agents are in danger in both cases. In the first situation, an agent's life is at risk. In the second situation, the agent's freedom, a condition almost the same important as life, is in danger. I do not understand why Garren allows interference in the case of losing freedom but does not permit enforcement on stopping others from risking their lives. One possible explanation for my confusion is that Garren might believe that one's freedom is more important than one's life. If an agent is injured in the first instance, the agent would learn a lesson from the consequence of exercising his autonomy which is part of the process of developing one's autonomy. If the agent dies in the first instance, the agent cannot feel the suffering of losing autonomy anyway. However, in the second instance, the agent will lose personal freedom – a loss that is incompatible with autonomy. In my perspective, adult individuals should have complete freedom to make decisions for themselves in both the first instance and the second instance. I agree with Garren's opinion that it is permissible to remind an agent about the danger she or he is about to step in but to let the agent make the final decision by themselves. But the case of selling oneself into slavery should not be treated differently. If one

insists on selling oneself into slavery, we shall respect one's autonomous decision, so long as it is made without threats or coercion by a "mentally healthy adult individual."²

Garren may argue that selling oneself into slavery goes against liberty. It is self-defeating, and it will permanently take away one's freedom of practicing autonomy. But, I think, after being told the disadvantages of becoming a slave, a mentally healthy adult agent may still decide to temporarily permit her freedom to be restricted. There must be some other reasons drive them to do it. But, if there are, we should not ignore these reasons. For instance, this agent might be an undercover police officer who is on a mission to arrest slave traders; selling himself into slavery and becoming familiar with the slave trade may help him to obtain evidence and arrest slave traders.

Mentally healthy adult individuals generally know their own interests best. To assume that anyone else knows better than an individual about his situation and interest is wrong and could cause more harm than good to the agent. Therefore, my opinion regarding Garren's two exceptions is that authorities are permitted to remind agents about possible dangers. But, if agents are mentally healthy adults, they should have complete freedom to make decisions for themselves.

Society should not only reduce constraints on individuals' second-order desires but also encourage people to form their second-order desires because second-order desires are necessary for becoming autonomous. Frankfurt claims that agents who only have first-order desires but cannot establish second-order desires are considered "wanton" (Frankfurt, 11). He indicates that

² Garren's anti-paternalism arguments use "adult individuals" as the term to refer to agents whose autonomy should not be restricted in most cases. He excludes children from his argument possibly because they lack independent decision-making capability. However, I would like to use "mentally healthy adult individuals" to refer to the agents in my argument because patients who are suffering from mental disease also have limited ability to **exercise** their autonomy.

the category of wanton includes all nonhuman animals that have first-order desires, all very young children and some adult human beings who cannot form second-order desires. Frankfurt writes that only humans can form second-order desires, so only humans can become autonomous. Frankfurt does not explain why second-order desires are essential for autonomy. But he may think that, unlike first-order desires, second-order desires are not desires imposed on agents by others, and they are not desires driven by physiological needs or impulsive emotion. Second-order desires are desires formed based upon agents' independent reasoning. When agents are acting according to their second-order desires, they are being themselves. The reason is that second-order desires are formed upon one's unique experiences and personal wisdom. Someone's second-order desires are somewhat connected to who the person is.³ These second-order desires are reflections of agents' autonomous thought rather than other people's belief or agents' impulses.

Agents who care about becoming autonomous probably want to avoid growing into wantons. Therefore, it is important to know what can cause humans to become wantons. Frankfurt demonstrates various possible reasons that might cause an adult human being to become a wanton. These reasons can be that the agent "has no opportunity to act in accordance with some of his desires," and "the translation of his desires into action may be delayed or precluded either by conflicting desires of the first order or by the intervention of deliberation" (Frankfurt 11).

I agree with Frankfurt's argument here. But I think he ignores another possible condition, which also may cause someone to become a wanton: agents who are deprived of opportunities to

³ I believe that someone's second-order desires reflect who the person is better than someone's social status, career or wealth does. When we are questioning "Who am I?" we should look into our internal beliefs, such as what our higher leveled desires are, rather than our external possessions and connections.

practice independent thinking are very likely to become wantons. Without the capability to think independently, agents cannot form true second-order desires. Since second-order desires are desires formed after the agent has contemplated the relationship between himself and his first-order desires, the establishment of second-order desires requires the agent to be able to think independently. For example, an agent has the capability to think independently and wants to quit smoking. This is a second-order desire. Why would the agent want to quit smoking? It could be because he does not think it is good for his health or because his friends tell him that smoking may cause cancer. But no matter what reason causes him to want to quit smoking, it has to be initiated by his reflective judgment. Even if, sometimes, it seems as if other people's advice affects him to want to quit smoking, his friends' advice is only one of the factors he considers before he forms the second-order desire of wanting to quit smoking. But, if another agent does not have the ability to think independently, he would listen to whatever other people tell him to do. He would quit smoking because his friends told him that smoking is unhealthy. Since agents in both of these cases will start to try to quit smoking, the outcome for both agents is the same. However, the first agent wants to *quit smoking*; the second agent wants *to do what his friends tell him to do*. The second agent lacks a well-formed second-order desire in this case. The second agent is a wanton who only has the first-order desire of smoking and does not have the second-order desire for wanting to quit smoking. Wantons are not autonomous because they do not think critically. And, their actions are either controlled by others' thoughts or by animal desires.

After discussing what autonomy is and what can hurt agents' autonomy, it is important to consider why we should care about autonomy. The answer is that autonomy promotes human flourishing. Human desire to become autonomous is part of the desire to flourish. In the

following paragraphs, I discuss what human flourishing means and why autonomy is essential to human flourishing.

According to Aristotle, there is an end of all the actions that we perform which we desire for itself. The end is *eudaimonia* or flourishing. He thinks flourishing is the end of human actions because people pursue flourishing for itself rather than other things come with it. Aristotle believes that flourishing is living well and acting well (Aristotle 6-13).

John Kleinig and Nicholas Evans argue that human flourishing involves the development of capabilities. They write that flourishing humans are people who “acquire skills and knowledge, achieve a particular mental state and mode of being and realize a set of values” (541-542). Martha Nussbaum agrees. She claims ten central capabilities that are essential for making people able to pursue a meaningful life. These capabilities include bodily health, freedom to use your own body, the ability of imagination, practical reason, the capability to use sympathy, being able to live with other species, being able to play and laugh, being able to control over one’s environment and so on (Nussbaum 33).

Nussbaum is correct in noting that autonomy is not only about bodily freedom but also relates to mental freedom. Some of these capabilities can only be gained when agents have autonomy. For example, according to Nussbaum, the capability of practical reasoning consists of being able to consider and develop an understanding of good and evil and to think critically about the world and one’s place in it (33). I think the capability of practical reasoning extends to the capability to form the second-order desires that are central to autonomy.

There are additional connections between autonomy and human flourishing. First, self-esteem can be enhanced by exercising personal autonomy. In general, education is a process of learning knowledge from others. Usually, a good education should not only teach knowledge but

also foster students' independent thinking skills. Independent thinkers are not simply absorbing knowledge but also digesting knowledge and forming personal wisdom. They evaluate the evidence and consider for themselves whether the information being presented is true based on personal observation. Autonomous agents act with their insight rather than acting according to the thought of others. That promotes self-esteem and allows for independent agency. Robert Young claims that autonomy is "the means to our working out our projects in the world." He demonstrates that being self-directing contributes to self-esteem. He also argues that, even if "the experience machine"⁴ can get what people want, it eliminates autonomous action and devalues agents' autonomy while they achieve their goals. Thus, the experience machine thought-experiment demonstrates that we need to work for what we want in order to increase our self-esteem and experience genuine flourishing (43).

Secondly, believing in personal autonomy and being able to act autonomously encourages people to take responsibility for their actions, which increases agents' self-supervision. If one lives in a society where he must act according to authorities' instructions rather than his own, he might not consider the consequences of his acts as his responsibility.

My concern is whether this type of society is good for people's flourishing. Garren writes that, according to John Stuart Mill, "so long as the individual is not harming others, he must not be constrained, either by law or custom, from doing as he wishes" (797). I agree with Mill's point. No matter what intention or reason authorities have, they would only be justified in restricting individuals' autonomous actions if those actions were harmful. If authorities add unnecessary constraints on exercising personal autonomy, individuals would feel less responsible

⁴ In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Robert Nozick invented a thought experiment involving the experience machine. In this thought experiment, individuals could choose to connect with an experience machine that induces exclusively pleasurable experiences.

for their actions. Knowing that we are acting on our own motivation and based on our own judgements not only eliminates excuses to blame others but also forces us to be more attentive to our behaviors. People who act for themselves care about the quality of the work they do, but people who cannot act according to their authentic selves would not be as attentive as the former.

Being autonomous is a necessary condition for agents to flourish. Therefore, the goal of achieving personal autonomy deserves more attention from our society, and society should be more concerned about problematic restrictions on personal autonomy.

The three papers that follow raise questions about problematic restrictions on people's autonomy. The first paper, *The Tension between Reason and Emotion*, supports the point that allowing agents to act autonomously enables a greater variety of options for personal development and contributes to a greater possibility of human flourishing. Without autonomy, the lives in Paradise were restricted to a divine being's version of paradise. After Eve made the autonomous choice to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge, humans gained more possibilities for determining their own life plans.

The second paper, *China's Cultural Revolution through Chinese Literature*, describes how the Chinese government banned books, revealing political and social problems at that time. Chinese people did not have freedom of speech. During the time of China's Cultural Revolution, Chinese people were suffering not only from poverty but also from incomplete access to information, particularly in terms of access to political news. This type of knowledge control is harmful to human flourishing because it deprives people of their human rights and limits their ability to be autonomous. They lack the information they need to cultivate authentic second-order desires and act on them.

The third paper, *Deontological Ethics on Small Lies*, argues that, even in the case of small lies, access to inaccurate or incomplete information may constrain people from exercising their autonomy. A healthy relationship should never include coercion, manipulation, and lying.

Overall then, the portfolio aims to show that freedom to use one's own well-informed reason to develop and act upon one's second-order desires is essential to living autonomously and to human flourishing. To help individuals to accomplish these goals, society should enforce fewer limits on people and work on delivering an education that promotes people's independent thinking skills and provides them with true information.

Human's Autonomy Before and After the Fall

To “justify the ways of God to men”, John Milton created a great epic poem, *Paradise Lost* (Pullman, Book I). This poem tells the story of Men's fall with more vivid details than *The Holy Bible* itself. Miltonists often assert that Milton created *Paradise Lost* based on the stories in the Bible. *Paradise Lost* readers frequently find numerous allusions to the bible (Stallard, viii). For example, in *The Holy Bible of King James Version*, the book of Genesis, Adam and Eve were warned that “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Genesis, 2:17). At the very beginning of *Paradise Lost*, Milton writes that:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the World, and all our woe, (Milton, 2)

Another evidence is that, in *The Holy Bible* and *Paradise Lost*, the serpent deceived only Eve but not Adam to eat the fruit. So, it was the woman initially caused men's fall. Bible says that “and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world...” (Revelation, 12:9) and “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Timothy, 2:14). Milton writes that:

Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
 Th' infernal Serpent, he it was, whose guile,
 Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
 The mother of mankind, ... (5-6).

Besides, both *The Holy Bible* and *Paradise Lost* indicate that Eve was made from part of Adam's body. According to the bible, "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis, 2:23). Milton writes that "To whom thus Eve replied/ O thou for whom/ And from whom I was formed, flesh of thy flesh... (149)".

Even though *Paradise Lost* was created upon the Bible story, characters in *Paradise Lost* have fleshed-out personalities. In Milton's version, men's fall seemingly deserves more sympathy than blame. After listening to Satan's words, Eve ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge because she wanted to know both good and evil which could eventually make her become the same as God. But, the consequence of satisfying the desire of knowing good and evil was severe. God expelled men from paradise. Men were condemned to suffer from death and pain. *Paradise Lost* aroused my interest in learning why God punished men from learning good and evil, and it also attracted my curiosity on learning about whether the fall was a tragedy for humans. This paper will discuss possible reasons that caused God to prohibit men from eating the forbidden fruit. Besides, this paper will also compare the conditions of men's autonomy before and after the fall and develop arguments about which life is better for men's flourishing. Without autonomy, the lives in Paradise were restricted to a divine being's version of paradise. After Eve acted according to her autonomy, eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge, there were more possibilities for personal development. Therefore, the fall of men is the rise of men because men lost paradise but gained their autonomy which enables them to engage in a fuller life and wider experience.

Men's life had a dramatic change after the fall. Before the fall, men lived in a paradise where was filled with peace and glory. In book IV, Milton shows his readers what paradise looks

like through Satan's eyes. When Satan first entered paradise, he saw endless trees, beautiful flowers, and fruits.

Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
 A sylvan scene, and, as the ranks ascend
 Shade above shade, a woody theatre
 Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops
 The verdurous wall of Paradise up sprung;
 Which to our general Sire gave prospect large
 Into his nether empire neighbouring round.
 And higher than that wall a circling row
 Of goodliest trees, loaden with fairest fruit,
 Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue,
 Appeared, with gay enamelled colours mixed: (Milton, 137-138)

Satan felt that the air in paradise is even purer than at other places. The living environment God offered to men was excellent. And, it seemed that God also provided proper living materials for Adam and Eve. Based on Milton's description, men did not need to work for their necessities of life.

However, the cost of living in paradise for men was to give unconditional submission to God. Living under God's desire for control, paradise was not a good environment for men's autonomy. And, the reason is that, if an agent gave unconditional submission to someone, it

means that the agent will give up opportunities on making a critical judgment on this person, which would hurt the agent's autonomy. As I argued in the main part of my paper, personal autonomy requires 1) freedom to form one's own moral will based upon one's own reasons and 2) freedom to put that will in practice. Autonomy involves agents' reflective judgment. And, reflective judgments cannot be imposed by others. They must be formed by oneself. So, in order to form reflective ideas, agents must be able to think independently. In other words, someone without independent thinking ability cannot form reflective ideas. Therefore, the lack of independent thinking skills would hurt agents' autonomy. To give unconditional submission to someone equals to give away freedom on practicing critical judgment on this person. This could problematically obstruct agents' independent thinking capability and impact their autonomy. For example, God warned Adam and Eve that they should not eat fruit from the tree of knowledge. And, Adam and Eve were not supposed to have any critical thinking regarding this command. The right reaction to this order was to respect and obey. Men were expected to process this command as a machine rather than a human. They should not doubt God's rule. For example, in book V, the first time Eve had a dream about being convinced to eat the forbidden fruit, Adam was frightened by her dream. Adam asserted that this would not happen. And, they returned to the praise of God (Milton, 174). In this scene, Adam and Eve were obstructed to practice their independent thinking skills. And, long-term restrictions on exercising independent thinking would hurt their autonomy.

Someone may argue that God only prohibited men to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge. It is not accurate to claim this as unconditional submission because it is only one requirement. This one requirement suggests God's will on controlling men. God's purpose in

prohibiting men from eating the fruit of knowledge is to implant fear into men. God wanted men to be afraid of God because fear can be used as a tool to control people.⁵

Here is a scene supports the idea that God wanted to control men's heart. An angel questioned God why he did not stop the human's fall. God asserted that he wants men to obey even if they have the chance to disobey:

Freely they stood who stood and fell who fell.
 Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love,
 Where only what they needs must do appeared,
 Not what they would? What praise could they receive,
 What pleasure I, from such obedience paid. (Milton, 92)

God foresaw men's fall, and he was able to prevent it from happening. But why did not he stop it? In his conversation with an angel who had the same question, God answered that he wanted to educate men that only God can save them.

His fallen condition is, and to me owe
 All his deliverance, and to none but me. (Milton, 97)

⁵ Some countries' governments control their people's thoughts through creating fear of authority among people. The paper, *China's Cultural Revolution through Chinese Literature*, discusses how China government controlled people through spreading fear.

God wanted to declare sovereignty in paradise. God aimed to warn Adam and Eve that God had the power to create men and could destroy them, so men had to obey God.

The act of eating the forbidden fruit does not hurt anyone's benefit but only hurt God's prestige. According to God's words, men could not act out their desire towards forbidden fruit because once they ate the fruit they would be condemned to death. However, Eve learned different information about the forbidden fruit from Satan. Judging between God and Satan's words, at last, she chose to eat the fruit. Eve made this decision based upon her reflective judgment. She learned different information about the results of eating the fruit. Information from God and the serpent were both true.⁶ Eve's act was motivated by her reflective judgment. The act of eating the forbidden fruit looks only disobedient but not vicious. But why does this action deserved to be condemned? Because God forbid so. The fall of men was not because of men's vicious acts. The fall was because of men's disobedience against God. Even though God gave men the freedom to choose, his motivation for endowing men this freedom is to gain more control over them. Fear of authority and limited opportunity to practice critical thinking would harm men's autonomy. Therefore, in the case that Adam and Eve always had to act according to God's words, they had limited autonomy in Paradise.

Besides, God's restriction on men to learn knowledge could also hurt men's autonomy. In the conversation between Adam and Raphael, Raphael suggested that God's knowledge is beyond human understanding. He said that knowledge is like food. Enough is the best; too much knowledge hurts wisdom:

⁶ It is controversial whether God or the Serpent lied about the consequence of eating the fruit. It will take pages to argue about this. Since this is not the focus in this paper, I will just briefly claim that they were both honest. God said eating the fruit will lead Adam and Eve to death, and this information was true. Serpent told Eve that the fruit will open her eyes and let her know both good and evil. This is also true.

But knowledge is as food and needs no less

Her temperance over appetite, to know

In measure what the mind may well contain,

Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns

Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind. (Milton, 257)

Raphael is a loyal angel. God sent him to talk to humans. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that his words represent God's opinion.

And, this is another evidence that supports the idea that men had very little opportunity to practice their autonomy in paradise. I discussed Harry Frankfurt's bi-level theory in the introductory part of my portfolio. The bi-level theory claims that human beings have two levels of desires, "desires of the first order" and "desires of the second order" (Frankfurt, 7). Desires of the first order are desires to do or not to do one thing or another; desires of the second order are desires about one's first-order desires. For example, the fact that one wants to smoke a cigarette is a first-order desire. After knowing that smoking is not good for oneself, then one wants to not want to smoke, which is a second-order desire. Autonomy is connected to having moral freedom to form second-order desires and the freedom to act on them. Lack of knowledge could problematically affect an agent's second-order desires. Agents may form a problematical reflective judgment without enough related knowledge. For example, an agent would not want to quit smoking if information from authorities all suggests that smoking is a good hobby. The agent would never be able to know the truth about smoking. He would be very likely to form a problematic second-order desire to want to keep the habit of smoking. Therefore, restriction on

knowledge learning could hurt agents' freedom to form a moral second-order desire, which simultaneously hurts their autonomy.

According to the story, after eating the fruit, men started to feel more emotions. They felt ashamed of being naked; the man and the woman had a lust for each other, and they also felt guilty of having such a desire. These new emotions suggest that they were not ignorant anymore. They felt their animal desires, desire for sex, and they also had a second-order desire that guilt of having the first-order desire. And, this was men's progress in acquiring personal autonomy.

However, the consequence of eating forbidden fruit for men was not just feeling more emotions. After men disobeyed God's command, their lives encountered a dramatic change. Another angel, Michael, foretold Adam about men's life after they are expelled from paradise. On earth, men suffered from death and disease. However, the serpent said that eating the forbidden fruit would enable men to see good and evil which is the condition of being a god.

Ye eat thereof, your eyes that seem so clear,

Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then

Opened and cleared, and ye shall be as gods,

Knowing both good and evil as they know. (Milton, 333)

Adam and Eve's descendants saw good and evil, or rather, they were good and evil. According to Michael's foretell, some humans would commit vicious killings. But men seemed to have more freedom on acting their desires out. For example, men attempted to reach up to heaven and constructed a tower. This behavior offended God. So, God decreed that men will speak different languages and won't be able to understand each other (Milton, 446-447). Even though this action

brought trouble for humans, they practiced their autonomy. Life on earth is not as glorious as in paradise. But the former is wider and richer. Men could practice their autonomy better on earth than in paradise. These pieces of evidence show that human's path to autonomy started from the fall.

The act of eating the forbidden fruit led men on the path of personal autonomy, and it was also a critical start for men's flourishing because only autonomous agents can flourish. Human flourishing is not about reaching a certain height of wealthy life or virtue. Human flourishing is a process of human bodily growth and human psychological growth, and it focuses on human's body freedom and mental freedom. The bodily freedom refers to having a healthy body and having freedom on moving the agent's body around. The mental freedom means freedom on making an independent decision. Only autonomous agents have these freedoms. So, only autonomous agents can achieve their flourishing.

Martha Nussbaum argues that agents need the capability to make independent choices, and this is critical for human flourishing. Nussbaum claims that there are ten necessary capabilities for men to pursue a meaningful life. One of the ten capabilities is to be able to consider and develop an understanding of good and evil. She thinks knowledge of good and evil is essential for humans to develop a meaningful life (Nussbaum, 33).

One of the possible reasons that drives her to believe so can be she believes that capability on developing a comprehensive knowledge, knowledge of good and evil, is necessary for men's growth. The process of men's flourishing is like a human's growing process. Children need to experience enough during their childhood, then they would grow up into adults who usually have more principles and wisdom to make authentic reflections. It is not only good experience can teach children to become more mature. Lessons children learned from difficulties

and failures are also necessary for their growth. Just having experience of good is not enough for men to grow up. To grow up into mentally and bodily mature adults, men also need experience in encountering evilness, defeating evilness and even resisting vices. However, according to *Paradise Lost*, God forbid men from eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge which would enable them to see good and evil (Milton, 431). And, it means that God prohibited men from learning evil and acquiring the capability of defeating the evil which is not good for men's growth.

Eating the forbidden fruit was a turning point for men's life. Even though men disobeyed God's rule and lost paradise, the fall was not a tragedy. It was men's rise because allowing agents to act according to their autonomy enables a greater variety of options for personal development and contributes to a greater possibility of human flourishing. On earth, humans acquired the capability to understand good and evil, and they had more opportunities to practice their autonomy, and their lives became fuller and richer. Even though men had to live with sufferings and pains, life on earth worth the cost. The fall was the beginning of humanities.

China's Cultural Revolution through Chinese Literature

Autonomy is freedom on forming moral wills upon one's reasoning and freedom on performing these wills. As I argued in the introductory part of this paper, I believe lacking autonomy could obstruct people to pursue a meaningful life. In China history, there was a time people could not exercise their freedom of speech and could not perform their autonomy. In 1966, China's Cultural Revolution happened. Between 1966 and 1976, it was "ten years of catastrophe" for a substantial number of Chinese people. During the dark ten years, China government completely restricted people's autonomy. Books and arts advocating freedom and revolution were banned by China government. Being illiterate was considered as the greatest glory. Things said in public could easily be twisted to impeach the speaker in the future as reactionary against the Communist Party. There was little freedom of speech at that time. And, Chinese people had very little autonomy in that period. I think China's Cultural Revolution is a great example of what the lack of autonomy looks like. In this paper, two Chinese Cultural Revolution themed literary works, *Random Recollection of The Cow Shed* and *The Class Teacher*, will be used to reflect how China's Cultural Revolution impacted Chinese people's life. This paper will also discuss how China government harmed Chinese people's flourishing through taking away their freedom on accessing to knowledge and freedom of speech.

Literature has been utilized by scholars as a tool to understand history for a long time. Literature that based on China's Cultural Revolution receives tremendous attention in China. China's Cultural Revolution, a product of parties' struggle for power, created many "by-products" in China. To know the meanings of these "by-product", terms specifically invented during the Cultural Revolution, is critical for understanding the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Four Olds: Old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits;

Red Guards: any of various radical or socialist groups, in particular, a militant youth movement in China (1966–76) that carried out attacks on intellectuals and other disfavored groups as part of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution.

Xiaohong Shu: Little Red Book which is a collection of quotations from Chairman Mao.

Chaojia: Repeated house searches; Red Guards could show up at suspicious anti-revolutionists' house at any time to search their house.

Niupeng: A darkened cow shed to lock up revolutionary rebels.

Pidou: To criticize people or behavior in public; Victims suffered from mental and physical pain during it.

Da-zi-bao: A form of information in the shape of a large handwritten poster presenting an important issue.

Kuo Min Tang: A nationalist party founded in China under Sun Yat-sen in 1912.

These terms are used frequently during the Cultural Revolution, so nowadays Chinese people usually use them only for describing things relate to the Cultural Revolution. Four Olds was a negative word at that time. I believe that, to implant government propaganda into people's mind, the Chinese Communist Party criticized traditional culture and conventions as obsolete. Schools were stopped in China because they were considered as places where to teach old culture and old ideas to people. Without going to school to learn a variety of knowledge, young students at that time only studied quotations from Chairman Mao. Therefore, red guards considered Chairman Mao's words as the only truth in their life to follow. To guard Chairman Mao's thoughts, they violently searched people's house and tried to destroy books which were against Mao's thought. They also criticized people whose behavior is in contradiction of Mao's

thought. Red guards were perpetrators and victims at the same time. They were deprived of opportunities to learn knowledge. Their thoughts were controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. They did not have the autonomy to decide what political thought they wanted to support. Even worse, not acted out of their choice but manipulated by Mao's politics, they committed injury to others. Some of them might torture their teachers, some of them might criticize their parents in public and some of them might betray their friends. They were victims and accomplices of Cultural Revolution.

In *Random Recollection of The Cow Shed* and *The Class Teacher*, these terms also appear a lot. These two stories are written by Chinese authors who experienced the Cultural Revolution. *Random Recollection of The Cow Shed* is translated into English, but *The Class Teacher* is only available in the Chinese version. The reason that these two stories are selected to be used in this paper is they tell the Cultural Revolution's impact on Chinese people's life through different perspectives and they cover different time zone, during and after the Cultural Revolution. They tell stories based on the Cultural Revolution victims from various backgrounds, a university Professor and teenagers. So, they should be able to offer a relatively complete description of China's Cultural Revolution and its influence on Chinese people's life.

Ji, Xianlin was a Chinese Indologist, linguist paleographer, historian, and writer. He was prosecuted in 1967. *Random Recollection of The Cow Shed* is memoirs about a university professor's miserable experience during the Cultural Revolution. He saw his colleagues died from persecution by Red Guards. He denounced other people on big-character posters (Dazibao) and was also denounced by others. In the Preface, he accuses everyone "was metamorphosed into a non-human". He claims that people at that time were cruel and evil. Before people "ate"

other people, they humiliated them and torment them first.⁷ *Random Recollection of The Cow Shed* tells real stories from a first-person perspective. It shows readers how the Cultural Revolution hurt a professor and how his common life was remained broken even after the Cultural Revolution.

The prosecution during the Cultural Revolution usually starts from house searching (Caojia). Revolutionists need to collect pieces of evidence to accuse other people of being anti-revolutionists.

Ji wrote his memory about the first time his house was searched in Chapter 7 Home Raiding:

The students destroyed whatever they wanted by smashing and kicking. If something was locked inside a container, no matter whether it was a wooden chest or an iron box, they simplified the way of unlocking it by knocking down the lock with an ax. I had some antiques and trinkets, which I had collected over many years of frugal living. These objects, difficult to come by and worth keeping in commemoration, embodied care, effort and hardship of my life. In a flash, however, they were shattered to pieces. Undoubtedly, these young people were quite experienced in raiding a home, after a vigorous round of practicing in the early months of the Revolution, agile and dexterous as ‘rolling back the enemy as we would a mat.’ But my heart was bleeding. (2092)

In Chapter 14, Ji wrote about his life in the cowshed. He and some other intellectuals were locked in a cowshed for months. According to the book, Ji and other “criminals” were used

⁷ Xianlin Ji, *Random Recollection of The Cow Shed*, trans. Perry W. Ma (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2013), #172.

as slaves. They were forced to do free work for Red Guards, and some of them were tortured severely.

Another important thing will always stay in my mind. Each day when we left for work, we were supposed to write on a board hung on a tree trunk the ‘supreme directive’ that we had learned to recite. This directive often came as a long discourse. Each ‘criminal,’ no matter what kind of work or where to work for the day, was supposed to be able to recite the directive free of errors. Any reform guard could stop one of us in any place and ask him to recite. If an error was committed, the ‘criminal’ would at least receive a slap on the face or harsher punishment for the unfortunate day. (4137)

After Ji was released from the cowshed back to his home, he could not live his life in the same way as before. He wrote that he was denounced and humiliated by strangers in cowshed and anyone could slap on his face and call him “son of a bitch” there. So, he was terrified of anyone living in the same apartment building he encountered could do the same thing to him without any reason. He lived in fear and anxiety for a long time after he was released.

Ji believed it is important for people to remember the ten-years tragedy, so he shows his pain and shame suffered from the Chinese Cultural Revolution in his book to remind China do not forget about the lesson. Ji said that he hoped this book can be a mirror that reflects virtues and vices, beauty and ugliness, hope and despair. For most readers, this book is also a mirror reflects how Chinese Cultural Revolution impacted on intellectuals’ life. In this book, Ji also writes that he had to destroy some of his favorite books so he would not get into trouble. He expresses complex emotions about books and knowledge. He writes that he loves learning knowledge. But he suffered a lot from this hobby. Ji indicates that he could not understand why people thought being knowledgeable should be viewed as a shame.

In my opinion, persecuting intellectuals like Ji during the Cultural Revolution time was a political strategy by Mao to seize power and to obtain easy supports from Chinese people. Mao knew that intellectuals who have independent thinking ability were more difficult to manipulate than illiterates who only study Mao's quotations. Therefore, Mao advocated knowledge was bad so he could consolidate his power. However, I think freedom of accessing information is a basic human right. External influence can impact on the development of agents' autonomy. No authority should utilize its power and block information from people. Sometimes, political authority tends to regulate what people can know to control people's thought. Some people may think this is the most practical way to rule a big group of people. However, they ignore the fact that people might need to work things out on their own and this experience can help them to find out their own relationship with the world. Controlling authorities also harm individuals' potential for obtaining happiness from exercising their autonomous power. Besides, being deprived of basic human rights, such as knowing complete information, causes agents to feel powerless and lose faith in being able to make a difference.

In *Chaotou Wenxue – China's New Literature*, Geremie Barme claims that gradually more and more interesting short stories appeared in 1977. He writes that one of the most significant works was *The Class Teacher* (Banzhuren) by Liu Xinwu, an editor in the Peking Publishing House (139). *The Class Teacher* only has the Chinese version, so texts from it would not be quoted in this paper. Liu's story happens between a teacher, Zhang Junshi, and his students. Zhang Junshi is put in charge of taking a new student, Song Baoqi who is a juvenile delinquent, in his class. Many students are not happy about teacher Zhang's decision on accepting Song Baoqi. To understand Song Baoqi and students who cannot accept being classmates with Song, teacher Zhang talks to them. Through communicating with Song Baoqi (a bad

student) and Xie Hunmin (a good student who strongly stands against accepting Song), Teacher Zhang realizes that most of his students are badly affected by the Cultural Revolution. Song Baoqi and Xie Huimin deeply believe in *The Gadfly* is a pornographic book because it was banned during the Cultural Revolution. Even though the Cultural Revolution ends already, these young people still believe in deep-rooted bad values from that time (Liu 16-29).

The Class Teacher is a short story happened after the Cultural Revolution. The author uses a made-up story happened in a middle school in China to point out the remained bad influence of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese teenagers. Anne Thurston also agrees that the Cultural Revolution had a long-term extreme effect on victims. She argues that the Cultural Revolution created a big economic loss for the country and left Chinese people in guilt and fear for a long time after the Cultural Revolution (5). Thurston interviewed victims from the Cultural Revolution. They were suffering from guilt, fear and hopelessness. Their pain did not disappear along with the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The negative impact created by China's cultural revolution is not only poverty. In my perspective, the most tragic part of the Cultural Revolution is that Chinese people could not develop themselves. They did not have the freedom of learning comprehensive knowledge and could not exercise their independent thinking skills. Jurgen Domes published an article about some results of the Cultural Revolution in China in 1971. Domes points out that, "silence intellectual dissent and to forestall the spreading of ideas and concepts which were non-conformist to Maoist theories", "Little Red Books" was the only publication product in China at that time. Textbooks had been revised to support Mao's thoughts. Arts and public discussions were entirely controlled by the communist party (934). Based on Domes's writing, Chinese people could only study Mao's thoughts. They could not access to any materials convey different

perspectives than Mao's thoughts. Government propaganda became a major knowledge spreading among people.

There was only one kind of political perspective was allowed. Any information against Mao's thoughts was prohibited. And, China government manipulated people to accept and support Mao's thought. Any acts seem not in favor of Mao's thoughts would be reported by friend or colleagues. And the consequence of these behaviors could be extremely difficult. Anne Thurston writes that some victims from the Cultural Revolution said the worst of it was they lost a sense of trust in human relations as their friends, colleagues and sometimes even family members turned against them. To claim loyalty to the Communist Party, some people betrayed their friends and reported others' reactionary thoughts to the government. These informers could get honor or rewards from it. Thurston also indicates that physical and psychological isolation was imposed on people who were claimed as reactionaries. Thurston writes that "for adults, the first sign that they were under attack was often the fact that friends and colleagues stopped greeting them". In some severe cases, these "reactionaries" were locked up in solitary confinement where some people would abuse them in criticism and with violence (605-607).

I believe, living under social pressure against people who were not in favor of Mao's thoughts, China's government propaganda dominated most people's political stand. During this period, Chinese people could not exercise their independent thinking skills, and there was very little autonomy for them. In the introductory part of my paper, I argue that autonomous people have freedom to contemplating and performing their morally right decisions. However, during the Cultural Revolution time, Chinese people did not have autonomy in terms of independent political belief. This harmed their lives for a long time even after the Cultural Revolution.

In 1985, after interviewed people experienced the Cultural Revolution, Thurston writes that “there is still another kind of guilt in China today”. People were still suffering from the guilt of being powerless to prevent the attacks against their families. Thurston introduced Ba Jin’s story. Ba Jin was a famous Chinese writer. His wife died of cancer during the Cultural Revolution. Doctors believe that anxiety and depression were major causes of his wife’s cancer. Ba Jin said that he regretted having written literature which caused accusations against his wife and his children. Besides, one of the interviewees told Thurston that he believed there would be another Cultural Revolution. And, the interviewee warned his son to be prepared for dealing with the next Cultural Revolution because he did not want his son to suffer the extreme pain he suffered in the Cultural Revolution (12-15).

The cases of Thurston’s interviewees, Ba Jin, and Ji indicate that victims from the Cultural Revolution suffered physical and mental pains during and after the extreme event. They did not have freedom of exercising their freedom of speech. Living in a society filled with government propaganda, these victims could not practice their autonomy and could not pursue a meaningful life. Some of them even lost the ability to enjoy life for the rest of their lifetime.

I believe agents can form authentic thoughts and act autonomously only if they have independent thinking capabilities; knowledge of facts and complete information are the foundation of independent thinking development. Enabling agents to access to full relevant information is critical to independent thinking skills obtaining. If agents are blocked from obtaining complete relevant information, independent thinking skill becomes extremely difficult to acquire and their authority over themselves also becomes venerable. During China’s Cultural Revolution time, voices doubted Mao’s thought was prohibited, and school textbooks were revised into words supporting Mao’s thoughts. Most Chinese people did not have opportunities

to exercise their independent thinking ability. China's society at that time deprived of people's autonomy which took this revolution to an uncontrollable path later. Most Chinese people manically loved Chairman Mao. They believed absolute submission and support to Mao's political movement was the only path would take them to a happy life. And, this created a tragedy for the country and its people. Therefore, I believe that a good society should always encourage people to exercise their autonomy because autonomy is a necessary condition for people to pursue a meaningful life. And, when most people do not have independent thinking ability, it may create incredible danger for a country if politicians make a wrong political judgment. To avoid repeating China's tragedy, society should always give people flexibility in learning various knowledge and practicing their autonomy.

Deontological Ethics on Small Lies

Lying is usually considered as a vice. Lies disable the deceived ones to see the truth and force them to make choices base on false or incomplete information. Victims' action is very likely to be initiated by manipulative information. In the introductory part of my portfolio, I argue that the first-order desires are desires of wanting to do or not to do something. They are instinctive desires. And, the second-order desires are agents' reflective desires towards their first-order desires. Their autonomy in forming second-order desires is impacted by external incorrect information which hurts their flourishing. Besides, in the case of lying, liars' autonomy is not exercised either. They give up relying on their reasons to develop second-order desires but choose to react with another first-order desire, to lie. In my opinion, no matter how small a lie is, lying is not acceptable because it constrains liars' and the deceived ones' autonomy and hurts their flourishing.

In *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant claims that not lying is our duty, and we should not lie in any circumstance. He writes that “the greatest violation of man’s duty to himself regarded merely as a moral being is ... lying...” and “by a lie, a man throws away and, as it were, annihilates his dignity as a man” (225).⁸ Many scholars criticize the rigorism in Kant’s ethics. They dissent on Kant’s emphasis on duty, and they suggest that Kant places too much value on acting from duty unconditionally. Some Kant scholars, on one hand, defend Kant’s ethics. On the other hand, they try to alter Kant’s ethics. For example, Christine Korsgaard and Alan Sturdlor permit that lying can be a moral behavior in some situations. In *the Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil*, Korsgaard suggests that, in some situations, lying is not morally wrong. She

⁸ I think, here, Kant means that, when a man lies, his behavior suggests that he believes other things, whatever drives him to lie, are more important than himself. To achieve his aim, he betrays what he believes and uses himself and the deceived ones as the means to attain his goal.

points out that lying is morally permissible when we are dealing with evil. Otherwise, “it would make you a tool of evil...” (349). In *Respectful Lying*, Strudler also claims that, in some cases, lying can be a moral behavior. He writes that, if lying gets the deceived one what she would choose in that circumstance, it should be considered as a moral deed (961). However, I do not think that their beliefs are consistent with Kant’s stand on duty. In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant claims that actions should be motivated by duty and that duty consists of following the categorical imperative, which is an unconditional moral obligation to humans. In *the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant asserts that lying violates man’s duty to himself. So, I conclude that Kant believes that it is our duty to not lie, which is an unconditional requirement to humans.

I think Kant would agree with me that if we deny that lying is an unethical act unconditionally, some people can always make up excuses for telling a lie. In *the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes an example that a servant follows a householder’s demand and lies about the householder’s whereabouts to others. Meanwhile, the householder commits a serious crime, which could have been prevented if the servant did not lie for him (225). Kant believes that the servant should take some responsibility for the crime committed by the householder. His comment on the question that “who (in accordance with ethical principles) is guilty in this case?” is “surely the servant, too, who violated a duty to himself by his lie” (227). I agree with Kant that the servant violated a duty to himself. And, I would like to borrow this example to support my argument that if lying is situationally ethical, every liar can always find some excuses to tell a lie. The servant could say that he tells the lie is because he is a loyal person, but he might be part of the crime the householder commits. The servant may know that the householder is about to steal the neighbor’s treasure. It is possible that the actual deal between the servant and the

householder is that the servant will get some rewards for covering the householder's whereabouts. If we start to believe lying is permissible situationally, we are allowing that lying is fine anytime, anywhere, because everyone can explain their lying as necessary in that situation. The consequence of breaking moral principles can be very dangerous because it may confuse people about rightness and wrongness. For example, a wife suspects her husband has an affair because the husband often returns home late at night. So, the wife asks if he is cheating on her. The husband can lie to his wife that he is not in a relationship with the other woman. After the affair is exposed, the husband can argue that it is necessary to lie otherwise his marriage will fail. It is the husband's personal decision to lie to his wife. But we cannot claim that his lie is morally permissible. If we believe that lying can be situationally ethical, we support the husband to lie to his wife. If partners in a marriage are permitted to lie to each other, then trust in a marriage would not exist. I believe that without a clear principle that lying is unethical unconditionally, trust between people would be ruined. Therefore, to maintain trust, lying should be prohibited unconditionally.

WHAT ARE SMALL LIES?

As I demonstrated above, I think all lies should be prohibited unconditionally. However, it is not realistic to argue that all lies are morally wrong since I cannot analyze each lie and prove each of them unethical. Therefore, I would like to make my argument zoom in on small lies since they are the sort of lies people can easily forgive. In this paper, I want to argue that small lies are disrespectful to yourself and those you lie to because they disempower those impacted (include the liar) from exercising their reason freely.

In my definition of small lies, they are trivial statements that deviate from the truth. The statements are not necessarily false information, but the liar believes what he tells others is not

true. They are small lies, not life-and-death related. One example of small lies can be that you lied to your friend that you will be drunk after three beers, but the fact is you believe three beers are not a big deal to you. The information that “you will be drunk after three beers” is not absolutely correct or false, but you believe it is false information. Lying to your friend that you cannot drink more than three beers is a small lie because you believe it is a piece of false information, and this information would not have a significant impact on your life.

HOW DOES LIE VIOLATE DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS?

In deontological ethics, lying is morally impermissible because it violates our duty to ourselves. But, sometimes, people incline to judge a lie from its consequences or motives. Usually, people tend to overly criticize lies that create a seriously negative effect and forgive lies which do not cause a serious consequence. Consequentialism is different from deontological ethics.

Consequentialists would judge if lying is morally right based on the consequences of a lie. For example, you text a friend that “I am on my way”, but you are putting on your clothes and about to be on your way. Your friend would see you two minutes earlier if you did not text him a lie. If your friend is a consequentialist, he would not consider the small lie as absolutely impermissible because the consequence of the texted lie is too small. People are more likely to permit white lies because they are told for benevolent reasons. People argue that white lies are morally permissible because of the liar’s benevolent motives. I do not think that a liar’s motives can impact the nature of lies; benevolent lies still violate humans’ duty to themselves.

It is not my goal to evaluate lies from the motives and consequences. I aim to evaluate lies from a deontological ethic’s perspective with Harry Frankfurt’s bi-leveled theory of desires. In deontological ethics, lying is morally impermissible because it violates our duty to ourselves rather than results a bad consequence or it is driven by a vicious motive.

In this paper, the motives of small lies are unimportant; they may be benevolent or selfish (the real situation can be more complicated such that a small lie can be a selfish and benevolent lie, or a lie lacks motive). Besides, to simplify, small lies, in my argument, are very unlikely to be discovered. So, they do not require more lies to cover themselves. Last, small lies here are different from lies in *Autonomy and Benevolent Lies* written by Thomas Hill. Small lies are opposite to these lies which “are about matters of the utmost importance to the deceived: heaven or hell, life or death, reunion or separation from a loved one” (253).

In my opinion, no matter how small a lie is, the liar disrespects himself and those deceived. Small lies disable the deceived one to see the truth, and they contradict against treating everyone with respect.

WHAT IS RESPECT IN DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS?

But what does respect for persons mean in deontological ethics? In *Between Consenting Adults*, Onora O’Neill claims that to treat others as persons with respect means they must be viewed as possibly consenting adults. However, O’Neill argues that consent between persons is not possible in some cases. The nature of our society determines the impossibility of consent between people. She asserts that capitalism pre-deprives true consent between workers and bourgeoisie. She also claims that true consent cannot be reached between a specialist and a non-specialist due to the knowledge gap even though it seems like they consent on some agreement. Patients cannot easily understand complex medical procedures, so, in most situations, they are informed with a simplified procedure. When a patient consent to the simplified version of the treatment, we cannot consider that they are really consenting to the real treatment (253).

I do agree with O'Neill that consent cannot be reached in some situations, but I think everyone can still try harder to provide more sincere and accurate communication. For example, the doctor could have informed the patient that the medical procedure in that conversation is a simplified description. I think Kant believes that respect to persons means to respect "her right to make her own decisions about her own life and actions" (xxv). In *the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues that respect for others is a recognition of dignity in other men. The dignity of being a man is priceless and unexchangeable (216). I think to respect other people's dignity, in Kant's word, means to respect other men's right to access to truth. In my opinion, to avoid intentional deception by providing the truest and the most accurate information in communication is respectful to other people. In an unideal world, deception is unavoidable between persons. But, if a speaker communicates with respect, respecting other's autonomy to reason, the speaker would include others to reason together with him rather than to manipulate other people by lying to them. So, in my perspective, respect for persons is that individuals try their best to enable others and themselves to exercise their autonomy in decision making. Here, the most basic requirement for "trying best" is to not lie to others. Therefore, I believe that everyone should try their best to avoid deception to others by providing the most accurate information in communication.

BI-LEVELED THEORY

In the introductory part, I introduce Harry Frankfurt's theory about first-order desires and second-order desires. The first-order desires are instinctive, and second-order desires are reflective. According to Frankfurt, autonomy is freedom in forming second-order desires according to agents' authentic motives and desires. In cases of lying, an agent's first-order desire is the real purpose of telling that lie. For example, in the case that you text a lie, "I am on my way", to your friend. Your first-order desire can be that you want to keep a good friendship with

this person, or you do not want to endure the guilty of being an irresponsible person (only oneself can know what one's first-order desire is). But this lie disturbs the establishment of you and your friend's second-order desire in this case. Your lie hides a real you⁹ from your friend and manipulates your friend's autonomy on judging what type of relationship he or she wants to stay with you. I believe that agents consciously or unconsciously choose partners and relationships base on their observation and judgment. And these conscious and unconscious choices are agents' second-order desires¹⁰. For example, A and B planned to meet somewhere at 6 o'clock. But A was late for an hour. A told B the reason that A was late was that A overslept. B's instinctive reaction was B's first-order desire. It could be B felt not being respected and wanted to stop seeing A. However, after considering how general and kind A was to B in the past, B chose to forgive A for being late. This decision B made was B's second-order desire. It was B's reflective judgment. But, if A lied about the real reason for being late, then B could not know A's real characteristics. A's lie blocked B from knowing A sometimes can be careless on timing. A's lie does not present a real A to B. Thus, B cannot make an autonomous judgment about how he or she wants to develop this relationship with a real A. You may be a habitual latecomer, or you may prefer to be waited instead of waiting for others. No matter what reason causes you to leave late, you should not lie to your friend because lies do not provide complete relevant information to your friend which impacts your friend on forming a second-order desire (to have a closer relationship with you or not) and hurts his/her autonomy. Besides, lying also hurts the

⁹ A real you include your weaknesses in your personalities. For example, you lied to your friends about why you were late for your meeting with them. You overslept, so you were late. But you told them that you were late because of traffic. Being careless about time is a weakness of you, but you hid from your friends. The lie you told prevents your friends from knowing a real you who are careless about time.

¹⁰ You may want to keep distance from friends who do not respect your time and frequently break their promises because you do not want to waste your time on always waiting for them. "do not want to waste your time" is a first-order desire here, and "want to keep distance" is a second-order desire because it is a desire formed base on your reasons and judgment.

liar's autonomy through not providing true relevant information for the liar to form autonomous second-order desires. Since you lie about "you are on the way", you cannot learn what kind of friend he or she is. If you were honest and told your friend that you forgot about the time and you would be late, your friend can react with sympathy or disappointment. And, you can learn more about your friend and decide how you want to develop this friendship, which is an opportunity for you to develop your second-order desire and practice your autonomy.

Small lies are disrespectful to yourself. Lies, even an extremely trivial lie, disrespect others through taking their autonomy away. Small lies disrespect the liar because the liar disavows his duty. When a person lies, he is treating not only the deceived one as a mean but also himself. No matter what reason he lied for, he let his personal preference overpower his moral obligation, or we can also say that the liar chooses his instinct rather than his reason.¹¹

Kant writes that when a person communicates thoughts that are opposed to what he believes, the "speaker is a mere deceptive appearance of a man, not a man himself" (226). The speaker let things other than his autonomy drive his communication. No matter what reason makes him lie, he uses himself as a mean for other ends rather than treating himself as an autonomous being. For example, your friend asks if you want to hang out next Friday night. You tell your friend that you do not have time to hang out on Friday night, but the real reason is that you just want to have some personal time on that Friday night. You may not want your friend to think you are not friendly, or you may simply just do not want to share this information with your friend. I think Kant would say to tell your friend that you do not have time is a lie, and it is wrong to lie because you did not truly communicate with your friend. It is not only you did not

¹¹ Lying is a first-order desire because it is an act of instinct. Acting with reason is acting a second-order desire which requires authentic reasons and motives.

do your duty, but also this small lie suggests that you are not willing or dare to present a real yourself in front of your friends.

Small Lies are not respectful to others. To create an untrue self-image in front of your friend is not respectful to yourself, and it is not respectful to your friend either because it hurts your friend's autonomy. First, you do not have confidence that your friend would react reasonably. In the example of lying to your friend that you do not have time to hang out on Friday night, if you lie because you are afraid that your friend would not include you for other activities after you declined this invitation, you take away your friend's autonomy to interact with a real you. Second, to get what you want, such as being a likable friend, you manipulate your friend to exercise his autonomy in the way you want. Your friend is used as a means for you to get your end. Third, you do not allow your friend to access to a real you, which deprives your friends the right to know the real you. After you lie to your friend that you do not have time on Friday night, even though you want to hang out, your friend may try to arrange another hanging-out time with you on the next Friday. Because you did not make a sincere communication with your friend, you may start to feel be bothered by his Friday night invitations, which can cause you a negative impression about your friendship with this friend.

In deontological ethics, lying is morally prohibited unconditionally because it violates men's duty to themselves. Liar's benevolent motives or consequences created by a lie should not be used as a ruler to judge if a lie is ethical. People should not permit a small lie just because it is little because even small lies take away others' right to know truth and ruin trust between people.

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