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Judging Others' Deprivation: Adaptive Preferences, Moral Diversity, and the Good

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Judging Others' Deprivation: Adaptive Preferences, Moral Diversity, and the Good

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I develop a justification of intervention by public institutions aimed at transforming adaptive preferences—preferences held by oppressed or deprived persons that seem complicit in perpetuating their oppression and deprivation. International development practitioners must identify and respond to adaptive preferences in order to promote the interests of development beneficiaries. However , identifying and responding to adaptive preferences poses ethical problems. What makes adaptive preferences worthy of special moral treatment? Can intervention to transform adaptive preferences be compatible with respect for personal autonomy and the variety of conceptions of the good across cultures?

I claim that we need a perfectionist conception of the good rather than a conception of autonomy to diagnose and appropriately respond to adaptive preferences. I offer an account of the apparent inauthenticity of adaptive preferences based on the idea that human beings have a propensity toward basic flourishing. This account entails a conception of the good, and I suggest that an appropriately formulated "deliberative perfectionist" conception enables adaptive preference identification without objectionable paternalism.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION: ETHICS, DEVELOPMENT, AND THE DIAGNOSIS OF DEPRIVATION

In this dissertation I justify intervention by public institutions aimed at transforming adaptive preferences—preferences held by oppressed or deprived persons that seem complicit in perpetuating their oppression and deprivation. In it, I attempt to contribute to the ongoing project of developing ethical responses to oppression and deprivation. This introduction sketches the argument of the dissertation and situates it in the context of existing work on ethics and deprivation by philosophers and development theorists.

1.1 ETHICS AND DEPRIVATION

We live in a world where oppression and deprivation are widespread.

1billion people live on less than $1 a day, "while another fifth live in countries where many people think nothing of spending $2 a day on a cappuccino" (UNDP 2005, 17).[1] A person living in Zambia today is less likely to live to the age of 30 than a person in England in 1840, and the situation is worsening (UNDP 2005, 17). More than 130 million women alive today have experienced severe genital cutting (UN Secretary General's Campaign to end Violence Against Women 2008, 1). In the United States, 5.3 million women are victims of domestic violence each year (American Institute on Domestic Violence 2001) In India, girls ages 1-5 are 50% more likely to die than boys (UNDP 2005, 20).

Most contemporary work in analytic ethics on global deprivation focuses on allocating responsibility for responding to such deprivation. It asks *who* is responsible for such deprivation, *who* should do something about it, and *why*.[2] These are important questions, and I believe that it is generally a good thing for philosophers to ask about the obligations of the first-worlders to the third-world poor.[3]

But the fact of massive deprivation and oppression on a global scale poses other compelling questions for ethicists. We should be interested—not only in who is responsible for ending deprivation and why—but also in *how* deprivation should be responded to. We want more than to persuade others that large-scale deprivation is morally unacceptable; we want to imagine morally acceptable ways for responding to it.

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[1] Reddy and Pogge (2005) problematize World Bank statistics that measure persons' poverty according to the $1 and $2 a day lines. They suggest that this leads to *undercounting* the poor. There is thus reason to believe that the 1 billion person estimate cited above is too conservative.

[2] See Singer (1972) for the most influential recent ethical work about obligations to the global deprived. For other analytic ethical works on obligations to the deprived, see Pogge (2002), O'Neill (2000), and the essays in Chatterjee (2004).

[3] It is worth acknowledging that this literature places a disproportionate emphasis on encouraging first-world benevolence. It may be criticized for failing to call into question the structures that promote first/third world inequalities. Uma Narayan (2005) has criticized it on these grounds.

Questions of *how* to respond to deprivation have troubled development studies for at least twenty years—at least since the advent of what is called post-development theory. This is partly because fifty years of experience with development has shown that development often does not *work*. It frequently fails to achieve the goals it sets out for itself and causes substantial suffering in the process.[4] Many development theorists and practitioners suggest that the roots of this problem are not pragmatic. The only problem with development is not that it fails to achieve its desired ends. There are also problems with development's desired ends. Many development theorists and practitioners have claimed that the normative ends of development are themselves questionable.

The normative ends of development have appeared objectionable for two central reasons. First, development may simply have the wrong vision of what is good for human beings. Development has often assumed that having more technology and more income are always good-- irrespective of the tradeoffs involved. Development may, for example, assume that a life where one has a connection with nature is hopelessly primitive, and thus devalue the life-activities of many women and indigenous people.[5] Or it may fail to treat belonging to a community in which people live together harmoniously as objectively valuable. Views like this have justified the destruction of many traditions and kinship structures.[6]

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[4] For an introduction to the debate questioning the general effectiveness of development assistance, see Easterly, Levine, and Roodman's meta-analysis (2004) and Easterly (2001). For a narrative account of a catastrophically failed development project, see Roy (2001).

[5] Apffel-Marglin and Marglin (1996) and Shiva (1989) accuse mainstream development practices of doing precisely this.

[6] Norberg (1992) worries that development interventions will destroy the traditions of cooperation and civility in Ladakh, Tibet—such as the tradition of third-parties spontaneously mediating disputes that they came across in their communities. Many of the essays in Grim's collection (2001) also claim that Western ideas of development destroy traditions that hold communities together.

Second, development may involve inappropriately universalizing or generalizing normative goals. This problem with development goals is sometimes--- but does not have to be-- supported by some type of cultural relativism. What is good for one group of persons is not necessarily good for another group. It may, for instance, be the case that more income is good for people in the third world but not for people in the first world. As one development critic claims, "'rational self-interest' as opposed to 'my neighbor's interest' or 'the collective good' are concepts that developed only under Western capitalism; they are not universal" (Ferguson 1998, 99). Or, it may be that the normative goals of development promote an objectionable disregard for what the persons who are potential "beneficiaries" of development value. Development practitioners may simply not care how beneficiaries view what is happening to them; they may tend to attribute legitimate disagreement about values and strategies to some sort of inadequacy on the part of beneficiaries. This paternalism toward beneficiaries may result from the vices of individual development practitioners. However, this paternalism may also have systemic roots. Some theorists attribute it to a dominant development epistemology that encourages them to think in terms of universal categories that represent development beneficiaries as less human.[7] For example, development practitioners may view affinities for trading outside of the cash economy as simple misunderstandings of capitalism rather than ways of maintaining community bonds.[8]

These controversies in development theory and practice help us to identify another set of important ethical questions in development—a set of questions that is not about who should help whom and why. This set of questions revolves around *how* to make judgments

[7] Escobar (1994) offers an extended and highly influential analysis of how a dominant development discourse constructs beneficiaries as lacking.

[8] Maiava (2001) argues that development practitioners in Samoa attributed cattle exchanges that contributed to maintaining social bonds to an inability to handle markets.

about deprivation and how to respond to them. As Denis Goulet points out, "ethicists are late arrivals on the stage of development studies" (Goulet 1995, 2). With a few notable exceptions, academic philosophers ask ethical questions different from those that trouble development practitioners. This is not to say that philosophers must *only* ask questions about development that originate from practice. It is to point out that there is room for ethical reflection to enrich existing normative debates within development.

Perhaps the most critical normative questions facing development practitioners are about what deprivation is and how judgments should be made about it. As post-development theorist Majid Rahnema puts it:

> The word "poverty" is, no doubt, a key word of our times, extensively used and abused by everyone. Huge amounts of money are spent in the name of the poor. Thousands of books and expert advice continue to offer solutions to their problems. Strange enough, however, nobody, including the proposed "beneficiaries" of these activities, seems to have a clear and commonly shared view of poverty….What is necessary and to whom? And who is qualified to judge all that? (Rahnema 1991)

The existing philosophical literature that does engage questions about defining and responding to questions about deprivation concentrates on Rahnema's last question.[9] This literature focuses on the epistemological aspects of defining deprivation. Conducted mostly by feminist epistemologists, it asks how the allocation of epistemic authority shapes development encounters.[10] Why do some people's ideas of what counts as deprivation get heard more than others? How might deprived persons play a role in defining what counts as deprivation? And how might development practitioners and theorists learn to better hear the

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[9] Nussbaum and Sen's work are notable exceptions to this claim. Their work generally asks about how different ethical theories do at defining deprivation rather than who is best situated to diagnose it.

[10] For examples of this work, see Code (2000), Ferguson (1998), and Harding (1998). For examples of this epistemological focus from feminist political philosophers, see Jaggar (2005, 2006) and Okin (2003). For a review of the work on development, gender, and epistemic authority—from both inside and outside of philosophy—see Goetz (1993).

voices of the deprived? These epistemological reflections help to illuminate the existing trend toward more participatory development approaches.[11]

This dissertation attempts to contribute to the project opened up by the epistemologists and post-development theorists-- the project of developing dialogical approaches to diagnosing and responding to deprivation. However, the focus of this dissertation is more ethical than epistemological. We need to know what types of attitudes and discourses promote and hinder understanding among development beneficiaries and practitioners. In addition, we need to have an idea of what deprivation is, and what it is to reduce it. Ethicists have an important role to play in answering this question. As Anne-Marie Goetz puts it, "We cannot replace the question, 'What must be done?' with 'Who am I?'" (134). For reasons that will become clear shortly, I do not think it is feasible or desirable to expect every development conversation on the ground to yield its own definition of deprivation. Rather, responding to deprivation—especially in its worst forms—requires an objective conception of human flourishing. One of my central aims in this dissertation is to clarify why those of us who are critical of development but concerned about deprivation should still want a conception of human flourishing. I also want to make some recommendations about what we should want that conception to look like.

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[11] The move toward participation in development is positive in my view, but there are cases in which its use may be inappropriate or cause more harm than good. A growing body of literature suggests that participatory development is not the panacea it once seemed to be. See the essays in Cooke and Kothari (2001) and Gujit and Shah (1998).

1.2 NORMATIVE CONCEPTIONS AND THE DIAGNOSIS OF DEPRIVATION

It should be clear to anyone who has studied—or even surveyed—the history of development that development has not always succeeded in improving the lives of those it is intended to benefit. It should also be clear that the reasons for this are partly normative. The normative conceptions motivating much development practice often seem imposed from without. They often take for granted that the values of some culture—usually (but not always) "Western" industrialized culture-- are the best values. They are also often implemented by institutions and practitioners that do not know how to recognize moral worth in ways of lives different from theirs.

Minimizing this problem will require us to separate the Western way of life from the life that is objectively best for human beings. Effecting this separation means increasing development beneficiaries' control over what happens in their communities. There is no good reason that the development agenda should be set by Westerners—or other dominant classes. Nor is there any good reason that members of dominant groups should be the choosers of the best way to improve development in a particular community. Once we recognize this, we should seek ways for diagnosing deprivation that are not simply the products of the internal monologue of some dominant group.

Rejecting a conception of the good that has been disproportionately influenced by a particular worldview is not the same thing as rejecting conceptions of the good in general. This is not only a logical point. Development practice *needs* conceptions of the good if it is going to facilitate understanding across difference and if it is going to attempt in good faith to improve beneficiaries' lives. If development practitioners are to appropriately target their energies, they will have to make judgments—even if only preliminary ones-- about whether

and how persons are deprived. This will mean attempting to evaluate their lives according to some normative conception. If we think evaluating persons' deprivation can be done without a conception of the human good, it is probably because we have underestimated the limits of the type of dialogue that can occur in actual development practice. Persons that seem to be deprived should participate in diagnosing and responding to their own deprivation. However, a conception of the good plays an indispensable role for this simple reason: deprived and oppressed persons do not always actively seek interventions from public institutions that might improve their lives.

A conception of the good can usefully supplement dialogue about deprivation. Even if development practitioners are committed to using dialogical methods of diagnosing and responding to deprivation, they will encounter situations in which there are compelling reasons not to take beneficiaries' preferences and descriptions of their preferences at face value. We can understand how this is so if we examine some of the most common practical strategies for producing beneficiary-driven development.

One proposed way of encouraging beneficiary-driven development is simply not to intervene in the lives of persons who seem deprived. Although development theorists rarely explicitly advocate the end of development interventions, some post-development theory seems to imply that the best thing for communities that are potential targets of development would be to be left alone. It assumes that most intervention will happen on the basis of bad normative conceptions and/or have bad effects.[12] If we can expect most intervention to have only bad effects (and it is possible that this expectation is warranted), we should take a strong position against intervention. However, whether it is legitimate to expect all intervention depends on empirical facts—and answering this empirical question is beyond

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[12] For examples of views like this, see the introduction to Rahnema and Bawtree (1997).

the scope of this project. If we assume that it is possible to imagine new, less pernicious ways of intervening, the question becomes whether nonintervention helps beneficiaries to live good lives (or lives that actualize the values that are important to them)?

Is nonintervention a way of ensuring that persons who seem deprived will be able to live lives that are good or meaningful to them? It is not clear that we should answer this question in the affirmative. "Leaving people alone" only means promoting persons' abilities to live lives that are good or meaningful to them if we assume that what people are already doing is good for them or reflects their conception of the good. It may seem that what persons are already doing *must* reflect their conceptions of the good. Persons are always making choices. If we assume some level of rationality, we can say that the choices persons make generally reflect their values.

However, the view that what persons are doing reflects their conceptions of the good ignores some very real constraints on the processes by which persons make decisions about how to lead their lives. We can grant that persons tend to choose the best option available to them without granting that their choices embody their conceptions of the good. Persons may simply lack options that would allow them to live the kinds of lives they want to lead. A woman who chooses not to ask her promiscuous husband to wear condoms because she knows it will anger him and that will jeopardize her access to income makes a choice. She probably has good reasons for making such a choice. However, it does not seem right to conclude from this state of affairs that her conception of the good includes repeated HIV-exposure. Perhaps her idea of the good life includes both health and income, and providing her opportunities for both of them would increase her capacity to lead a life that is good and meaningful to her.

There are further possible constraints on persons' choice situations that make it possible that persons' choices do not actualize their conceptions of the good. Persons may be mistaken about what their options actually are and may thus benefit from an intervention that helps them to more accurately evaluate their opportunities. They may also be living under conditions where they are dominated by other members of their communities. They may be unable to live according to their conceptions of the good because other community members are preventing them from doing so. If nonintervention means leaving *communities* alone, nonintervention can mean abetting the deprivation and oppression of certain members of those communities. Persons' existing choices may not reflect their conceptions of the good because other members of their communities are oppressing them.

Once we acknowledge the existence of constraints on persons' capacities to live lives that are good or meaningful to them, it seems questionable to assume that what persons are already doing actualizes their conceptions of the good. Protecting persons' capacities to live according to their own values is not a matter of just leaving them alone. Development practitioners interested in protecting persons' capacities to live according to their own values cannot simply read persons' values off their existing preferences. They need to know when to dig deeper to find out whether a person's existing preferences really actualize her conception of the good. This is one place where an objective conception of the good can be useful; one sign that a person is being prevented from living the sort of life she wants to lead may be that the life she is leading is objectively bad for her. So, practitioners might suspect that the woman who does not ask her partner to wear condoms is not living out her conception of the good, because we expect desiring health to be a part of her conception of the good.

Non-intervention alone is a dubious strategy for ensuring beneficiary-driven development, because it assumes that what persons are already doing actualizes their conceptions of the good. We have good reasons to refuse to always take persons' exisiting preferences at face-value. Actually helping persons live according to their conceptions of the good can require interrogating their existing preferences, and a conception of the good can be useful in determining which preferences to interrogate.

Another strategy for producing beneficiary-driven development is to encourage progressive movement that already exists within a community. Anthropologist Susan Maiava refers to this approach as "immanent development" or supporting "what people are doing anyway" (Maiava 2002, 4). The idea is simple: rather than imposing external ideas of what is good on persons, development practitioners should support the movements to improve their lives that those communities are already engaged in. Persons within beneficiary communities are already struggling to improve their lives, and the role of the practitioner is to identify these existing struggles and assist them. Maiava provides an example of one such possible intervention. The Samoan community Maiava studied raised cattle and understood one of the most important roles of these cattle to be their exchange as part of community rituals (such as marriages and funerals). Development practitioners tended to view this as evidence of "project failure." Maiava suggests that development practitioners ought to have encouraged this practice, because it promoted social bonding, increased the community's access to protein, and gave persons incentives to increase cattle production (Maiava 2002, 3).

This approach has much to recommend it. It circumvents many of the problems of traditional development. Promoting strategies for development that already exist within communities increases the likelihood that development will be experienced as legitimate by

beneficiaries. It also diminishes the tendency to confuse the Western industrial way of life with the good life.

However, this strategy is only attractive if it is accompanied by a conception of human flourishing. If practitioners want to promote existing initiatives by deprived people to improve their lives, they need to be able to distinguish initiatives that improve persons' lives from those that do not. If they want to encourage the "progressive" strains within a community, they need to be able to distinguish progressive strains from harmful ones. That persons in a community are doing something does not provide sufficient reason to support it. There are initiatives in every community that are harmful to their members. To return to the Samoan cattle production example, it seems perfectly acceptable to promote cattle-production strategies that improve persons' access to food and community. However, it seems less acceptable to promote cattle-production strategies that destroy persons' natural environments or enslave some community members. Thus, the strategy of supporting existing initiatives for life-improvement works best when supplemented by an objective conception of the good.

A third strategy for promoting beneficiary-driven development is to ask the deprived what they want and help them obtain it. If one of the dangers of traditional development is imposing an external conception of the good, why not attempt to ascertain persons' conceptions of the good and help them to live according to them? Many development projects work on this type of basis. Deepa Narayan offers an example of one such project in the district poverty initiative of the state of Andhra Pradesh in India. Practitioners hired by the project spend one month living in very poor villages and then ask the women there what their problems are and what they want to do to work on them (Narayan 2002, 3). In this project, beneficiary women decide how they are deprived and what to do about it.

This strategy for encouraging beneficiary-driven development, like the one before it, possesses great potential for offsetting the dangers of development as usual. However, it too needs to be supplemented by a conception of flourishing to be effective. One reason for this is that practitioners need to make preliminary judgments about deprivation in order to know where to target their energies. In the Andhra Pradesh example, the development agency had to decide ahead of time which communities they should send practitioners to. This preliminary judgment was not made by the extreme poor themselves and was quite likely made by examining how well these communities were faring against objective indicators of poverty.

Also, more importantly, we know that oppression and deprivation affect persons' perceptions of their own well-being and their willingness to report deficits in their well-being. As David Clarke puts this point:

> An impoverished person may lack the necessary knowledge or experience to imagine many aspects of a good life. Moreover, the wants, hopes and expectations of the disadvantaged may be crushed by the harsh realities of life. A poor person may learn to take pleasure in small mercies and to desire nothing more in order to avoid bitter disappointment. (Clark 2003, 179)

Several empirical studies have noted a tendency on the part of the deprived and oppressed to adjust their expectations to limited option sets (Becker 1995, 634; Kynch and Sen 1983). Perhaps the most famous of these studies showed that only 2.5% of widows in Calcutta described themselves as ill while 45% of widowers—who were objectively more healthy—did (Nussbaum 2000b, 139).

Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen refer to the tendency of the deprived to underestimate or underreport the extent of their deprivation as the phenomenon of

"adaptive preferences."[13] If we think that adaptive preferences are real, we should not want development practitioners to uncritically accept all deprived persons' evaluations of their own deprivation. An objective conception of the good can be useful in responding to what seem to be adaptive preferences. Development practitioners can suspect reports of preferences that seem inconsistent with human flourishing.

We should want strategies for diagnosing and responding to deprivation that are more dialogical and beneficiary driven. However, a conception of flourishing has an important role to play even in such approaches. Beneficiary-driven approaches cannot eliminate situations in which persons' expressed preferences or descriptions of their preferences warrant further scrutiny. A conception of the good can provide guidelines for such scrutiny.

1.3 QUESTIONING PREFERENCES: THE ARGUMENT OF THE DISSERTATION

1.3.1 Summary of the Argument

Development practitioners—even participatory development practitioners—will inevitably run into situations where beneficiary preferences merit suspicion or interrogation. Intuition tells us to dig deeper when deprived persons express preferences that seem to perpetuate their oppression and deprivation. Some preferences, to use Anita Superson's words, "to belong to 'the established order of domination' rather than to the individual" (Superson 2000, 114).

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[13] Elster coined the term "adaptive preference," but his understanding of adaptive preference is different from Sen and Nussbaum's. His understanding is not linked to oppression and deprivation. Moreover, he thinks adaptive preferences as necessarily developing the way the fox in LaFontaine's fable comes to believe the grapes are sour—one stops wanting something one would otherwise want because one cannot have it.

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This dissertation develops an ethical justification for intervention by public institutions in the lives of persons that have such preferences. I refer to such preferences as "suspect preferences." I think that what bothers us about these preferences is that they seem to be adapted to unacceptable conditions. I therefore think of this project as an attempt to justify public intervention in the lives of persons who have "adaptive" or "inappropriately adaptive" preferences (see the coming paragraphs for more on this distinction).

We know that some preferences—expressed in either words or actions—do not seem worthy of being taken at face value, because they seem adapted to unacceptable conditions. But how do we distinguish preferences that are worthy of suspicion from the chosen conceptions of the good liberal societies are committed to respecting? Does giving practitioners latitude to suspect beneficiary preferences mean giving them authority to override beneficiaries' conceptions of the good with their own? Is it possible to say that such suspicion is legitimate without undermining the goals of beneficiary-driven development— namely respect for the agency of the deprived and diversity among conceptions of the good?

I argue that we can justify public intervention in the lives of persons with suspect preferences without falling into the traps of paternalism or cultural hegemony. Coherently justifying such intervention requires an objective perfectionist conception of the good. As I suggested above, we cannot coherently differentiate preferences that are worthy of suspicion from those that are not without a conception of flourishing. I claim that the appropriate conception of the good will have to be perfectionist, because the idea of adaptive preferences rests on the idea that there are certain goods we expect human beings to desire. We conclude that something has gone awry in persons' capacity to make or report choices when they report choices inconsistent with their well-being because we hold background assumptions about what human beings would normally choose. Perfectionism, as a moral

theory that holds that the good lies in the development of human nature, allows us to make sense of this background assumption.

To put this differently, the notion of adaptive preference only makes sense if we assume that human beings usually want their own well-being. This is why adaptive preferences may seem inauthentic, unchosen, or not to truly "belong" to the persons that bear them. On a more commonsense level, this is why we wonder whether persons that choose against their basic well-being *really* had a choice. If we had no assumptions about what persons "normally choose," adaptive preferences would either just be examples of wickedness—or they would fail to be morally troubling at all. Without an idea of what persons normally choose, the woman who chooses HIV-exposure over loss of income-- is just someone who is sexually irresponsible or someone who happens not to care about her health. We can view her situation differently if we say that persons normally desire health and basic income and that it is good for them to do this. We can suspect that something is preventing her from living the type of objectively good life she wants to live.

The idea that most persons desire their basic flourishing makes sense of our intuition that adaptive preferences do not truly belong to their bearers. I call this the "Propensity to Flourishing Account" of the seeming inauthenticity of adaptive preferences—or the PTFA. The PTFA provides a justification for scrutinizing certain preferences—in particular preferences that seem inconsistent with basic flourishing formed by persons who lack access to opportunities for basic flourishing. If most persons desire their basic flourishing, preferences that seem inconsistent with flourishing are unlikely to be their "deep" preferences.

Suggesting that persons' preferences may not really belong to them is not without its dangers. To say that a person does not really want to live the way she is living may seem like

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an invitation to others to flatly override her stated desires. This is a worry that accompanies virtually all theories that align persons' "true" desires with the objective good—theories that range from Rousseau's notion of positive freedom to Marx's notion of false consciousness. It may seem to follow from the belief that persons' expressed preferences do not reflect their true desires that others should make choices *for* them. It may seem that using the PTFA to justify intervention in the lives of deprived persons means saying that development practitioners should make key decisions *for* persons whose preferences seem adaptive.

In the dissertation, I attempt to move beyond the false dichotomy that requires development practitioners to choose between endorsing an objective conception of the good and respecting development beneficiaries. We can use an objective conception of the good to diagnose and respond to adaptive preferences without compromising the main goals of beneficiary-driven development. I claim that the PTFA only justifies noncoercive intervention. This should assuage some of our worries about development practitioners choosing *for* beneficiaries. Noncoercive intervention is also important, because it preserves the possibility of dialogue about preferences before any course of action is chosen. Practitioners cannot simply read meaning off preferences. Choosing dialogue over paternalistic coercion as a response of first resort opens up the possibility of imagining strategies for preference transformation that both challenge the status quo *and* are acceptable to beneficiaries. It also makes it possible to take seriously the fact that development practitioners may be wrong to suspect certain preferences. Preferences that seem adaptive, may on inspection, turn out not to have negative effects on flourishing.

I further argue that it does not follow from the belief that persons' preferences merit questioning that those persons are not worthy judges of what is good for them. To say that a person's choices may not reflect her deep desires is quite different from saying that she does

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not know what is good for her. It also certainly does not mean that she lacks the rationality to respond to practitioners' evaluation of her situation or to offer her own evaluation. We should not assume that a person who lacks opportunities lacks the capacities for judgment and moral imagination that would allow her evaluate opportunities proposed to her. Not all forms of deprivation assault persons' moral capacities. Deprived persons should generally be treated as rational-- as co-participants in meaningful moral dialogue—and using a conception of the good to issue preliminary judgments about preference need not undermine this.

The extent to which the PTFA-motivated interventions are compatible with beneficiary-driven development is not only a function of the amount of paternalistic behavior it justifies. It would be disingenuous to say that development that does not coerce or treat beneficiaries as morally inadequate is beneficiary-driven. Development as usual is also objectionable because it privileges one particular conception of the good over others. This seems incompatible with respecting moral diversity—with treating moral differences among cultures as legitimately controversial.

The PTFA I defend as a framework for diagnosing and responding to adaptive preferences says that persons usually desire their goods. It thus requires an objective conception of the good. This may seem fundamentally at odds with treating moral differences among cultures as legitimately controversial. I argue that it is not. Some conceptions of the good will not allow for cultural differences in conceptions of the good. However, an appropriately formulated conception of the good can be objective and allow for cultural divergences in ideas about the good life.

I claim that the conception of the good that defines flourishing for the PTFA should be a "deliberative perfectionist conception." By this, I mean a conception that has been arrived at by some sort of cross-cultural deliberative process. We can expect a deliberative

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perfectionist conception to have three central features. It should be substantively minimal, justificatorily minimal, and vague. By "substantively minimal," I mean that it should confine itself to basic levels of well-being. By "justificatorily minimal," I mean that it should be endorsable from a wide variety of different worldviews. By "vague," I mean specified at a high level of generality, so that a wide variety of life-activities can be understood as actualizing the same good.

Using a deliberative perfectionist conception of flourishing in conjunction with the PTFA allows adaptive preference intervention to avoid some important pitfalls of traditional development. Traditional development has been seen as imposing one culture's conception of the good on other cultures. However, the deliberative conception of the good is not the conception of the good of any given culture. Moreover, a wide variety of conceptions of the good are compatible with the deliberative conception of the good because it is minimal and vague. The deliberative conception of the good will discourage ways of life that inhibit persons' flourishing, but, because it is substantively minimal, it will not offer a vision of excellence. Above some threshold of basic well-being, the deliberative perfectionist conception will say nothing.

Further, since it offers no vision of excellence, the deliberative perfectionist conception provides a framework for imagining new ways of achieving flourishing. It can, for example tell practitioners that the persons in a given context need access to better health, but it will not tell practitioners how to bring that about. Many different interventions may improve health—ranging from educating children about the benefits of eating a vegetarian diet, to building hospitals, to better remunerating midwives trained in traditional birthing practices. The vagueness of the deliberative perfectionist conception suggests an important role for dialogue in deciding how to actualize it in a given context.

Diagnosing and responding to adaptive preferences requires a perfectionist conception of the good. It requires us to assume a high level of coincidence between what persons deeply desire and their basic flourishing. This is the PTFA. If we define basic flourishing according to a deliberative perfectionist conception and acknowledge that the world presents persons with real impediments to their living flourishing lives, PTFA-motivated intervention need not conflict with our commitments to respecting autonomy and moral diversity. It is possible to diagnose adaptive preferences using an objective conception of the good *and* treat development beneficiaries and the cultures they come from as morally worthy. This is the central argument of the dissertation.

1.3.2 Some Key Terms and A Qualifying Remark

My project in this dissertation is to justify intervention by public institutions aimed at transforming adaptive preferences. Since development ethics is a relatively new field of philosophical inquiry, it may not be immediately clear what I mean by "intervention" or why I speak of the obligations of "public institutions." My use of the term "adaptive preference" is also somewhat idiosyncratic. Clarifying these terms will provide a better sense of the practical context and consequences of my argument.

Let us begin with the term "public institutions." Most political philosophy discusses the role of the state rather than the role of public institutions. Discussing the state as responsible for ensuring access to basic social entitlements makes sense in the context of first-world countries. However, in many third-world non-state actors are responsible for providing persons' with basic opportunities. These are usually nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

I speak of intervention by public institutions and not the state to provide an analysis that applies in both first and third-world countries. Although there are interesting questions to be asked about the unique role of NGOs in providing services in the third-world,[14] NGOs are public institutions for the purposes of this dissertation. There are good reasons for thinking of NGOs as public institutions. One of these is that bilateral and multilateral donation—that is aid donation from one country to another or from an international financial institutions to others—often works through NGOs. NGO-funding is often part of a political process in which governments are involved. Moreover, governments may withdraw from the social service sector, because NGOs are providing services that the government would otherwise provide. This means that NGOs are often persons' only point of access to certain basic opportunities we think of the state as charged with providing.

The term "intervention" also warrants further clarification. Public institutions intervene when they involve themselves in persons' lives in ways that might affect their options or their perceptions of their options. Intervention is different from interference, because interference seeks to prevent persons from undertaking or realizing courses of action that are already set in motion. To intervene is not necessarily to attempt to stop a person from doing what they are already doing, although some interventions may involve this. Intervention is a much broader term that includes activities like collecting and providing information, providing assistance in undertaking courses of action that are already underway, attempting to persuade persons of the value of a particular opportunity, and helping persons to clarify their existing goals.

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[14] One of the most important questions that should be asked about the role of NGOs in providing services is whether NGOs have the same type of democratic legitimacy that governments do. I believe that NGOs cannot have the same type of legitimacy as democratically elected governments. By claiming that NGOs function as public institutions, I do not mean to make the stronger claim that this role is acceptable. For a discussion of the controversy surrounding the role of NGOs, see Pratap (1995).

What types of interventions does my argument in the dissertation attempt to justify? As I have already specified, I do not advocate coercive interventions. Since meaning does not usually roll neatly off preferences, most interventions aimed at transforming adaptive preferences will begin with attempts at understanding those preferences' effects on flourishing. Such information-gathering will often constitute intervention, because it will entail gathering first-person narratives about the meaning of preferences. Participating in interviews or community-level deliberations takes people's time and asks them to reflect on their lives.

Beyond attempts at understanding and the limit on coercion, I give little specific content to the idea of intervention. This is deliberate. Different types of intervention are appropriate to different contexts. There are many different ways of expanding persons' opportunities for leading objectively good lives. What one person or group wants or is willing to accept may be different from what another person or group wants. The PTFA cannot adjudicate between different strategies for preference transformation that have positive effects on flourishing. Persons' own values and rankings of values can dictate the course of intervention.

Furthermore, the same intervention will not be equally effective in all contexts. Persons have a variety of reasons for holding the preferences they do and hold their preferences with a variety of degrees of depth. Intervening in persons' preferences may be a matter of attempting to change their actions, their beliefs, or both. Persons who express preferences inconsistent with their basic flourishing may do so simply because no other opportunities are available. In cases like these, changing persons' option sets rather than their beliefs is probably the best type of intervention. Persons who have internalized

constraints on their flourishing to a greater degree will likely most benefit from interventions

that work on their beliefs, since their beliefs prevent them from taking advantage of options.

Practitioners Solava Ibrahim and Sabina Alkire discuss how interventions should

vary according to the reports and self-understandings of prospective beneficiaries.

> Consider a local government that wished to enhance women's autonomy but did
> not know whether to invest in conscientization of women about their deplorable
> state, or in direct interventions to invest in change, such as providing training for
> advocacy for child care facilities and maternity leave on jobs. Which of these
> interventions will prove most helpful? If the women are truly chafing at their
> situation, further conscientization is not necessary and could seem a waste of time,
> so the second option would be chosen; if, on the other hand, the women were
> demurely satisfied with their role as housewives, then they would not participate in
> the advocacy work, so conscientization would be a necessary first step. However,
> to choose between these requires an understanding of women's own "positionally
> objective" views. (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007, 29).

Even with this broad definition of intervention, the project of justifying intervention

rather than systemic change (project aid, in the language of development practice) will

disturb some readers. Relatively small-scale interventions are not a sufficient response to the

oppression and deprivation that are so common in the world we inhabit. We know that

systems—like patriarchy and global capitalism—sustain deprivation. The interventions I

describe do not change systems. I can only reply to this criticism that I am sympathetic to

the concerns that motivate it. Changing the systems that effect large-scale oppression and

deprivation is a pressing moral problem. It is true that the type of intervention I advocate

will not, on its own, dismantle these systems. However, I would point out that changing

systems and more local interventions are not incompatible or mutually exclusive strategies.

Indeed, both movements may cut in the same direction. Persons who have undergone

preference transformation may be more likely to participate in global struggles against

oppression and deprivation. Sen suggests that discussion of values and preferences can help

persons to form political consciousness and political identities (Sen 1996a). He also intimates

that discussion of values can help persons to perceive injustice where they did not perceive it before (Sen 1996b). Adaptive preference intervention may increase persons' capacities to oppose injustice.[15]

Let us now turn to my use of the term "adaptive preference." Nussbaum and Sen brought this term into currency in development ethics. My use of the term "adaptive preference" is slightly broader than Nussbaum and Sen's. Nussbaum and Sen seem to think that persons who have adaptive preferences are persons who have adapted their *conceptions of the good* to unacceptable option sets. However, I would suggest that preference adaptation need not happen on the level of moral beliefs. Certainly, some persons who have adapted their preferences to constricted option sets have developed questionable beliefs about what is good for human beings and what is good for them.

But we should not assume that this is the only plausible explanation for why persons who are deprived often exhibit preferences that seem complicit in perpetuating their deprivation. Persons may simply be choosing the best options available to them given their option sets. It seems spurious to assume that the woman who chooses HIV-exposure over loss of income does so because she thinks that this is the way her life *should* be. Persons may also be aiming to find subjective happiness in a world that does not afford them much objective well-being; they may be happy *and* know that things could be objectively better. Further, persons may *report* preferences that are out of line with their objective well-being because of the way that they are questioned.

Indeed, the examples of adaptive preference that Nussbaum and Sen use are not all clearly examples of persons adjusting their conceptions of the good to limited option sets. The Bengali widows who report being not being ill may think that they do not deserve to be

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[15] I thank Eva Feder Kittay for pointing out to me this connection to Sen's work.

well or that suffering is just part of women's lot in life. But Nussbaum and Sen jump to these conclusions too quickly. They may be comparing themselves to other widows they know and think they are better off than the rest of that group, or their responses may reflect social taboos against widows expressing dissatisfaction about their lives. Nussbaum also suggests that Jayaama, an Indian woman who does not complain or protest about the discriminatory wage structure at her job, has adaptive preferences (Nussbaum 2000b, 113). Is this really evidence that she has adjusted her conception of the good? Might she not just be making a rational calculation about what is and is not likely to change in her life?

My point in using the term "adaptive preference" differently from Nussbaum and Sen is not to suggest that persons *never* adjust their conceptions of the good to constricted option sets. Rather, it is to point out that adjusting one's conception of the good is only *one* strategy among many for adapting one's preferences. Moreover, adjusting one's conception of the good to one's options need not be a purely unconscious process—or a process that remains unconscious. Once we acknowledge this, responding to preferences that seem adaptive dissolves less quickly into a matter of paternalistically replacing deprived persons' conceptions of the good with someone else's. In many cases, persons are not deeply attached to their suspect preferences, so attempting to change them is not a matter of changing persons' conceptions of the good. In cases where preference adaptation does happen on the level of the conception of the good, rational questioning of these conceptions of the good may persuade persons to change them. This is possible because persons can inappropriately adjust their conceptions of the good and remain rational actors who can be deliberated with.

Why include preferences that have not changed at the level of a conception of the good within the group of adaptive preferences? Persons who choose the best option among those available to them—all the while fully aware that their options are rotten—have

adapted their preferences to subflourishing conditions. The difference between them and persons who have truly adapted their conceptions of the good is a difference in the *order* of the preferences they have adapted.

In order to offer a more nuanced view of what adaptive preferences are and how they might be responded to, I introduce three other terms for describing preference types. I use the term "suspect" preference to describe a preference that *seems* to be adapted to unacceptable conditions. This is the status of a preference that a third party diagnoses as inconsistent with basic flourishing and formed under conditions where basic flourishing was unavailable. Such a preference is "suspect," but not necessarily "adaptive," because a third party's preliminary judgments should not usually be taken as definitive. It is important to understand persons' with suspect preferences cultures and utility calculations before issuing a conclusion about that preference's effects on flourishing.

A preference that initially seems adaptive may turn out not to be, because it does not adversely affect basic flourishing. I discuss a case like this in the fifth chapter—the case of genital cutting practices in East Africa that do not significantly alter women's genitals, but may seem to outsiders to interfere with basic flourishing simply because it is cutting. Or, a suspect preference may turn out to involve tradeoffs that the outsider does not understand—such that changing a person's flourishing actually means changing a different preference. Women may not want to participate in microcredit programs, or may choose to give their loans to their husbands, because of fears of violence from them. A third-party that interpreted such women's incomplete participation in microlending as a desire not to earn an income would be mistaken. Once a preference has been determined suspect, practitioners should attempt to determine not only *whether* it is adaptive, but also *why*. They need to know what conditions are sustaining these preferences, and preliminary judgments about this may

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not always be correct.

In addition to introducing the term "suspect preference," I speak of "inappropriately adaptive preferences" and preferences to which persons are "deeply attached." I shift from the term "adaptive preference" to "inappropriately adaptive preference" at the end of the second chapter. I provide a fuller argument for this shift in that chapter. To briefly state my reasons for shifting from the language of "adaptive" to "inappropriately adaptive" preferences: I believe that the term "adaptive" preference insinuates that so-called "adaptive preferences" are morally troubling because they are adapted to conditions external to the agent. However, most—if not all—preferences are adaptive in this sense, and most do not trouble us in the way that the cases cited as examples of adaptive preference typically do. In my view, what troubles us about so-called "adaptive preferences" is not that they are adapted to external conditions, but that they are adapted to subflourishing external conditions. I present the term "inappropriately adaptive preference" to emphasize that it is not the adaptiveness of preferences *per se* that is morally problematic.

I also refer to preference that are "deep" or to which persons are "deeply attached." The difference between deep preferences and others is simply that deep preferences survive interrogation and persuasion. I argue that it is possible to suspect certain preferences and respect preferences to which persons are deeply attached. In practice, this means that persons who strongly resist changing their preferences will not be forced to change them.

I propose "deep attachment" as a criterion for preferences that should not be altered, because it allows us to commit to respecting persons' desires without committing to certain dubious assumptions about persons' conceptions of the good. In particular, the idea of deep preference allows us to avoid assuming that preferences couched in moral language must be respected. Preserving this possibility is important, because oppressive ideologies can

inhabit moral language. The notion of deep preference also allows for the possibility of practical interventions that involve proposing solutions and ways of thinking that persons with suspect preferences may not have encountered in advance. Respecting persons' conceptions of the good need not be a matter of protecting a rigid, pre-determined idea of the good life. It is persons themselves and not enclosed conceptions of the good that determine what ideas and strategies they can be exposed to, accept, and reject.

Now that I have defined the terms central to this dissertation's argument, I make one final qualifying remark that should clarify the aims of the project. The examples of adaptive preferences to which I refer come almost exclusively from the lives of third-world women. This should not be taken to mean that adaptive preferences are a phenomenon present only in third-world women.[16] There is a vast existing literature about adaptive preferences in first-world women on topics like oppressive beauty standards and sexual expectations, anorexia, and domestic violence.[17] There is also a vast existing literature about adaptive preferences in the poor regardless of their genders.[18] I use examples from the lives of third world women primarily so to make clear the applicability of my moral arguments to international development practice. However, I believe that my arguments about the roles and responsibilities of public institutions and the needs of oppressed and deprived persons hold across national and cultural boundaries.

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[16] Jaggar (2005) enumerates the possible pitfalls of contemporary work about justice that focuses on third-world women.

[17] For examples of this literature, see Friedman (2006), Levey (2000), Meyers (2004), and Stoljar (2002).

[18] Paolo Freire (2000) understands many poor people's acceptance of their own disempowerment as a type of adaptive preference.

1.4 THE CHAPTERS

As I stated above, the argument of this dissertation is that diagnosing and responding to adaptive preferences requires us to assume that persons deeply desire basic human flourishing. I claim that we can justify intervention aimed at transforming adaptive preferences on such grounds without falling foul of our commitments to respecting persons' autonomy and the moral diversity of cultures. My defense of this position in this dissertation comprises three parts.

The first part consists of Chapters Two and Three. Taken together, these chapters make a case against using a conception of autonomy to diagnose and respond to adaptive preferences. I make this case explicitly, because the distinction between adaptive and nonadaptive preferences may initially seem to be that nonadaptive preferences are *chosen*. It may seem that we want to question the preference of the South Asian woman who malnourishes herself to feel her male family members because she did not choose it.

I argue in Chapter Two that adaptive preferences cannot be coherently conceived as procedural autonomy deficits. Thinking of adaptive preferences as procedural autonomy deficits is appealing because it suggests that we can identify adaptive preferences without taking any controversial positions about the good. Schools of development thought that aim at "empowering" the oppressed and deprived attempt to capitalize on this appeal. However appealing it is to think of persons with adaptive preferences as procedurally nonautonomous or disempowered, the idea that the difference between adaptive preferences and others is that adaptive preferences were chosen under conditions of unfreedom does not withstand closer inspection. I point out the flaws in thinking of adaptive preferences as procedurally nonautonomous by asking whether a variety of different conceptions of procedural autonomy can identify them in a way that is consistent with our intuitions and amenable to

practical implementation. My exploration in this chapter reveals that conceptions of procedural autonomy cannot reliably diagnose adaptive preferences. Not all preferences adopted under conditions of unfreedom appear to us to be adaptive.

In Chapter Three, I ask whether a substantive conception of autonomy might succeed where a conception of procedural autonomy fails. A substantive conception of autonomy says that free choices must have certain contents. Since Chapter Two showed that a content-neutral conception of autonomy cannot reliably identify adaptive preferences, perhaps a content-laden one will hold more promise. I claim that a substantive conception of autonomy will indeed help identify adaptive preferences in a way more consistent with our intuitions. If, for instance, eating sufficiently is a mark of autonomy, we can identify the preference to malnourish oneself as nonautonomous. However, I claim that there are serious reasons for refusing to go down this path. One of them is that substantive conceptions of autonomy define all self-sacrificing lifestyles as nonautonomous. The second, more important reason, is that thinking of persons with adaptive preferences as nonautonomous authorizes coercing them. I demonstrate that it is very difficult to detach substantive notions of autonomy from coercion and claim that this makes using substantive autonomy to diagnose adaptive preferences an unappealing path.

Chapters Two and Three constitute the first part in my argument that we need a conception of the good to diagnose adaptive preferences. Chapter Four makes up the second part. Once we have seen that we need a conception of the good that is separate from a conception of autonomy, we can see what we need from a conception of the good that will be useful in identifying and responding to adaptive preferences. In the fourth chapter, I present the Propensity to Flourishing Account of the seeming inauthenticity of adaptive preferences. It stipulates that we expect persons to make choices that promote their basic

flourishing. We worry about the chosenness of the preferences of the woman who malnourishes herself to feed her male relatives, because we think that deprivation and interference are the most common causes of such choices.

The PTFA says that we expect persons to make choices consistent with their basic flourishing. This raises the question of what basic flourishing is. Chapter Four is also the point at which I introduce the idea of a deliberative perfectionist conception. I argue that such a conception of the good will be minimal and vague, and that we should want a conception of the good used to diagnose adaptive preferences to have these features.

The first two parts of my overall argument are 1) that we cannot characterize adaptive preferences as autonomy deficits and 2) that we can diagnose adaptive preferences with reference to a deliberative perfectionist conception of the good. The third part of my argument is that we can diagnose adaptive preferences with reference to a perfectionist conception of the good without paternalism or disrespect for moral diversity. It may seem that using a perfectionist conception of the good to diagnose or respond to adaptive preferences means forcing persons to live according to conceptions of the good that are foreign to them.

I attempt to defend the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination against objections of this sort. I affirm that we can use them to diagnose and respond to adaptive preferences without falling foul of our commitment to respecting autonomy and moral diversity. In Chapter Five, I show that the PTFA is compatible with respecting individual autonomy and preserving moral differences among cultures. I enumerate objections against it motivated by the desire to respect moral diversity and show that none of them is decisive. It is in chapter that I deal most directly with questions about the cultural relativity of conceptions of flourishing.

In the sixth and final chapter, I attempt to show that interventions motivated by the PTFA need not be seen as motivationally paternalist. That is, PTFA-motivated interventions need not be seen as attempts to replace persons' conceptions of the good with external ones. Rather, they can be seen as attempts to get clear about persons' conceptions of the good and help persons to live according to them. We can see how this is so if we shift some basic assumptions about the world—assumptions about the conditions under which many oppressed and deprived persons live, and assumptions about what conceptions of the good are like.

This outline of the structure of my argument makes explicit the fact that this dissertation is an attempt to come to terms with certain intuitions. In particular, it attempts to reconcile the intuition that public institutions should respect the rights of individuals and groups to live according to their own conceptions of flourishing with the intuition that some types of preferences held by oppressed and deprived persons require a normative response by public institutions.

It is difficult to do moral or political philosophy without discussing intuitions, and I refer to intuition often and explicitly. However, I realize that not all readers may share my intuitions. In discussing and presenting various pieces of this dissertation, I have encountered interlocutors that questioned certain intuitions that motivate my argument. I have, for example, encountered interlocutors who thought coercion should form a fundamental part of responding to persons with suspect preferences. I have had discussions with others who thought that imposing one culture's conception of the good on the entire world was a good thing. Still others have suggested that it is impossible to have meaningful cross-cultural dialogue about deprivation or that what is deprivation in one culture is simply not morally objectionable in another. For those who do not share my intuitions, I hope that

this dissertation will nevertheless contribute to an ongoing and productive moral

conversation.

2.0 ADAPTIVE PREFERENCES, PROCEDURAL AUTONOMY, AND EMPOWERMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Amartya Sen, "there is much evidence in history that acute inequalities often survive precisely by making allies out of the deprived" (Sen 1990b, 126). Sen is just one in a long line of feminist theorists that has observed that oppression and deprivation can work *through* the desires and behaviors of the deprived.[19] Deprived conditions can cause persons to form preferences that perpetuate (or simply do little to challenge) their own deprivation. These are what contemporary development theorists refer to as "adaptive preferences."[20] Such preferences tend to strike us as somehow less authentic than other preferences. They may seem externally imposed upon the deprived. Some preferences, to use Anita Superson's words, "to belong to 'the established order of domination' rather than to the individual" (Superson 2000, 114).

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[19] For other feminist arguments that the beliefs and behaviors of the oppressed can collude in their own oppression see Frye 1983, Bartky 1990, and Mill 1997.

[20] Development theorists have slightly altered the term "adaptive preference" from its original meaning in the work of John Elster. For Elster, the term "adaptive preference" refers exclusively to the sour grapes phenomenon—cases where a person downgrades the desirability of something because she does not have it. Nussbaum and Sen have used the term more broadly to refer to preferences that are untrustworthy as guides for public action, because conditions of deprivation seem to have caused them. I use the term in the latter sense.

Development project workers in general—and gender and development workers in particular— often encounter beneficiary preferences that appear to be of this type.[21] For example, ACTIONAID workers in Bhola Island, Bangladesh noticed that the majority of women participants in its microcredit program transferred their loans to their husbands (Archer and Cottingham 1996, 4.1.1). Development practitioners throughout South Asia worry that women's own behaviors and beliefs concerning intra-household food distribution contribute to their disproportionate malnourishment (Ramachandaran 2006; Papanek 1990).[22] Before an intervention by the Indian government, the women of a desert region near Mahabubanagar, India lived under very poor sanitary conditions but did not seem to have a problem with them (Nussbaum 2000b, 113). Practitioners in various areas of Sub-Saharan Africa describe women's own highly positive attitudes toward genital cutting practices as significant obstacles to the eradication of these practices (COGWO, Nagaad, and WAWA 2004; Mandaleo ya Wanawake 2000).

What should development practitioners do when they encounter preferences like these? Our feminist intuition is not likely to be that they should unquestioningly respect these preferences because they express these women's individuality. Indeed, it is likely to be that they should interrogate or attempt to change them.[23] But on what normative grounds might development practitioners be justified in doing this?

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[21] Although my focus here is on adaptive preference in gender and development contexts, I reiterate that adaptive preference formation is not only present in third world women. Discussions of adaptive preferences in first-world women have surfaced in discussions of eating disorders, See Meyers (2004). Stoljar (2002) discusses American women's adaptive preferences about sexuality, and Friedman (2006) discusses adaptive preferences in battered women. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that adaptive preference formation is a phenomenon exclusively found in women.

[22] For a discussion of the aggregate effects of discrimination against women in nutrition, see Sen (1990).

[23] Of course, this is not the *only* feminist intuition we may have; Lorraine Code, for example, has claimed that such interventions are almost always likely to do more harm than good and we should abandon them, referring to them as "an imperialist alternative that knows no limits" (2000, 76). I agree with Code that interventions that

To the extent that we are liberals or value-pluralists of some sort, responding to this question confronts us with some tensions in our own intuitions. We probably do not want to glibly endorse intervention by public institutions to interrogate adult[24] persons' ideas about how they should live their own lives. Indeed, we usually think it is unjustifiable to attempt to change or interfere with persons' beliefs and behaviors because we think they are mistaken about what is good for them.[25] We hold that human beings can reasonably disagree about the good and that they should be allowed to live according to their own lights—regardless of whether others agree that their chosen lifestyles are good for them. Moreover, value-pluralists know that the second-guessing of persons' conceptions of the good is not new in international development practice, and that the belief that third-world persons' conceptions of the good are somehow deficient has historically justified disastrous imperialist interventions.[26]

But we may believe all of these things and still remain unpersuaded that public indifference is the appropriate moral response to adaptive preferences like those mentioned above. We may find it hard to believe that the preference to malnourish oneself usually represents a conception of the good whose sanctity public institutions should defend. Indeed, we may go so far as to feel suspicious of public institutions that refuse to intervene to change preferences that evidence deprivation on the grounds that those people actually

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are likely to do more harm than good should not be pursued. But I do not think we should assume *a priori* that no attempts at preference transformation will be successful.

[24] I specify "adult persons" here, because most liberal theories do endorse normative education for children.

[25] Liberal theories tend to hold that intervention is only justified when a person's chosen conception of the good imposes undue costs on others.

[26] For a discussion of the imperialist function of the belief in the deficiency of third world women's conceptions of the good in development practice see Shiva (1989).

"want to be deprived." This is what we feminists typically feel when liberal public institutions represent domestic violence as the result of women's choices.

Development theorists and practitioners have suggested one way of dissolving the tension between our feminist and value-pluralist intuitions: thinking of preference transformation as *empowerment*. Perhaps we need not worry that questioning and transforming women's adaptive preference is a way of judging them according to values that are not their own or imposing values that are not their own on them. Perhaps transforming women's preferences is the result of "empowering" them – for the first time—to form their own conceptions of value and to live according to them. Development practitioners use the term "empowerment" in a variety of ways, but they converge on the conception of empowerment as the process of transforming adaptive preferences (Nagar and Raju 2003)[27] and gaining the capacity to make decisions about the course of one's own life.

In philosophical terms, the strain of development theory that promotes empowerment against adaptive preferences defines empowerment as the process of becoming autonomous according to some procedural conception of autonomy. Autonomy is the capacity for self-rule. Procedural accounts of autonomy hold that the mark of self-rule is not adherence to any particular set of values, but rather standing in a particular type of relationship to one's values. Public intervention aimed at changing adaptive preferences is justified on empowerment views, not because adaptive preferences contain aberrant *contents*, but because adaptive preferences are not autonomous conceptions of the good, and public institutions owe individuals the ability to autonomously form and pursue conceptions of the good.

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[27] Development practitioners tend to use the term "internalized oppression" rather than "adaptive preference."

If we can justify public concern about adaptive preferences without attention to their value-content, it becomes less likely that public interventions designed to change them will devolve into the arbitrary privileging of one conception of the good over another. We can justify interventions to change adaptive preferences without having to simultaneously justify public intervention in the lives of all persons whose conceptions of the good are somehow aberrant, because adaptive preferences do not count as conceptions of the good. Indeed, our feminist intuition about adaptive preferences may not be an intuition about what types of conceptions of the good are acceptable at all; it is an intuition about the conditions under which authentic conceptions of the good can be formed and maintained. We can reconcile the feminist and liberal/pluralist intuitions by saying simultaneously that autonomously-formed, self-regarding conceptions of the good should always be exempt from public suspicion *and* that adaptive preferences are not autonomously formed.

In this chapter, I ask whether this path for harmonizing our intuitions about value-pluralism with our feminist intuitions about adaptive preferences is coherent and capable of providing normative guidance for development practitioners. I examine the criteria for identifying adaptive preferences generated by four different procedural conceptions of autonomy—autonomy as rationality, autonomy as life-planning, autonomy as agency, and autonomy as access to conditions for flourishing. I discover that none of these procedural conceptions of autonomy generates criteria for identifying adaptive preferences that are both 1) practically plausible and 2) consistent with our intuitions about which preferences count as adaptive. I conclude that we cannot use a purely procedural account of autonomy or empowerment to consistently identify adaptive preferences. Procedural autonomy is thus not the key to reconciling our feminist intuitions about adaptive preferences with our commitment to value-pluralism.

2.2 THE ROLE OF ADAPTIVE PREFERENCE IDENTIFICATION IN DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

2.2.1 Preference Suspicion

Distinguishing adaptive preferences that merit public concern from conceptions of the good that merit immediate public respect is not simply a matter of theoretical interest. Making such distinctions is an integral part of development practice. Development practitioners often refuse to take at face value the expressed preferences of development beneficiaries. Gender and development theorists and practitioners consistently report suspicion that the choices of their target populations are effects of their deprivation.[28]

It may seem that I am using the word "choice" too liberally here, because our intuitions about adaptive preferences often lead us to characterize them as non-choices. For example we may not think that the choice between staying in an abusive relationship and feeding one's children is a real choice, or we may think that a choice between these alternatives is "a choice no one should be forced to make."[29] However, it still represents a preference of one alternative over the other. For this reason, I will continue the words "choice" and "preference" throughout this dissertation to refer to the adoption of one alternative over others. My employment of these terms is in no way meant to diminish the fact that sometimes only rotten alternatives are available.

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[28] It is worth pointing out that refusing to take beneficiary preferences at face-value and flatly overriding them are two different things. In this chapter, I am concerned with the grounds on which practitioners might suspect beneficiary preferences, not the grounds on which they may coerce them.

[29] Sara Ruddick uses this phrase to describe the choices between deprivation and infanticide the Brazilian women in Nancy Shepherd-Hughes *Death Without Weeping* (1993) are forced to make. See Ruddick (1995).

When development practitioners treat expressed beneficiary preferences as invitations to further intervention (and these expressed preferences are not explicitly preferences for government intervention), they preliminarily identify certain preferences as adaptive. They suspect the preferences of the deprived of not being the sort of conceptions of the good whose sanctity they should be trying to protect.

A now-famous example of such preference-suspicion is Sen's questioning of the self-reported happiness levels of Indian widows. In a 1944 study in Calcutta, only 2.5 percent of widows described their condition as "ill," where almost half of widowers readily used this adjective to describe themselves. This was striking given that objective health measures suggested that many of the widows were actually ill and that the widows as a group were actually far worse off than their male counterparts. Sen does not treat this difference between women and men's self-representations as a merely aesthetic difference to be respected by public institutions. Rather, he opines that the widows' evaluations of their own health reveal an underlying self-image generated by oppression and an attempt to cut-down their desires to match up with life-options that have been unjustifiably constricted (Sen 1985, 82).

Sen's suspicion surfaces in the context of a discussion of whether utilitarianism can provide a sufficient basis for social policy. Practitioners also often suspect that certain preferences reflect deprivation and that leaving them intact may perpetuate injustice. Practitioners frequently attribute problems implementing development projects to the adaptive preferences of intended beneficiaries and/or assume that their existing life-choices manifest adaptive preferences. Take the example of practitioners' response to the surprisingly high rate at which women recipients of micro-loans in Bangladesh transfer their loans to their male family members. One study in Bangladesh found that 22% of female loan

recipients did not know what had happened to their loan money and that only 37% of female loan recipients retained their loans in their names (Goetz and Sen Gupta 1996, 47). An ACTIONAID evaluation of its own failed program on Bhola Island noted that the *vast majority* of its women loan recipients handed the money over to their husbands (Archer and Cottingham 1996, 4.1.1). Development practitioners in cases like these interpret women's choices to transfer their loans to their male relatives as signs that their projects have not gone far enough rather than as injunctions to respect the desires of beneficiary women to forego financial independence.

For another—perhaps more controversial--[30] example of development practitioner suspicion of beneficiary preferences, we need only look to the motivations of anti- female genital cutting activists in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The Kenyan organization Maendeleo Ya Wanawake considers women's perception that female genital cutting "is an important aspect of a girl's social, moral and physical development, allowing passage from girlhood to womanhood, bestowing respectability on her and generally permits her to be a fully participating member of the society" to be the primary obstacle to the eradication of female genital cutting—and considers alteration of this system of beliefs to be an important part of its mission (Maendeleo Ya Wanawake 2000). A report by the Somali organizations COGWO (Coalition of Women's Organizations), Nagaad (an umbrella of Somali NGOs), and WAWA (We Are Women Activists Network) considers the persistence of the belief that "female sexuality must be controlled [through genital cutting] to ensure 'purity' and 'virginity'" to be an invitation to "carefully designed awareness-raising and community education activities" (COGWO, Nagaad, and WAWA 2004).

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[30] For discussions of the ethical controversy surrounding female genital cutting, see Tamir (1996), Nussbaum (1999), Meyers (2000), Kassindja (1999), and Gordon (1997).

2.2.2 Preference Suspicion and Participatory Development Methodologies

The need for practitioners to be able to deem certain types of preferences suspect is irreducibly present in development practice—even participatory development practice. We might assume, as the rhetoric of development practice often does, that the employment of participatory research and evaluation methodologies[31] will eliminate the need for development practitioners to morally evaluate the preferences of the persons they are intended to serve. It is certainly true that participatory methodologies decrease the extent to which moral evaluation is the task of outsiders alone, and the final two chapters of this dissertation are devoted to describing why this is a good thing. However, we cannot expect participatory methodologies to eliminate the need for grounds for public suspicion that certain preferences are adaptive.

One reason for this is that women often seem to exhibit adaptive preferences about the very prospect of their own participation in development programs. Poor women often prefer not to participate when faced with the opportunity to take part in development activities that are designed to "empower" them. ACTIONAID practitioners involved in the Bhola Island microcredit project mentioned above describe the process of even getting women to interact with them as very difficult. At the outset, the women refused to leave their houses to interact with development practitioners. Once they did so, they would only with veils and two umbrellas to cover their entire bodies (Archer and Cottingham 1996, 4.1.1). A study of participatory development in Uganda noted that "a deep lack of self-esteem" on the part of young women in particular inhibited them from voicing their interests (Mukasa and Mugisha 1999).

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[31] For more information about current participatory development methodologies—especially Participatory Rural Appraisal, see Sillitoe (2002), Gujit and Shah (1998), and Kothari (2001).

Indeed, development practitioners who employ participatory methodologies often identify women's recognition of and changing of their own adaptive preferences as an *outcome* of recipient interaction with development practitioners. Women often seem at the outset of participatory development activities to acquiesce to the conditions of deprivation in which they live, and it is only *through* interaction with development practitioners and one another that they see things differently. Women's identification of their own problems is not always something that happens automatically. Showing women "that they can successfully challenge individuals and institutions opposed to their self-interests" is in itself an important goal of development practice (Papanek 1990, 168) and this means that practitioners must make normative judgments about the adaptiveness of beneficiary preferences even when participatory methodologies are in use.

Development practitioners—particularly those promoting women's "empowerment"-- often celebrate the arousal of discontent in women who were not discontented before. One manual describing the uses of participatory methodologies in development projects that focus on water and sanitation issues cites women's becoming "aware that they all shared the same water and sanitation problems" one of the central successes of participatory methodologies in one Java, Indonesia (The United Nations, 2003). The same study of participatory methodologies in sub-Saharan Africa cited in the previous paragraph counts the fact that "in Oseera village [Uganda], one elder woman finally plucked up the courage and took advantage of a general community meeting to air women's concerns about AIDS, child marriage and bearing many children" as an example of a desirable development outcome (Mukasa and Mugisha 1999, 3). Sagwati Raju, who has worked on empowerment projects throughout India recounts the following success story:

> There were these women who, five to six years ago, would not even talk face-to-face with male strangers. If they had to respond to any queries from men outside

their household and no one else was around, they talked from behind closed doors or remained silent. Sometimes they responded by using a wall as an intermediary: "Bheet ka doh ki Lali ki papa ghar main nani hain [wall, tell him father is not at home]"! This denoted reverence toward men, who often did not consider women worth face-to-face interaction anyway. As a result of interventions by NGOs, along with the central and state governments, the same women now not only talk to male strangers but also offer hospitality. (Nagar and Raju 2003, 4).

For participatory development to get off the ground, participants must be able to identify their own problems and represent them in public. However, adaptive preferences can interfere with both of these capacities, and this fact requires development practitioners to be able to question preferences that appear to be of this type.

It is not only in evaluating women's preferences that interfere with their authentic participation that development practitioners—participatory and otherwise—must be able to distinguish adaptive preferences from life-choices worthy of respect and social support. Identifying groups to target with development projects also requires initial judgments about the life-choices of the groups in question. Projects that aim to end deprivation must be targeted toward persons who are deprived. This requires that development practitioners be able to make at least preliminary judgments about whose life choices are adapted to deprivation—even when the deprived persons do not seem themselves that way or do not ask public institutions to end their deprivation. This does not mean that these preliminary judgments will turn out to be vindicated when practitioners and recipients deliberate together, but it does mean that there remains an important role in participatory development for concern over the adaptiveness of recipient preferences.

2.3 ADAPTIVE PREFERENCES AS PROCEDURAL AUTONOMY DEFICITS

2.3.1 The Appeal of Using A Procedural Conception of Autonomy to Identify Adaptive Preferences

Identifying adaptive preferences—by distinguishing them from conceptions of the good worthy of public respect-- plays an important and inevitable role in development practice. As I have already suggested, a procedural theory of autonomy may help us to clarify the normative grounds on which such distinctions can be made without sacrificing a commitment to value-pluralism. Recall that defining empowerment as becoming procedurally autonomous (and correspondingly identifying adaptive preferences as procedurally nonautonomous) is particularly attractive to those with commitments to liberalism and value pluralism, because it promises to distinguish adaptive preferences without attention to the content of those preferences. Procedural criteria for identifying adaptive preferences promise to allow us to identify adaptive preferences without public commitment to a particular set of values. If procedural criteria for identifying adaptive preferences are available, identifying them is not a matter of development practitioners deciding that some conceptions of the good are better than others and encouraging persons to adopt the 'better'' ones. Identifying adaptive preferences is a matter of discovering which preferences and behaviors do not authentically belong to their bearers.

There is a second reason we should find procedural criteria for adaptive preference identification appealing. It seems at first glance that what concerns us about adaptive preferences is not their content. It seems feasible to look at two preferences with the same content and call one adaptive and the other nonadaptive. We want to be able to say, for

example, that there is a difference between renouncing most of one's worldly possessions for religious reasons and not having many worldly possessions because one is very poor. Similarly, we want to say that the fact that an individual is leading a life of celibacy is not in itself cause for public concern, but the fact that she is celibate because she is afraid that she will experience violence from the men in her community if she does not *is*. This indicates that the moral claim adaptive preferences exert on public institutions is not traceable—or exclusively traceable—to their content.

In order to examine whether and how it is possible to identify adaptive preferences based on a conception of autonomy, we need to propose and examine some different ways of employing the concept of autonomy to identify adaptive preferences. Here, I propose and critically examine four different conceptualizations of autonomy and the criteria for identifying adaptive preferences they generate: autonomy as rationality, autonomy as life-planning, autonomy as agency, and autonomy as access to conditions for flourishing.

2.3.2 Autonomy as Rationality

Perhaps the right way to distinguish adaptive preferences from nonadaptive ones is on the basis of their rationality. Defining empowerment as some type of rationality finds much support in the rhetoric of participatory development practitioners, especially those who are strongly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. These practitioners suggest that the disempowered state of adaptive preference formation is one that lacks reflection and is therefore not fully human (Barroso 2002). The fundamental idea behind the definition of empowerment as rationality is that adaptive preferences are preferences that have not been adequately reflected upon. Conversely, public intervention aimed at preference

transformation should encourage persons who have not had a chance to rationally consider their preferences to consciously evaluate them.

2.3.2.1 Rationality as Full Information

Rationality is a concept that is extremely difficult to pin down. We use it in our everyday language and academic discourses in multiple ways. Even if it seems intuitively correct to say that adaptive preferences are rationality deficits, we should not assume that we know exactly what we mean. A simple way to differentiate rational from adaptive preferences might be to suggest that adaptive preferences are not fully informed. Perhaps persons who have formed adaptive preferences are simply unaware of the consequences of their lifestyles or what options are available. So, for example, the Bangladeshi women in the microcredit example in the first section of this paper may have handed their loan money over to their husbands because they were simply unaware that women can and do start small enterprises in their own names.[32] Women who seem to manifest adaptive attitudes about genital cutting surgeries may simply be unaware of the health risks it poses. Women who live in poor sanitary conditions may do so because they do not know about how germs spread disease.

Much of the appeal of the definition of rationality as full information is that it enables us to think of public intervention to transform adaptive preferences as interfering only with persons' instrumental preferences-- not their preferences about the nature of the good. The preferences being transformed are not preferences about what a good human life *is*; they are just preferences about *how* to achieve their conception of a good human life. By

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[32] Showing beneficiary women images of other women participating in the activities beneficiary women think they are incapable of participating in is a common feature of women's empowerment programs. See Rose (1992) and Bery and Stuart (1996).

promoting full information, public institutions are just providing persons non-normative instruments with which to achieve normative goals they already have. But is this an adequate justification of the wide variety of types of interventions that our intuitions about adaptive preferences seem to justify? It may seem plausible to say that women who live in poor sanitary conditions already want to live lives without disease but do not know how. But it is disingenuous at best to claim that the seemingly adaptive preference to give one's money to one's husband is a non-normative one, given that it is often sustained by an entire network of beliefs about what women should and should not do.

It might be objected at this point that there is no reason to assume that a woman who gives her loans to her husband actually cherishes the belief that this is what good women do. Even if we do not want to exclude the possibility that some women do it because of deeply-held beliefs about femininity, we may think that many others do it out of fear of causing conflict at home or being looked down upon by other community members. Note, however, that if we want to support the intervention of public institutions to reduce the degree to which women are willing to stay in violent homes or to reduce the degree to which communities shame women who do not fulfill certain roles, we cannot support this on the grounds of providing full information.

Thus, one reason to reject the full-information account of empowerment as rationality is that it justifies intervention of *too few types*. It seems that there are occasions where our intuitions about adaptive preference formation should justify public action intended to change persons' normative conceptions. It also seems that the type of preference transformation we want to endorse will require changing the actual conditions persons live in, not just providing them with information. Changing the preferences of a woman who gives her micro-loan to her husband, for example, may not just be a matter of showing her

that other women start businesses in their own names. It may require, for example, support for the creation of social networks that celebrate the possibility of her growing financial independence or educational programs that allow her to experiment with a new sense of competence.

On one hand, the full-information account justifies too few types of intervention. On the other, it justifies intervention in too many cases. It is worth asking ourselves whether we really think public institutions are justified in examining all preferences that are not fully informed. Two types of cases where the answer to this question seems to be undoubtedly negative are cases where persons' uninformed preferences seem to be good for them and where persons' uninformed preferences are morally trivial. So, for example, it probably does not arouse our intuitions about the need for public intervention when a woman does *not* want to undergo genital cutting surgery, even if she is ignorant of the statistics about its complications. Indeed, if we were strongly committed to the full information test, we would want such a woman to be informed about both the risks of genital cutting and its potential benefits (increased marriage prospects for example). We also probably do not think it is grounds for public intervention when a woman participant in a microcredit program opts to buy and sell goats instead of buying and renting out a cellular phone if both of these activities can provide her a sufficient income-- even if she has not performed in-depth calculations about the prospective financial advantages of each strategy.

We do not suspect that all preferences that manifest lacks of information are adaptive. We should therefore ask ourselves what implicit criteria distinguish the cases where a lack of information provokes our feminist intuition from those where it does not. We cannot avoid answering this question with reference to preference content. For example, we may want to say that the uninformed preference to sell goats instead of rent out a cellular

phone is nonadaptive, because it does not harm the person involved, we suggest that preferences with harm-causing contents must be adaptive. Similarly, as soon as we start to say that "good" preferences arrived at without adequate information are autonomous, we are embroiled in making judgments about the goodness and badness of preferences. Altering the full-information test so that it better captures our intuitions about which preferences merit public attention may give us a better test for adaptive preference formation, but it will no longer be a procedural test.

2.3.2.2 Rationality as Reflection

It may be possible to salvage a version of the rationality test by working with a different definition of rationality. A second way of defining rationality might be as critical reflection on one's preferences, as the ability to raise questions about whether one wants to have the preferences that one has. This is similar to Gerald Dworkin's definition of autonomy as the having of second-order preferences (1988). It is also a way of understanding the conception of empowerment motivating the strain of participatory development practice that takes the "conscientization"[33] of beneficiaries to be a way of responding to adaptive preference formation. Once persons reflect on the way they are living their lives, they will discover that they are acquiescing to power structures to which they should not want to acquiesce and change their preferences on their own. As one description of the aims of Participatory Rural Appraisal (the most common participatory development approach) puts it, "people who have lived in marginalized positions need to develop critical insights into the structures, ideas, and practices in society and in themselves that place and keep them in positions of inequality" (de Koning 1995, 34).

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[33] This is Paulo Freire's term. See Barroso (2002).

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It is unclear how this can work as a test for adaptive preference formation, however, without our making a very dangerous empirical assumption. This is the assumption that persons who have formed adaptive preferences are somehow less reflective than the rest of the population. The only reasonable argument I can immediately see in favor of this assumption is that many individuals whose preferences are likely to be suspect have very little formal education. This is the argument to which Marilyn Friedman presumably appeals when she implies that it may be appropriate to suspect (or override) the preferences of some third world women by asking whether they "have been able to develop, earlier in life, the capacities needed to reflect on their situations and make decisions about them" (Friedman 2006, 188). It is implausible to me, however, that one needs formal education to develop capacities to reflect on situations and make decisions about them. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine independent adult human beings being able to get through their lives without having developed these minimal capacities. My grandmother, an Indian widow who never learned to read, was nonetheless a successful midwife who routinely made serious decisions about the health of women and children.

A second reason we should reject the assumption that there is a strong connection between education and adaptive preference formation is that we can imagine plenty of cases that evoke our intuitions about adaptive preferences but do not involve persons who lack education. Battered women in the first world who manifest the preference to stay with their abusers provide just one example. Empirical data about battered women in the United States consistently attest to high levels of domestic violence despite American women's overall high level of educational attainment compared to women in many third world countries.[34]

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[34] The 1996 *National Violence Against Women Survey* reported that nearly one fourth of American women reported being assaulted or raped by a partner during their lifetimes (Tjaden and Thoennes 1998).

Many studies suggest no correlation between American women's educational level and their risk levels for domestic violence, but those that do suggest correlations usually show that only very high levels of education (usually a college degree) decrease women's levels of risk for domestic violence (Tjaden and Thonnes 1998).[35] It seems quite likely that confounding variables such as income—and not changes in women's rational capacities—explain the correlation between very high levels of education and decreased risk for domestic violence. More importantly for our purposes, it seems implausible to claim that only American women with college educations have developed sufficient rational capacity to make reflective decisions. This suggests that the assumption that persons with formal education cannot form adaptive preferences required by the reflectiveness criterion is not borne out by empirical evidence.

The assumption that persons with adaptive preferences are necessarily less reflective than others is not only unwarranted, it is likely to function perniciously on a practical level. If persons with adaptive preferences are unreflective, development practitioners are absolved of the obligation to treat them as though they have reasons for having the preferences that they do. Practitioners can treat beneficiary preferences as not worth understanding. As Seyla Benhabib has eloquently put it, "all understanding….must begin with a methodological and moral imperative to reconstruct meaning as it appears to its makers and creators" (Benhabib 2002, 34). In the place of understanding, however, the assumption that persons with adaptive preferences are unreflective encourages development practitioners to cultivate what Marilyn Frye and Maria Lugones refer to as arrogant perception. This is the perception that

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[35] Moreover, a college degree actually increases an American woman's risk for domestic violence if her partner does not possess one. U.S. domestic violence research consistently show that disparities in education where women possess more education actually increase their susceptibility to domestic violence (Zawit, Hornung, et.al. 1981; Tjaden and Thoennes 1998; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2006).

does not realize that "'to know the seen, one must consult something other than one's will and fears and interests and imagination'" (Lugones 1987, 4). Development practitioners who think that their beneficiaries are unreflective are likely to think that they can adequately reconstruct the psychologies of beneficiaries without participating in any genuine encounter with them. To use Chandra Talpade Mohanty's term, beneficiaries can be approached as simply "unconscious reactors" (Mohanty 1992).

As well as being morally objectionable in its own right, arrogant perception will decrease the extent to which development practitioners see persons with suspect preferences as bearers of epistemic authority, as persons whose perceptions are valuable in the construction of strategies for change. Indeed, a common feature of the rhetoric of participatory development that sees itself as encouraging critical reflection is the claim that the unreflective state is "animal" or less than human in some other way (Barroso 2002, 4-5). Viewing beneficiaries as less than rational is likely to result in development practice that is only participatory in name. It is also likely to result in the choice of projects and strategies that will fail because they are based on misunderstandings of the specificities of situations. Moreover, to the extent that beneficiaries know that that they are being condescended to, projects undertaken under the assumption that the beneficiaries are unreflective are likely to fail because of a lack of beneficiary ownership.

Up to this point however, I may have been unfair in characterizing the idea of empowerment as reflection as entailing the assumption that persons with adaptive preferences are unreflective. Perhaps it is not some threshold level of rationality that persons with adaptive preferences lack; perhaps it is a high level of reflexivity. But this path is fraught with problems as well. One of these is that the presupposition that there is any positive correlation between reflexivity and nonadaptive preferences is questionable. Plenty of

preferences that we are inclined to call adaptive manifest higher levels of reflection than their nonadaptive counterparts. The woman who systematically malnourishes herself to feed her husband exhibits an extremely reflective attitude toward her food consumption. It seems strange to suggest that her preference is less revealing of conditions of deprivation than the preference to eat a sufficient number of calories without thinking about it. A second problem with saying that having nonadaptive preferences requires a high level of reflection sets the bar for nonadaptive preferences too high. Most preferences would probably fail a robust reflection test.

A proponent of the reflection criterion might want to say that she does not call persons with adaptive preferences unreflective or less reflective. Perhaps she only assumes that the reflections of persons with adaptive preferences are not *critically* reflective. Unfortunately, however, this attempt to rehabilitate the rationality as reflection test fails on the same grounds as the attempt to rehabilitate the rationality as full information test—it introduces significant attention to preference content into the test. The difference between critically reflective consciousness and reflective consciousness must be a difference in the content of the consciousness. We might be tempted to believe that it is not if we presuppose that one cannot endorse existing power structures and simultaneously be highly reflective. But in a world where eloquent defenses of institutions like patriarchy and colonialism—even from people who we would claim are harmed by these institutions-- abound, this position seems dubious.

The rationality as full information and the rationality as reflection criteria both turn into content-sensitive criteria when we attempt to defend them against some compelling objections. These versions of the rationality test share two other flaws. Like the rationality as full information test, the rationality as reflection test justifies public intervention in cases of

preferences that seem wildly out of line with our feminist intuition. Just like the full information test, the reflection test implies that, for example, the unreflective choice not to undergo a genital cutting surgery demands public concern.

A second flaw shared by both rationality tests above is that they require that persons act as though they want all of their preferences to be based on true judgments about the world. In this sense also, neither test is effectively procedural. Some types of preferences— particularly preferences not to reflect or to be denied information-- would always fail to meet these criteria. The most glaring example of preferences that would fail these tests is that of preferences motivated by religious concerns. Some preferences of this sort-- like the preference not to know one's options for education because one believes it is God's will that women be cloistered-- might incite our feminist intuition about adaptive preferences. But a good many preferences to act unreflectively or without full information do not—such as the preference not to know the extent of one's illness because one believes that it will depress her when she believe that constant hope is a religious duty.

2.3.2.3 Rationality as Self-Interest

A final attempt to salvage the rationality test that is worth considering is to redefine rationality as self-interest. Redefining rationality as self-interest can help us to make sense of the impulse to define adaptive preference formation as a deficit in rationality to begin with. Perhaps adaptive preferences appear irrational, because they are contrary to persons' self-interests and no rational person would choose against their interests. It is likely that we were tempted to think that adaptive preferences were preferences made without sufficient reflection or information, because we tacitly believe that a sufficiently reflective or informed choice will always be a self-interested choice.

Moreover, theorists who focus on adaptive preference formation often suggest that a capacity to act out of self-interest is precisely what persons with adaptive preferences lack. Amartya Sen frequently indicates that persons with adaptive preferences need to develop perceptions of self-entitlement (Sen 1999b). John Elster, who coined the term "adaptive preference formation," describes it as a failure on the part of persons to adequately identify and act on their own interests. For Elster, adaptive preferences are arrived at through the same type of process through which the fox in LaFontaine's fable arrives at the judgment that the grapes that he cannot have are sour. That is, a person forms an adaptive preference when she comes to think that something she cannot have is not worth having simply because she cannot have it. This causes her to misidentify her self-interest; because she no longer thinks it would benefit her to have that thing, she stops seeking it.

Self-interest is itself a very difficult concept to define. Theorists of rational choice typically define an act as self-interested if one can reasonably expect it to increase one's utility. The question of whether it is coherent to see actual persons as seekers of utility has provoked much warranted debate in economics and philosophy, but I will not deal with this question here. Let us assume for the moment that persons are seekers of utility and that acts that contribute to one's utility are self-interested. Acts that do not contribute to one's self-interest are acts taken under the influence of adaptive preferences.

Does this definition effectively identify the types of preferences that our feminist intuition tells us that public institutions cannot justifiably ignore? If we define utility subjectively—that is, if we say that utility is simply an individual's feeling of satisfaction-- we must answer this question in the negative. A wide variety of preferences that that our intuitions identify as adaptive may increase persons' overall utility. The woman who systematically undernourishes herself to feed her husband may experience an increase in

utility even if her preference decreases her bodily health. She may, for example, feel genuinely proud of her acting in the way a "good woman" should. As Hannah Papanek, who has extensively analyzed intrahousehold food distributions in India asserts, part of the process of learning to live with less food on one's plate is learning the "compulsory emotions" that are supposed to accompany it (Papanek 1990, 163). An adult woman who has lived her entire life this way is quite likely no longer simply going through the motions of feeling these "compulsory emotions". It is quite possible that such a woman gains more utility from the boost to her self-image she gains from denying herself food than she would gain from eating the food. Nothing in the definition of utility stipulates that she must value her bodily health more than her feelings of satisfaction. If preferences that are self-interested are preferences that increase one's level of overall satisfaction, this woman exhibits no failure of self-interest.

What happens if we give objective content to the conception of utility? This is notoriously hard to do, but let us suggest-- for argument's sake--that actions that jeopardize one's bodily health are necessarily not self-interested. One advantage of such an assumption is that it makes practical implementation of this test more imaginable. We do not have to be able to understand the minutia of individuals' personal utility calculations in order to diagnose lacks of self-interest if we can assume that the same types of goods are constitutive of self-interest.

Yet even with this assumption that decisions compromising bodily health are not self-interested in hand, we cannot capture many preferences that our intuitions would deem adaptive. It is not difficult to imagine cases of a person simultaneously making choices that harm their bodily health according to some objective metric and making the type of choice our feminist intuition suggests no one should be forced to make. A woman may

systematically malnourish herself for reasons other than that it contributes to a certain self-image. She may, for example, malnourish herself because if she does not nourish her husband above a certain level, he will not make it through the workday and neither of them will have food. Or she may malnourish herself because she knows that if her husband suspects her of taking more than her "fair share" he will beat her. Still another option is that she knows that if she leaves him, she will have less food because she will not be able to find employment to support herself. In all of these cases, intuition tells us that the woman's choice to malnourish herself merits public attention. But it would seem strange to claim that her action is not self-interested, since she is expressing the most self-interest with regard to bodily health she can possibly express in her circumstances.

Perhaps we can resolve this conflict by giving further objective content to the concept of utility. We might say that in order to be acting out of self-interest a person must not only be doing the best she can to secure some given good (such as bodily health) or list of goods; she must also demonstrate a desire for the quantity of that good that would be conducive to her flourishing. Thus a person who has adaptive preferences is not just a person who is deprived with respect to some important good, it is a person who thinks that she does not need more of the good than she has. It is a person who is a victim of the sour grapes phenomenon insofar as she thinks that the good that she does not have is not worth having above the level at which she has it.

This is the type of adaptive preference formation Nussbaum attempts to attribute to Jayamma, one of the poor Indian women whose life experiences she refers in *Women and Human Development*. According to Nussbaum's speculative reconstruction of her psychology, Jayamma worked in a brick kiln in which women were paid less for heavier work than men and did not even understand anything to be wrong with her lack of access to the same

opportunities as men (Nussbaum 2000b). However, whether this preference appears as adaptive on the self-interest criterion or not depends on what is on our list of the type of goods one is expected to be interested in securing.

It remains possible that the very preference not to be troubled by one's mistreatment helps one to secure access to other goods whose desiring constitutes self-interest. It may be the case that if Jayamma lets herself become angry, she will not feel able to stop herself from protesting at work. She knows that if she does this, she will lose her job and access to money to support her family. Or it may be the case that if Jayamma starts wanting wages equal to those of men, she will not be able to sleep at night. Accepting that this is just the way things are will provide her an opportunity for what Elster calls "reducing cognitive dissonance" (Elster 1987, 110). This in turn will help her to perform the tasks required by her daily life more efficiently. Whether or not making the desire for certain quantities of certain goods constitutive of self-interest a tenable project depends largely on which goods a self-interested person is supposed to desire.

Attempting to make the rationality as self-interest test coherent leads us down the same path as our attempts to make the rationality as full information and rationality as reflection tests did. We begin to distinguish adaptive preferences from nonadaptive ones based on the content of those preferences. When we attempt to provide a definition of self-interest that is assessable by a third party, we begin to define an empowered person according to the contents of what she prefers. Furthermore, even if giving objective content to the conception of self-interest can help us to place more preferences we think of as adaptive under the umbrella concept of self-interest, it is also likely to require us to take many preferences we do not intuitively consider to be adaptive under the same umbrella. For example, if interest in bodily health did find its way onto the list—which seems likely—

we would be unable to avoid identifying the preference to engage in religious fasting as adaptive.

2.3.3 Autonomy as Life-Planning

All three attempts to define empowerment as rationality turn out not to capture our intuitions about which preferences are adaptive-- without the addition of significant attention to preference content. In addition, the reflection test contains dangerously paternalistic attitudes about persons who have formed adaptive preferences. Thus a definition of autonomy that relies heavily on notions of rationality fails to provide the type of procedural criteria for adaptive preferences we are looking for. However, several contemporary feminist ethicists suggest that it is possible to define autonomy without such a strong emphasis on rationality. One of these ethicists is Diana Meyers who claims that autonomous people are simply people who ask the question "How do I want to live my life?" and answer it with some consistency (Meyers 1987, 624). According to this definition, we may be able to identify persons with nonadaptive preferences as those who embrace their preferences as part of their life-plans.

Elster attempts to salvage the possibility of using a theory of autonomy to discern adaptive preferences by appealing to this sort of definition. He explicitly confronts the dilemma posed by our last definition of autonomy as rationality—the idea of autonomy as self-interest. Just as we did, he notices that it is difficult from within a conception of autonomy to distinguish adaptive preferences from other types of non-self-interested preferences. What, he asks, is the difference between the fox who does not want the grapes because he thinks they are sour and the Buddhist or Stoic who does not want material goods because of his religious beliefs? According to Elster, a notion of "character-planning" can

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facilitate the distinction. Simply put, Elster thinks that the Buddhist has planned his character and the person with adaptive preferences has not. According to him, the formation of adaptive preferences "is a purely causal process of adaptation, taking place 'behind the back' of the person concerned" (Elster 1987, 117). Thus, a person who has adaptive preferences cannot have incorporated those preferences into her life plan, because she does not even know that she has them.

2.3.3.1 Life-Planning as the Understanding of Personal History

Two different conceptions of the role of a life-plan in the life of a person with adaptive preferences propose themselves here. Elster may mean that a person with adaptive preferences has not successfully understood the role of the adaptive preferences in her life plan. Or he may mean that she is simply not living according to her life-plan. It is more likely that he means the latter, but the former claim is also worthy of consideration. The former claim seems to rehash a type of rationality as reflection test and is subject to most of its pitfalls. Like that test, it sets a very high bar for forming preferences that are not grounds for public concern. Indeed, it sets the bar even higher than the reflection test. Now being generally reflective, or highly reflective, is not enough to exempt one from preference suspicion. One must also understand what role each of the historical events in one's life have played in one's character-formation.

Raising the standards for reflectiveness in this way makes this new version of the reflectiveness criterion even more difficult to use in practice than the last. It is likely that this one is actually *impossible* to implement in practice. One reason for this is that it requires an unreasonable amount of public surveillance to make it possible for institutions to know the intimate details of individuals' life histories.

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But even if this level of surveillance was not impractical or morally objectionable, its plausibility rests on a metaphysical claim that we may not want to accept. This is the claim that there is one authoritative narrative about the role that certain external conditions play in a person's development. A person's understanding of how she came to hold the beliefs she holds can be evaluated as true or false by a third-party observer. So, for instance, we would have to assume that there is a "true" reason the fox thinks the grapes are sour.

This may not seem particularly problematic for the character in LaFontaine's fable, but it is problematic in the real-life cases we are talking about. Is the "true" reason some woman chooses to give her micro-loan to her husband that she does not enjoy public sphere activity or that she is unconsciously afraid that she will not succeed at it? Is the "true" reason some woman chooses to undergo genital cutting surgery that she believes that it will increase her beauty or that she is afraid she will never get married? These questions do not seem readily answerable.

Elster does suggest a more practically plausible test for distinguishing the self-denying preferences of the Stoic or the Buddhist from those of the person with adaptive preferences that still involves consciousness of one's life-history. According to him, "Adaptive preferences typically take the form of downgrading the inaccessible options, deliberate character-planning would tend to upgrade the accessible ones (Elster 1987, 119). What it means to say that adaptive preference formation happens behind someone's back is that it degrades an unavailable option, which is worse than upgrading an available one "in terms of cardinal want-satisfaction" (Elster 1987, 119). The differences between the woman who undernourishes herself and the Buddhist who fasts is that the woman who undernourishes herself thinks that living with a full belly is undesirable, where the Buddhist thinks there is something to be learned from the state of living with an empty belly.

This attempt to reshape the personal history criterion into the nondevaluation of options that were once positive contains two critical flaws. First, it assumes that adaptive preference formation cannot happen through the upgrading of existing options. Yet many of the real-life cases that are most likely to elicit our intuitions about adaptive preference formation seem to involve precisely this. Recall the statistic I cited at the beginning of this paper about widows in Calcutta who did not think they were ill even when objective measures of health suggested that a large number of them were. This is precisely the type of case this Elster-inspired criterion says cannot exist.[36] Conditions of deprivation have most likely contributed to the widows' self-conceptions. But the widows in the study did not claim that health was not important; rather they upgraded their actual state to describe it as not ill.

Second, using option *degradation* as a criterion for adaptive preferences removes us from the domain of procedural autonomy. The notion that persons are *devaluing* goods does not make sense unless we stipulate some objective value of the goods that the contents of persons' preferences ought to reflect. We might think that we can get around this problem by defining devaluation as a decrease in the individuals' evaluation of the good over time. This is ostensibly what the fox in La Fontaine's fable does. He wants the grapes at first and decides they are sour only when he realizes he cannot have them. So perhaps all we need to say that he has devalued the grapes is to be able to point out that his own valuation has shifted from positive to negative.

But this does not dissolve the need to objectively identify the valuable goods, because the type of preference transformation we are likely to think is a good thing can

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[36] Since Elster's definition of adaptive preference is slightly different from ours, it is somewhat unclear what he would make of the woman who devalues her own nutrition because of beliefs about femininity. He would probably not see her as having formed adaptive preferences since more than merely "causal" processes have contributed to the formation of these preferences. However, these preferences still appear to be questionable because of their complicity with conditions of deprivation.

happen by the same process. The woman who changes her attitudes toward genital cutting may, for example, begin by believing that genital cutting increases women's beauty and then grow to believe that it actually decreases it. Her practice of "devaluation" seems to be a move from a seemingly adaptive preference to a nonadaptive one. Thus we cannot use "degradation" of certain options as a criterion for adaptive preference formation without introducing content-sensitive criteria for adaptive preference formation.

2.3.3.2 Life-Planning as Living According to a Life-Plan

We may be able to interpret Elster's idea that character-planning is not adaptive preference formation in a different way. Perhaps Elster means that the person with adaptive preferences is not living according to her life-plan. On this view, the real difference between the Buddhist and the person with adaptive preferences is that the Buddhist has her way of life as a sort of meta-preference where the person with adaptive preferences has not. If you ask the Buddhist whether her ascetic lifestyle reflected her conception of the good, she will answer you in the affirmative. If you ask the person with adaptive preferences whether their deprivation represents their conception of the good, she will say that it does not.

One significant advantage of this conception of the person with adaptive preferences as one who does not endorse her preferences is that it allows us to hold that preferences can be rational and adaptive at the same time. A woman may prefer to give her micro-loan to her husband over being screamed at by him every evening. However, perhaps it is the case that what she would prefer on the level of a life-plan is to live in a world where these are not her only two choices. Perhaps what she would really prefer is to be able to leave her husband without shame and keep the money. The choice to give her loan to him is therefore not an

autonomous choice we think should be protected from public institutions, because it is not her real conception of the good life.

As appealing as the conception of adaptive preferences as those that are inconsistent with individuals' life-plans may be, it identifies adaptive preferences in a way wildly out-of-sync with our intuitions. It does not successfully pick out many—perhaps even most—of the most intuitively glaring cases of adaptive preference formation. These are the cases in which persons endorse conditions of oppression and deprivation. The suggestion that persons with adaptive preferences are simply persons who experience gaps between what they want and what they can have is very appealing if we believe that nobody could possibly *want* to have the preferences we are inclined to classify as adaptive.

But, I would suggest, this suspicion is often based on a lack of interpretive charity toward the persons who endorse preferences that seem adaptive. Friends and colleagues with whom I discuss this dissertation project often insist that nobody could possibly want certain preferences. My friends and colleagues typically articulate the preferences in normatively-laden language that does make it difficult to imagine anybody wanting those preferences. It is for example, difficult to imagine a person who wants to "go hungry all day." But it is much less difficult to imagine someone who wants to make sure the people they care about eat enough or to learn to be less demanding like a good woman should. The preference of the woman who malnourishes herself to feed her husband seems adaptive, but the life-plan test can say nothing about it since she endorses the belief.

It may still seem that preferences like these are not the women's *real* preferences—even if they are meta-preferences. Nussbaum demonstrates sympathy for this view when she claims that when persons seem to manifest adaptive preferences for their conditions of deprivation we should "probe more deeply" (Nussbaum 2000b, 42).

Perhaps she believes that if we just probe deeply enough, we will find a core of preferences that are nonadaptive.

There may be something to this idea, and I will return to it in Chapter 3. However, we should be wary of the idea that persons' reports about why they believe cannot themselves be suspect. Theories of ideology frequently suggest that persons' descriptions of their reasons for their behavior often uncritically reflect social norms,[37] even when their behavior itself challenges them. For one example of this phenomenon, consider this account from a participatory sex-education workshop for sex-workers run by the Zimbabwean organization OMES (Organization of Women Aids Educators). One of the first questions the workshop facilitator asked was why women chose to sell their bodies. Among the first responses given by the sex worker participants were, "'They are lazy, they don't want to work,' 'They want to steal other women's husbands,'" and "'Because they are bad'" (Reiss-Koncar 2003). It is plausible to maintain that the practitioner in this case had not yet probed deeply enough. In fact, the women's expressed beliefs about themselves did change over the course of the workshop. However, it seems clear that the development practitioner in question took the *content* of the sex-workers' expressed preferences as an invitation to dig deeper. It may very well be that preferences against well-being are unlikely to be very deep, and I will defend this type of view later in the dissertation. For our current purposes, we need only note this: if preference content is seen to be a marker of preference depth, we are no longer dealing with a procedural test.

In addition to letting the preferences that seem most adaptive slip through the cracks, the autonomy as life-planning criterion also classes far too many preferences as

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[37] Deveaux (2003) argues that we should not take the fact that a practice has a moral or cultural justification as evidence that the practice cannot be changed.

adaptive. If any set of preferences that is inconsistent with one's life plan is adaptive, the preferences manifesting weakness of will that are so common in most of our lives would have to count as adaptive. Surely the preference to eat chocolate when one is on a diet does not merit public interrogation.

We may try to fix this defect by saying that adaptive preferences are inconsistent with individuals' life plans because individuals do not have access to the *external* resources for fulfilling their life-plans. But this suggests that adjusting one's preferences so that one can achieve some level of happiness given one's real conditions is necessarily adaptive formation. However, the fact that an individual adjusts her life-plan to the opportunities available to her in her society does not in itself appear to constitute cause for public concern. In fact, John Rawls has goes as far to suggest that public institutions can reasonably *expect* individuals to adjust their life-plans to available opportunities, because social cooperation may require us to demand less for ourselves than we would want in an ideal world (Rawls 1996, 186). He concludes this in the context of a discussion of persons who have expensive tastes as part of their life plans. A person whose ideal life-plan involves the daily consumption of champagne may have to content herself with an occasional glass of white wine given her income level. Rawls does not think this type of sacrifice necessarily manifests the subjection of the champagne-lover to an injustice, and we are unlikely to think her resultant preference for white wine is worthy of state suspicion.

This mention of preferences for white wine and champagne may seem terribly out of place in the present discussion. After all, the real-life preferences development practitioners are likely to confront and want to interrogate are more likely to be about bodily health and self-worth and access to basic income than champagne. Surely, there must be a way to distinguish life-plan/opportunity gaps in these fields of life from life-plan/opportunity gaps

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in ones that may strike us as morally trivial in comparison? It is unclear how we can make such a distinction without making our criterion for adaptive preferences highly content-sensitive. If we say, for example, that preferences that diverge from persons' life-plans and include the preference to compromise one's bodily health are suspect, we immediately turn our attention to preference content.

2.3.4 Autonomy as Agency

A third family of approaches to identifying adaptive preferences as procedurally nonautonomous defines autonomy as agency. Minimally, agency means the ability to make changes in the outside world, or perhaps, the ability to make choices that influence the outside world. It seems clear enough that most persons with adaptive preferences possess this general capacity, and approaches to empowerment that define it as agency do not claim otherwise. Approaches that identify adaptive preferences as deficits in agency assert instead that adaptive preferences are distortions in persons' conceptions of their own agency. More specifically, these approaches assert that adaptive preferences cause people not to conceive of themselves as capable of making changes in the outside world that would contribute to their advancement of their interests.

This view of adaptive preference formation helps make sense of the autobiographical accounts of those who have gone through preference transformation. Time and again, these accounts indicate that their transformed preferences are characterized by an increase in feelings of self-worth and an expansion of the field of activities of which they think they are capable. We can find one instance of such improved self-worth in the testimony of a poor woman participant in an Oxfam-funded literacy project in Khoj, Pakistan. Sabina Alkire cites this woman-- identified as Shabnam-- as saying, "Women think that they are like a

bud—that they do not understand with their own eyes. But we are not buds, we are mountains. We can do anything with out lives. So I tried to open my eyes, and my eyes were opened" (Alkire 2005, 233). Stories like Shabnam's are not uncommon.

2.3.4.1 Agency as Self-Esteem

If we characterize adaptive preferences as deficits in persons' conceptions of their own agency, we have a plausible explanation of how persons can seem not to want things that we imagine they would want given other conditions. The fact that a person is not actively seeking some good may not mean that the person does not want that good. Rather, it may mean that the person does not believe that they are capable of securing the good. So, for example, the woman who transfers her microcredit loan to her husband may not believe that she is (or women in general are) actually capable of managing the loan. A woman who chooses to undergo genital cutting may do so, not because she holds strong beliefs about the practice, but because she thinks she is powerless to resist the pressure to do so.

Much discourse on empowerment in development describes this constricted view of one's own agency as a lack of self-esteem or sense of entitlement. Persons whose preferences seem adaptive, on this view, lack the sense that they are worthy or capable in general. Virtually every contemporary gender and development project asserts that it aims to empower women by increasing their self-esteem. Many preferences that seem intuitively likely to be adaptive are plausibly attributable to low self-esteem. Nussbaum speculates that Jayamma did not protest her work situation or her husband's squandering of his earnings, because she lacked the "concept of herself as a person with rights that could be violated" (Nussbaum 2000b, 114). We might also easily make such judgments about other cases we think manifest adaptive preferences. For example, we can venture that the woman who

chooses to undergo genital cutting does so because she does not think she deserves sexual pleasure or that the woman who malnourishes herself does so because she does not think she deserves to eat.

But this explanation is just too simple to be empirically plausible. The central reason for this, is, in my estimation, that self-esteem is an excessively global concept. It seems highly unlikely that most persons who seem to exhibit adaptive preferences think that they are unworthy human beings who cannot make claims on others. Many practicing participatory rural development facilitators have noticed that groups of women who otherwise seem to lack self-esteem can still attempt to dominate one another in during sessions (Gujit and Shah 1998, Kothari 2001). It is quite likely that the same South Asian women who Papanek's studies saw as acquiescing to not having enough food on their plates will demand humble service from their daughters-in-law in old age. Persons' apparent levels of self-esteem change according to who they are dealing with.

Sen's concept of "cooperative conflict" helps account for this fact. Sen argues that we must understand people's differential senses of entitlement not only with reference to their attitudes toward the goods (Sen 1990a). We must also refer to their relations to one another. What appears as a general lack of self-esteem may be more aptly described as a diminished sense of worthiness relative to some specific other person or persons.

This fact does not necessarily pose a problem for the attempt to understand constricted agency as a lack of self-esteem. Perhaps what it means to lack self-esteem is not to think that one is equal to all others. However, persons' levels of self-esteem do not only vary based on whom they are interacting with. Their attitudes about their own worthiness and competence vary based on what field of life they are operating in. The same woman who is a confident business owner may seem to manifest adaptive preferences about her own

bodily health. A woman who has high levels of self-esteem about her sexuality may also think that a formal education would be wasted on her. Self-esteem is context variant, and this makes it difficult to use a global measure of self-esteem to identify adaptive preferences.

Perhaps we can avoid the problems of understanding adaptive preferences as deficits in self esteem by broadly defining self-esteem. We may propose that a person without adaptive preferences has self-esteem across all domains. However, it is certainly impossible for a person to possess self-esteem across all domains, given that self-esteem in some domains necessarily excludes self-esteem in others. Even if it were possible to be confident across all domains, we must ask ourselves whether we are willing to identify persons who lack self-confidence in certain domains as bearers of adaptive preferences. Certainly there are domains in which a lack of self-esteem does not seem provoke our intuitions about adaptive preference formation. That a person does not think she can be a successful farmer or mathematician does not seem to constitute grounds for public intervention. It might seem that we can get around this problem by specifying important domains in which persons need to exhibit self-esteem and levels of self-esteem they need to exhibit. This may indeed allow us to use a conception of self-esteem to diagnose adaptive preferences, but, once again, it will no longer be a procedural conception.[38]

2.3.4.2 Agency as Public Self-Representation

What if we understand agency in a less global fashion? One way to do this would be to define adaptive preferences as the lack of a conception of one's own political agency. A person who has adaptive preferences would be a person who does not see herself as capable

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[38] Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) propose a notion of domain-specific autonomy that incorporates a conception of the good.

of representing interests in public forums (like participatory development meetings) or making claims on public institutions. Admittedly, this definition of empowerment is not purely procedural. It is sensitive to preference content, because it indicates that persons should exhibit the preference to participate in public life. However, this sensitivity to preference content may be less objectionable than other types of attention to preference content, particularly for the liberal. The liberal is likely to think that the capacity to represent one's preferences in public is a requirement for a democratic society. She thus may be able to provide an argument for why public institutions are more justified in requiring preference to represent one's interests in public life than requiring other preferences.[39]

This redefinition of the agency deficit as a deficit in one's willingess to participate in public life presents a couple of advantages. One of these, as we have already seen, is that it is sensitive to preference content in a way that is less problematic than many other ways of paying attention to preference content. A second advantage is that thinking of adaptive preference as limited conception of one's agency also provides a conceivable explanation of why many persons who appear to have formed adaptive preferences often initially resist interacting with development practitioners. Perhaps they do not believe that their concerns are worthy of public attention, or perhaps they do not believe their participation in public institutions will do any good.

However, a problem with this criterion for adaptive preferences is that it suggests that all preferences not to engage in political life are suspect. This discourages development practitioners from paying attention to the good reasons persons may have for not wanting to take part in participatory development activities. It is clear that many persons refuse to

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[39] Rawls suggests that the state can promote political participation without promoting a comprehensive conception of the good if it does so because an active citizenry is key to preserving persons' basic rights and liberties (1996, 205-206).

interact with development practitioners because they do not believe that it is possible for them to improve their life-conditions. But some persons refuse to interact with development practitioners for other reasons—for instance, that they have had their hopes raised and dashed by development practitioners one too many time. It may be important to the empowerment of beneficiaries vis-à-vis practitioners that the decision not to participate be capable of being a meaningful act.

I do not think that the above argument is decisive against the definition of agency as participation in public life. After all, simply suspecting the preference not to participate in public life does not require that it be impossible for development practitioners to initially be wrong about why persons are reluctant to participate in public life. However, there is another argument against it that carries more weight. This is that the description of adaptive preferences as the absence of competence or desire to participate in public life suffers from the problem opposite that of the description of adaptive preferences as the lack of self-esteem. Where self-esteem is an excessively global concept, participation in public life is an excessively local one.

Many cases that elicit our intuitions about adaptive preferences are unrelated to a desire to participate in political life, and may indeed happily coexist with a desire to participate in political life. If we take seriously the idea that one's self-confidence in a particular arena is related to one's bargaining position relative to others in that arena, we must be aware of the possibility that a battered woman may quite competently represent her interests in a women's self-help group and still manifest the preference to continue to live with her abuser or to malnourish herself vis-à-vis her husband. Moreover, there is another set of preferences our intuitions suggest we should identify as adaptive that seem simply unrelated to the confidence to represent one's interests in public. Adaptive preferences

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about sexual life potentially fall into this class. It is perfectly imaginable that a woman could choose to be celibate because of fear of violence and shame from relatives and simultaneously participate actively in public life.

2.3.4 Autonomy as Access to Conditions for Flourishing

The agency criterion fails to capture our intuitions about adaptive preferences because—without further content-sensitivity—it identifies either too few or too many types of preferences as adaptive. Let us consider one final way of defining autonomy and the criteria for adaptive preferences it generates. We might define autonomy as the capacity to live under conditions that promote human flourishing. This is certainly a very idiosyncratic definition of autonomy. Autonomy is usually taken to be an aptitude of subjects rather than a feature of conditions. It is certainly an insufficient definition of autonomy, given that persons may possess opportunities and nonetheless make choices that seem nonautonomous on any definition—like the choice to go to a job interview while under-the-influence of mind-altering drugs. A definition of autonomy as access to conditions for flourishing must be combined with some other stipulations about subjective states (such as rationality) in order to constitute a full-definition of autonomy.

However, the language of theorists of adaptive preferences often suggests that they take access to conditions for flourishing to be a constituent component of autonomy. Sen claims, for example, that poverty can be a form of coercion just as tyranny can (Sen 1999b, 4). Nussbaum responds to critics of her capabilities list who claim that it is a problem that the list justifies public intervention in the lives of poor women who did not ask public institutions to intervene in their lives with the following:

> Choice is not pure spontaneity, flourishing independently of
> material and social conditions. If one cares about autonomy,

> one must care about the form of life that supports it, and the
> material conditions that enable one to live that form of life.
> Thus the approach [of using a capabilities list] claims that its
> own comprehensive concern with flourishing is a better way
> of promoting choice than the liberal's concern with
> spontaneity alone. (Nussbaum 1999, 45).

It is slightly puzzling what Nussbaum means in this passage. She transitions from the autonomy to flourishing very quickly. There are two different ways to understand this transition. In one, Nussbaum may hold something like a life-planning conception of autonomy and be claiming that one cannot develop the rational capacities needed to reflect on one's preferences absent a very minimal level of nutrition and education. If so, her reconceptualization of autonomy is susceptible to all of the arguments I made against the life-planning and reflection tests above.

However, I do not think that this is precisely the link between autonomy and flourishing Nussbaum wants to make. It is unlikely, because the conception of flourishing entailed in her capabilities list includes much more than the minimal conditions for practical reason (the capacity to enjoy the natural world, for example, does not seem to have an effect on a person's rational capacities). Nussbaum must think that nonflourishing conditions inhibit one's capacities to for autonomy in some other way. I will not venture to fully explain what this other way is here, but there is intuitive resonance to the idea that bad conditions force us to choose things we would not otherwise choose. The idea seems to be, however, that a certain range of options must be available to individuals—in addition to their rational capacities—for their choices to count as autonomous.[40]

Before I discuss the problems with using a conception of autonomy as access to flourishing conditions to identify adaptive preferences, it is worth pointing out one of its

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[40] Natalie Stoljar (2002) discusses the need for feminist theories of autonomy to include access to opportunities to form nondegrading values.

principal advantages. This is that it offers the possibility for circumventing a criticism that is typically levied against theories that justify suspicion of persons' self-regarding preferences—the charge of paternalism. Theories that justify the attribution of false-consciousness are often accused of containing implicit condescending judgments about persons, chief among these the judgments that some persons are deficient in the capacity to make their own judgments about the good. A definition of autonomy as access to flourishing conditions may be able to shift the negative judgment inherent in preference suspicion from a judgment about the persons in question to a judgment about their living conditions.

However, autonomy as access to flourishing has two flaws that constitute grounds for its rejection as an option for a procedural test for adaptive preference formation. The first of these is that it does not do a good job sorting preferences that we intuitively think are adaptive from those we intuitively think are not—even the cases about which we are most sure. Conditions of oppression or deprivation can produce in persons the determination to escape these forms of oppression or deprivation, and we surely would not want to count these preferences as adaptive. Feminist scholarship has provided a plethora of analyses of preferences that members of oppressed groups have developed under conditions of oppression that actually work to empower them. Let us cursorily examine just two examples from feminist sociology. Bonnie Thornton Dill's studies of black women domestic workers in the United States show that their oppression helped them to develop empowering preferences. These women were frequently subjected to verbal abuse and exploitation by their employers, but this caused them to encourage one another to resist the exploitation and to develop concrete strategies for doing so (Dill 1998). Catherine Kohler Riessman's study of childless women in South India showed that these women often responded to the barrage

of insulting comments from their neighbors by coming to understand their neighbors as ignorant (Reissman 2000, 125).

Many preferences formed under conditions of deprivation do not evoke our intuitions about adaptive preferences that demand public concern. This is a problem for the philosopher trying to account for our moral intuitions about adaptive preference formation, because it suggests that the historical conditions under which the preferences were formed are not the root of our worries about them. But this is not necessarily a problem for the practitioner trying to figure out which preferences to suspect. This is because the preferences that the test cannot identify—preferences that have adapted in a good way—are not preferences she is likely to have suspected in the first place. So, for example, the preferences of women whose own experiences being battered have moved them to activism against domestic violence are unlikely to appear to development practitioners as suspect. Conversely, the preferences of women whose experiences being battered have caused them to believe that they are worthless are likely to appear suspect.

Thus, as we may have suspected from the beginning, making access to conditions for flourishing a constituent component of autonomy cannot generate a content-neutral test for adaptive preferences. We may be puzzled about why it makes perfect sense in many other contexts where autonomy is discussed to use the conditions under which preferences are formed as a way of deciding if those preferences are autonomous. In the context of medical decisions, for example, it seems plausible enough to say that the decision to have a surgery because the doctor intimidated them into doing it is not autonomous. However, it seems more questionable to say that a woman who transfers her micro-loan into her husband's name because she is afraid of making him angry is not autonomous. One reason for this is that she may have made an autonomous decision to be in this particular relationship. It is

difficult to identify a moment of decision when we speak of persons' preferences for lifestyles without falling into an infinite regress problem.

This brings to light a more general problem with using a theory of autonomy to identify adaptive preferences. As Kant's moral theory suggests, autonomy is most plausibly construed as a feature of decisions. It is easier to discern whether individual decisions are autonomous, because we can compare decisions to a background life-plan and check for consistency. But when we attempt to apply the theory of autonomy to lifestyle preferences we cannot so easily distinguish between the background life-plan and the particular adaptive preferences. The conditions under which a preference is formed and the preference itself are much more difficult to distinguish from one another. This is why the flourishing test turns out in practice not to be a procedural test; the conditions under which the preferences were formed and the preferences themselves are both describable as preference contents.

2.4 CONCLUSION: BEYOND PROCEDURAL CRITERIA FOR ADAPTIVE PREFERENCES

All four of the conceptualizations of autonomy we have explored—autonomy as access to conditions for flourishing, autonomy as agency, autonomy as life-planning, and autonomy as rationality have failed to yield tests that identify adaptive preferences in a way that is consistent with our feminist intuitions. The chart below summarizes our exploration

Table: Problems with Using Different Conceptions of Procedural Autonomy to Distinguish Adaptive Preferences

CONCEPTION OF PROCEDURAL AUTONOMY	PROBLEMS

Rationality A- Full Information	1. does not justify interventions that do more than provide information
	2. identifies APs inconsistently with our intuitions by saying all uniformed preferences are adaptive
Rationality B- Reflectiveness	1. elitism
	2. encourages seeing bearers of APs as unworthy of consultation
	3. identifies APs inconsistently with our intuitions by saying all unreflective preferences are adaptive
Rationality C- Self-Interest	1. assumes APs cannot contribute to utility
	2. identifies APs inconsistently with our intuitions by saying all non-self-interested preferences are adaptive
Life Planning A- Understanding Personal History	1. assumes single authoritative narrative of individuals' personal histories
	2. cannot coherently explain upgrading and downgrading of goods without attention to preference content
	3. identifies APs inconsistently with our intuitions by saying all preferences

	based on incomplete understandings of personal history are adaptive

Life Planning B- Living In Accordance with Life-Plan	1. identifies APs in a way inconsistent with our intuitions
	
	   a. higher-order preferences cannot be adaptive
	
	   b. preferences manifesting weakness of will must be adaptive
	
	   c. preferences to correct expensive tastes count as adaptive

Agency A- Self-Esteem	1. identifies APs in a way inconsistent with our intuitions by saying all persons with APs lack self-esteem
Agency B- Public Self-Representation	1. identifies APs in a way inconsistent with our intuitions by ignoring APs that do not directly affect political representation
Access to Conditions Conducive to Flourishing	1. identifies APs in a way inconsistent with our intuitions by saying all

	preferences formed under sub-flourishing conditions are adaptive
	2. not neutral to preference content in practice

It may have initially appeared to us that the content of adaptive preferences is not what makes them particularly objectionable. However, the deep difficulties that confront attempts to elaborate purely procedural criteria for adaptive preferences suggest that our intuitions about adaptive preferences may not be content-indifferent either.

The possibility of identifying adaptive preferences consistently seems to require incorporating substantive content into the idea of choice. To put this differently, the problem with adaptive preferences seems not to be that they are *adapted* to their bearers' living conditions. Most—if not all—preferences bear traces of the living conditions they were developed under. The problem seems to be that such preferences are adapted toward acceptance of *unacceptable* living conditions. Once we realize this, the term "adaptive preference" begins to look like a misnomer. Since the term "adaptive preference" suggests a deceptive explanation of what is morally troubling in the types of preferences in question, I suggest we describe them with a different term. I use the term "inappropriately adaptive preference" (IAP) in the remainder of the dissertation.[41] This term incorporates the results of our investigation in this chapter; it does not suggest that all preferences adapted to conditions are morally problematic. The challenge for the coming chapters will be to find a way of justifying suspecting some preferences of being inappropriately adaptive that respects

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[41] I thank Jonathan Warner of Dordt College for suggesting this term to me.

persons' capacities to make choices and legitimate divergences among their conceptions of the good.

3.0 INAPPROPRIATELY ADAPTIVE PREFERENCES AND SUBSTANTIVE AUTONOMY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, I argued that inappropriately adaptive preferences cannot be coherently defined as deficits in the procedural autonomy of their bearers. Attempts at defining IAPs as procedural autonomy could not identify IAPs in a way consistent with our intuitions. Bringing a moral description of IAPs into line with our intuitions inevitably required moving *away* from a thin, rationality or agency-centered conception of autonomy and *toward* a thicker conception of the human good.

However, procedural autonomy is not the only type of autonomy, and it would be premature to conclude from our difficulties using a concept of procedural autonomy to identify IAPs that that it is impossible to identify them using a conception of autonomy. It may be possible to define IAPs as deficits in *substantive* autonomy. According to substantive conceptions of autonomy, certain "bad" values and preferences are simply incompatible with autonomy.

The possibility of identifying IAPs as deficits in substantive autonomy is the topic of this chapter. It is indeed more consistent with our intuitions to describe IAPs as lacks of substantive autonomy than as lacks of procedural autonomy. However, I argue here that

identifying IAPs as deficits in substantive autonomy produces morally undesirable

consequences for a political theory—consequences that are incompatible with our value-

pluralist intuitions. The most significant of these morally undesirable consequences is

justifying coercion of persons with IAPs. Political philosophy typically invokes the value of

autonomy to limit paternalistic coercion, and packing the conception of autonomy with

normative content excuses an unpalatable amount of paternalistic coercion. In addition to

arguing that identifying IAPs with references to a substantive conception of autonomy

produces morally unacceptable outcomes, I claim that another path remains for the

identification of IAPs that preserves simultaneously the possibilities of limiting paternalistic

coercion and identifying IAPs with relation to their content. This path requires

distinguishing the paternalism-limiting concept of autonomy from the freedom to form and

pursue a conception of the good.

The first section of this chapter presents the apparent advantages and disadvantages

of substantive autonomy as a conceptual instrument for adaptive preference identification.

The second section discusses the main problem theories of substantive autonomy pose for

liberalism—the extent to which they justify coercion of persons with divergent conceptions

of the good. The third section examines one of the most sophisticated attempts of a

substantive autonomy theorist to dissolve this problem-- Joseph Raz's derivation of a Millian

harm principle from a perfectionist conception of autonomy in *The Morality of Freedom*. Raz's

effort to defend the harm principle from the perspective of a substantive theory of

autonomy is deeply flawed, but uncovering the conceptual problems behind these flaws

reveals one fruitful path for a the project of identifying IAPs with reference to a conception

of the good but without justifying paternalistic coercion. This is the path of distinguishing

the autonomy that limits paternalism from freedom to pursue valuable life activities. The

fourth and final section of the chapter claims that Amartya Sen's notion of capability as the end of social policy implicitly distinguishes autonomy from freedom. This distinction is useful for developing a theory of adaptive preference identification that does not justify coercion.

3.2. IAPS AS SUBSTANTIVE AUTONOMY DEFICITS

3.2.1 Advantages of Defining IAPs as Substantive Autonomy Deficits

I suggested in the previous chapter that IAPs cannot be coherently defined as deficits in procedural autonomy. Procedural conceptions of autonomy tended to yield criteria for adaptive preference identification that were highly inconsistent with our intuitions about which preferences are inappropriately adaptive. Attempts to bring conceptions of procedural autonomy into line with our intuitions often required the introduction of normative content into the conception of autonomy. This indicates that a substantive conception of autonomy—that is, a conception of autonomy with some conception of the good built into it—is likely to make better sense of our intuitions about which preferences are adaptive.

The primary difference between procedural and substantive conceptions of autonomy is that procedural conceptions purport to be indifferent to the content of autonomous choices where substantive theories do not. Substantive conceptions require that choices manifest certain "good" values in order to count as autonomous. The paradigmatic example of a substantive conception of autonomy lies in Kant's claim that a good will and an autonomous will are one and the same, that one cannot autonomously choose the bad. Contemporary theories of substantive autonomy are less beholden to Kant's metaphysics but still suggest that free choices will usually be "good" ones.

Most of these contemporary theories are relatively *value-pluralist* in the sense that they acknowledge that there are often a variety of "good" choices available to a given agent. The agent is usually not required to choose one of them in particular in order to be autonomous; she may choose any of the available "good" choices autonomously. However, unlike procedural conceptions, substantive conceptions of autonomy do not purport to be *value-neutral*. According to substantive conceptions, some types of values and preferences or choice contents are simply incompatible with autonomy.

Substantive conceptions of autonomy differ on the question of which values an agent's choices must manifest in order to be autonomous. Still, they share certain general formal characteristics that make them appealing instruments for adaptive preference identification. Definitions of IAPs as deficits in substantive autonomy will understand IAPs as those that manifest disregard for the basic values associated with autonomy. Like procedural conceptions of autonomy, substantive conceptions are compatible with many of our value-pluralist intuitions that militate against public endorsement of a single conception of the good life.

It may be difficult to see how substantive autonomy can be compatible with value-pluralism, given that substantive conceptions of autonomy are necessarily less value-pluralist than procedural ones. Substantive conceptions will, by definition, exclude a wider range of preference contents from compatibility with autonomy than procedural ones will. However, provided that the conception of the good incorporated into a conception of substantive autonomy is relatively thin (as it is in most contemporary theories), it seems possible to harmonize a concern about IAPs with a high level of respect for pluralism of value.[42] One

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[42] Of course, the position that public institutions should promote a normatively-laden type of autonomy is incompatible with pure public neutrality among different conceptions of the good. However, there is little reason to believe that public respect for pluralism of value requires absolute neutrality. See Raz (1988).

advantage of using a substantive conception of autonomy to identify IAPs, then, is that it is compatible with a concern for value-pluralism.

A second potential advantage of using a substantive conception of autonomy to identify IAPs is that it can make sense of the direction in which most of our intuitive judgments about IAPs proceed. Our intuitive judgments about IAPs in particular cases—whether they turn out in inspection to be warranted or not—typically begin from a negative evaluation of preference content. It is often the negative evaluation of the content of a preference that leads us to suspect that a preference may be adaptive. So, for example, the judgment that the preference to live in poor sanitary conditions is adaptive is likely to proceed in this way: we begin with the judgment that living in poor sanitary conditions is undesirable and then (perhaps rhetorically) ask ourselves why someone would possibly choose to live this way. The idea that autonomous choices will necessarily be good ones can account for this feature of our pre-theoretical evaluations. If bad preferences cannot manifest autonomy, preference content can function as a reliable indicator of autonomy.

A third potential advantage of defining IAPs with reference to a substantive conception of autonomy is that it is consistent with the intuition that oppression and deprivation can affect persons deeply enough to impair their capacities to choose and pursue conceptions of the good. . It is often suggested that oppression and deprivation can reduce persons' life-opportunities to a point at which the choices they make are not genuinely theirs.

We often suggest that choices not to flourish in certain basic ways are likely to have been made out of desperation rather than free will. So, for instance, a woman's choice to malnourish herself in order to adequately nourish her husband may seem to be externally imposed on her by extreme poverty in a highly patriarchal culture. It is also often suggested

that oppression can affect persons so deeply as to make it impossible for them to form and pursue conceptions of the good that are authentically theirs.[43] It may seem, for example, that the woman in the above example cannot participate in the self-rule that is autonomy, because she does not have an adequately developed conception of self. A substantive conception of autonomy is one way of accounting for the idea that, to use Martha Nussbaum's words "choice is not pure spontaneity" (Nussbaum 1999, 50)-- that it is possible for factical conditions of deprivation and oppression to reduce one's life-opportunities so dramatically that an agent's choices cannot be said to belong to her. If "good" values are a sign of autonomy, a lack of opportunities to form (or act in accordance with) such values can reasonably be said to affront autonomy.

A fourth general advantage to defining IAPs as lacks of substantive autonomy is that it helps make coherent the otherwise puzzling intuition that it is possible to increase someone's capacity to make autonomous choices by questioning their existing ones. This intuition features prominently in mainstream contemporary ethics in justifications of interventions in the lives of temporarily irrational persons, such as drug addicts, on the grounds that these interventions increase autonomy.[44] According to many of these justifications, her choice to use the substance is not autonomous, because it reflects a disregard for her future autonomy. Intervening against her will to stop her addiction does not violate her autonomy because the decision to forego her future autonomy was not itself autonomous. This is true regardless of the addict's reasons for beginning to use the

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[43] Meyers (1989) claims that many types of feminine socialization are incompatible with women's formation of autonomous life-plans. John Christman also states, without argument that a woman who is a subservient housewife is "clearly a manipulated individual whose choice of lifestyle and values are not her own in a real sense" (1988, 113).

[44] See Husak (1982, 37) and (1989).

substance. Since the initial decision was not itself autonomous, it is not worthy of the same respect as a decision to value her own autonomy would have been.

This intuition that intervening in someone's existing choices can promote their autonomy also features prominently in the rhetoric of development theory and practice. It is common for development practitioners to assume that there is something inauthentic about certain types of beneficiary preferences. To return to an example discussed in the last chapter, development practitioners do not usually understand the choice of women to refuse to appear in public in various parts of South Asia to be worthy of unfaltering respect. Indeed, they often read such preferences—at least partly because of their content—as symptoms of disempowerment (Nagar and Raju 2003, 4; Archer and Cottingham 1996). The moral desirability of moving them from a state of disempowerment (nonautonomy) to empowerment (autonomy) supposedly justifies the initial judgment that these women's current lifestyles do not reflect their conceptions of the good-- and development practitioners' willingness to treat them as such. A conception of substantive autonomy is useful in accounting for this type of justification. Perhaps interfering with the women's initial preferences does not undermine their autonomy, because these initial preferences were not themselves autonomous. On a substantive conception of autonomy, their initial preferences can be reasonably judged to be nonautonomous and worthy of suspicion because of their content and external intervention to change preference content can be one means of increasing autonomy.

3.2.2 Types of Substantive Autonomy

Different types of theories of substantive autonomy promise more specific advantages for identifying IAPs in a way consistent with our intuitions. Two different ways

of understanding substantive autonomy recur in the philosophical literature about autonomy. Let us call the first one "substantive independence" autonomy. It views substantive autonomy as on a continuum with procedural autonomy where substantive autonomy is a higher level of autonomy than procedural autonomy (see Friedman 2006, 20-25). According to this view, substantive autonomy requires not only that the agent's decisions be made in an autonomous fashion but also that agent value autonomy—where autonomy is defined as the capacity to accept the rational and independent self as the source of one's actions.

An example usefully differentiates substantive independence autonomy from procedural autonomy. Most procedural definitions of autonomy hold that it is perfectly plausible to make the autonomous decision to do whatever one's religious leaders tell one to do. Substantive independence theories of autonomy, on the other hand, do not typically consider the decision to do whatever one's religions leaders tell one to do to be autonomous, because it manifests indifference toward the value of autonomy as self-direction.

The second understanding of substantive autonomy that appears in the philosophical literature, is what we might call "substantive good" autonomy. It suggests that in order to be autonomous, the content of choices must be good—where the good is not necessarily defined as autonomy. Joseph Raz argues that bad choices are never autonomous and that the autonomy we should value is that which allows us to make choices among various "good" options (Raz 1988, 410). Substantive good theories of autonomy have also been particularly widespread in the field of feminist theory in recent years. Paul Benson (2005), Diana Meyers (1989), and Anita Superson (2000) have all argued that autonomous decision-making requires attitudes of self-worth on the part of the agent. Natalie Stoljar has suggested that

being influenced by oppressive or morally false[45] norms, even when they are internalized, is incompatible with autonomy (Stoljar 2002). Martha Nussbaum has suggested that one's choices are not autonomous if one has not been presented with sufficient opportunities for living a good human life (Nussbaum 1999, 50).

Both types of substantive conceptions of autonomy promise to identify IAPs more reliably than procedural conceptions, since both build normative content into the conception of autonomy. Since the substantive independence autonomy is narrower in scope and may be described simply as a sub-category of substantive good autonomy, I examine its potential contribution to IAP identification first. In the previous chapter, we saw that identifying IAPs as deficits in procedural autonomy often led to discrimination against conceptions of the good that do not value autonomy. So, for example, conceptions of autonomy as political agency tended to rule out the possibility that one could autonomously (and hence nonadaptively) choose not to participate in politics. Conceptions of autonomy as rationality tended to rule out the possibility that one could nonadaptively choose to cede one's authority over one's life to another, as in the cases of religious submission or voluntary self-sacrifice.

3.2.3 Advantages of Substantive Good Autonomy in Identifying IAPs

Where this is a problem for identifying IAPs according to a conception of procedural autonomy, it is not a problem for doing so according to a conception of substantive autonomy. A conception of substantive independence autonomy dissolves this problem of discriminating against conceptions of the good that do not value autonomy by saying that

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[45] The description of certain ideological norms about women's sexuality as "false" is Stoljar's and not mine. It is not clear to me that the problem with oppressive norms is their falseness. Nor is it clear to me what it means for a norm to be false.

life-plans that do not value autonomy simply do not count as conceptions of the good. A conception of the good must be autonomous to be worth respecting, so to speak of conceptions of the good that do not value autonomy is a contradiction in terms. Of course, this response may be far from satisfying to those us whose value-pluralist intuitions suggest that non-autonomy-valuing conceptions of the good are worthy of respect—a problem to which I will return very shortly in my argument against the conception of IAPs as deficits in substantive autonomy. For the moment, however, let us only note that the problem of discrimination against non-autonomy valuing conceptions of the good poses no logical problem to a substantive independence conception of autonomy.

A substantive good conception of autonomy may do even better than a substantive independence conception of autonomy at identifying IAPs in a way consistent with our intuitions. It can correct for two further shortcomings of procedural conceptions of autonomy as instruments of IAP identification. One problem with using a procedural conception of autonomy to identify IAPs is that it allows far too many preferences to qualify as inappropriately adaptive. Procedural accounts of autonomy make no distinctions between morally trivial and morally significant choices.

This causes morally trivial choices that do not intuitively seem to be inappropriately adaptive to qualify as such nonetheless. For example, procedural accounts of autonomy as full information make no distinction between the uninformed choice to undergo a genital cutting procedure that will permanently alter one's sexual functioning and the uninformed choice *not* to do so, even when the former seems more worthy of suspicion. Procedural conceptions of autonomy as agency make no distinction between the lack of interest in choosing what color socks to wear and the lack of interest in participating in public life. Procedural conceptions of autonomy as rationality cannot explain why the unreflective

preference not to earn an income seems to be adaptive[46], but the unreflective preference to use one's micro-loan to rent out a cellular phone rather than to buy a goat does not.

Substantive good autonomy is capable of introducing into autonomy concepts that differentiate morally trivial and morally significant domains of choice.[47] One way it might do so is by designating regions of life in which autonomy is particularly important.[48] A substantive good conception of autonomy can say that an agent must participate in certain valued activities and exhibit the desire to do so in order to be considered autonomous. It may say, for example, that a life where one has no choices about what religion one follows is not autonomous, where a life where one has few choices about what language to speak is not.

A second way a substantive good conception may differentiate morally trivial from morally significant choices is by setting a threshold of preferences agents must have in order to count as autonomous. Such a conception may say that if agents' preferences about some important good manifest a failure to value it sufficiently, those preferences cannot be genuinely autonomous. Such a conception may stipulate that the decision to irreparably damage one's bodily health is not autonomous, while the decision to eat unhealthy food on occasion is not. The reasoning would be that the latter does not evidence that the agent's

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[46] The role of income-generation in promoting well-being is especially controversial in contemporary gender and development practice. One reason for this controversy is that focusing on income may decrease the security of women's access to nourishment given unstable currencies and the decline of subsistence agriculture. For a discussion of the deleterious effects of the shift away from subsistence agriculture, see Shiva (20000)

[47] Substantive *independence* accounts of autonomy can also distinguish morally insignificant from morally significant choices if the difference between significant and insignificant is simply a distinction between choices that affect one's valuation of autonomy and those that do not.

[48] Shiffrin (2000) argues that valuing autonomy is contingent on demarcating domains of life in which autonomy is particularly important. See Scanlon (2003) for a discussion of the importance of identifying morally important spheres of life that apply generally to human beings to theories of distributive justice more generally.

regard for her own bodily health has fallen below the threshold. The ability of substantive good conceptions of autonomy to differentiate trivial and significant choices makes them more likely than procedural conceptions to identify IAPs in a way consistent with our intuitions.

Substantive good conceptions of autonomy possess another advantage as instruments of IAP identification that procedural conceptions of autonomy do not.[49] Substantive good conceptions easily accommodate the intuition that goods other than freedom of choice can promote autonomy. As we saw in the last chapter, some procedural conceptions of autonomy are unable to describe preferences that harm well-being rather than freedom as inappropriately adaptive. So, for example, defining procedural autonomy as political agency makes it very difficult to understand preferences that do not impinge on agents' political freedom as inappropriately adaptive. Yet many preferences that do not impinge on one's political freedom-- like the preference to eat below subsistence level or the preference not to resist sexual abuse-- for example still strike us as adaptive.

A substantive good conception of autonomy allows preferences that decrease well-being to appear as lacking in autonomy. Exactly which components of well-being will be necessary for autonomy will vary from one substantive good conception to another. It seems quite plausible, though, for a substantive good conception of autonomy to equate autonomy with preference for certain goods (including but not limited to freedom) so as to identify IAPs in a way consistent with our intuitions.

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[49] This advantage is unique to substantive good conceptions of autonomy and does not accrue to substantive independence conceptions.

3.3 PROBLEMS WITH IDENTIFYING IAPS AS SUBSTANTIVE AUTONOMY DEFICITS

3.3.1 The Necessary Nonautonomy of Self-Sacrificing Choices

Despite the appeal of employing a substantive conception of autonomy to identify IAPs, there are compelling reasons to resist doing so. One plain inadequacy of substantive conceptions of autonomy as instruments of IAP identification is their inability to exclude fully voluntary but nonautonomy-valuing preferences from being considered as inappropriately adaptive. Many preferences that do not value autonomy, but that do not seem to have been acquired under coercive circumstances, do not strike us as inappropriately adaptive—regardless of the fact that their content closely resembles that of many preferences that do.

This is the problem that arose in the last chapter of distinguishing the fasting Buddhist from the woman who systematically malnourishes herself in the conditions of poverty and a patriarchal culture. Substantive autonomy fares no better than procedural autonomy in making this distinction. Procedural conceptions of autonomy tended to be incapable of making this distinction without distorting the facts about the self-starving woman's self-conception. When pressed to distinguish the self-starving woman from the fasting Buddhist, procedural accounts of autonomy could only respond by suggesting that the self-starving woman somehow does not *know* what she is doing—a suggestion I see little reason to credit. Substantive accounts of autonomy, since they distinguish autonomous preferences from nonautonomous ones based on their content, seem forced to say that both the Buddhist and the self-starving woman are nonautonomous.

The fact that neither procedural nor substantive autonomy can distinguish voluntary self-sacrificing preferences from inappropriately adaptive ones in a way that harmonizes with our intuitions may indicate that this problem is intractable. Confronting the persistence of this problem opens up two different paths forward for the project of generating a coherent moral description of IAPs. The first path involves saying that the problem of distinguishing voluntary from nonvoluntary self-sacrificing preferences is irresolvable. Given that it is irresolvable but we are committed to identifying IAPs with a conception of autonomy, we should think of IAPs as deficits in some type of substantive autonomy because substantive autonomy identifies IAPs in a way more consistent with our intuitions than procedural autonomy. The second path involves saying that we should abandon the project of identifying IAPs according to a conception of autonomy—or of identifying IAPs altogether—since liberal social institutions must allow for the possibility of voluntary self-sacrificing choices.

The second path is more coherent than the first, as well as more a more promising way of reconciling our feminist and value-pluralist intuitions. The first path—that of using a substantive conception of autonomy to identify IAPs because it does so more accurately than a procedural conception and that is the best we can do— mistakenly presupposes that procedural and substantive autonomy present the same number of disadvantages as instruments of IAP identification.

3.3.2 IAPs as Substantive Autonomy Deficits and the Justification of Coercion

Closer examination reveals that substantive conceptions of autonomy present a serious disadvantage that procedural conceptions do not. It is this: if persons with IAPs are nonautonomous, public institutions can justifiably coerce them to increase their autonomy.

A central function of autonomy in ethical theory is to place limits on—or outright deny the acceptability of paternalistic coercion.[50] Autonomous persons govern themselves, and this self-governing capacity makes the domain of their self-regarding behaviors what Seanna Shiffrin would call "a sphere of legitimate agency."[51] On theories that value autonomy, the authority autonomous persons exercise over their own lives is legitimate, and paternalistic coercion—coercion that attempts to usurp this authority in the name of the agent's good—affronts this legitimacy.[52] Coercion that usurps an agent's control over the lives of others does not generally affront the agent's autonomy, given that autonomy is not the right or capacity to govern others and thus the lives of others do not prima facie fall into her sphere of legitimate agency. If autonomy is what entitles agents to have their decisions about their

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[50] Not all definitions of paternalism require paternalism to involve coercion. Shiffrin (2000) claims that paternalism need not involve coercion.

Moreover, some philosophers have used conceptions other than autonomy to limit paternalistic interference. Feinberg, for instance, asserts we should be concerned about the *voluntariness* of choices rather than their autonomy (Feiberg 1989, 3-23). Feinberg's framework makes it possible to say that autonomous agents can make nonvoluntary choices that deserve to be interfered with. However, since these agents are autonomous and the choices are nonvoluntary, they do not need to be coerced when they make nonvoluntary choices. They need only have pointed out to them that their choices are inconsistent with their goals.

However, introducing the concept of voluntariness does not mean that Feinberg does not hold that nonautonomous agents should not be coerced. It means only that he has pointed out that autonomous agents can make choices worthy of noncoercive intervention. This is a view to which I am highly sympathetic, and which is very consistent with my argument that we can question choices without questioning persons' moral worth in the fifth and sixth chapters.

[51] Interestingly, Shiffrin herself does not explicitly claim that it is autonomy that entitles a person to a "sphere of legitimate agency."

[52] Of course, nonpaternalistic, arbitrary coercion can also be seen to affront this legitimacy. But the ill of nonpaternalistic, arbitrary coercion can be explained just as easily with reference to well-being as with reference to autonomy.

own lives taken as authoritative,[53] public institutions can justifiably override the self-regarding decisions of agents who lack it.[54]

Nonautonomous agents can be justifiably coerced, regardless of whether the conception of autonomy used to identify IAPs is substantive or procedural. However, coercion in the name of autonomy is likely to become more disturbing the thicker the conception of the good incorporated into autonomy becomes. This indicates that defining IAPs as deficits in substantive autonomy excuses more a more disturbing range of coercive acts than defining them as deficits in procedural autonomy would. Consider the following three examples of persons deemed less than autonomous by philosophers of autonomy:

> 1. The medical doctrine of parens patriae holds that "mentally disordered adults who are so deranged as not to be able to seek psychatric treatment for themselves" can be placed in treatment without their consent (Feinberg 1989, 7).
>
> 2. John Stuart Mill claims that a person cannot autonomously sell herself into slavery (Mill 2008 114).

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[53] See Hill (1987) for a discussion of the complicated way in which autonomy is sometimes used to refer to a psychological capacity and sometimes used to refer to a right.

[54] My reader may be puzzled by the fact that I speak of autonomy as a feature of agents rather than a feature of decisions. In fact, there is no agreement in the existing philosophical literature about whether autonomy is a feature of agents or decisions. It is used in both senses. Kant's moral theory holds that autonomy is a feature of the will (Kant 1998), and presumably the autonomy of the will can vary from act to act. Meyers, in contrast, speaks of autonomous *people* (Meyers 1989). For a discussion of the wide variety of (potentially inconsistent) uses of the term autonomy, see Christman (1988).

My central argument holds that diagnosing IAPs with a theory of substantive autonomy would legitimize coercing the agents that hold them. This argument admittedly hangs on taking autonomy to be a feature of persons and not decisions; if we said autonomy was a feature of decisions we could say that agents worthy of respect could make nonautonomous decisions. However, if we took this second path, we would still need some moral capacity on the part of agents to distinguish those whose choices were worthy of respect and those whose were not. My point here is that we cannot have the capacity that entitles agents to respect for their choices and the capacity to choose the good over the bad be part of the same conception. If we do, we will end up justifying the coercion of agents with bad choices. This will be true whether we call the capacity of agents that makes their decisions worthy of respect "autonomy" or not.

3. Nussbaum suggests that illiterate women who do not initially value literacy

highly are not fully autonomous (Nussbaum 1999, 50-51).

Our intuitive certainty about the justifiability of coercing the agent is likely to have

been strongest in the first case and weakest in the third. Coercing a person who may literally

lack the rational capacity to be aware of their wants and desires may seem appropriate. On

the other hand, using force to ensure that an adult woman becomes literate is likely to strike

us as the most morally contentious of the three potential justifications of coercion above.

Even if illiteracy seems to us to unjustifiably constrict persons' options for pursuit of a good

life, it seems at least controversial to claim that illiteracy reduces a person to a status where

force is an appropriate way of engaging with her-- especially in a world where eighteen

percent of the world's population, two-thirds of which are women, is illiterate (UNFPA

2005).

Our intuitive reactions to the above four examples suggest that the more a

substantive conception of the good is incorporated into our conception of autonomy the

less comfortable we are with justifying coercion in its service. This intuition is surely

intertwined with our commitment to pluralism of value. The thicker the conception of the

good built into autonomy is, the narrower the set of values to which agents can meaningfully

refer in making the case for protection of their life-choices becomes.

3.3.3 Arguments Against Linking Substantive Autonomy and Coercion

Taking IAPs to be deficits in substantive autonomy has the unpalatable consequence

of justifying the coercion of persons with IAPs. However, the connection between

substantive autonomy and the justification of coercion may not be as tight as initially

appears. Three arguments that substantive autonomy does not justify coercion present

themselves. Let us call them "pragmatic arguments," "tradeoff arguments," and "range property arguments." However, as we will see through closer examination, none of these arguments effectively prohibits a substantive conception of autonomy from justifying paternalistic coercion of persons with the "wrong" self-regarding values.

3.3.3.1 Pragmatic Arguments

Theorists of substantive autonomy often claim that substantive autonomy does not justify coercion, because coercion cannot successfully produce autonomy in agents. This is the pragmatic line of argument. It works best in defense of substantive independence conceptions of autonomy—conceptions of autonomy that hold that autonomous persons value and exercise rationality and independence. Put simply, it claims that coercion causes agents to blindly follow orders rather than reflect rationally, and this is antithetical to autonomy. For one example of this type of reasoning, we can examine Thomas Hurka's claim that coercing persons into a particular type of sexual behavior will not produce in them the type of autonomous attitudes toward sexual behavior that is typical of flourishing human beings. According to him, "instead of encouraging rational evaluation, [coercion] tells citizens to obey unthinkingly....If people are to choose the best sex intelligently, far better to let them learn from experience, both their own and others' of its better and less good forms" (Hurka 1993, 157).

However, this type of argument rests on an unsubstantiated and misleading empirical claim: that coercion can never encourage persons to rationally reflect. One reason this claim is dubious is that it is possible to use coercive policies to the end of educating persons—by instituting serious penalties for persons who do not want to undergo non-normative sexual

education, for example. It is plausible that forcing persons to learn about sexually transmitted diseases will encourage them to think more about their sexual behavior.

Second, we can imagine coercive policies that are not educational by design that can encourage persons to rationally evaluate. Heavily taxing certain types of sexual behavior that persons would have otherwise engaged in unthinkingly—say, because it was the dominant behavior in their culture—may require persons to honestly ask themselves how attached to this behavior they are and to begin to weigh rationally the merits and demerits of this type of behavior. The argument that coercion cannot contribute to autonomy and that therefore coercion in the name of autonomy is not justified is, at best, only an argument that coercion that does not work at promoting autonomy is not justified.

Moreover, if we attempt to use pragmatic arguments to defend conceptions of substantive autonomy that do not hold rationality and independence to be the only goods conducive to autonomy, the pragmatic case against coercion from within a substantive conception of autonomy becomes even weaker. As mentioned above, a number of feminist theorists have suggested that self-esteem is a prerequisite for autonomy. It is not difficult to imagine circumstances in which coercive policies can help persons build self-esteem— preventing them against their will from interacting others who degrade them or make them feel bad about themselves, for example. In the thickest example of a substantive good theory of autonomy I described earlier, Stoljar suggests that holding a specific set of beliefs about female sexuality is a requirement for women's autonomy. There is nothing implicit in this definition of autonomy that precludes the employment of coercion in its service. Indeed, punishing persons who do not subscribe to a particular sexual ideology may be the *best* way to bring about this type of autonomy. Thus, the line of argument that says that coercion

cannot pragmatically promote autonomy does not separate substantive conceptions of autonomy from the justification of coercion very effectively.

3.3.3.2 Tradeoff Arguments

Another argument that attempts to separate substantive autonomy from the justification of coercion concerns the tradeoffs persons make to secure well-being. It holds that substantive autonomy does not justify coercion, because autonomy is a subcategory of well-being, and coercion is likely to decrease well-being. The purported reason for this is that coercive public policies cannot effectively target the behaviors that they intend to weed out. This ineffectiveness stems from the fact that public institutions cannot have sufficient knowledge of the details of individuals' lives to be sure that altering their choice situations will not decrease their overall well-being. This is what I take Mill to mean when he claims that an individual is "the person most interested in his own well-being…The interference of society to overrule his judgments and purposes in what only regards himself must be grounded on general presumptions which may be altogether wrong, and even if not, are as likely as not to be misapplied to individual cases" (Mill 2008, 85).

It is worth noting that it is possible to take Mill's position with or without moral skepticism. The skeptic can take Mill's position by holding that individuals vary so widely that what is good for any one of them may actually be different from any other. The non-skeptic can agree with Mill without contradiction by holding that individuals can—and often do-- make tradeoffs that increase one type of well-being but may decrease another. So, for instance, a woman may refuse to attempt to earn her own income, because this is a sign of status and modesty in her society, even when this requires her to forego some of her material needs. A sufficiently nuanced moral objectivist position can hold that both social acceptance

and material wealth are goods. It is quite possible that she will experience a decrease in overall well-being (vis-à-vis her initial situation) if she acts in accordance with coercive policies designed to increase her income generation but not designed to decrease the social disgrace that accompanies her participation. Individuals may make tradeoffs so complicated and agent-variant that attempts to increase individuals' well-being are likely doomed to failure.

As in the case of the argument before it, much of the weight of this argument against coercion in the name of autonomy—in its nonskeptical version, at least—rests on the empirical facts about variance among individuals. It certainly provides a much-needed word of caution to designers of coercive policies, but it does not seem warranted to assume that coercive policies are more likely than not, and more likely than other types of policies, to fail to take into account the variant tradeoffs individuals make in their pursuit of well-being. But if it is true that individuals vary so widely as to render most paternalistic coercion ineffective, the problem with the tradeoffs argument runs deeper.

For if the tradeoffs argument is right, it is right about all kinds of coercion, not just paternalistic coercion. If individuals do vary widely enough that coercive attempts to increase their well-being are likely to decrease it, it is also highly likely that coercive attempts to decrease their well-being (say, because they have injured some other person) may increase it. It is, for example, plausible that incarceration could increase a person's well-being if they were homeless before the incarceration. Thus, the claim that coercion to increase substantive autonomy is likely to decrease well-being can only preclude a substantive conception of autonomy from entailing the justification of coercion if it also persuades us that coercion in general is almost never justified.

3.3.3.3 Range Property Arguments

Neither the tradeoff argument nor the pragmatic argument successfully dissociates substantive autonomy from the justification of coercion. A third argument that attempts to dissociate them refuses to treat autonomy as a range property—something that an agent either possesses or does not, regardless of variations within the groups of possessors and nonpossessors. According to this argument, substantive autonomy does not justify coercion of the nonautonomous, because persons are not easily divisible into the groups autonomous and nonautonomous. Rather, autonomy can be measured in degrees, and individuals fall into different places on a more autonomous/less autonomous scale.[55] If autonomy is not a range property and the conception of autonomy at work is substantive, the consistency of their values and choices with those constitutive of autonomy determines their degree of autonomy. Thus, on a substantive independence conception, the more an agent prefers and exercises independence and choice, the more autonomous she is. On a substantive good conception that values, say, positive attitudes toward the self, the more positive the attitudes toward herself an agent holds the more autonomous, she is.

There is nothing inherently contradictory about saying that the distinctions that matter within autonomy are distinctions of degree rather than distinctions of threshold. However, refusing to treat autonomy as a range property leads to a morally troubling consequence: elitism. If the capacity to be autonomous grants persons the right to personal sovereignty, a conception of autonomy that treats autonomy as a matter of degrees allocates the right to personal sovereignty unequally. If autonomy is substantive, persons who

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[55] See Meyers (1989) for a theory of personal autonomy that does not take autonomy to be a range property.

manifest the right values and preferences are more worthy of the right to make ultimate determinations about themselves than others.

One problem with this view is that it contradicts one of the intuitions about moral personhood that is very basic to the liberal tradition: that persons are moral equals. Persons may be more or less talented, more or less rich, or more or less beautiful, but we typically do not hold that they are thereby more or less worthy of certain fundamental rights.[56] A second, related, problem with the elitism of substantive autonomy that is not a range property is that it is likely to justify more coercion rather than less. Dividing persons into the categories autonomous and nonautonomous as range property arguments typically do, involves the specification of a minimal threshold above which increases in capacity do not affect one's entitlement to sovereignty. There is nothing built into a non-range property conception of autonomy to preclude the coercion of persons in order to make them maximally autonomous, so that even persons who are highly autonomous become potential objects of justified coercion.

Neither range property arguments, nor tradeoff arguments, nor pragmatic arguments make possible the endorsement of substantive autonomy without the endorsement of paternalistic coercion. Defining IAPs as lacks in substantive autonomy is likely to justify extensive coercion of persons whose preferences seem to be inappropriately adaptive. Thus, substantive conceptions of autonomy facilitate the identification of IAPs at the price of low compatibility with our value-pluralist intuitions. Even if we are willing to acknowledge that public institutions cannot be completely neutral about the good (as the difficulties of procedural autonomy in the first chapter suggested), we are likely reluctant to endorse the

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[56] Differences in rational capacity, however, do seem to matter to persons' worthiness of autonomy rights. Most range-property theories of personal autonomy hold that persons are autonomous above a certain level of rational competence.

use of force in its service—especially in the context of adaptive preference formation. Most cases of IAP may seem to justify public suspicion, but do not seem to justify the judgment that the persons who possess them are unworthy of consultation about their futures or unworthy of the right to refuse to live according to a publicly-held conception of the good. However, the justification of coercion seems an inevitable consequence of a substantive conception of autonomy for a simple reason: autonomy is usually the capacity that sets limits on one's susceptibility to justified paternalistic coercion. The more stringent the requirements for autonomy—and the more substantive the conception of autonomy, the more stringent the requirements—the larger the set of cases becomes in which paternalistic coercion is justified.

3.4 RAZ'S ATTEMPT TO SEPARATE SUBSTANTIvE AUTONOMY AND PATERNALISTIC COERCION

3.4.1 Raz's Argument for Substantive Autonomy Without Coercion

Before concluding that justifying coercion is endemic to all substantive conceptions of autonomy, let us examine one very sophisticated attempt to distance substantive autonomy from the justification of coercion: Raz's attempt to derive the harm principle from a substantive conception of autonomy. This is a rather surprising move on Raz's part, since Mill's harm principle is usually interpreted as a way of respecting procedural autonomy. Mill's harm principle holds that public institutions can coerce individuals only when they cause harm to others.[57] In all other cases public institutions should presume that persons' life-choices express their freedom to form and pursue individual conceptions of the good.

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[57] Not all interpretations of Mill's harm principle understand it as a fundamentally coercion-limiting principle. See Raz (1988) for an argument for why the harm principle should be interpreted in this way.

The content of these choices is off-limits to public institutions, because these institutions should be interested in protecting persons' freedom to choose rather than forming them into "good" persons. This view is typically interpreted to presuppose a procedural conception of autonomy, because it holds that it is the freedom of choices—and not the "goodness" of their contents—that makes them worthy of respect. The ability of persons to make *free* choices, and not good ones, is what entitles them to protection from public usurpation of their personal sovereignty.

Raz claims that it is the ability of persons to make *good* choices, and not necessarily free ones, that entitles persons to protection from public usurpation of their personal sovereignty. He wants to say that substantive autonomy can perform the role in a political theory that usually belongs to procedural autonomy: that of limiting justifiable coercion. Raz's ability to claim this depends on the slightly idiosyncratic place he assigns to autonomy in the network of human values. His definition of autonomy—as the capacity to form and pursue a conception of the good that is authentically one's own—is fairly standard.

However, Raz asserts that autonomy is valuable because it contributes to well-being, and it contributes to well-being insofar as it allows individuals to choose among the various ways of living a good human life.[58] The choice of a life-plan that is not objectively good can, according to him, still be autonomous. However, the autonomy involved in such decisions is not the type of autonomy *we value* and thus "bad" autonomous choices are not worthy of the same level of respect as "good" autonomous choices (Raz 1988, 411). Raz's conception of autonomy is substantive insofar as it holds that the content of autonomous choices determines their worthiness of respect.

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[58] Raz (1988) claims that ensuring access to bad options is not a necessary component of public respect for value pluralism. What is necessary is access to a wide variety of good options and the absence of coercion in choosing among them.

It would seem, then, that Raz's conception of autonomy must justify the coercion of those with "bad" values as other substantive conceptions of autonomy do. Raz admits the necessity of this conclusion to an extent, because he claims that his conception of autonomy supports the derivation of a harm principle not quite identical with Mill's. Raz's harm principle holds that an agent can be legitimately coerced by public institutions if her actions will or have caused harm to *anyone*--the agent herself included (Raz 1988, 413) . But this does not yet justify wholesale coercion of persons with the "wrong" values.

Raz draws a distinction between "bad" choices that cause harm (to oneself or others) and "bad" choices that do not. He gives almost no content to this distinction but claims that harming a person involves the diminishment of her opportunities or the infliction of extreme pain or offense on her (Raz 1988,414). We are left to imagine what non-harming but "bad" self-regarding values might be, since Raz does not elaborate a theory of the good life beyond the formal stipulation that good and bad human lives can be distinguished from one another. Which values qualify as bad but non-harming depends on the thickness of the vision of the good life that is built into autonomy. If the conception of the good is very thick, it may be only aesthetic choices (like preference for one type of music over another), choices to hold false or bad beliefs (like the un-acted upon belief that others are inferior to one) and certain comportments toward nonhuman beings (like the practice of animal sacrifice)[59] that count as "bad" but non-harming choices.

However, it is unlikely that the range of self-regarding choices Raz wants to exclude from constituting grounds for coercion is so small, given that the purpose of this section of his book is to show that one can be a perfectionist—and promote a substantive conception

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[59] Raz says nothing about whether the class of beings the harm principle protects from harm includes non-human beings (e.g. animals, the natural environment), so I assume that it does not.

of autonomy—and still be a liberal. No liberal is likely to be persuaded that the state adequately respects autonomy and allows for pluralism of value by refusing to forcibly dictate persons' musical tastes, behavior towards animals, and beliefs that are untranslatable into action. Some of the definitions of harm Raz provides (and he briefly hints at several) are compatible with limits on paternalistic coercion robust enough to satisfy the liberal.

It is conceivable, according to Raz's own definitions of harm, to interpret his harm principle in a way that does not justify the coercion of many persons with IAPs, even if those preferences have "bad" contents. Raz concentrates on two types of harm in particular: harm that causes severe pain, and harm that diminishes opportunities (Raz 1988, 414). Given that most persons with IAPs are not themselves responsible for the lacks of opportunities in their lives, many IAPs are not self-harming in the strict sense. It is not clear that the possession of negative attitudes toward "good" opportunities (or one's ability to take advantage of good opportunities) themselves diminish a person's opportunities. If it is possible to interpret most IAPs as non-harming in Raz's sense, we can understand Raz to be proposing a theory of substantive autonomy that helps to identify IAPs without justifying coercion of the persons who hold them.

Raz simultaneously holds that autonomy is without value in the service of "bad" preferences *and* that persons who exhibit only the value-less sort of autonomy do not necessarily deserve to be coerced. Let us examine the tenability of his position. He makes two arguments in its favor. One is that coercion decreases persons' autonomy. The other is that coercion manifests an attitude of dominance and disrespect toward the coerced. His discussion of both of these arguments is scant, but in defense of the first, he writes that coercion is "a global and indiscriminate invasion of autonomy. Imprisoning a person prevents him from almost all autonomous pursuits" (Raz 1988, 418). The idea here is that

paternalistic coercion is likely to reduce individuals' autonomy. Since autonomy is a basic

constituent element of well-being, and public institutions are responsible for promoting the

well-being of their members, this reduction of autonomy is usually unjustified.

3.4.2 Problems with Raz's Argument

This argument that coercion diminishes substantive autonomy—that is, the

autonomy we value according to Raz—is flawed in two ways, depending on how we read the

argument. The first is that too much hangs on his use of imprisonment as the paradigmatic

example of coercion. It is undoubtedly true that imprisonment makes it impossible to

choose and pursue a great many human goods—the ability to maintain very close

relationships to one's children or the ability to pursue a vocation of one's choosing, for

instance. However, as I discussed above in the context of tradeoffs argument against the

association of substantive autonomy with the justification of coercion, we can imagine

coercive policies that target specific activities and do not invade autonomy so

indiscriminately. Placing very large taxes on consumption of harmful foods, may for

example, coerce persons into stopping eating them without harming those persons' abilities

to pursue a multitude of human goods—it is more than conceivable that a person can pay a

large tax on certain products and still see her children, pursue a meaningful career, and so

on.

An objector on Raz's behalf might reply that a tax like the one I described could not

legitimately be described as coercive. Indeed, we often describe coercive choice situations as

those that present agents with offers they can't refuse. If paying a large tax does not prohibit

a person from doing a variety of things that are of value (objectively, and to them

personally), such a tax may not appear coercive. Yet, if coercive public policies are only those

that deeply threaten persons' capacities to pursue and choose among various human goods, we should expect that most persons subject to coercive policies will choose to abandon the behavior the coercive policy is intended to discourage.[60] Not everyone who is coerced will suffer the loss of autonomy Raz claims results from coercion. This loss of autonomy will only accrue to the presumptive minority of the coerced who refuse to succumb to the coercion. The fact that the loss of the autonomy to pursue and choose among a variety of human goods only accompanies a minority of instances of coercion reduces the weight of Raz's claim that coercion decreases substantive autonomy.

But perhaps Raz really means to claim that all coerced agents undergo a loss in autonomy, regardless of whether they end up in prison or deeply deprived of access to objective goods in some other way. Raz's general remarks about autonomy do appear to commit him to this claim. At one point, he says that it is a larger insult to a person's autonomy to remove from her option set an option that a person is committed to than it is to remove an option she is not committed to. Removing an option a person is committed to "is preventing him from living the life he has chosen" (Raz 1988, 411). Unfortunately, Raz does not mention whether the option in his example is "good" or "bad," but, either way, he implies that the person's attachment to the option adds value to it. If the option is "bad" the harmfulness of removing the option must result from its importance to the agent. If the option is "good" and there remain a large number of other available good options, the harmfulness of removing this particular option must result from its importance to the agent.

Raz also indicates that the harmfulness of coercion arises from its tendency to deprive a person of something she values when he defines coercion in a different section of

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[60] This requires an assumption of moderate self-interest on the part of the coerced, an assumption that seems warranted enough.

The Morality of Freedom. According to it, a person is coerced if their choice situation is such that "all but one non-trivial option will sacrifice a personal need and will make impossible the continuation of the life the agent has" (Raz 1988, 153). Again, he says little in this section about whether the "life an agent has" has to be objectively good for her autonomy to be insulted by the threat to its continuation. I see no good reason to presuppose, however, that an agent's commitment to an option *requires* its objective goodness.

Indeed, the very existence of the phenomenon of IAPs testifies to the possibility of agent commitment to preferences that are objectively "bad"; recall, the widows in Sen's example in my first chapter who are presumably attached to seeing themselves as healthy when they are not. Furthermore, there is good reason to believe here, too, that Raz thinks the agents' commitment to a way of life gives it value independently of the objective goodness or badness of its content. The example Raz draws on to describe coercion in this context is that of a concert pianist threatened with the loss of his fingers, who, Raz claims, we should understand as coerced "even if he is able to make a new life as a business consultant" (Raz 1988, 153).

Thus, Raz is committed to the claim that removing an option that is important to an agent from her choice situation affronts her autonomy, independently of the objective goodness or badness of the option. Once we see this, we can discern the second flaw in Raz's argument that coercion affronts the autonomy we value. If the only autonomy we value is substantive autonomy—that is, autonomy used in the pursuit of the good— removing a bad option or a single good option from an agent's set cannot affront her autonomy in any morally significant way.[61] It seems that Raz, despite his explicit avowals to

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[61] It may affront an agent's autonomy to remove a single good option from her set if it is the last option left before the number of good options in her set becomes impoverished.

the contrary, holds content-neutral, procedural (and not only substantive) autonomy to be valuable.

The broad claim that coercion affronts autonomy is much more coherent if procedural autonomy is also a type of autonomy we value. It is clear that paternalistic coercion usually decreases procedural autonomy—by usurping an agent's control of her own self-regarding values. It is far less clear that paternalistic coercion usually decreases substantive autonomy. For instance, it is clear that coercing a woman who does not want to learn how to read into learn into doing so affronts her *procedural* autonomy—her ability to live the kind of life she wants to live. It is much less clear that it affronts her substantive autonomy—her ability to live a life that is good, or to choose among various good types of lives. Consequently, Raz's first argument for the interpretation of substantive autonomy as a concept that places limits on paternalistic coercion is less than persuasive. The concept he implicitly calls up when asserting that coercion diminishes autonomy is that of procedural autonomy.

We now turn to Raz's second argument for the derivation of the harm principle from a conception of substantive autonomy. This is the argument that coercion involves subjecting one person to the will of another, and that this involves an attitude of domination and disrespect toward the coerced. In Raz's words, coercion "violates the condition of independence [that is required for autonomy][62] and expresses a relation of domination and an attitude of disrespect for the coerced individual" (Raz 1988,418). Elsewhere Raz associates coercion with "contempt" (Raz 1988, 410). He does not elaborate further, but presumably, the idea here is that paternalistic coercion treats persons as though they cannot—and could not be led to by rational means—make decisions about their own good.

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[62] Raz describes a "condition of independence" as basic to autonomy (1988, 378).

The implicit belief that the coerced could not be led to change their preferences by rational means is what distinguishes the ill of paternalistic attitudes on the part of public institutions from the distinct ill of paternalistic coercion.

As in the case of Raz's first argument for the compatibility of the harm principle with a conception of substantive autonomy, however, this argument is only coherent if we take procedural autonomy to be the type of autonomy to which it refers. Already, Raz's allusion to a "condition of independence" suggests that it is procedural autonomy he is interested in; after all, theories of procedural autonomy typically hold that decisions are autonomous that were made under conditions of procedural independence. This part of Raz's view seems to imply that the preference of a woman who *has chosen* to eat less than her male relatives are more worthy of respect than the preference to eat less than one's male relatives undertaken for other reasons.But linguistic similarities between a procedural account of autonomy and his account certainly do not provide sufficient evidence that a procedural conception of autonomy is necessary to make sense of his claim that paternalistic coercion necessarily involves contempt toward agents.

Substantive conceptions of autonomy are conceptions of autonomy, and not simply conceptions of the good life, because they hold that certain attitudes toward the good are prerequisites for having one's decisions count as truly one's own. This is in contrast to conceptions of the good that do not closely link the goodness and the "ownness" (autonomy) of agents and decisions. Substantive conceptions of autonomy typically assert that certain attitudes about the good are symptoms of the agent's susceptibility to undue external influences. It is true that coercing a person with "bad" values into becoming substantively autonomous usually reflects contempt for that person's values. But it is far from clear that it reflects contempt for the agent herself-- given that on a substantive

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conception of autonomy the relationship between the agent herself and the "bad" values is utterly contingent.

Perhaps coercion in the name of substantive autonomy can express attitudes of contempt toward the agent who holds bad values, but on a substantive theory of autonomy, these attitudes of contempt are likely to appear morally unproblematic. This is because it follows from most theories of substantive autonomy that the agent that holds the bad values is somehow not the "real" agent.[63] The woman who malnourishes herself, for instance, is somehow a "false" representative of that woman. From within a theory of substantive autonomy, it is difficult to see how coercion in the name of autonomy does anything worse than show contempt for a "false" agent who is wrongly repressing the "true" one.

It may seem that Raz's own conception of substantive autonomy avoids having to say this by making very few explicit metaphysical commitments. He does not write about true and false agents. However, like theorists who claim that paternalistic coercion liberates the "true" agent, Raz subsumes the value of not having one's choices forcibly interfered with and the value of choosing the good over the bad into a single conception. Recall that Raz explicitly claims that the autonomy to choose the bad is not valuable. If paternalistic coercion is bad because it treats persons as if they cannot make decisions--but the only decisions persons need to be able to make are between good ones anyway-- paternalistic coercion that deprives agents of bad options does not deprive agents of anything significant.

Once we recognize this, it seems somewhat arbitrary for Raz to assert that paternalistic coercion expresses attitudes of disrespect toward coerced persons. It seems just as likely that the removal of a worthless option from a person's option set shows a neutral

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[63] This is the theory of the "inner man" Isaiah Berlin claims theories of positive freedom always construct (1969).

attitude toward her. Moreover, it seems plausible to claim, as many theorists of substantive autonomy do, that coercion in the name of autonomy is a far more respectful way to engage with persons than allowing them to continue on with their "bad" behavior.[64] After all, why shouldn't improving the likelihood that someone will engage in a worthwhile life be a way of respecting them?

Whether it is neutral, respectful, or disrespectful of an agent to coerce her into becoming substantively autonomous depends on what it is about human beings that renders them worthy of respect. If it is the capacity to choose among good options, as Raz seems to think it is, coercing persons in the name of autonomy is likely to increase their worthiness of respect, or make them worthy of respect in a way they simply were not before. If it is the capacity to make rational or independent self-regarding decisions regardless of the rest of their content, coercing persons in the name of autonomy does offend their autonomy. If it is neither (potentially some non-autonomy related value), it is possible for paternalistic coercion to be morally neutral.

Raz does not offer a theory of what makes persons worthy of respect, and he does say on several occasions that something called independence is a part of autonomy.[65] Given this, it is highly likely that Raz refers to the idea that it is persons' capacities to make rational or independent decisions that makes their decisions worthy of respect. It manifests contempt on the part of public institutions to coerce persons, because it involves treating them as though they are incapable of—and cannot be persuaded by rational means to— make their own decisions.

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[64] Rousseau (1999), for example, suggests that the submission of the individual to the general will brings out what is best in her and is thus not true submission.

[65] See Raz (1988, 378; 1988, 417-18).

As in the case of Raz' first argument for deriving the harm principle from a substantive conception of autonomy, Raz falls back on a procedural conception of autonomy in his attempt to describe what is wrong with paternalistic coercion. The conception of procedural autonomy to which he implicitly refers is incompatible with the rest of his theory of autonomy. If we value the capacity to make rational or independent choices in its own right, it cannot simultaneously be the case that, as Raz claims, that autonomy directed toward the good is the only autonomy we value. Even if Raz were to make a slightly weaker version of his claim-- and claim that substantive autonomy is only *more* valuable than bare procedural autonomy—his derivation of the harm principle from the value of autonomy would make little sense, given that it would entail the assertion that the less worthy value trumps the more worthy one when they come into conflict.

3.5 TWO CONCEPTS OF AUTONOMY?

3.5.1 Can Substantive and Procedural Autonomy Both Be Forms of Autonomy?

The unsuccessfulness of Raz's attempt to elaborate a conception of substantive autonomy that places limits on paternalism may make the project of identifying IAPs seem doomed to failure. It may seem that we have a choice between a procedural conception of autonomy that identifies IAPs inaccurately and a substantive conception that does so accurately but also justifies coercion of persons with IAPs. Neither of these options seems very promising.

However, there is a simple way of resolving the contradiction that arises when Raz claims that we only value substantive autonomy and then makes arguments that presuppose the value of non-substantive autonomy. Moreover, it is a way of resolving the contradiction that opens up a possible path for identifying of IAPs without concomitantly justifying the

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coercion of persons who have them. If one of the two conflicting values Raz is calling "autonomy" is not actually a form of autonomy[66], it may be possible to defend a position similar to Raz's without contradiction. That is, it may be possible to coherently say that the capacity to choose the good is more valuable than the capacity to choose the bad *and* that persons who choose the bad should not be subject to coercive forms of intervention. It may make it possible to say that persons with IAPs lack the capacity to form and pursue a conception of the good, but this lack does not provide a reason to coerce them.

As the analysis of Raz's arguments in the previous section reveals, theories that value substantive autonomy have a hard time explaining what is wrong with coercion that increases agents' substantive autonomy.[67] There are two principal reasons for this. The first is that they typically leave intact the classical liberal assumption that the problem with paternalistic coercion is that it affronts persons' autonomy. Building normative content into the concept of autonomy and conceiving of autonomy as a range property requires the categorization of persons whose values do not manifest the appropriate normative content as nonautonomous. On such a view, there cannot be anything wrong with coercing persons with "bad" values, because they are not autonomous, and only autonomous persons have the right not to be coerced for their own goods.

The second, related reason that theories of substantive autonomy have a difficult time condemning coercion that increases autonomy is that they subordinate the value of autonomy to the value of well-being. Raz does this by asserting that autonomy is valuable

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[66] It is equally plausible to save Raz from his contradiction by claiming to value two different types of autonomy and creating a hierarchy between them. However, I take the main difference between this strategy and the one I suggest—of calling one value "autonomy" and the other something else—to be terminological.

[67] It is very easy for theories of substantive autonomy to be critical of paternalistic coercion when this coercion is in the name of goods that do not affect basic autonomy. It is very difficult for them to be critical of paternalistic coercion in the name of the goods that are constitutive of autonomy. The latter issue is the issue at hand.

only insofar as it helps us to pursue the good. On the view that the value of autonomy is derivative of the value of well-being, the only coherent reason not to coerce a person to increase her autonomy-- assuming that autonomy is the relevant coercion-limiting concept—is that doing so will decrease her well-being. If her conception of her own well-being differs from an objective conception in a way that suggests that the conception does not authentically belong to her, the hierarchy of autonomy and well-being dictates that her *objective* well-being should be valued above her *subjective* well-being. If autonomy is derivative of well-being, the question of whether persons who hold "bad" values should be coerced dissolves into a question of whether their values contribute to their well-being. On theories of substantive autonomy, restrictions on coercion designed to increase autonomy are usually thought to represent capitulations to moral relativism.[68]

Both of these reasons that theories of substantive autonomy tend to justify coercion suggest that limiting acceptable coercion in the name of autonomy requires reference to a value other than substantive autonomy, a value that is not derivative of well-being. The value that Raz calls "independence" is presumably such a value. In his reference to independence, as well as his assertion that removing an option to which a person has become attached can hurt them, Raz indicates that an agents' valuing of an option provides a freestanding reason not to remove the option from the agents' set.[69] The prohibition against autonomy-promoting coercion is indifferent to the objective goodness or badness of the option and the fact that the choice of the bad option reflects a lack of autonomy on the agent's part.

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[68] On theories of substantive autonomy restrictions on autonomy-promoting coercion can still be defended on pragmatic grounds, but as I have suggested above I think this defense is weak.

[69] Raz describes coercion as forcing agents to make decisions out of something he calls "personal need." An agent is coerced when she has the choice between one nontrivial option and giving up her way of life. Raz does not say the way of life she is forced to give up in such a situation must be objectively valuable. This, too, suggests he thinks that the fact that an agent values an option provides reason that that option should not be taken away from her. See Raz (1988, 153)

If the freestanding value of independence is not derived from well-being, it seems plausible to defend persons' access to bad options without thereby affirming that the bad options are somehow good. However, it is less clear that it is coherent to say simultaneously that a person is nonautonomous and that their choices should be respected. Autonomy is the capacity that we typically understand as grounding the entitlement to be the ultimate authority over oneself. Since the entitlement issues from a capacity, it is inconsistent to claim that those who lack the capacity deserve the entitlement.

One way to circumvent this problem might be to insist that the entitlement does not derive from any capacity. This route is problematic, however, since it results in the conclusion that the overriding of the wills of persons who lack basic rationality is unjustifiable. To separate the right to have one's decisions respected from some level of rationality is incompatible with several moral intuitions that we are fairly sure about-- such as that paternalistic coercion can be an acceptable response to a person who is engaging in self-harming behavior because she is under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs.

Another way of circumventing the apparent inconsistency in claiming that coercive intervention in the choices of nonautonomous persons is unjustified would be to argue that some value other than autonomy grounds the right to protection from paternalistic coercion. However, absent a detailed argument in favor of such a position, it is difficult to imagine what such a value might be. Most political theories that place restrictions on justifiable paternalistic coercion do so in the name of personal autonomy. Moreover, the fact that justifying paternalistic coercion raises moral problems that justifying other types of coercion does not indicates that we value a specific right to be sovereign over oneself—a right that is independent of our valuing of well-being or the capacity to be sovereign over others. The value of autonomy (etymologically, the being of the law for oneself) emphasizes the

differences between the scope of legitimate relationships the self can have to itself and the scope of legitimate relationships it can have to others.

3.5.2 From Substantive Autonomy to Capability Freedom

It is therefore difficult to show that the value that Raz calls "independence," the value that supports the protection of individuals from paternalistic coercion, is not a form of autonomy. However, as I asserted above, rescuing an argument like Raz's-- that values opportunities for good choices over opportunities for bad ones, but does not justify paternalistic coercion-- requires that one of the two conceptions Raz describes as "autonomy" above turn out not to be a form of autonomy. I want to suggest that substantive good autonomy—the autonomy Raz says we value— can be more plausibly described as a version of what Amartya Sen would call "capability freedom" than a version of autonomy. For Sen, freedom consists in "a person's capability to achieve various alternative combinations of functionings" (Sen 1990b, 114). The functionings that are constitutive of freedom are those that "one has reason to value" (Sen 1999b, 14).

Sen's notion of capability freedom resembles Raz's conception of valuable autonomy in four significant ways. First, both Raz's conception of autonomy and Sen's conception of freedom are substantive rather than formal. Both conceptions are aimed at the ability to achieve certain valuable ends, and both hold that the absence of interference from others is not sufficient to secure individuals the capacity to achieve those ends. On both views, not being forcibly prevented from eating does not mean that an individual has the capacity to eat if they live in social conditions where food is not available to them.

Second, both conceptions derive their value from the value of well-being. This does not mean that they derive their value from the value of felt happiness. Indeed, both Raz and

Sen are highly critical of the use of subjective happiness as an indicator of welfare. Nor does it mean that these thinkers think that well-being is the only—or ultimate—human value; indeed, both thinkers' seem to value procedural autonomy independently of well-being. Rather, both values (Raz'z valuable autonomy and Sen's freedom) are meant to be basic constituent elements of a good human life. Without a wide variety of good options and the capacity to choose between them, an agent cannot be said to be leading a good life. Certainly, this derivation of the value of freedom from well-being is more straightforwardly attributable to Raz than to Sen, and this is not the place for a lengthy metaethical discussion of Sen's theory. However, Sen's consistent defense of agency freedoms (like the capacity to make decisions about how one's well-being will be achieved) on the grounds that they add to individuals' senses of their own worth and possibilities (Sen 1985, 219; Sen 1985, 4-5; Sen 1999) suggests that Sen holds the value of well-being to ground the value of freedom.[70]

Third, both conceptions belong to theories that hold that the capacity to pursue the good is more valuable than the capacity to pursue the bad. As noted above, Raz asserts that autonomy to pursue the good is without value. Sen's insistence that one must have "reason to value" one's ends places normative restrictions on the types of ends one can pursue under the rubric of freedom.[71]

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly for developing a political theory that distinguishes good choices from bad ones without justifying the coercion of persons who have made "bad" ones, both Raz and Sen denounce the coercion of persons who make choices inconsistent with their objective well-being. We have already seen that Raz's

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[70] We can also cite Sen's implicit commitment to the idea that positive freedom's worth is derivative of its contribution to well-being in his recent argument that adding options to a person's set only increases their freedom if those options increase her capacity to do things she has "reason to value" (Sen 2002, 602).

[71] For a number of discussions of Sen's idea of "reason to value," see Sen (2002).

argument fails, because he attempts to unite two incompatible conceptions of autonomy under a single concept.

Sen, I would argue, does not fall into the same trap, because he values autonomy separately from capability freedom, and suggests that the former should be respected when the two come into conflict. This is the implicit valuation behind a central idea of Sen's capability theory—the idea that capability (access to valued abilities to be and do) and not functioning (valued abilities to be and do) should be the end of social policy. It is also the implicit valuation behind Sen's occasional claim that when dealing with agents who are not fully rational, such as children, we should be concerned with achieved well-being (functioning) rather than capability (Sen 1985, 204).

Sen does not explicitly argue that respect for autonomy is what motivates him to make capability rather than functioning the end of social policy.[72] Three different arguments against paternalistic coercion to promote functioning propose themselves, one based on the value of well-being and the other two based on the independent valuation of procedural autonomy. Of these three, the last, one of the two that rests on the independent valuation of procedural autonomy, seems most plausible. One possible motivation for Sen's promotion of capability over functioning may be that he holds that being forced to function cannot promote agents' well-being.

Serena Olsaretti makes an argument of this sort on Sen's behalf. She claims that well-being requires ex post facto endorsement of one's life-choices and living conditions, and that one is unlikely to come to endorse conditions that have been forced on one (Olsaretti 2005, 100). Being forced to learn to read, on this view, is more likely to arouse resentment in an

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[72] Nussbaum occasionally suggests a link between the valorization of capability over functioning and autonomy. See (Nussbaum 2000b, 101).

agent than the feeling that reading is valuable. However, Olsaretti's argument is a variation on the pragmatic arguments against coercion in the name of substantive autonomy discussed earlier. It is flawed for the same reasons. The empirical assumption that coercion always (or even usually) incites resentment on the part of agents seems specious. I may endorse the criminal laws of the society I live in, even if I did not participate in making them, and even if I know that I will be punished by force if I break them. Moreover, the very fact that individuals can form IAPs, suggests that persons *can* react to coercive conditions by endorsing them.

A second possible reason Sen may hold that societies should promote capability rather than functioning is that he holds that agents deserve to be able to make fully free choices about whether or not to engage in valued functionings. He may hold that the public institutions should be more interested in promoting free choices than good ones, because freedom is a more fundamental value than well-being. The capacities constitutive of well-being are only truly constitutive of well-being if they are freely chosen. On such a view, public institutions should cultivate an environment where persons' relationships to their own well-being are relationships of rational choosing. They should provide comparable options for both performing valued functionings and not performing them so that persons will be able to consistently exercise choice in a way that infuses their well-being with value. This position may be viewed as an independent valuation of procedural autonomy on Sen's part, because it holds that well-being is not valuable if it is not accompanied by autonomous choosing.

However, Richard Arneson and Gerald Cohen have put forth persuasive criticisms of this argument for the promotion of capability over functioning. Cohen points out that the view of choice as infusing well-being with value is excessively "athletic" (Cohen 1993, 25-

26). According to him, this view defines well-being in a way that is unrealistically demanding. It requires that persons be choosing all the time, in a way that is likely to interfere with the practice of daily life. Moreover, it proposes a counter-intuitive conception of well-being. It does so to the extent that it suggests that the active choice of all valued functionings increase their contributions to the agent's well-being. As I suggested in the last chapter, it is rather bizarre to claim that an agent who makes active decisions about whether she is going to eat or not or whether she is going to attempt to prevent illness is necessarily doing better than one who unreflectively values her health.

Arneson's criticism of the view that capability should be absolutely valued over functioning is that this valuation results in the allocation of resources in a morally irresponsible manner (Arneson 2000, 61-62). If resources are limited, spending resources in order to make "bad" choices available (in order to make sure the "good" choices are actually chosen) or in order to promote activities in the most choice-optimizing way possible, can result in the provision of valued functioning to a much smaller group of individuals than spending resources according to a strategy less intent on choice promotion. This criticism is especially damaging in the international development context, where resources are often very scarce and the level of functioning in question often very basic. To imagine one example, a position that *requires* public institutions to promote public discussion of girls' education over the provision of financial incentives to encourage it-- even in cases where the latter is far more successful in increasing girls' school enrollment—is problematic.

Neither the claim that well-being is only well-being if it is infused with choice nor the claim that coercion usually damages the well-being of the coerced provides Sen with a persuasive argument against coercing persons in order to increase their capability freedom. I believe that a plausible defense of Sen's insistence on the unacceptability of coercing persons

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into functioning—even when their refusal to do so is objectively bad—is available. Philip Pettit provides such a defense.

Pettit claims that coercing persons into functioning subjects persons to domination. That is, persons who are coerced into performing valued functionings must be subject to a power that is just as likely to coerce them into not performing them (Pettit 2001, 15). The problem with such power is not simply that it is unpredictable, that tomorrow the power may decide to coerce them into bad functionings rather than good ones (Pettit 2001, 15). Rather, the problem is with the power itself, the position of dependence in which this places the person vis-à-vis the power.

This power situation faces the agent with an unacceptable set of options: she must either do what the power wants and act in a way inconsistent with what the power values or she must suffer a coercive response. This deep subjection of an individual to another is, on its face, affronts the personhood of that individual. Pettit's response may be seen as an independent valuation of procedural autonomy in the sense that it insists that the usurpation of a rational person's self-regarding choices is wrong, regardless of the rightness or wrongness of those choices. A person's right to be sovereign over herself holds independently of the extent to which the content of her choices is questionable.[73]

Pettit's reading of Sen adds to Sen's notion of freedom as the ability to achieve (and choose among) valuable functionings a commitment to the individual's ultimate right to be sovereign over her self-regarding choices. According to it, Sen can consistently hold that

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[73] There is another way of reading Pettit's argument here. Pettit may claim that what is wrong with being forced to function is that it is arbitrary-- that the conception of functioning at hand belongs to the dominator and not the dominated. If this is the case, however, Pettit's argument is only an argument against the promotion of functioning over capability when the agent has had no say in the definition of valued functioning. However, Pettit does not restrict his argument in this way. Moreover, if Pettit means to say that coercing persons into functioning is acceptable if he has participated in defining the conception of functioning, his theory runs the risk of being seriously illiberal. See Renaut (2005).

coercion of persons who make choices contrary to their well-being is wrong and that those choices are truly contrary to their well-being. He can do this in a way that Raz cannot, because he does not make the value of autonomy depend on the value of well-being. Rather, he holds that an agent's self-sovereignty should not be overridden in the interests of her well-being, regardless of how it would contribute to her objective well-being.

To translate this into the context of IAP, Sen can say that it is wrong to coerce an illiterate woman into learning to read, because he is not committed to the view that only good choices deserve respect. Raz cannot give us a reason not to coerce her because her endorsement of this belief is not autonomous. Sen differs from Raz, because he does not conceive of the freedom that is necessary for well-being as a type of substantive autonomy. The ability to pursue a good life and the ability to make determinations that others must respect are different abilities for Sen.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Substantive conceptions of autonomy are attractive tools for IAP-identification, because they make sense of the common intuition that self-harming preferences are unlikely to have been chosen. However, theories of substantive autonomy have one very unpalatable consequence: they justify coercion of persons who hold values that are supposedly inconsistent with autonomy. I have argued that this problem is not easily resolvable for a theory that values only substantive autonomy, or for a theory that values substantive autonomy more highly than procedural autonomy. Pragmatic arguments and tradeoff arguments against the association of substantive autonomy with coercion are, at best, only arguments against select instances of coercion. Arguments against the association of substantive autonomy with coercion that refuse to conceive autonomy as a range property

are likely to justify more coercion than range-property arguments. Raz's argument that substantive autonomy does not justify paternalistic coercion is internally inconsistent because of its unavowed valuation of procedural autonomy over substantive autonomy.

I have claimed that-- despite the weaknesses of Raz's argument-- it is possible for a theory to claim that choices with "bad" contents are unfree without lapsing into the justification of paternalistic coercion. This is precisely what Sen can be seen to do in his distinction from capability from functioning. Sen is able to make such an argument consistently because he distinguishes the freedom that increases a person's well-being from the procedural autonomy that entitles them to freedom from coercion. This is consistent with Pettit's way of understanding the normative reasons for valuing capability over functioning.

The difficulties that beset the attempt to elaborate a theory of substantive autonomy that does not justify the coercion of persons with IAPs provides good reason not to define IAPs as deficits in substantive autonomy. However, we may continue to think of IAPs as deficits in the freedom to choose the good—or to choose among various human goods. To malnourish oneself is to deprive oneself of health; to refuse to learn to read is to participate in depriving oneself of opportunities for the enjoyment of practical reason.

We may make judgments such as these without suggesting that persons who lack these freedoms lack the ability to make meaningful choices, provided that we value procedural autonomy separately from the freedom that contributes to human well-being. This is the path opened up by Sen's distinction of capability from functioning and the argument for social promotion of the former rather than the latter. Once it is clear that it is possible to value opportunities for the realization of various human goods over non-goods

without justifying paternalistic coercion, it becomes much less problematic to identify IAPs

with reference to a theory of the good.

4.0 THE PROPENSITY TO FLOURISHING ACCOUNT AND DELIBERATIVE PERFECTIONISM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Giving an account of what makes inappropriately adaptive preferences (IAPs) seem not to be the "true" preferences of their bearers has proven more difficult than it initially seemed. Taken together, the last two chapters make a case against attributing the apparent inauthenticity of IAPs to autonomy deficits. In the first chapter, I argued that we cannot coherently ascribe the inauthenticity of IAPs to the conditions under which they were formed or attitudes their bearers manifest toward them. It is thus improbable that IAPs seem inauthentic because their bearers lack procedural autonomy. In the second chapter, I showed that attributing the inauthenticity of IAPs to *substantive* autonomy deficits, while coherent, had counterintuitive and morally undesirable consequences. If we think persons with IAPs lack substantive autonomy, it is difficult to avoid concomitantly justifying the coercion of those persons. It thus seems unlikely that we can explain our intuition that IAPs are inauthentic by characterizing IAPs as unchosen.

In this chapter, I propose an alternative way of accounting for the seeming inauthenticity of IAPs, which I call the "propensity to flourishing account" (or PTFA). I claim that IAPs seem inauthentic—not because their bearers lack autonomy—but rather

because their bearers would abandon them if they had access to opportunities for basic flourishing. The PTFA holds that IAPs seem not to be the "true" preferences of their bearers, because true preferences persist when persons have access to conditions for basic flourishing.

In the second section of this chapter, I explain the PTFA and how it can make sense of the intuition that IAPs are inauthentic. In the third section, I ask what type of ethical commitments this account requires and claim that a perfectionist conception of the good best furnishes them. In the fourth, I describe a subtype of perfectionism I call "deliberative perfectionism" that is particularly suited to IAP identification. I also suggest that this deliberative perfectionism is free of many of the defects of Aristotelian perfectionism that may make the application of a perfectionist conception of the good to development practice initially seem naïve and contrast it to what Sen calls "self-evaluation" as a basis for IAP identification. In the final section, I characterize the work of three contemporary participatory development practitioners as using assumptions similar to those of the PTFA in approaching persons with IAPs.

4.2 THE PROPENSITY TO FLOURISHING ACCOUNT

We have already seen the serious difficulties that confront attempts to claim that IAPs are inauthentic because they are not freely chosen. This may seem to require us to conclude either 1) that there is no principled way of making sense of the intuition that IAPs are inauthentic or 2) that the intuition that a given IAP is inauthentic is identical to the intuition that the preference is "bad" because of the unacceptability of its content. Neither of these conclusions is particularly satisfying. If the first is correct, we must abandon the project of providing a reliable explanation of our intuition that IAPs do not reflect the "true"

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desires of their bearers. It is unlikely that the second conclusion is even correct, given that it would have problems explaining why two preferences with the same contents do not always strike us as equally inappropriately adaptive. As I noted in the last two chapters, IAPs seem distinct from other "bad" preferences, because the sense that a preference is inappropriately adaptive does not depend entirely on preference content. There is a morally significant difference between fasting and being malnourished, for example, but it is not a difference in preference content. The second conclusion above claims that a purely content-based account can explain the seeming inauthenticity of IAPs, but this is rather improbable.

Fortunately, we need not accept either the first or second conclusion above. I believe we can subscribe to a coherent non-autonomy-based account of the apparent inauthenticity of IAPs. This is the PTFA stated below:

A person's preference is inappropriately adaptive if it 1) impedes her performance of a functioning that is basic to her flourishing (objectively defined), and 2) she would abandon it for a preference conducive to her basic flourishing under conditions where opportunities for her basic flourishing were present.

However, it is impossible to know for certain in advance what preferences a person would hold onto under conditions conducive to her basic flourishing if she does not already live under such conditions, or if she does not have a good sense of what those conditions might be like. This is a problem if we want the PTFA to be useful to public institutions trying to identify IAPs. The PTFA must make possible *prospective*, and not just retroactive, judgments about the likelihood that a given preference is an IAP. I would suggest that we can use the PTFA in making prospective judgments about IAPs if we draw out its normative assumptions. I propose the following grounds for suspecting a preference of being an IAP:

We may reasonably suspect that a person's preference is inappropriately adaptive if it 1) impedes her performance of a functioning[74] that is basic to her flourishing (objectively defined), and 2) she lacks opportunities for the development of that functioning or the preference disproportionately accrues to members of an oppressed social group of which she is a member. [75]

The PTFA helps us to understand our sense that IAPs are inauthentic. It suggests that the preferences that properly belong to a person are those to which she is deeply committed under conditions conducive to her basic flourishing. IAPs seem not to reflect the "true" desires of their bearers, then, because IAP bearers are not committed to their IAPs deeply enough to hold onto them when they have opportunities to form preferences consistent with their flourishing.[76]

The second, prospective version of the PTFA allows us to reasonably suspect that certain preferences are inappropriately adaptive on the basis of a narrative something like this: When a person does not perform a functioning basic to her flourishing, it is possible that she is deeply committed to a conception of the good that does not value it. However, it is also possible that she manifests this preference, because it is her way of managing the particular limited option set with which she is faced. For example, she may, in her current situation be unaware that she would value such a functioning if it were made available to her.

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[74] The word "functioning" here is used in the same way as in Nussbaum and Sen's work and simply means "a being or doing." See Nussbaum (2000b, 86-88) and Sen (1990b).

[75] In his famous article on paternalism, Feinberg (1989) asks what we should do when we encounter persons who are engaged in self-harming behavior. He states that we can infer from the self-harming behavior that it is *unlikely* that the self-harming behavior in question is voluntary. Oh his view, we should intervene to test for voluntariness, and, if the act turns out to be voluntary, allow it to continue unobstructed.

The prospective version of the PTFA is similar to Feinberg's idea that we can infer something about voluntariness from preference content. However, the PTFA-motivated intervention does not test for voluntariness. Rather, it tests for deep attachment.

[76] IAPs are thus what Elster would call "situation-dependent beliefs" (1987).

She may have no way of expressing value for the functioning that she does not perform and thus have convinced herself that she does not value it. Or, she may be trading away an objectively valuable functioning that she actually does value for another objectively valuable functioning that she also values, because access to opportunities for flourishing is so limited. So, to return to one of our examples from the first chapter, a poor South Asian woman who malnourishes herself in order to feed her male relatives may do so because she attaches great importance to ideals of femininity and austerity. But there are other reasons she may do so. She may do so because she does not know that this is not the way things have to be; because it is easier to believe that she deserves less than to face a life of daily disappointment; or because her option set forces her to choose between domestic violence and adequate nourishment.

On the basis of the PTFA, we may say that if a person holds a preference contrary to her basic flourishing, and she lacks opportunities for basic flourishing, it is much more likely that the person in question is managing a limited option set with provisional beliefs and preferences than expressing a conception of the good to which she is deeply committed in the way she would want to express it. Faced with a woman like the one in the above example, whose context has not afforded her opportunities to eat sufficiently or as much as her male family members, public policy can reasonably proceed from the assumption that her preference to eat less than is healthy for her does not express desires to which she is very deeply attached. It can make this type of judgment based on the presumption that persons have a tendency to value their basic flourishing. Indeed, this tendency is strong enough that

we expect most of them to express preferences consistent with their basic flourishing if they are presented with an option set more conducive to their flourishing.[77]

The PTFA allows us to explain the intuition that IAPs are inauthentic by distinguishing authentic and inauthentic self-regarding preferences based on the *likelihood of their persistence in the face of opportunities for basic flourishing*. Authentic preferences are those to which persons are deeply attached. They are beyond public suspicion, because we expect them to persist regardless of their bearers' access opportunities for basic flourishing or they do actually persist despite their bearers' newfound access to opportunities for basic flourishing. IAPs are a class of inauthentic preferences. Preferences are inauthentic if we can reasonably expect them to disappear when the agent's access to basic flourishing increases.

This authentic/inauthentic distinction is different from those provided by autonomy-based accounts and purely content-based accounts. Autonomy-based accounts suggest that IAPs appear not to belong to their bearers, because their bearers did not choose them. But, as we saw in the first chapter, there is no reason to assume that IAPs are any less chosen than other preferences. Trying to fix this defect by saying that only preferences with certain contents can be chosen had adverse consequence of saying that deprived persons cannot make worthy choices. In contrast to such autonomy-based accounts that say that IAPs are inauthentic because their bearers did not choose them, the PTFA indicates that they are inauthentic because their bearers are not deeply attached to them. IAPs are not preferences that their bearers do not choose, they are preferences that—on some level—their bearers do

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[77] Bina Agarawal (1997) makes an argument very similar to mine to show that Sen has exaggerated the extent to which adaptive preferences are internalized. That, is, she states that Sen jumps too quickly to the conclusion that psychological factors—rather than external constraints—prevent persons from living good lives. Put simply, she thinks that we should assume that failures to live well should be read as indicators of deficits of opportunity. She does not make explicit reference to a conception of human flourishing, but I think that some implicit account of what persons have a tendency to do makes her account coherent.

not *want* to have.[78] This is why many preferences complicit with deprivation transform when the persons who have them cease to be deprived.

The PTFA also makes sense of the intuition that IAPs do not truly belong to their bearers differently from how a purely content-based account would. If the intuition that IAPs were inauthentic were simply identical to the intuition that IAPs were inconsistent with the good, authenticity would be identical with goodness. The PTFA holds that human beings generally desire their basic flourishing, but this is a general assumption rather than a categorical one. It does not hold that persons *always* deeply desire their basic flourishing. On the PTFA, it is quite possible for a person to authentically forego basic flourishing—by maintaining her preference to forego it even when presented improved opportunities for attaining it. It is also quite possible for preferences against basic flourishing not to appear as inauthentic at all, as in cases where persons who already have sufficient opportunities for basic flourishing manifest them. Preference content plays a role in distinguishing IAPs from authentic preferences, but it is not an exclusive one.

This is an extremely important point, because it helps us to get clear about some things the PTFA does *not* justify. It does not justify coercing persons into flourishing. One reason for this is that, as noted above, its notion that human beings have a propensity to basic flourishing is general and not categorical. Thus, there is room for the possibility that some persons' flourishing does not require certain functionings—although this is the

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[78] The PTFA may seem similar to an account of IAPs as procedural autonomy deficits, if procedural autonomy is defined as endorsement. However, there are important differences between the PTFA and the idea that IAPs are simply unendorsed preferences. First, the PTFA does not identify as inappropriately adaptive preferences those that do not affect basic flourishing; in contrast a procedural endorsement account would have to say that all undendorsed preferences were likely to be inappropriately adaptive. Second, the PTFA allows existing preferences to be suspect even if they are endorsed, provided that they are contrary to basic flourishing and are manifested under conditions of opportunity deficit. Third, without a conception of human flourishing, an endorsement account cannot give us grounds on which to make reliable projections about what persons will endorse in the future or reason to take their future endorsement more seriously than their present endorsement.

exception and not the rule. A second reason the PTFA does not justify coercion into flourishing is that it is not based on a conception of autonomy; it is perfectly compatible with the principle that public institutions should always respect self-regarding choices rational persons make under autonomous conditions. A third reason the PTFA does not justify coercing persons to live in accordance with an objective conception of basic flourishing is that it characterizes providing conditions conducive to flourishing to persons as revelatory of their deep desires. If causing a rational person to flourish according to an objective conception requires coercing them, their "true" desires are likely not desires for flourishing according to the objective conception. Thus, making policy designed to reveal persons' deep preferences is a matter of adding options to their sets rather than reducing them to a point of coercion.[79]

4.3 PERFECTIONISM AND THE PTFA

If the PTFA is to be plausible as a philosophical explanation and a guide for public policy, we must make certain ethical presuppositions that are best supported by a perfectionist-type conception of the good. In order to show this, I will describe these presuppositions and explain their consistency with the basic tenets of perfectionism. I will also contrast the PTFA with informed preference accounts of the inauthenticity of IAPs and

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[79] Clarke (2006) argues that much of what makes public promotion of a conception of the good objectionable disappears if that conception is promoted by increasing rather than reducing options. I believe that there is one significant problem with his argument; he lacks a conception of opportunity cost and thus does not take into account the fact that introducing new options changes agents' choice situations. Providing a person who has lived in unsanitary conditions without knowing it access to adequate sanitation removes her option of living without adequate sanitation without knowing it, even if it does not remove her option of living without adequate sanitation. I think a more plausible way of thinking about the difference between adding and subtracting options is to distinguish the provision of new options from coercion. We may say that there are ways for public institutions to introduce new options that alter persons' choice situations in ways that provide them more objectively good options as long as there remain nontrivial alternatives to choosing the objectively good options.

show that the advantages of the PTFA over informed preference accounts are traceable to the perfectionist underpinnings of the PTFA.

4.3.1 The PTFA's Perfectionist Assumptions

It is difficult to imagine being persuaded by the PTFA without committing to the following four assumptions about human beings and human nature: 1) that it is possible to give a valid objective account of the functionings that constitute human flourishing, 2) that being human entitles one to certain opportunities for flourishing, 3) that there is a high level of coincidence between what persons deeply desire and the functionings that constitute basic human flourishing, and 4) that human beings' authentic desires are best revealed under conditions conducive to their basic flourishing. Let us examine the role each assumption plays in assuring the credibility of the PTFA in turn.

The importance of the first assumption, that it is possible to give a valid objective account of the functionings constitutive of basic human flourishing, is fairly self-evident. If it is going to be possible to evaluate preferences based partly on their consistency with an objective conception of basic human flourishing, such a conception must be available to the evaluators. Moreover, if we are to consider such evaluation morally appropriate, we must believe not only that such a conception can be generated, but also that it has moral force.

There is another, less obvious, reason the plausibility of the PTFA depends on this assumption. In practice, in order for representatives of public institutions to be able to reasonably suspect a preference of being an IAP, it must be possible for third parties to make reliable judgments about whether preferences are inappropriately adaptive. This last statement requires qualification, however. To say that third parties must be able to make reliable judgments about the likelihood that preferences are IAPs by no means entails that

third parties must be able to make these judgments without the consultation of the persons whose preferences are in question or that third parties must be the ultimate deciders about whether preferences should be treated as inappropriately adaptive. But-- whatever the role of third parties in deciding whether to treat persons' existing preferences as IAPs and what to do about this—it must be possible for third parties to be able to achieve some level of understanding of whether a given preference is consistent with a person's basic flourishing and how to increase a person's access to basic flourishing in a way appropriate to her context.

An objective conception of basic human flourishing facilitates these types of understanding. It does so by allowing the translation of the particular preferences in question into the language of the objective conception—a conception both persons with suspect preferences and third parties are likely to be able to relate to. T.M. Scanlon describes the way an objective conception of flourishing[80] can allow persons to better understand the preferences of others in this way: Even if the actual contents of others' preferences are quite difficult for us to relate to, "we can understand why they are of value to someone else if we can bring the reasons for their desirability under familiar general categories" (Scanlon 2003, 75). An objective understanding of human flourishing makes it possible for third parties to make reliable judgments about whether to suspect preferences that appear inappropriately adaptive and what to do about them.

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[80] Scanlon does not use the term "flourishing," but rather uses the term "well-being." However, the term "well-being," as Scanlon uses it in that essay, is easily interchangeable with the word "flourishing" as I use it here.

The second assumption that accepting the PTFA likely requires is that being human entitles one to a certain set of opportunities for flourishing.[81] Without this assumption, or one like it, it would be difficult to justify even preliminary judgments about others' deprivation. This is because it would be conceivable that what constituted basic flourishing for some groups of persons was radically different from what constituted basic flourishing for others. Moreover, it would be difficult to justify providing opportunities to persons who lacked them and did not actively seek them, because it would be difficult to characterize their situation as one in which they lacked opportunities that were owed to them.

The third assumption listed above is key to the plausibility of the PTFA. This is the assumption that there is a high level of coincidence-- but not a one-to-one correspondence-- between what persons' deeply want to be and do and the contents of an objective conception of basic flourishing.[82] It allows the PTFA to be compatible with liberalism. It is what allows us to suppose that persons' IAPs are likely to change on their own under conditions conducive to their basic flourishing— that is, without coercion. Absent this assumption, ensuring persons access to basic flourishing would be just a type of social engineering. It would be just as likely to leave their seeming IAPs intact or produce new preferences against flourishing in them as it would be to cause them to express preferences for their own flourishing. Saying that preferences consistent with basic flourishing, revealed under conditions conducive to it, were persons' "true" preferences would just be a (very

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[81] This is a way of reformulating the Kantian principle that each person is an end in himself, although it may be even more expansive given that the category "human" is more inclusive than the category "person." For a discussion of the compatibility of perfectionism with moral equality, see Hurka (1993)

[82] Sen frequently draws a distinction between what persons actually value and what they "have reason to value" (1999b; 2002). We might think of this third assumption as being a way of fleshing out the notion of "reason to value." A person has "reason to value" functionings basic to her flourishing, and this reason is not simply provided by a theory of what she *ought to* value, but rather by a theory of what most human beings happen to value.

dishonest) way of justifying coercion that had already happened. We—or at least those of us who do not want public institutions to be in the business of forcing people to live according to a particular conception of the good—would clearly not want to say something like this.

This third assumption is also what allows preference content to play a role in determining which preferences institutions might legitimately suspect of being IAPs. When we presuppose that most persons deeply desire the functionings constitutive of basic flourishing, it makes sense to suspect that preferences *inconsistent* with basic flourishing will have less staying power than preferences consistent with it. However, it is worth re-emphasizing that we do not need a strong, categorical version of this assumption to make preference content a basis for suspecting that a preference does not reflect the deep desires of its bearer. Suspecting that a person's preferences are inappropriately adaptive and determining out-of-hand that they *are* inappropriately adaptive are not the same thing. The PTFA aims to justify suspicion and not ultimate, out-of-hand determination.

Given this aim, accepting the PTFA only means assuming that it is *likely* that preferences against basic flourishing are inappropriately adaptive, not that they actually are. Moreover, the PTFA does not make manifest preference content the sole determinant of whether a preference qualifies as suspect. The PTFA states that the conditions under which a preference is held also play a role in determining whether or not it is suspect. Since inconsistency with basic flourishing is not the sole criterion for determining whether a preference is suspect, and since suspecting a preference is not the same as deciding out of hand that a preference is inappropriately adaptive, we do not need a very strong version of the third assumption to accept the PTFA.

Indeed, I would suggest that it is a good thing that we do not need a categorical version of the third assumption. A categorical version of the third assumption would likely

be unacceptable anyway, because it would have morally and philosophically objectionable consequences. Morally, it would have similar consequences to doing without the third assumption; that it would justify coercing persons into flourishing—at least in cases where coercion was an expedient way to bring persons' preferences into line with the objective conception of flourishing. Philosophically, it would require our assent to a premise that is not at all consistent with our real-world experiences—namely, that preferences for self-sacrifice cannot be deeply and genuinely desired by their bearers. Also, assuming that *all* persons desire their own flourishing would make the PTFA dissolve into the claim that preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing simply *are* inappropriately adaptive. We can conclude from this that the plausibility of the PTFA depends on assuming that persons generally, but not absolutely, deeply desire the functionings that constitute basic flourishing.

We also need a fourth assumption if we are going to be persuaded by the PTFA. This is the assumption that the authentic desires of human beings are best revealed under conditions conducive to their flourishing. This fourth assumption allows us to depict the "transformed" preferences that often appear when a once-deprived person has opportunities for basic flourishing as "truer" than the IAPs that preceded them. Without it, we could not describe the transformed preferences as more authentic than the inappropriately adaptive ones. We could say that the transformed preferences were objectively better than the earlier ones, but then we would have to make a separate case for identifying objective goodness with authenticity—a case that would be very difficult to make. Or, we could say that preferences expressed later in a person's life always more accurately reflect their deep desires, but a reasonable justification of this position does not seem forthcoming.

I have argued that, if the PTFA is to seem to us a plausible account of the inauthenticity of IAPs, the four assumptions above must also seem plausible. Now, I want to

suggest that commitment to the four assumptions above constitutes commitment to a roughly perfectionist conception of the good. Perfectionist conceptions of the good "share the foundational idea that what is good, ultimately, is the development of human nature" (Hurka 1993, 3). On such conceptions, we can make meaningful statements about a generalizable human nature and we can meaningfully distinguish functionings that contribute to the realization of human nature from those that do not. Put differently, perfectionist conceptions of the good contain ideas about what is good for human beings in general and claim to be able to distinguish degrees to which different life-choices and activities actualize this good.

The four assumptions required by the PTFA and listed above are best supported by a conception of the good that is perfectionist in structure. The first and second assumptions listed above simply correspond to the two fundamental principles of perfectionism. To say that we can come up with an objective conception of human flourishing is basically to say that we can distinguish functionings that contribute to the realization of human nature from those that do not. To say that all human beings are entitled to the same basic opportunities is an affirmation of the principle that we can make meaningful statements about a general human nature. The third assumption needed by the PTFA listed above, that human beings generally desire their basic flourishing is easily interpretable in terms of the perfectionist claim that the good is the development of human nature. One way of thinking of a nature is as having an intrinsic tendency to develop in a certain way.[83] If we think of human nature as what human beings tend toward becoming, it makes sense to think of human beings as desiring their own basic flourishing, or of choices against basic flourishing as requiring significant acts of deliberative will that are worthy of respect.

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[83] This view is famously developed in Aristotle (1999).

The fourth of the assumptions required by the PTFA listed above is the one that most strongly commits us to a morality based on human *nature* and not just a set of generalizations about persons or rational beings. It is the assumption that the authentic desires of human beings are best revealed under conditions conducive to their flourishing. Though there are probably several lines of reasoning about human *nature* that will warrant the third assumption, here is the one that seems to me the most evident. Human beings are particular types of living creatures, and all living creatures need certain environmental conditions in order to manifest their natures. Trees, for example, need water to grow to the heights appropriate to them; a tree that lacks sufficient water will not grow to the height typical of its species. A tree that did not have sufficient water might live despite its short height, but the tree's nature would be more fully expressed with sufficient water. We may say something similar of human beings. Human beings who live under conditions unconducive to their basic flourishing may be rational, may lead meaningful lives, may even experience pleasure from those lives. However, they have not had a chance to express their true nature. It is under conditions conducive to their flourishing, that the deep natures of human beings are most properly revealed. If we think of human beings this way, we can think of preferences expressed under conditions conducive to basic flourishing as more authentic than other preferences. Under sub-flourishing conditions, human beings may be compelled by need to express their deep desires in a deformed way.

4.3.2 Differences Between the PTFA and Informed Preference Accounts

We may more fully appreciate the importance of perfectionist commitments to the PTFA by comparing it to a competing, similarly structured type of account of the inauthenticity of IAPs. It may initially seem that an informed preference account of the

inauthenticity of IAPs can do the same theoretical work as the PTFA. John Harsanyi makes

a distinction between manifest and "true" preferences that could form the basis of such an

account. For Harsanyi, a person's preferences may be unworthy of being considered "true' if

they were arrived at under conditions of inadequate information. According to him, "a

person's true preferences are the preferences he *would* have if he had all the relevant factual

information, always reasoned with the greatest possible care, and were in a state of mind

conducive to rational choice" (Harsanyi 1982, 41). Taking this claim as a point of departure,

we might propose an alternative, informed preference account of the seeming inauthenticity

of IAPs that looked something like this:

A preference is inappropriately adaptive if a person would abandon it upon reflection or under conditions of

full information.

This may seem to be enough to make sense of the seeming inauthenticity of IAPs to say that

IAPs are not fully informed.

However, the PTFA has several advantages over this informed preference account

that are supplied precisely by its perfectionist underpinnings. First, the PTFA can provide

more practically feasible grounds for suspicion of persons' extant preferences than the

informed preference account. As I suggested in the second chapter, it is implausible (not to

mention probably highly undesirable) for persons to make *all* of their life-decisions under

reflective conditions of full-information. There may be arenas of life in which reflection and

access to information are particularly important, but picking them out would require us to be

able to distinguish important functionings from unimportant ones—something it is difficult

to imagine an informed preference account doing without an objective conception of human

flourishing.[84] Moreover, suspecting preferences of being inappropriately adaptive in practice is likely to require making judgments that move from preference content to doubts about full information.

I would venture that this is how most intuitions suspecting persons' preferences of inappropriate adaptiveness actually work. We look at a person's preference, and if the preference seems particularly out of line with the typical preferences of human beings, we ask ourselves what may have gone wrong that caused the person to arrive at this preference. So, to use another example from the first chapter, if we wonder whether the poor Bangladeshi women who turned their micro-loans over to their male relatives did so because of a lack of information, the judgment is likely to have moved from noticing the content of their preference against personal subsistence income to inquiring into the conditions under which the preference was formed—not the other way around. Assuming that persons have a tendency to choose in a particular way under the right conditions—as the PTFA does— allows public institutions to make these sorts of judgments. The informed preference account, in contrast, does not contain adequate assumptions about what persons have a tendency to desire to enable public institutions to make such judgments.

A second advantage of the PTFA over the informed preference account is that the PTFA can include within the group of IAPs fully informed preferences that are adapted to conditions of deprivation. Preferences most likely to fall into this group are preferences that involve tradeoffs between different constituent components of basic flourishing and preferences against flourishing that exist under conditions where flourishing is impossible. So, for example, it is perfectly imaginable that one of the Bangladeshi women in the

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[84] For an argument that we need an account of the good to be able to distinguish areas of life where autonomy is important from those where it is not, see Shiffrin (2000).

microcredit example above is forced by her conditions to make a choice between bodily safety and access to basic income, because her husband beats her if she keeps her loan in her name—and that she knows perfectly well what she is doing. In such a case, her problem is not a matter of information, it is a matter of lacking morally significant options, and the informed preference account does not have ground from which to criticize this. The PTFA, on the other hand, can consider such preferences inappropriately adaptive. It can say that, even if a person under such conditions is autonomous, a moral loss is involved when a person is faced with such options. It can do so because it holds that persons' "true" preferences are revealed under conditions conducive to basic human flourishing.

A third advantage of the PTFA over the informed preference account is best understood by pointing out a deep flaw of the informed preference account. The informed preference account can be used to justify moving human beings from any set of conditions to any other if being adequately informed about certain conditions requires living under them (at least for a time). As Elster aptly puts this point, "If preferences are reversibly linked to situations, then preferences *over* pairs of situations appear in a very different light. If an initial preference for city life could be reversed by extended exposure to he countryside and vice versa, then one could justify any status quo by what might appear as informed preferences" (Elster 1987, 113). One way to avoid this consequence is to claim that some situations are objectively better-- and more revelatory of persons' true desires-- than others for reasons other than that the individuals in question prefer them. The PTFA offers this by entailing our commitment to an objective conception of basic human flourishing.

All of this indicates that a roughly perfectionist conception of the good helps us to support and flesh out the assumptions the PTFA requires. Two questions may remain about the connection between the PTFA and perfectionism. One is why we want to tie the PTFA

to perfectionism at all. My answer is that this move is very analytically useful. Classifying the commitments underlying the PTFA as perfectionist can help us to clarify what we need to believe in order to accept the PTFA and what we do not. More specifically, it can help us to discern what arguments exist in favor the assumed commitments and what arguments exist against them, since the arguments for and against perfectionism are familiar.

A second question that may remain is whether tying the PTFA to a perfectionist conception of the good does not undermine its usefulness in helping identify IAPs. The term "perfectionist" evokes a conception of the good that is deeply controversial (hardly desirable in when we are trying to compare preferences across cultures and across individuals) and unacceptably teleological (hardly desirable if we think living in a diverse moral world is a good thing). My answer to this question is that a perfectionist conception of the good need not be either, and it is to defending this answer that I now turn.

4.4 DELIBERATIVE PERFECTIONISM

I argue in this section that we can imagine an objective conception of human flourishing that would usefully subtend the PTFA without falling prey to many of the shortcomings for which perfectionist conceptions are often—and rightfully, in my view—criticized. I call this type of perfectionism "deliberative perfectionism." Deliberative perfectionist conceptions provide lists of the constituent elements of human flourishing, are arrived at through cross-cultural deliberative processes, and are likely to require community-level deliberations to realize in practice.

As I claimed in the last section, accepting the PTFA requires adherence to an objective conception of human flourishing. My aim in this section is not to tell us which objective conception of human flourishing we should subscribe to, but rather to help us get

clear about what we would need from a conception of human flourishing that would allow us to honestly endorse the PTFA. That is, I am more interested in describing the structural features we would want an acceptable conception of human flourishing to have than telling us *which* existing conception of human flourishing (if any) has them.

Many different ways of conceiving the types of *elements* constituting a conception of human flourishing exist. It is worth pointing out, therefore, that the PTFA is compatible with a wide variety of ways of conceptualizing the constituent elements of human flourishing. Lists of primary goods, basic human needs, human rights, and capabilities---appropriately formulated and arrived at—are all plausible candidates. It may not be evident at first blush that the first two types of lists—lists of primary goods and lists of basic human needs are conceptions of human flourishing, but I would contend that they are. Rawls' primary goods are meant to be of value to persons as prerequisites for any type of life they choose to lead (Rawls 1996, 186-189), and this suggests that the goods are means to ends realized in actual human functionings.[85] Moreover, the fact that the contractors in his original position assume that the primary goods will be of use to those they represent indicates that human beings are meant to actually desire them.[86] Lists of basic human needs also usually contain conceptions of human flourishing, because they usually define needs as those things without which we would be objectively harmed—where harm is presumably the opposite of flourishing.[87] I make this point in order to emphasize that accepting the PTFA

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[85] Nussbaum and Sen have both provided arguments to this effect. See Nussbaum (2000, 88-89) and Sen 1990.

[86] This characterization of Rawls is not entirely fair, because it does not take into account the insistence on ethical "constructivism" that prevents him from grounding the list of primary goods in a conception of the human being. The important point here, though, is that Rawls justifies the list of primary goods on the grounds that we can expect persons to want it given their two moral powers (1996, 187-88).

[87] For an example of a philosophical account of need defined in relation to harm, see David Wiggins (1998).

need not require taking a stand in the debates about how to best conceptualize the building blocks of human flourishing.

There is one issue I think we *should* take a stand about in searching for a conception of human flourishing that would allow us to support the PTFA—the issue of how the conception is justified. The conception of basic human flourishing used to identify IAPs should be what I would call a "deliberative perfectionist conception." It should be justified by a broad, cross-cultural consensus that has been arrived at by a deliberative process(es). I will not specify the type of deliberative process by which the conception should be arrived at beyond saying that that the process should be rational and that it should be an *actual* rather than *hypothetical* deliberative process. Subjecting a proposed conception of human flourishing to actual deliberation allows proposed content to be critically evaluated by several parties who come from different moral frameworks. It is unlikely that the quality of evaluation achieved by actual discussion can be achieved by an exercise in the moral imagination of one person. More importantly, employing actual, rather than hypothetical, deliberation to arrive at the conception lends *legitimacy* to that conception. We want to know that the conception *is* actually acceptable to a wide variety of people, not that some person thinks the conception *should* be acceptable to a wide variety of people.

A conception of flourishing that is arrived at deliberatively and cross-culturally acceptable should be free of two of the most important defects we associate with perfectionism. Let us call these the defects of "arbitrary authority" and "teleology." We may want to reject perfectionist conceptions of flourishing, because we think the authority of their creators to define the human good is questionable. Aristotelian perfectionism, for example, rests almost exclusively on the intuitions of one man who belonged to a specific cultural context—indeed, a peculiar cultural context— and who made few distinctions

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between what his culture valorized and the objective good. We also have good reason to worry that traditional perfectionism is too *teleological,* to closely bound to a single picture of ultimate human excellence to be useful in identifying IAPs.

Using traditional perfectionism to support the PTFA would likely warrant suspecting all preferences that did not match up to a single, highly specific model of being inappropriately adaptive. This path would not be appealing because it would be inhospitable to moral pluralism. I want to suggest that these defects—real as they may be—are defects of traditional, Aristotelian perfectionism, but not necessarily of perfectionism in general. They do not attach to deliberative perfectionism in the same way. In order to see how deliberative perfectionism is different, we need to know a bit more about what we can predict a deliberative conception of flourishing will look like.

4.4.1 Features of Deliberative Perfectionism

A conception of flourishing about which there is broad cross-cultural agreement is likely to have certain features that allow it to avert the problems of teleology and arbitrary authority. We can anticipate that, in a moral world as diverse as ours, a conception of flourishing on which we can agree will possess the following three features: 1) a concern with basic levels of functioning, 2) justificatory minimalism, and 3) vagueness. We expect that a cross-culturally acceptable conception of flourishing will confine itself to *basic* flourishing, because, as is often argued in the literature on global ethics, there seems to be greater consistency across cultures about what basic flourishing requires than about what excellence requires.[88] Indeed, as philosophers like Nussbaum[89] and Michael Walzer (1996)

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[88] For examples of this view, see Joshua Cohen (2004), Ignatieff (2003), Nussbaum (2000), Sen (1985b), and Walzer (1996).

have suggested, different cultural perspectives appear to converge more neatly on conceptions of the bad than the good.[90]

A conception that grows out of a shared sense of what impedes human flourishing rather than a shared sense of what an excellent life is will likely confine itself to describing human flourishing at its more fundamental levels.[91] Fortunately, this type of fairly minimal conception is all the PTFA requires, since it defines IAPs as those that are likely to disappear under conditions conducive to basic flourishing—not conditions conducive to excellence. What constitutes excellence is far more controversial than what constitutes basic flourishing. If the PTFA defined IAPs as those likely to disappear under conditions conducive to excellence, it would be much less likely we could rely on a cross-culturally acceptable conception of flourishing to support it.

The diversity of existing cultures and belief systems also gives us reason to suppose that a cross-culturally acceptable conception of the good will be justificatorily minimal. I borrow the term "justificatory minimalism" from Joshua Cohen (2004), who uses it to describe conceptions that come unaccompanied by comprehensive moral justifications and are therefore compatible with a variety of comprehensive moral justifications. A conception of flourishing that emerges from cross-cultural deliberation is likely to be justificatorily minimal, because our agreement about *what* functionings constitute basic human flourishing

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[89] This is my understanding of why Nussbaum continually points out that human beings can identify tragedy across times and cultures (1992; 2000, 72-73).

[90] It does not follow from this that we agree only about what is horrifyingly bad as some philosophers of human rights have suggested. Ignatieff (2003) suggests we can only agree on the badness of things like torture. I see no reason to assume this is true. Basic flourishing can include much more than freedom from torture; it can include things like health, nourishment, and sexual functioning. A view that included these things would still be basic in my terms.

[91] Of course, if cross-cultural norms and institutions continue to develop, we can expect convergence on more than basic flourishing in the future. Joshua Cohen makes this point (2004).

is stronger than our agreement on *why* these functionings are important. As I noted above, it seems quite plausible that there is broad agreement about what flourishing is at its more fundamental levels. On the other hand, it seems quite *im*plausible that there is broad agreement about what the ultimate ends of human life are. However, controversy about the ultimate ends of human life does not necessarily preclude agreement about what the basic needs and desires of human beings are. As Cass Sunstein (1995) has argued, our chances of reaching moral agreement may be enhanced if we are willing to leave the deepest theoretical questions unresolved. A conception of flourishing that is cross-culturally acceptable will most likely rest on what he might call "an incompletely theorized agreement".

It may seem that the conception of flourishing required for the PTFA cannot be justificatorily minimal because of its ties to a conception of human nature.[92] However, there is compelling reason to believe both that a cross-culturally acceptable conception of flourishing would be articulated in a moral language that makes the human being central and that this would not compromise the justificatory minimalism of the conception. The idea of the human being is central to the existing cross-cultural consensus embodied in the human rights regime, and yet persons from different cultures flesh out the deeper moral significance of the human rights in dramatically different ways.[93] The PTFA refers to a conception of

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[92] The Rawls of *Political Liberalism* seems to hold that reference to perfectionist values means referring to a comprehensive conception of the good. This is particularly noticeable in his discussion of the right/good distinction (1996, 173-207). At one point in this discussion he argues that a politically liberal state can incorporate virtues of classical citizenship as long as those virtues are justified on political rather than perfectionist grounds. The danger of justifying them on perfectionist grounds seems to be that this would mean public endorsement of a comprehensive doctrine. "The crucial point is that admitting these virtues into a political conception does not lead to the perfectionist state of a comprehensive doctrine" (1996, 194).

[93] To provide just a few examples, Nigerian legal theorist J.A.I Bewaji (2006) makes a case for human rights based on traditional Yoruba beliefs that evaluate political and economic systems in terms of their contribution the development of human beings; Afkhami and Vaziri (1996) argue that women's human rights can be justified using ideas found in the Koran; S.S. Rama Rao Pappu (2005) argues for an interpretation of human rights founded in Hindu notions of dharma.

human flourishing, but referring to the human being is not a justificatorily maximalist move in the actual moral world we inhabit.

We can anticipate that a conception of flourishing that receives cross-cultural endorsement will be vague as well as justificatorily minimal and concerned with basic flourishing. By saying that we should expect the conception to be vague, I mean that we should expect it to enumerate the functionings constitutive of basic human flourishing at a highly general level. This is because the process of reasoning about these functionings moves from identifying specific instances of them to generalizing about what these instances have in common. Describing the functionings in a way that makes them applicable to human beings as a group will require eliminating particularities that make them realizable only by certain persons in certain contexts. As Alkire aptly puts it, "Actualized functionings will always have a particular form. One cannot drink 'nutrition' through a straw. One must drink a mango milkshake, or eat a plate of biscuits" (Alkire 2005, 138). Given this, we should expect the items contained in a cross-culturally acceptable conception to be very generally formulated ones, like "access to nutrition" rather than specifically formulated ones, like "access to mango milkshakes." It would be absurd to think of access to mango milkshakes as a constituent of *human* flourishing per se, even though consuming mango milkshakes may help particular human beings in particular contexts to flourish.

A deliberative, cross-culturally acceptable conception of flourishing will likely be vague, justificatorily minimal, and concerned with basic levels of flourishing. Furthermore, if it is vague and justificatorily minimal, the conception of flourishing will be deliberative in another sense: it will usually require local-level deliberation to be used in practice. If the conception of basic flourishing is vague, it will often be difficult for outsiders to ascertain whether a given preference is consistent with it or not. In order to make determinations

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about whether to treat-- or continue to treat—a certain preference as suspect, public institutions must understand the role that preference plays in its particular context. Arriving at this type of understanding will frequently entail taking into account the first-person narratives of the persons in question.

An example can help us to see how this is so. Genital cutting of girls remains very prominent and accepted in AbaGusii communities in Kenya (Christofferson-Deb 2005). A development practitioner motivated by a vague conception of flourishing might conclude from a quick look at this state of affairs that the girls and families in question were making choices contrary to the girls' basic flourishing—assuming, of course that something like access to sexual functioning was part of the vague conception. However, digging deeper into the first-person narratives of these girls and those who cut them reveals what seems to be a different story. Anthropologist Astrid Christofferson-Deb has performed interviews in this community that indicate that the form of genital cutting has tacitly changed into a ceremonial practice that has little—if any—impact on the girls' future sexual functioning (Christofferson-Deb 2005). In this case, gathering first-person perspectives was crucial in determining whether a preference should be treated as suspect or not. It is difficult to imagine representatives of public institutions making accurate judgments cases like this one without engaging in conversation with persons who hold preferences that initially appear suspect. A vague conception of flourishing will often have to be supplemented by information that can only be achieved through local deliberation in order to be used reliably.

There is another practical level at which responding to suspected IAPs using a vague and justificatorily minimal conception of flourishing will often require local deliberation— the level of deciding what form the new opportunities made available to persons with suspected IAPs should take. A conception of flourishing of the type in question

underdetermines the sorts of opportunities that should be made available to persons whose preferences seem inappropriately adaptive. To say this differently, a vague and justificatorily minimal conception of flourishing cannot tell us *on its own* what practical measures should be taken to provide a person or group of persons access to a functioning that they previously lacked. There are presumably manifold ways to achieve any basic functioning, and the vague conception on its own cannot tell us which of these to choose.

A justificatorily minimal conception does not give us grounds on which to choose one way of realizing a functioning over another. If public institutions want opportunities for flourishing to appeal to persons with suspect preferences, these opportunities will have to take forms the persons in question understand and in which they are invested. Deliberating with persons and groups who have suspect preferences can increase the chances that opportunities for flourishing will be considered worthwhile and recognizable by their intended beneficiaries. Through deliberation, prospective beneficiaries conceptions of the good can come to fill in the spaces that justificatory minimalism and vagueness leave empty.

For an example of how deliberation can contribute to structuring basic opportunities in a way with which prospective beneficiaries identify, we can turn to Alkire's description of an Oxfam-funded rose cultivation project in the village of Arabsolangi, Pakistan. Oxfam began work in the village without much prior knowledge of it assuming that persons in it needed basic income (Alkire 2005, 154), but participatory processes played a significant role in designating rose growing as the income-generating project of choice (Alkire 2005, 272).

The strong investment the participants developed in the project reflected the extent to which this project fit into their existing sets of values and views about the world. For example, it fit well into the high value participants placed on community religious life; some

of them described feeling particularly connected to this work, because it reflected their conception of *sawab* or holy work (Alkire 2005, 278).

They may not have been as quick to want to participate in other types of income-generation projects—projects like chicken-farming or factory work or doily-knitting that have been undertaken elsewhere, for example. Say the Arabsolangi rose cultivation participants were judged according to a conception of flourishing that was not vague--- one that equated income with factory work. We can imagine them being uninterested in such work for reasons that have nothing to do with their desire not to have income. They may reject the tradeoffs entailed by this particular activity—the commute to the city to engage in such work might destroy their family structures, bring shame upon the women, or expose them to excessive pollution, for example. Or, they may not recognize factory work as an opportunity for flourishing because they do not understand what it entails. A practitioner that interpreted their lack of interest as a matter of not valuing income would mistakenly interpret their rejection of a *particular instantiation* of a functioning as a wholesale rejection of that functioning. A vague conception of the good helps to avoid this; it opens the door to asking what *other* ways of instantiating a particular good might be more acceptable to a person or community.

4.4.2 Advantages of Deliberative Perfectionism over Traditional Perfectionism

We may say that a deliberative conception of flourishing is deliberative in two senses. It is arrived at through processes of cross-cultural deliberation, and it often requires local-level deliberation to be effectively used in practice. Now that we have a clearer projection of the features of a deliberative perfectionist conception, we can see how such a conception escapes the two defects of Aristotelian perfectionism listed earlier—those of arbitrary

authority and elitism. Let us begin with the defect of arbitrary authority. A traditional

perfectionist conception of the good may seem utterly inappropriate for use in development

practice, because it is not at all clear why the account of flourishing arrived at by some single

person should be taken as authoritative.[94] One reason we do not want to give the authority

to define flourishing to one person is that the content of the resultant conception will almost

certainly be hopelessly subjective. At the very least, the person developing the conception—

even if the person is Aristotle[95]—will probably be biased by their cultural and social location.

These biases may cause the person to draw unwarranted general (or even universal)

conclusions from particular data; they may mistake what they (or members of their culture

and class) think flourishing is with what human beings in general think flourishing is. It is

fairly clear how this defect does not accrue to deliberative perfectionism in the same way. If

the conception of flourishing is arrived at through cross-cultural deliberation, the risk that it

will reflect only the concerns of a given person, culture, or set of cultures is diminished.[96]

A second reason we may oppose giving the authority to define flourishing over to

one person is that it suggests that what most persons think flourishing is not important; it

gives the capacity to decide what is good for persons entirely over to some external

evaluator. It is true that some residue of this defect will remain in a deliberative perfectionist

conception, since employing a deliberative perfectionist conception to make judgments

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[94] Another reason we might associate perfectionism with arbitrary authority would be that we believed that all conceptions of the good were too controversial to make more than arbitrary judgments about. I see no reason to grant this. For an argument against this position, see Chan (2000).

[95] Aristotle is not the only philosopher one could accuse of assuming such illegitimate authority. Alison Jaggar (2006) charges Nussbaum with exactly the same error.

[96] Of course, even if a conception of flourishing is cross-culturally arrived at, there remains the possibility that it will *disproportionately reflect* the concerns of a certain culture or cultures. This is a common critique of the list of human rights; for an example of it, see Mutua (2002). I cannot begin to treat such criticisms here. But I would suggest that the problem of disproportionate influence can be mitigated by making the conditions of deliberation as fair as possible. This risk may also not be that great when discussing conceptions that restrict themselves to basic levels of flourishing.

about IAPs does mean making certain fundamental value commitments in advance-- and thinking these commitments are important enough that they should not be called into question every time a public institution subjects a preference of inappropriate adaptiveness. However, this deciding in advance may no longer seem like a defect if it does not imply utter indifference to what persons who are subject to the conception think of it.[97] A deliberative conception is highly compatible with the view that persons' endorsement of the normative conceptions by which they are judged is important. Since it is justificatorily minimal, it is open to endorsement on multiple grounds by persons with multiple views. Moreover, unlike traditional perfectionist conceptions, a deliberative perfectionist conception encourages local-level deliberation about which preferences are consistent with flourishing and what should be done about it. This gives persons with suspect preferences much latitude to interpret the conception of flourishing and adapt it in ways that are meaningful to them.

Now that we have seen how the authority of a deliberative conception may be less arbitrary than that of a traditional conception, we can ask whether a deliberative conception escapes the other defect we associate with perfectionism. As I mentioned above, we may distrust perfectionist conceptions of the good because they are beholden to a type of objectionable teleological reasoning. To explain this further, traditional perfectionist conceptions sometimes seem to proceed in this way: they discover in the world a particular type of life they deem "excellent," and then describe any life that differs from it as falling short of flourishing. This leads us to fear that a perfectionist conception of flourishing must stipulate that only one type of life is good enough, or that there is a single best type of life; the word "perfectionism" does contain the word "perfect," after all.

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[97] Seyla Benhabib claims that encouraging public discussion about norms can enhance the legitimacy of norms even if the discussion does not aim to call those norms into question (2002, 105-146)

However, we have no reason to expect that a deliberative conception of flourishing will hold up a single vision of the good life as the model that all lives should follow. As I argued earlier, it is highly improbable that any single picture of the good human life would survive cross-cultural deliberation, because there is not broad agreement about what types of lives are good. As I also suggested above, we should expect a deliberative conception of flourishing to concern itself with the requirements for *basic* levels of flourishing. It will be silent on the higher levels of human functioning; we should not expect it to tell us whether a life of contemplation is better than a life of action, whether a life devoted to caring for others is better than a life full of professional achievements, or whether one religion is better than another. A cross-cultural conception of basic flourishing is fully compatible with a wide array of conceptions of excellence. The only ranking of lives a deliberative perfectionist conception is likely to make possible—and the only ranking of lives the PTFA requires-- is a distinction between lives where basic functionings are present and those where they are not.

A deliberative perfectionist conception has much to recommend it. Understanding the differences between a deliberative perfectionist conception and traditional perfectionist conceptions should mitigate our concerns about enlisting perfectionist concepts in the task of IAP identification. However, once we have acknowledged the desirability of subjecting a conception of flourishing used to identify IAPs to deliberative processes, another question emerges. We may wonder whether it is better to simply leave all judgments about apparent IAPs up to local-level deliberations.

4.4.3 Advantages of Deliberative Perfectionism over Self-Evaluation

It may seem that, if we truly believe deliberation enhances the quality and legitimacy of conceptions of flourishing, we should want the conceptions of flourishing used to make

judgments about IAPs emerge from deliberations by the persons that have them. Sen recommends a deliberative normative approach that lends itself to being used in IAP identification. He proposes that, though persons' preferences do not always reflect the types of preferences public institutions should be interested in respecting, such desires can be revealed through processes of what he calls "self-evaluation." However, this approach is practically and morally inadequate to the task of IAP identification.

Sen introduces self-evaluation as a way of assessing a person's well-being that takes her perspective into account without requiring unquestioning acceptance of her existing preferences.[98] This would seem to make it a very useful approach to IAP identification; it, like the PTFA, is motivated by the concern that persons' existing preferences may not tell us much about what they "truly" want. Sen does not develop his account of the process of self-evaluation very thoroughly, but in outline, self-evaluation is a process by which an individual assesses her own well-being relative to those of others in her community (Sen 1989, 31). The person's report about her own well-being is subject to revision through public discussion, with either other members of her community, external evaluators, or both. It is not assessed relative to some metric that is external to the discussion.

The idea here is that the perspectives of others that challenge her own self-assessment may persuade her to adopt a more "objectively true" one. For Sen, a judgment's objectivity is a function of its ability to be corroborated by others—in the domains of both facts and values.[99] So, on his view, the Bengali widows who do not perceive themselves as ill might begin to think otherwise if others in their communities suggested to them that they

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[98] Sen is an outspoken criticism of aggregative democracy precisely because he thinks taking persons' existing preferences as ultimate is an arbitrary move. See Sen (2002).

[99] For a discussion of Sen's notion of "positional objectivity," see Sen (2002, 463-483). For a criticism of how his understanding of positional objectivity causes him to place too much faith in deliberation, see Hamilton (2003, 76-102).

were sick or if they noticed that the widowers who reported illness did not seem nearly as poorly off as them. But, for Sen, a self-evaluation can be worthy of the respect of public institutions even if it is not objective; it needs only to have had the *chance* to become objective. That is, if the widows did not change their views after deliberation, their views would still be worthy of respect. In self-evaluation, the individual is the ultimate authority on her own needs and desires, but we take the post-deliberation perspective—regardless of whether it has changed—to tell us about her "true" needs and desires.

Self-evaluation much to recommend it as a method of IAP identification and transformation. Since it regards the individual's self-reports as the ultimate authority, it-- like the criteria for IAP-identification generated by the PTFA--urges the use of non-coercive means to attempt to transform preferences that seem inappropriately adaptive. Further, it seems to have the advantage of encouraging persons with IAPs to develop expanded senses of agency. The deliberative process of self-evaluation is intended to promote the cultivation of critical consciousness.[100] This is attractive in a strategy for approaching individuals with IAPs, since many IAPs take the form of resignation to existing circumstances. It also encourages preference-transformation interventions that are likely to be endorsed by the persons whose preferences are in question. This, in turn, is likely to improve the success of projects aimed at preference transformation. On the whole, persons are more likely to accept as legitimate evaluations and policies they have participated in creating than evaluations than policies that have been "imposed" on them.

It is beyond doubt that self-evaluations and deliberative processes, appropriately carried out, can contribute positively and significantly to IAP identification and transformation. However, there are compelling reasons we should not rely on deliberative

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[100] Sen emphasizes the role of discussion in value-formation. See (1999a, 10).

processes *alone* to tell public institutions how they should respond to or identify preferences that seem to be inappropriately adaptive.[101] First, a belief in the good of "objective" self-evaluations and deliberative process cannot, on its own, give public institutions reliable guidance about *where to focus their energies* if they want to respond to IAPs. This is a shortcoming the commitment to deliberative process alone shares with informed preference accounts of the inauthenticity of IAPs, so I will not belabor it here.

Briefly, though, a commitment to deliberation on its own can only offer two proposals about how public institutions concerned about IAPs should focus their energies. It can 1) recommend that all preferences should be subject to public deliberation, or 2) recommend that public institutions should support all already existing processes that subject preferences to public deliberation. The former recommendation is clearly practically infeasible and morally unacceptable, and attempting to follow it would likely result in a very objectionable allocation of resources. The latter recommendation, in addition to sharing most of the shortcomings with the first, has a further disadvantage. It will endorse leaving many cases of IAP—especially the most severe ones—untouched by public institutions. Public institutions must wait until persons and communities start diagnosing their own IAPs and asking for their help to attempt to respond to them.

A second reason we should not rely on a commitment to deliberative processes alone to tell public institutions how to respond to IAPs is this: believing deliberation alone can transform most seeming IAPs rests on questionable non-normative assumptions about

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[101] It is not quite fair to refer to Sen as believing that deliberative process is the *only* possible way in which a person's preferences can become suspect. He mentions that normative content other than persons' preferences must contribute to social choice (Sen 2002, 626). He also sometimes suggests that in addition to self-evaluation, we can use something called "standard evaluation" that compares how a person or group is doing to criteria that they did not themselves produce (Sen 1989, 31). However, it is unclear how standard evaluation would not require us to refer to an objective theory of the good. We seem to have a choice between taking Sen at his word that his theory is anti-perfectionist and taking Sen at his word that standard evaluation is sometimes appropriate.

what deliberation can actually do. Simply talking to persons about what alternative

preferences are available to them is unlikely to undo preferences that are deeply entrenched.

Changing persons' preferences often requires changing their option sets, not just suggesting

to them that their preferences may be distorted. Sen's own writing continually emphasizes

the idea that we need access to opportunities to be able to form wants and plans of life.[102]

Evidence from development practice suggests that IAP transformation can require the

ability to experiment with new capacities, not just to think about them. Global women's

movements have shown time and again that transforming deeply ingrained preferences often

requires long incremental processes, persuasion, and consciousness raising. Moreover,

subjecting persons' preferences to deliberation is sometimes simply not an option. The effect

of some persons' suspect preferences may be to prevent them from participating in

deliberation at all. This is, for example, the case of women in communities that have strong

traditions of female seclusion.[103] It may also be the case for persons who are ashamed of

speaking in public, etc. We should not expect discussion alone to reveal persons' deep

desires.

A third reason we should not rely on a commitment to deliberative processes alone

to tell public institutions how to respond to IAPs is that deliberation, especially community-

level deliberation, can sometimes go terribly wrong. Intergroup power dynamics do not

disappear just because a group is engaged in collective deliberation. Many, if not most,

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[102] See Sen (1999b, 63; 1999a; 2002, 583-623).

[103] Sagwati Raju, who has worked in development throughout South Asia, tells the following story about the condition of women in one Indian community whose women were meant to be targeted by development efforts. The women "would not even talk face-to-face with male strangers. If they had to respond to any queries from men outside their household and no one else was around, they talked from behind closed doors or remained silent. Sometimes they responded by using a wall as an intermediary: "Bheet ka doh ki Lali ki papa ghar main nani hain [wall, tell him father is not at home]"! This denoted reverence toward men, who often did not consider women worth face-to-face interaction anyway. (Nagar and Raju 2003, 4).

communities where individuals have IAPs are communities with grave and deep-rooted social inequalities. Indeed, we should assume the existence of significant inequality when dealing with persons with suspected IAPs, because conditions of domination are likely what cause individuals to form IAPs in the first place.[104] Where conditions of severe inequality obtain, we should be skeptical of Sen's assumption that deliberation will produce more objective preferences. For the domestic servant, the member of a low caste, or the woman who is abused by her husband, the stakes of speaking about their suffering in deliberation may cause them to incur unacceptable costs. The fear of what will happen to them outside of the deliberative context (losing one's job, getting beaten, etc.) may just be too high.

Indeed, in some cases, public discussion may produce preferences in persons that are *more* distorted than their pre-deliberation preferences. It is quite possible that discussions that include both privileged and oppressed persons can serve to reinforce the oppressed persons' conception of their own inferiority. It is also easy to imagine cases in which discussion between privileged and oppressed persons results in prioritizing the needs of the privileged persons over the more compelling needs of the oppressed. If the privileged are used to having their desires met, we should not be surprised if they are more convinced that they are unjustly deprived than the oppressed or if public discussion among persons used to living in a society that condones this ends up agreeing.[105]

Of course, we should not assume public deliberation has no value for IAP identification and transformation just because it can go wrong. But I do think we must

[104] One type of case where we may not be compelled to assume that radical inequalities obtain, but we may still suspect preferences of being inappropriately adaptive is that where all—or the vast majority of-- members of a community seem to exhibit an IAP.

[105] There is a vast existing literature critiquing deliberative practices for not adequately taking oppression and inequality into account—both in philosophical discussions of deliberative democracy and in practical discussions of development practice. For a few examples, see Gujit (1995), Gujit and Shah (1998), Kothari (2001), and Young (1996).

acknowledge that deliberation has its limits. A deliberative perfectionist conception can supplement bare deliberation in a way that minimizes some of deliberation's most serious risks. A perfectionist conception makes it possible to criticize the outcomes of deliberative processes; we can worry that something has gone wrong in public discussion if, for example, everyone leaves it believing that the most objectively privileged persons deserve more, if the oppressed leave saying that the desires of the privileged are more important than theirs, or if certain needs of the oppressed never get brought to the table. A perfectionist conception can facilitate such criticism in two ways. First, it makes it possible to make judgments about who the oppressed and the privileged *are* that are not based on who *says* they are oppressed and who *says* they are privileged. Second, it makes it possible to say that certain functionings are fundamental and fundamental for everyone. This allows for suspicion of post-deliberation preferences by oppressed persons in cases where those persons do not acknowledge their own basic needs or subordinate the fulfillment of their basic needs to the provision of further luxuries to the privileged.

Employing a perfectionist conception in IAP identification and transformation also helps correct for the other two problems of employing deliberative self-evaluation alone. A perfectionist conception that tells us what most persons "deeply" desire can, in certain cases, justify suspicion that persons' post-deliberation preferences are still not "true"—that adding opportunities for flourishing to persons' option sets can be appropriate even if deliberation does not transform their preferences. This is because the perfectionist conception offers a notion of what must be available to human beings in order for their authentic desires to be revealed. A perfectionist conception, along with the assumptions of the PTFA, can also justify third-party suspicion that certain preferences are inappropriately adaptive. It makes it possible to use preference content and conditions, and not just first-person accounts that

have undergone deliberation, as indicators that persons' existing preferences do not reflect their deep desires.

In addition to minimizing the most important problems of using deliberative self-evaluation to identify and transform IAPs, a deliberative perfectionist conception coupled with the PTFA retains many of the advantages of self-evaluation. This should not surprise us once we realize that most of the advantages of self-evaluation are advantages over certain types of conceptions of the good, but not conceptions of the good in general. Like self-evaluation, the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination only recommends non-coercive responses to cases of suspected inappropriately adaptive preference. The risk of coercing persons to flourish according to an objective conception only accompanies conceptions of the good that completely conflate persons' "true" desires with an objective conception of flourishing that is rather specifically defined.

Like self-evaluation, the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination also highly values public discussion—and the endorsement and increased sense of agency that are often its byproducts. Deliberative perfectionism encourages public discussion. It helps to ascertain whether persons' preferences are consistent with basic flourishing and to decide what forms opportunities for flourishing should take. The PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination allows public institutions to suspect preferences of being inappropriately adaptive and to respond to them in ways that take advantage of the good of public discussion. It does so without succumbing to many of the pitfalls of relying on public discussion alone. There are compelling reasons not to leave all IAP identification and transformation up to local-level deliberations. Deliberative perfectionism allows us to take these reasons seriously without abandoning a commitment to the good of public deliberation.

4.5 CONCLUSION

I have offered an account of the inauthenticity of IAPs. It holds that preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing held by persons who lack opportunities for basic flourishing can reasonably be suspected of being inappropriately adaptive. I have argued that this account requires perfectionist ethical commitments to be plausible. I have also suggested that suspicion of perfectionism in general need not constitute grounds for rejecting the PTFA, because we can imagine a type of perfectionism—deliberative perfectionism—that is free of many of traditional perfectionism's defects.

I have made the case that an approach to IAP identification and response based on the PTFA and deliberative perfectionism is superior to alternative approaches that emphasize autonomy or deliberation. I have made these claims on a very theoretical level. To conclude, then, I would like to briefly describe one approach to IAP identification from contemporary development social science that seems implicitly motivated by something like the PTFA and a deliberative perfectionist conception.

Egyptian political scientist Solava Ibrahim is currently working to develop a set of indicators that can be legitimately used to assess the well-being of the Egyptian poor. She is using input from participatory research to develop these indicators. She has developed and implemented a questionnaire with poor persons in two different Egyptian communities that asks them, "(1) whether they value a specific *capability* or not; (2) why they value/do not value it (*reasons for valuing this capability*)1; (3) whether they have achieved it or not (*functioning*); and (4) why they have succeeded/failed in achieving it (*conversion factors*)" (Ibrahim 2007, 4). We may think of this research as motivated by a deliberative perfectionist conception of flourishing. The judgment that the community is poor (deprived) pre-exists the questionnaire. The contents of the questionnaire itself also suggest deliberative perfectionist

commitments. It begins by asking persons whether they value a certain capability that is presumed salient because empirical research shows actually is valued by the poor in other communities (Ibrahim 2007, 6). In asking questions about whether this group values what other people generally value, she brings to her research a vague conception of flourishing that did not originate in the community she works with per se. However, it is a vague conception of flourishing that she has reason to believe reflects their deep values. Indeed, she—and the participants in her study—see some of the functionings in question as of such incontrovertible value that she does not ask them *why* they are important; when she began asking participants why they valued things like health and transportation, they replied so frequently that the answer was self-evident that she stopped asking.

Ibrahim's research is also designed to acknowledge that the specific instantiations of each of the broad capabilities she asks about will vary from community to community. By asking them questions about whether they have achieved the capabilities they value and why not, she gets a more specific sense of what expanding the access to basic flourishing of the persons in the communities she studies would require. In one of the communities, for example, she has learned that most persons are upset about the degeneration of government services in health and education that used to exist, but no longer do (Ibrahim 2007, 20). Their poor health and education result from a particular change in government service provision that the poor people themselves have identified.

The well-being assessment tool Ibrahim is developing does not have as its sole aim the identification of IAPs. However, she has used it to justify her suspicion that many persons in one of the communities she studies have adaptive preferences. She noticed that the participants in the objectively poorer of the two communities reported higher levels of happiness. Rather than simply assuming that this was because they needed or wanted less,

the divergences in their reported happiness motivated Ibrahim to ask more questions. She worried that persons have "adapted their wants to what is practically feasible for them." In other words, she suspects those wants would not be the same in conditions where there was an expanded sense of what was practically feasible, that they would not want less than most people want if they lived under better conditions. This is strikingly similar to the explicit criteria for preference suspicion laid out by the PTFA. Ibrahim's suspicion gave her a critical perspective from which to consider some of the participants' own comments, which do indeed lend themselves to interpretation as signs of IAP. Some of them said things like, "I am willing to live with the minimum so long as I have peace of mind," and "One day is good, another is bad; whoever accepts the least lives" (Ibrahim 2007, 17).

Ibrahim's project is primarily research-oriented, so designing policies aimed at transforming these suspect preferences is not its main goal. We can imagine that a practitioner motivated by the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination might pick up where Ibrahim left off and work with the community to develop strategies for expanding their opportunities that they would be likely to take advantage of. The important point here is that a conception of human flourishing, assumed to be one shared at some level by deprived persons themselves, made third-party preference suspicion possible. The narratives of persons with suspect preferences also played an important role in helping the researcher discover whether or not her suspicion was warranted. In Ibrahim's case, listening to the actual perspectives of deprived persons, and considering them in the light of a deliberatively arrived at conception of flourishing, strengthened the researcher's suspicion. Ibrahim's case can give us a clearer picture of how an understanding of IAPs based on the PTFA and an accompanying deliberative perfectionist conception can facilitate IAP identification. Moreover, it suggests that it is possible to identify and respond to IAPs in a way that both

takes a strong normative stance about what human beings need and takes seriously the first-person perspectives of the deprived.

5.0 THE PTFA IN PRACTICE AND MORAL DIVERSITY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The PTFA I presented in the last chapter gives the best available account of the intuition that adaptive preferences somehow do not reflect the "true" desires of their bearers. Supported by a deliberative perfectionist conception, it also promises to identify suspect preferences in a way consistent with our intuitions. For the PTFA to explain our intuitions is one thing. For us to want to endorse it as a guide for public policy is quite another. The PTFA may help us to better understand our intuitions but still have consequences that prevent us from wanting it to influence actual development practice. If we accept that the PTFA should inform public policy, we must accept that a conception of the good can legitimately inform public policy—at least in this particular case.

Once we realize this, it may seem that endorsing the use of the PTFA as a guide to development practice would require us to compromise other values that we cherish. More specifically, it may seem that endorsing the PTFA as a guide to development practice would require us to give up our commitment to respecting moral diversity. Respecting moral diversity means making it possible for persons—and, to some extent, peoples-- to live according to their own conceptions of the good. Public endorsement of a conception of the good may seem fundamentally at odds with this. We may be inclined to believe that public

institutions that respect moral diversity can only legitimately be interested in maximizing the freedom of the persons whose lives they influence.

However, public endorsement of a conception of the good can be consistent with respect for moral diversity, provided its content is appropriately formulated and its role is sufficiently limited. The PTFA and the deliberative perfectionist conception that support it are formulated in ways that minimize the conflicts between endorsing them and respecting moral diversity. The aim of this chapter is to show that the types of public interventions in the lives of persons with suspect preferences justified by the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination are compatible with a high level of respect for moral diversity.

I show this by examining a number of possible objections to the endorsement of a conception of the good in development policy. I claim that none of these objections is decisive against the types of public policies justified by the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination. The objections to which I will respond are divided into two types: objections that claim that public promotion of a conception of the good requires disrespecting *persons'* capacity to form their own conceptions of the good and objections that claim that it requires disrespecting *cultures'* capacities to form their own conceptions of the good. To make my argument clearer and more concrete, I defend strategies for IAP identification and transformation justified by the PTFA and a particular deliberative perfectionist conception—Nussbaum's capabilities list. In the next section of the chapter, I defend the choice of Nussbaum's capabilities list as an example of a deliberative perfectionist conception and describe what policies motivated by a combination of it and the PTFA might look like. In the third and fourth sections, I respond to objections about persons' capacities to pursue their own conceptions of the good and cultures' capacities to pursue their own conceptions of the good, respectively.

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5.2 PUBLIC INTERVENTIONS JUSTIFIED BY THE PTFA

To show that PTFA/deliberative perfectionism-motivated interventions are compatible with moral diversity, we need to know more about what we can expect such interventions to look like. Let us recapitulate the content of the PTFA and the shape of the deliberative perfectionist conception I argued should support it. The PTFA says that IAPs are preferences inconsistent with basic flourishing held by persons that lack opportunities for basic flourishing and that are likely to change under conditions conducive to basic flourishing. In its prospective form, it says that preferences against basic flourishing formed absent opportunities for basic flourishing are suspect. The conception of flourishing underpinning it, I argued should be a deliberative one. We can expect a perfectionist conception that has been shown by deliberation to be cross-culturally acceptable to be basic, vague, and justificatorily minimal. In this chapter, I will use Nussbaum's capabilities list as an example of such a conception, because having such an example on hand will help us better envision the types of strategies that the PTFA and deliberative perfectionism will justify. In the first part of this section, I discuss the role of Nussbaum's list in this chapter and the following chapter. In the second, I attempt to spell out more clearly what types of strategies for responding to IAPs the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination justifies.

5.2.1 The Role of Nussbaum's Capabilities List

We can get a clearer picture of what strategies motivated by the PTFA/deliberative perfectionism combination might look like if we settle on a particular deliberative perfectionist conception. I will use Nussbaum's list of basic capabilities. Her list includes

functionings[106] like bodily health, bodily integrity, emotions, and affiliation. The full text of the list appears in the appendix to this chapter. For purposes of simplicity, Nussbaum's capabilities list will stand in for any deliberative perfectionist conception in the remainder of this chapter and most of the next.

I emphasize, however, that my choice to defend the PTFA and deliberative perfectionism by referring to *this* deliberative perfectionist conception is fairly arbitrary. There are certain features of Nussbaum's list that make it particularly amenable to being used in a brief defense of the PTFA and deliberative perfectionism —particularly its brevity, simplicity, and justificatory bareness. However, the arguments I will make in this chapter are meant to hold just about as well for any other deliberative conception of flourishing that might support the PTFA. I am nowhere claiming that we actually should use the PTFA supplemented by Nussbaum's list to guide policy about IAPs. I am claiming that we should use the PTFA supported by something *like* Nussbaum's list. Further, I am not claiming that Nussbaum's list is superior to other deliberative perfectionist conceptions. The list of human rights, Finnis's list of human needs (1980), and Qizilbash's take on Griffin's list of prudential values (1996) seem to me to be other equally plausible candidates. I also do not want to exclude the possibility that some even better deliberative perfectionist conception can be arrived at in the future.

Nussbaum's capabilities list functions here simply as a heuristic example of a deliberative perfectionist conception. Still, my choice of this list as an example may be puzzling. It may not be evident at first blush that the conception of flourishing embodied in

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[106] On occasion, I will refer to Nussbaum's list as a list of functionings to prevent linguistic confusion. I do not think that I am misrepresenting her intention by talking about the list in this way. We need only keep in mind that the functionings are functionings persons need *access* to – rather than to actively exhibit--in order to flourish.

it is actually either deliberative or perfectionist. The list may not seem to be perfectionist, because Nussbaum proposes the list, at least in its most recent versions, as the subject of a political "overlapping consensus" (Nussbaum 2000b, 76; 1999, 40).[107] However, we should not assume that a perfectionist conception cannot itself become the topic of an overlapping consensus. Nussbaum's list is a list of functionings human beings need access to in order to flourish, so it has irreducibly perfectionist content.[108] However, Nussbaum thinks that different persons from different cultures can decide on their own how it fits into their comprehensive worldviews. There is no contradiction here, unless we decide *a priori* either that the belief that human beings need certain things to flourish *itself* constitutes a comprehensive worldview or that persons with different comprehensive worldviews could not come to accept this belief.[109]

Neither presumption would be warranted. The belief that humans need certain basic things to flourish is clearly does not "cover all recognized values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated system" (Rawls 1996, 13), and this is the definition of a comprehensive conception. Moreover, Nussbaum argues that persons from different comprehensive worldviews can, and do, agree that certain things are necessary for human flourishing; she tells us that the list *is* the subject of a cross-cultural overlapping consensus,

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[107] Commentators have made much of Nussbaum's change from endorsing as a "thick vague theory of the good" (Nussbaum 1992) to endorsing it as the subject of a Rawlsian overlapping consensus. As we will see shortly, I do not think this change bears heavily on the extent to which the list is perfectionist. For another discussion of the significance of this move, see Deneulin (2002).

[108] Nussbaum claims that she is not a perfectionist (Nussbaum 2000a), but it is clear that what she means in this context is that she does not believe that her theory justifies maximizing the capabilities of the excellent. This question is not at issue here, given the way we have defined perfectionism.

[109] Rawls' argument against making a perfectionist doctrine the basis of an overlapping consensus points out some obstacles facing the attempt to achieve an overlapping consensus on a perfectionist conception of the good (1996, 152-158).

not just that it could become one (Nussbaum 2000b, 76).[110] We also have reason to believe, independently of Nussbaum's justification of her own list, that persons from diverse cultures can come to agree that persons need certain basic things to flourish. As I suggested in the last chapter, the existence of the actual human rights regime attests to this. Nussbaum's list offers a perfectionist conception of the good *and* is the potential subject of an overlapping consensus.

That Nussbaum's list is a *deliberative* perfectionist conception is more difficult to show. Nussbaum says that she developed it through years of discussion with diverse persons from a wide variety of cultures (Nussbaum 2000b, 76), and there is significant evidence that persons from a wide variety of cultures endorse the list. Some Southern development practitioners have expressed their support of the list as providing a helpful normative framework (Nagar and Raju 2003, 8; Uyan-Semerci 2007a; Uyan-Semerci 2007b). Moreover, some empirical field studies have indicated significant overlap between what some poor Southern populations value and the items on Nussbaum's list (Clark 2003; Ibrahim 2007). However, Nussbaum's assertions and these endorsements will not give the critic sufficient evidence that the conception has been arrived at through a legitimate deliberative process. As Alison Jaggar points out, Nussbaum tells us very little about the content of the discussions that led her to the list, how she decided who should participate in them, and whether those persons provided a representative sampling of the diverse moral world we actually inhabit (Jaggar 2006).

For the purposes of this chapter, however, we do not need to take a stance about whether the deliberation through which Nussbaum's list has been arrived at and endorsed is

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[110] We could also make an argument for the persistent perfectionism of Nussbaum's list based on her assertion that persons from various cultures do, or could be persuaded to, endorse it. We might say that the truth of this assertion rests on the assumption of a shared human nature, or at least a shared human condition.

sufficient to make it legitimate. We need only agree that a deliberative perfectionist conception would look *something like* it. This, I think we can grant. Interestingly, the vast majority of criticisms of Nussbaum's list are criticisms of the processes by which it was arrived at rather than its contents.[111]

The list exhibits the structural features we expect from a deliberative perfectionist conception. It confines itself to basic levels of basic functionings. It is also justificatorily minimal and vague. These three features mean that using it to guide practice will require much interpretation, and that interpreting it effectively will often require deliberating with persons with suspect preferences. The rest of the chapter will defend the PTFA as supported by Nussbaum's list of central human capabilities. It will treat the list as though it has been deliberatively arrived under the assumption that a list like it *could* reasonably be arrived at through cross-cultural deliberation. Since we now have an example of a deliberative perfectionist conception in hand, I will begin to use the term "PTFA" alone to refer to the PTFA as supported by Nussbaum's capabilities list.

5.2.2 Types of Intervention Justified by the PTFA

Only certain types of strategies for identifying and transforming IAPs are consistent with the PTFA. It is worth recalling that the PTFA defines IAPs in a way that makes it impossible to know for certain in advance whether a preference is inappropriately adaptive. What it means to suspect a preference is to make a conjecture about whether it will disappear under better future conditions. The conjecture comes from certain assumptions about what human beings generally prefer under conditions conducive to their flourishing. The upshot of this aspect of the PTFA is that it only justifies noncoercive intervention in the

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[111] For examples of these criticisms, see Clark (2003, 178), Jaggar (2006), and Qizilbash (1998).

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lives of persons with suspect preferences. Since public institutions cannot know in advance what any given individual will be disposed to do under conditions conducive to her flourishing, it does not provide a warrant for "forcing her to be free;" if a person has to be coerced against her will into changing her preferences, we cannot justify changing her preferences on the grounds that she has a propensity to flourish.

The prospective version of the PTFA justifies third-party suspicion of preferences, and this is a good thing. If we want it public institutions to take IAPs seriously, we need to authorize them to do more than wait for persons with IAPs to come to them and ask that their preferences or conditions be changed. However, the PTFA does not justify what we might call "uneducated preference suspicion." Public institutions suspect preferences of being inappropriately adaptive in an uneducated way when they assume out-of-hand that they understand those preferences' moral significance. The list of central human capabilities is vague and justificatorily minimal, and this means that the list alone cannot tell us whether a given preference is consistent or inconsistent with a persons' basic flourishing or whether that preference is likely to disappear. That is, public institutions need knowledge about the world in order to be able to determine whether any given preference is promoting or detracting from any of the basic functionings on the list. For example, to reliably determine whether a woman's nonparticipation in the formal economy is preventing her from having "control over her material environment" (Nussbaum 2000b, 80), public institutions need to know that having an income is a typical way of controlling one's material environment, that she is not earning an income in the informal sector, etc.

If we believe the moral world we inhabit is rich and diverse, we should add something to the statement that public institutions need knowledge about the world in order to decide how to treat suspect preferences. We should add that public institutions need

knowledge about the *worlds* of persons with suspect preferences to be able to interpret the list in a way that warrants the judgment that their preferences are suspect. The ways that basic flourishing manifests itself vary from context to context. Indeed, flourishing may sometimes be unrecognizable as such to persons who do not belong to a particular context.

Shiva (1989) illustrates this for us in her criticism of the Western development agenda in India in the 1980s—an agenda that assumed that Indian women farmers were deprived. According to her, this agenda was facilitated by a way of seeing that assumed that the absence of Western technology and deprivation were one and the same (Shiva 1989, 5). To translate this into the language of the present discussion, third parties are likely to confuse the way that a particular functioning manifests itself in their world with the *only* way a functioning can manifest itself. It was incomprehensible to the Westerners in Shiva's example that farming based on local, traditional practices could secure persons an acceptable amount of control over their material environments.

Third parties may make mistakes about whether a particular preference is inconsistent with basic flourishing. This is particularly likely to happen when third parties are working in contexts that are unfamiliar to them—either because these contexts are unlike their own, or because these contexts are atypical compared to the rest of the world. This may sometimes result from malice, but it may also sometimes result from a lack of understanding. The PTFA cannot eliminate this problem, but it gives public institutions good reason to attempt to understand preferences in their contexts. It is true that the PTFA justifies initial third party suspicion that often cannot help but be underinformed.

However, the PTFA offers public institutions two good reasons not to make such intitial judgments authoritative in most cases. One reason is epistemological. The functionings the PTFA valorizes are stated vaguely. Thus, third parties that are self-

consciously using the PTFA cannot reasonably think that evaluating preferences in context is simply a matter of "applying" the PTFA. If there were simple formulas for determining whether a preference were inappropriately adaptive, the perfectionist conception accompanying the PTFA would look more like a detailed checklist. Representatives of public institutions that endorse the PTFA must acknowledge that the vagueness of the conception of flourishing leaves them a lot of room for error. Obviously, the likelihood of error varies from context to context—based at least partly on the practitioner's familiarity with that context.[112] However, in all cases the PTFA encourages practitioners to be aware of the likelihood of error and to take steps to offset it.

The PTFA gives representatives of public institutions a second reason to attempt to understand suspect preferences in their contexts. This reason is pragmatic. According to the PTFA, part of what makes a preference inappropriately adaptive is the likelihood that it will disappear under conditions conducive to basic flourishing. Failing to understand preferences in their contexts will often mean devoting resources to changing preferences that are unlikely to change.

Representatives of public institutions who want to avoid this consequence should want—at both the outset of an intervention and as it progresses—to track the likelihood that a given preference will change. Such tracking will require understanding *why* the persons in

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[112] I say "at least partly" here, because I believe that there are also ways in which being familiar with a context can actually *impede* the distinction of suspect from non-suspect preferences. Being a member of a community where certain forms of oppression and deprivation are normalized, for example, may prevent one from seeing such deprivation *as* deprivation. For a discussion of the evaluative advantages and disadvantages of cultural insiders in development practice, see Crocker (1991). It is also worth noting here that having familiarity with a particular context is not a matter of being Western or non-Western. There are vast cultural differences within countries in the South. My students in Tanzania who were from ethnic groups that did not practice genital cutting were horrified enough by stories about genital cutting in Kenya to call it "barbaric." It is not clear to me that the fact that they were Tanzanian meant they wore equipped to intervene respectfully in communities that practiced genital cutting. More than one essay in Gujit and Shah's collection (1998) mentions the fact that caste differences between development facilitators and participants in India affected the quality of participation. Even if a facilitator is from a community in which she works, she may come to be viewed (or to view herself) as something of an outsider because she has an education, has lived in a city, etc.

question have the preferences they do (Are they trading this basic functioning in order to have access to another? Do they not know what opportunities are available to them? Is this preference important to their religious beliefs) and *whether* and *how* they are attached to them (Do they want to have the preference they have? What is the role of the preference in their conception of the good life?). In most cases, it is highly doubtful that a practitioner can do this by consulting her imagination alone. It will often require actual listening to first-person accounts of the role and significance of those practices.

Thus, the PTFA requires interventions that are not coercive and encourages judgments about the suspectness of preferences to take contextual details and first-person narratives into account. The PTFA also promotes particular types of interventions at the phase of designing projects aimed at preference transformation. As I mentioned in the last chapter, the PTFA radically *underdetermines* the set of preferences we expect an individual to have under conditions conducive to her flourishing. This means that there are manifold ways to actualize any of the capabilities, and nothing in the list itself recommends very specific ways of actualizing them.

The absence of a one-to-one correspondence between the capabilities on the list and the functionings that might actualize them is an effect of the vagueness and justificatory minimalism of the list. So, for example, policies designed to transform persons' nutrition may take several different forms—educating the elders of a community about nutrition and convincing them it is their role to disseminate this knowledge, providing classes about how to cook exotic foods that are less bland than the traditional fare, integrating nutritional information into primary school books in hopes they will transmit it to their families.[113]

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[113] These are all examples of interventions that have actually been conducted by development organizations to change persons' preferences. The first was conducted in Senegal as documented in Aubel et. al (2001). The second was conducted in Mexico (FAO 1993). The third is an example from my experience teaching in rural

Furthermore the preferences these interventions are aimed at brining about will be different in different situations; a nutritionally adequate diet—even if it is chemically similar—will look different in different cultural contexts.

The fact that the PTFA underdetermines the preferences any intervention should aim at bringing about has important practical consequences. If the PTFA itself does not tell us what should be done to change preferences or what preferences the existing ones should be replaced *with*, it does not provide moral reasons for choosing one flourishing-consistent course of action over another. Thus, the PTFA allows—and even encourages—pragmatic considerations to play a role in deciding which strategies for transforming IAPs should be adopted. On the whole, preference-transforming projects are more likely to work when the persons and communities they affect have been involved in designing them. There are at least two reasons for this; participation can increase persons' feelings of investment in a project, and local persons have invaluable knowledge about what types of new opportunities will appeal to and be meaningful to them and other members of their communities. Thus, using the PTFA effectively is incompatible with a one-size-fits-all approach to preference transformation.

Up to this point, I have described the types of strategies for IAP-suspicion and transformation the PTFA justifies mostly in the negative. I have said that the PTFA does not justify a one-size-fits-all approach to preference transformation, that it discourages taking initial third party suspicion as ultimately authoritative, and that it does not justify coercion. I

Tanzania, where I was instructed to teach from UNICEF-created books with titles like *Good Food* and *Dirty Water*.

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conclude this section by sketching a more constructive picture of what we can expect a typical intervention justified by the PTFA to look like.[114]

When a public institution becomes aware of a preference that seems to impede a basic functioning and has developed in the absence of opportunities for the exercise of that functioning, it may take this as an invitation to further investigate the preference. It will then attempt to understand the significance and role of the preference in order to decide whether this suspicion is warranted. Attempting to determine whether the suspicion is warranted will often require discussion with persons from the community whose preferences are in question. If the suspicion still appears warranted after the preference has been understood in context, a strategy for transforming these preferences can be devised. The most effective strategy for transformation is likely one that local persons have participating in designing, so the typical PTFA-motivated intervention will encourage local participation. Now that we have a clearer understanding of what types of development practice we will generally endorse if we endorse the PTFA, we can show that these types of practices are compatible with a high level of respect for pluralism of value.

5.3 THE PTFA AND THE MORAL DIVERSITY OF INDIVIDUALS

Practical interventions motivated by the PTFA are interventions motivated by a conception of the good. They will inevitably promote certain life-plans over others.[115] They

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[114] I say that the typical intervention will look like this, because I do not want to rule out the possibility that there are cases where needs are particularly evident or urgent where other moral considerations outweigh the need for participation. One example might be a case in which engaging women in a participatory development activity would likely subject them to violence by their partners.

[115] One might attempt to defend the PTFA by saying that policies justified by it do not promote certain sorts of life-plans over others since it does not justify coercive intervention. I do not think we can stop there. In my view, such a line of defense would be dishonest. Providing certain types of opportunities and encouraging

will encourage individuals to choose lives that involve things like "good health", "engaging in critical reflection about the planning of one's life", and "control over one's political environment" over lives that do not. It may seem to inevitably follow from this that policies promoted by the PTFA will deny individual persons' freedom to form and pursue their own conceptions of the good. If this accusation were justified, it would be serious. We might not want public institutions to take IAPs seriously if it meant depriving individuals of the capacity to live by their own lights. Fortunately, it does not. We can see this by looking at how the PTFA withstands three objections to it motivated by concern for individual freedom. Let us call these objections "the paternalistic coercion objection," "the nonautonomy objection," and "the agency objection."

5.3.1 The Paternalistic Coercion Objection

A common objection against allowing perfectionism to influence public policy is that it justifies forcing persons to live according to a particular conception of the good. Because perfectionism "thinks some lives are better than others," we might think, "it favors state coercion to force people into excellence" (Hurka 1993, 147). We already know that the PTFA takes a strong stance against forcing persons to live in accordance with a conception of the good. The PTFA thinks of policies that transform IAPs as revealing the deep preferences of the persons who held them and it would be difficult to make the case that coercing a rational[116] person is a way of revealing what they really want.

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individuals to take advantage of them structures individuals' choice situations. It gives them incentives to take advantages of those opportunities rather than others. We cannot escape this fact. The PTFA does involve promoting certain types of life-plans over others. There remains a moral difference between promoting certain types of life plans and forcing persons to choose those types of life plans and the PTFA justifies the former and not the latter.

[116] Although it is a matter of debate *what* role rationality should play in a theory of autonomy, it is generally acknowledged that minimal rationality is a prerequisite for autonomy.

But it may not satisfy us to know that the PTFA *does* not authorize coercion. Even if the PTFA *does* not support coercing persons with suspect preferences, it may seem to us that it logically *should*. It may seem that it follows from the logic of the PTFA that persons can be coerced into exercising the functionings on Nussbaum's list. If these functionings are so basic to human life, and we are sure that lives without these functionings are less flourishing than ones with them, how can it not follow that persons should be forced to embody them? Is prohibiting coercion not just a way of appeasing the liberal-- one that is not logically consistent with the belief that some types of lives are objectively better than others?

I believe we can honestly answer this question in the negative. There are three reasons we need not think of the belief in an objectively good life as justifying paternalistic coercion. The reasons have differing levels of decisiveness, but I think that they are decisive when taken together. The first reason the PTFA does not justify coercion was laid out in the last chapter. It is, quite simply, that the PTFA rests on a generalization—and not a universalization—about what human beings actually desire. We do not expect all human beings to want to live lives that manifest the functionings on Nussbaum's list. However, we do expect a high level of coincidence between persons' "true" preferences and the functionings on Nussbaum's list.

Still, stating that the PTFA is based on a generalization rather than a universalization may not persuade the critic that the PTFA does not endorse coercion. She may point out that whether PTFA authorizes coercion is actually a function of the *strength* of the generalization. If the generalization is very strong, will there not surely be situations where coercing the minority will do a better job promoting persons' overall flourishing? Before we respond to this question, it is worth noting that it is difficult to imagine cases in which the PTFA would justify this. Recall that the PTFA is meant only to justify responding to

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persons' self-regarding preferences. It is easy to imagine situations where coercing persons to change their *other*-regarding preferences will increase persons' overall flourishing—cases where persons have preferences to discriminate against and humiliate others, to pollute the environment, and so forth. However, deciding whether coercion is appropriate in cases where persons' preferences affect others—assuming basically liberal public institutions—is a matter of deciding how to balance the Kantian imperative to treat persons as ends with some version of Mill's harm principle. It is not a task for the PTFA.

The cases in which the PTFA actually might justify coercing persons into changing their self-regarding preferences seem to be cases in which leaving persons an opportunity to opt out of a particular preference change would involve costs that are outweighed by benefits provided to others. It is even difficult to imagine cases like this, but if they do exist, all we need say in response is that the PTFA is limited by the principle of treating each person as an end. Easier to imagine are cases in which actively encouraging persons to make informed choices about whether to change their preferences will demand resources that might be better spent elsewhere. The PTFA may sometimes justify this, and we will return to this point in a few pages at 5.3.2 in the discussion of the agency objection. For now, it is only important to observe that failing to encourage someone to actively decide whether a given preference change is good for them and coercing them into changing their preferences are not the same thing.

My invocation of the Kantian principle of treating each person as an end in the last paragraph may seem to beg the question. It may seem that, on the terms of a perfectionist conception, coercing a person into flourishing is a perfectly legitimate way of treating them as an end. If we believe some life activities are objectively better than others, is refusing to coerce persons into flourishing not just a way of allowing them to destroy their own lives?

The second and third reason the PTFA does not justify coercing persons into flourishing show that we can answer even this question negatively.

The first reason the PTFA does not justify coercive policies is that it rests on a generalization rather than a universalization about human desires. The second reason is that, in practice, public institutions can make mistakes. One of Mill's arguments against coercing persons to live according to a conception of the good is that general principles "are likely to be misapplied in individual cases" (Mill 2008, 85). Public institutions can affirm that certain basic functionings are necessary for human flourishing without always knowing how to recognize it or make it available. Development practitioners may have a general sense of what flourishing is but fail to interpret it accurately in real-world cases. This is not a capitulation to moral skepticism. It is only an acknowledgment that applying general principles to individual cases requires a lot of knowledge.

We should not expect public institutions' knowledge about particular cases to be infallible. We should especially not expect this when the conception of flourishing is as vague as that which supports the PTFA is. As I suggested at 5.2.3, it is not always evident whether a person's preferences are impeding her flourishing or not. For instance, we discussed in the last chapter the example of genital cutting among the Abagusii. Without understanding the fact that the ceremonial cutting was not actually impairing women's sexual functioning, an outside practitioner may have assumed the practice had adverse effects on flourishing.

It is also not always evident whether a proposed strategy for preference change will actually increase a person's flourishing; it may have unintended consequences that she can foresee with particular acuity, or it may require dangerous tradeoffs that third parties are not positioned to understand. If we acknowledge that public institutions may err in applying

general conceptions to particular cases, and that the stakes are high when persons' basic flourishing is in question, we have a good reason to think of the PTFA as prohibiting public coercion.[117]

To understand the third reason the PTFA does not justify coercion, we need to further examine the idea that a functioning is objectively good. It may initially seem that saying that a functioning is necessary for human flourishing means saying that a life without it is objectively bad. If it entails the belief that a life that does not exhibit the functionings conducive to flourishing is objectively bad, it will be very difficult for the PTFA to get out of justifying paternalistic coercion. However, I do not think it follows from the claim that certain functionings are necessary to human flourishing that lives that renounce some of them are not good. This may seem paradoxical, but it will seem less so if we recognize a fundamental distinction.

We can make a distinction between a life that is good *for* a person and a life that is virtuous or admirable.[118] These two types of lives sometimes, but do not always, coincide. They most commonly fail to coincide in cases of self-sacrifice. There are many preferences that involve self-sacrifice that we may still think of as virtuous—such as the preference to die for one's principles, to renounce one's possessions to become closer to the divine, or to take less than one's share so that others can have more. We can admire these preferences without saying that the persons who exhibit them are flourishing. All we need to acknowledge to allow for this is that flourishing is what is good *for* that person and that persons can make

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[117] In the second chapter I claimed that this argument could not justify a categorical prohibition on coercion,because it cannot say anything against coercion in cases where coercion is likely to be effective. My position has not changed; I still believe that the pragmatic argument against coercion does not sufficiently protect persons from being coerced. Here the pragmatic argument is only one of three arguments that together show that the PTFA's endorsement of a conception of the good does not entail endorsement of coercion.

[118] Darwall (2004) and Arneson (2000) make distinctions like this one.

good choices that are not good *for them*. Steven Darwall, who makes a distinction like this one, provides a very useful way of thinking about the idea of something being good *for* a person. According to him, we take up the perspective of what is good *for* a person when we are engaged in caring about someone (Darwall 2004). In the terms of his discussion, we might say that persons can live admirable lives without having to care about themselves.

We may still wonder why the PTFA—and public conceptions of the good in general-- focus on what is good *for* persons. One reason for this we might cite is that most life-plans we think of as admirable also happen to be life-plans that are good *for* the persons that live them. Another, more important, one is that we assume that deep preferences for extreme self-sacrifice (given that the conception of flourishing we are working with here is rather basic) are rare. Indeed, much of what makes self-sacrificing preferences particularly admirable is the self-discipline they require—and the fact that they require self-discipline suggests that they go against deep human tendencies. The moral character of extreme self-sacrifice depends on its happening against a backdrop of other types of lives. More fundamentally, public institutions that encouraged persons to form extremely self-sacrificing preferences would be harming those persons.[119] If the preferences of a whole group of people were self-sacrificing and their public institutions had deliberately encouraged them to form those preferences, we would decry the extent to which those preferences had been manipulated—not admire them.

As long as we are committed to the worth of self-sacrificing preferences (of the deep, non-manipulated kind), we have another reason not to think of the PTFA as justifying coercion. Public institutions can simultaneously acknowledge the admirability of some self-

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[119] I do not think this claim would be objectionable to most persons who have actually chosen extremely self-sacrificing plans of life. To understand oneself as having made a sacrifice is to understand oneself as having foregone something worth having.

sacrificing preferences and endorse the PTFA. Public institutions that do this will believe that some persons have "deep" preferences for self-sacrifice. Since the PTFA justifies attempts to reveal persons' deep preferences, public institutions motivated by it cannot coherently understand flourishing as a way of revealing everyone's deep preferences.[120]

The idea that self-sacrificing preferences can be good even if they are not good *for* a person and the idea that an objective conception of the good can be wrongly interpreted in practice suggest there is no contradiction between public endorsement of a conception of the good and public refusal to use coercion in its service. Moreover, these ideas, along with the recognition that the PTFA is based on a generalization and not a universalization, offer reasons that making policy in accordance with the PTFA does not entail coercing persons to live according to a conception of the good. This shows that the paternalistic coercion objection against letting the PTFA influence policy is unfounded.

5.3.2 The Nonautonomy Objection

We have established that the PTFA does not justify coercion as a means of changing persons' suspect preferences. We have not yet established that the PTFA does not involve objectionable paternalism. Arguably, part of what is objectionable about public paternalism is that it exhibits condescension toward individuals' abilities to make judgments about what it good for them. Public endorsement of the PTFA may seem to require treating persons with suspect preferences as though they were somehow morally deficient. Suspecting a

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[120] It is probably true that the PTFA will not justify attempting to change preferences that are clearly adapted to conditions of oppression or deprivation and are also extremely deeply rooted. This is not necessarily at odds with an objective conception of flourishing. All we need to acknowledge for this to be plausible is that subjective well-being is one constituent component of flourishing. If we believe this, it is plausible that there is some point at which one's subjective well-being can be reduced so significantly that one cannot be objectively flourishing without it. This would be the case for someone whose adaptive preferences were so deeply ingrained that she would not think her life was worth living without them.

person of failing to live in a way that is good for her may seem to mean believing that the moral decisions she makes are not worthy of respect.

Responding to this objection requires us to consider the relationship between the PTFA and autonomy. As I claimed in the second chapter, the role of autonomy in a political philosophy is typically to sort persons whose decisions are worthy of respect from those who are not. The most important thing to note about the PTFA's relationship to autonomy is that the PTFA is *not* a theory of substantive autonomy. This means that the PTFA says nothing about who can make worthy moral decisions and who cannot. We can compare what the PTFA does say to what a similar theory of substantive autonomy would say if we want to see this. If we are inclined to think that the PTFA is a theory of substantive autonomy that takes the list of basic capabilities as its conditions for real choice, we think the PTFA can be reasonably interpreted as saying something like this:

IAPs are preferences that are not chosen, because chosen preferences are consistent with basic flourishing.

This statement is significantly different from the PTFA, because the PTFA divides preferences into authentic and inauthentic based on the likelihood that they will persist under conditions conducive to basic flourishing. This authentic/inauthentic distinction does not clearly map onto the chosen/unchosen distinction. A theory of substantive autonomy categorically holds that only preferences consistent with flourishing can be chosen. In contrast, the PTFA allows for preferences to be inconsistent with flourishing but still authentic. To use an example from our recent discussion, a person may have self-sacrificing preferences formed under conditions where opportunities for basic flourishing were lacking that persist even when these conditions disappear. On a theory of substantive autonomy, the preferences of a person like this one have been nonautonomous from start to finish. On the

PTFA, her preferences were inauthentic at the beginning and are authentic, and thus beyond suspicion, now.

Furthermore, it is perfectly plausible for a given preference to be inauthentic according to the PTFA and still be autonomous. This compatibility will be possible as long as the conception of autonomy in question is a procedural one or a normatively thin substantive one. This compatibility is precisely what the nonautonomy objection misses. On the PTFA, a person with inauthentic preferences can still be an agent whose preferences are worthy of respect. All she needs is to fulfill the basic criteria for autonomy. Let us assume for the purposes of argument that agents who are rational and refer to higher-order preferences in making their decisions are autonomous. On such a definition of autonomy, most persons whose preferences are inauthentic on the PTFA can still be considered autonomous.

This is as it should be intuitively. Deprivation does not necessarily make a person irrational or unworthy of being consulted about her good. Many IAPs manifest high levels of rationality. As I suggested in the first chapter, the South Asian woman who calculates the amount of nutrition available to her family and makes sure to give herself the least is using deliberative skills. Other types of choices that seem to manifest oppression or deprivation also seem to involve decision-making that is not only rational, but also an expression of critical values. Many women all over the world choose not to avoid HIV-exposure because of fear that their partners—who are the primary sources of income for themselves and their families-- will become violent against them or leave them. This will leave them unable to care for their families, or simply unable to survive.[121]

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[121] A large body of evidence indicates that women's negotiating power in relationships and/or their financial independence affects their rates of condom use. The studies on this have occurred across a wide variety of

Choices like these may even be part of highly developed conceptions of the good—that say, for instance, that it is important to care for one's family. The autonomy of such choices is plausible because not all forms of deprivation impede persons' rational capacities. Persons make meaning from their situations, even if those situations are very bad. It is one thing to lack options, knowledge, or even a sense of what is possible for human beings to become, but it is quite another to not have a conception of one's good. A person can go to bed hungry every night and still know who she will vote for in the presidential election and why; she can be illiterate and still ask herself what the meaning of life is; she may lack knowledge about contraception but still have thought about how many children she wants to have and why.

That persons can be rational and have suspect—or even inappropriately adaptive—preferences at the same time is a good thing for the PTFA. If they could not, the PTFA would do worse than justify condescending attitudes toward persons with suspect preferences. It would justify treating persons with IAPs as though they had nothing to say about themselves, what they valued, or the world they would like to live in. These types of consequences would certainly make the PTFA fall foul of the nonautonomy objection, but the PTFA does not actually entail them.

5.3.3 The Agency Objection

There is yet another way in which interventions justified by the PTFA might seem to hinder individuals' capacities to develop and pursue their own conceptions of the good. The PTFA, since it judges the individual by an objective conception of the good, may seem to

cultural contexts. See Greig and Koopman (2003), Pettifor et. al (2004), Tabac (2003), and African HIV Policy Network (2006).

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rob her of the opportunity to formulate the conception of the good by which her life should be judged. The agency objection states that the ability to actively choose and reflect upon values is a fundamental part of the capacity to pursue one's own conception of the good, and that using an external conception of the good divests them of an opportunity to use this ability.

The objection is a bit idiosyncratic, but we will understand it better if we link it to paternalism. Paternalism involves infringing on another's power to make decisions about her own good. Where the paternalistic coercion objection examined at 5.2.1 holds that a person is sufficiently free to make decisions about her own good if she is not coerced, the agency objection holds that making decisions about one's own good requires active reflection on values. It holds that the ability to make choices about one's own capacity requires positive-- and not just negative-- freedom. [122] The idea behind it seems to be that one of the most important activities in human life is the activity of choosing what to value. We can divide the agency objection into a strong and a weak form, based on how important each holds the activity of choosing what to value to be.

The *strong* form of the agency objection holds that persons need to be engaged maximally--or at least very frequently-- in the process of reflecting on and choosing their values in order to be freely choosing their own conceptions of the good. Although this would be an uncharitable reading of Sen, Sen sometimes seems to hold a view like this one. He advances lines of argument that suggest that well-being freedom should be valued for its contribution to what he calls "agency freedom" (Sen 1988, 48), that the value of all functionings is derivative of their contribution to a person's ability to make deliberate

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[122] We may call this a view of autonomy or a view of freedom. Proponents of views like it have called it both. Raz thinks of the capacity to make important decisions about the course of one's own life as autonomy (1988). Sen (1988) describes it as "agency freedom."

choices (Sen 1999b 15), or that making decisions about one's values necessarily increases one's well-being (Sen 1992, 51).[123] From the perspective of the strong form of the agency objection, the problem with the PTFA is that it removes an opportunity to reflect on and formulate one's values—the opportunity to reflect on the conception of the good according to which one's preferences will be judged.

We can respond to the strong form of the agency objection by contesting its starting point. We should not grant that persons need to be maximally involved in the process of reflecting and choosing their values in order to be regarded as living according to chosen conceptions of the good. It is inconsistent with our intuitions about what counts as a good life and inconsistent with our intuitions about what types of lives can be reasonably chosen. It is inconsistent with our intuitions about what types of lives can be reasonably chosen, because it disqualifies many lives we think of as plausible objects of choice from being thought of as such. If we believe that persons must be engaged in constant choosing for their life-plans to have a chosen quality, we believe that lives that emphasize things like religious devotion, unfaltering courage, and action out of sympathetic attachment to others are not chosen. This is a very unpalatable conclusion.

Indeed, the notion that having a chosen life plan requires constant choosing idealizes a type of life most of us would agree is *not* good—a life of incessant reflecting and active choosing. This is how the notion is inconsistent with our intuitions about what counts as a good life. We have no reason to believe that choosing and reflecting always produce economies of scale. There is surely a point at which reflection and choice start to detract

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[123] Despite the existence of a strain in Sen's thinking that emphasizes the importance of choosing in general and choosing one's values in particular, he explicitly qualifies this position. "Indeed sometimes more freedom of choice can bemuse and befuddle, and make one's life more wretched" (1992, 52). More recently, he claims that the quality of options matter to whether an increase in options is good. See the discussion of reason to value in Sen (2002, 602).

from one's well-being. Most of us would agree that lives in which persons had to reflect on whether to get out of bed every single morning, ask themselves whether every purchase she made was consistent with her overall scheme of values, or—to return to an example we have used frequently—make active choices about whether they deserved to eat or not, would be lives full of distress.[124] My point here is not to say that persons should be prevented from living these types of lives. It is rather to show that something has surely gone awry in a view of freedom that asks public institutions to *prescribe* such lives.

Thus, the *strong* version of the agency objection — which holds that the PTFA unacceptably deprives persons of opportunities to choose their values because persons should have maximal opportunities to choose their values— rests on spurious normative assumptions. If we believe that the strong version of the objection's normative assumptions are spurious, it will not persuade us. However, the *weak* version of the agency objection is based on more plausible normative assumptions. According to it, the problem with the PTFA is not that it denies persons *an* opportunity to interrogate values; the problem is that it denies persons a particularly *important* type of opportunity to interrogate values. In order to be freely choosing their life plans, persons should be actively involved in decisions about values that are publicly espoused.

I think that this weaker objection misunderstands the PTFA. We can be very sympathetic to the spirit behind it without accepting it as reason to reject the PTFA as a guide to development policy. It seems fully plausible to say that persons are not free to pursue their own conceptions of the good if they are rarely given opportunities to reflect on and publicly discuss values. It also seems correct to say that persons are not free to choose

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[124] G.A. Cohen (1993) criticizes Sen in a similar vein. He accuses Sen of acting as though choosing certain functionings is what gives them their value, when the functionings themselves are the objects of value.

their own conceptions of the good if they are not regularly consulted about decisions that affect them. If we think the strong version of the agency objection has weight against the PTFA, it is because we think the PTFA justifies unacceptably reducing persons' chances to reflect on values that are publicly espoused or prevents them from being consulted about decisions that affect them.

The PTFA need not do either, however. Persons can have opportunities to publicly discuss their values and be consulted about decisions that affect their lives without having to have personally participated in forming the most fundamental normative conceptions according to which they were judged. Indeed, this is the case of persons in contemporary flourishing democracies. In flourishing democracies, persons have opportunities to publicly discuss values and are consulted about courses of action that deeply affect them. But they are not asked to come up with constitutional principles on their own, and we do not think that persons who have not personally developed the constitutional principles by which they were judged are not free to pursue their own conceptions of the good.

Nothing about the PTFA prevents persons from engaging in value-discussion or being consulted about public decisions that will affect their lives. Indeed, the PTFA encourages such discussion. As we saw at 5.1.2, many PTFA-motivated interventions will involve deliberation with persons with suspect preferences. Persons with suspect preferences can participate in ascertaining whether or not a preference is actually impeding a basic functioning in their lives and in deciding what should be done about it if it is. The weak version of the agency objection misconstrues the PTFA, and the strong version rests on objectionable moral commitments. Thus neither is decisive against allowing the PTFA to guide development policy.

5.4 THE PTFA AND THE MORAL DIVERSITY OF CULTURES

Public endorsement of the PTFA means public endorsement of a conception of the good. In the last section, I attempted to demonstrate that the type of public endorsement of a conception of the good the PTFA requires does not prevent individual persons from forming and living according to their own conceptions of the good. But it is not only individuals that vary in their conceptions of the good; cultures do also. We know that development policy has not always treated moral variation across cultures as legitimate. In this section, I attempt to demonstrate that endorsing the PTFA does not come at an unacceptable cost to our commitment to respecting the diversity of cultures. I examine four objections to treating the PTFA as a legitimate political objective that are motivated by a desire to respect cultural diversity. I claim that none of them is decisive, because they fail to understand that the PTFA is supported by a vague and justificatorily minimal conception of the good. Let us call them "the universal humanity objection," "the external standards objection," "the homogenizing objection," and "the passive recipients objection."

5.4.1 The Universal Humanity Objection

It may seem that the most fundamental moral commitments of the PTFA place it at odds with the project of respecting cultural differences in conceptions of the good. I have been candid about the fact that we cannot endorse the PTFA without assenting to some basic ideas about the human. The idea that certain preferences are inauthentic because they would not be retained by human beings under conditions conducive to their flourishing assumes that human beings share a nature. This nature is best realized under certain conditions and manifests itself in particular functionings. It may appear that all of this talk of the human inevitably dooms strategies motivated by the PTFA to unacceptably reduce

difference. We may ask ourselves, is it not oxymoronic to think we can promote understanding across difference by starting from the assumption that human beings are, in some very fundamental sense, similar? The universal humanity states that, because of its commitment to the idea of humanity, the PTFA will prevent understanding of the differences among persons from different cultures.

This type of misgiving about the human is corroborated by a common strand of thinking in contemporary theorizing about the causes of exclusion and oppression. This strand of thinking wants to claim that there is something in the very *logic* of the human (or any universal) that produces the oppression of persons who are different. In contemporary philosophy, it is most familiar to us in liberatory theories influenced by French poststructuralism.[125] In development studies, it manifests itself in what is called "postdevelopment" theory.[126] These theoretical traditions have much to offer contemporary liberation struggles, and I do not mean to minimize this by painting them in broad strokes here. Still, for the purposes of the present argument, we can isolate a particular argument-type about the human that appears in both literatures. It begins from a desire to explain the persistence of harm and oppression to human beings in contexts where ethical theories extolling "universal" features of human beings prevail(ed).

This argument type says that the definition of the human being (or person) in a given context had inappropriate content that caused it to exclude the needs of entire groups of human beings. To take one example from postdevelopment theory, Mitu Hirschman argues that the predominant concept of the human being in development thinks (or thought in the 1980s and 1990s) of human flourishing as requiring only access to material goods. According

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[125] For views in this family, see Derrida (1978) Dussel (1981) and Irigaray (2002).

[126] See Apffel-Marglin and Marglin (1996), Escobar (1995), Rahnema (1997), and Ziai (2004).

to her, this view makes the needs of many third world women not count as needs, because these women value spiritual connection to nature (Hirschman 1995). Some—but not all--postdevelopment and poststructural thinkers draw a wide-reaching conclusion from the persistent susceptibility of claims about the human to arguments like this one. They suggest that there is something in the very structure of claims about the human that makes some human beings appear as less than human.

Many arguments of this type advanced by poststructuralist and postdevelopment thinkers accurately portray problems in existing or past conceptions of the human. Even the wide-reaching conclusion from them is, in some sense, correct. It is not avoidable that using the human as a category of analysis will exclude some beings from the category of the human; drawing boundaries is simply what categories do. However, it does not follow from this that conceptions of the human must exclude beings from humanity in a way that is morally objectionable. It is clearly morally objectionable to define humanity in a way that prevents women, or third worlders, or third world women from being understood as human. In contrast, I do not think it is morally objectionable to define humanity in a way that excludes trees or chairs or butterflies from being thought of as human beings. We probably do not all agree on the exact limits of who counts as human, because they lie somewhere between these two extremes.[127] But the general point here is that it is not logically necessary for claims about human to exclude beings in a way that is morally unacceptable.

But, the antihumanist might reply, we know that the conception of the human is dangerous. Would we not do better to get rid of it? Can we not have understanding across difference without it? My response to the antihumanist is that it is not at all clear that we can.

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[127] The debate about where the boundaries of the conception of the human are is very important in philosophical conversations on cognitive disability and animal rights.

Understanding others as different, or recognizing the differences of others requires reference to some deeper sameness. Susan Babbitt (2005) argues that others' descriptions of their lives and beliefs only appear as *about* difference if we assume a background context of sameness.

Babbitt describes an objection by African feminist Nkiru Nzegwu to Anthony Appiah's representation of West African women. Nzegwu claims that Western readers need to know that West African women are different from them; they do not accept subservient roles in the family like Western women do (Babbitt 2005, 9). But, Babbit points out, in order to know why or how this difference is important, we need to be interested in finding out what is true for women in general (Babbitt 2005, 10). Otherwise her claim that West African women are not subservient is just an anthropological fact. But even if the claim is just an anthropological fact, it is about some other sameness—the sameness among human beings.

This analysis is particularly useful for understanding why the conception of the human in the PTFA does not prevent understanding across difference. In order for development practitioners to be able to interpret the preferences of the persons in the communities in which they work, they must assume some type of shared humanity. Indeed, the assumption that they share certain dispositions with the persons with whom they work is what allows differences to make sense *as* differences. To see how this is so, we can return to Christofferson-Deb's study of genital cutting in the Abagusii community in Kenya I referred to in Chapter Four. A practitioner who was not a member of the community might be genuinely puzzled about why girls were undergoing genital cutting—especially when this cutting was not actually significantly altering their genitals. However, with a conception of the good that indicates that affiliation is an important functioning in the background, an outsider might come to understand from the stories of young Abagusii women that this practice is *one* way of becoming accepted by one's community. It may be a way of doing so

that it unfamiliar to the practitioner, but the practitioner may think of it as a *different* way of achieving a functioning she also values. Without some frame of similarity, the significance of the practice to the girls undergoing it would be unintelligible.

The presumption of similarity given by a conception of the human is also what makes it possible for persons with suspect preferences to successfully contest judgments that they are deprived. Let us return to the example in 5.2 of the Indian women farmers who were assumed to be deprived because they did not use Western technology. A conception of the good that includes both the ability to relate to nature and access to income may have provided a framework in which it was possible to persuade outsiders that this was a flourishing way of life. Absent the view that a relationship with nature was an important functioning, and absent discussion about what functionings the traditional ways of life were contributing to, outsiders did not understand what was good about the traditional farming practices to the persons that held them.

An appropriately formulated conception of human flourishing actually facilitates understanding of cultural differences. What does it mean for a conception of the human to be "appropriately formulated" for the emergence of difference? At the very least, the conception must be vague. A conception that was highly specific would not allow us to understand different ways of achieving the same functioning as such and would make it very difficult to understand others as flourishing differently. Non-vague conceptions are the types of conceptions to which many postdevelopment and poststructuralist thinkers object. But since the PTFA incorporates a vague conception of flourishing, it is less susceptible to these types of objections. This vague conception, rather than obstructing understanding across difference, facilitates it. This is why the universal humanity objection is misplaced.

5.4.2 The External Standards Objection

Another objection against allowing the PTFA to influence development practice is the external standards objection. It holds that the PTFA endorses judging persons in a culture by a conception of the good that is external to it, and this is a bad thing. We frequently hear criticisms of another deliberative perfectionist conception—the existing international human rights regime-- that express this conviction. For example, Said Rajaie-Khorassani, the Iranian representative to the United Nations, once said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was "a secular understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition" and thus should not be implemented in his country (Littman 1999). In the late 1990s, the Singaporean Prime Minister, Lee Kwan Yew defended his country's failure to adopt human rights norms on the grounds that "Asian values" provided more appropriate standards by which to judge it (Sen 1997). There are two possible versions of the criticism that persons should not be judged by standards from cultures other than their own. Let us call them the "genetic version" and the "understanding version"

The genetic version is clearly the less credible of the two. It begins from the belief that persons in cultures should only be judged according to normative conceptions *generated by* those cultures themselves. On a view like this one, the problem with the PTFA is that it judges persons' levels of flourishing using a normative conception that those cultures did not invent. Mentioning that the PTFA is based on a cross-culturally acceptable deliberative conception can do little to persuade a critic who holds this view strongly. This is because "cross-culturally acceptable" does not mean "endorsed by an 'authentic' representative of every culture on the planet" (this would clearly be an unrealistic ideal). Nor does "cross-culturally acceptable" mean "having independently arisen in every culture on the planet."

If we believe that the PTFA falls foul of the belief that cultures can only be judged by standards generated by them, we are surely right. But, I would suggest, we are wrong if we believe this falling foul is a bad thing. If we reject the PTFA because we subscribe to the genetic version of the external standards objection, it is because we are subscribing to a set of beliefs about morality that do not deserve our assent. The arguments against the belief that persons within cultures must be judged only by standards internal to their cultures are very well-rehearsed elsewhere. I will only briefly summarize them here.

One basic problem with the view that cultures should only be judged by internal standards is that it is difficult to have a precise sense of *where* an idea—especially a basic moral idea-- was generated. This is partly because most cultures do not exist in isolation (and never have); just because an idea appears in a culture does not mean it originated there. But it is also because it is generally difficult to know exactly *where* an idea came from. For example, Uma Narayan responds to those who accuse her feminist ideals of originating outside of India by saying that part of the genesis of those ideals was her witnessing of her mother's pain (1997, 7).

Moreover, it is difficult to tell where basic moral conceptions originated, because similar ideas exist in many different cultures. For example, it has been argued that the origins of human rights can only be found in Western cultures, but there seems little reason to credit this argument. Sen (1997) argues that there are strong rights traditions in Asian cultures; Nussbaum argues that there are strong antipatriarchal traditions in India (2001, 41-48); J.A.I. Bewaji (2006) argues that some of the most fundamental conceptions of human rights can be found in precolonial Yoruba traditions. It is highly likely that the ideas in any deliberative perfectionist conception will be traceable to multiple different origins—and indeed, that

there is some understanding of them within all cultures. The appearance of similar moral ideas in multiple contexts is part of what should convince us that they are good moral ideals.

A second basic problem with the view that cultures should only be judged by standards internal to them is that it is unclear how to determine what *the* moral standards of a culture actually are. Cultures are not homogenous, and many different strains of thought —both conservative and radical—can exist within any given culture. As Biku Parekh says it, "A culture has no essence. It includes different strands of thought" (Parekh 2000, 175). Ironically, it is not even clear that critics of ideas like equality, dignity, and human rights are right to say that they are *the* standards of Western culture. As Narayan puts it, "One could argue that doctrines of human rights, rather than being pure products of imperialism, were often important products of struggles *against* Western imperialism" (1998, 97).

Even more problematically, making certain persons' depiction of the standards of a culture the authoritative one runs the risk of legitimizing the most conservative elements in a culture—elements that oppress and dominate other members of that culture. There are internal power struggles within cultures,[128] and we can refer to several examples where claims about a culture's internal norms function to silence members of those cultures who want to reform them. Narayan claims that Hindu fundamentalists in India object to "Westernization" when it manifests itself in the form of feminism, but not when it manifests itself in the form of television watching (1997, 22). We might also argue that it is no coincidence that the claim that conceptions of human rights do not exist in a given culture often come from defenders of authoritarian regimes. The two examples cited at the beginning of this section are cases in point.

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[128] See Ahmed (1993), Deveaux (2003), Eisenberg (2003), Narayan (1997, 1-41), and Okin (1999).

The view that individuals can only be judged by moral standards *generated* their own cultures is rather widely discredited, and I have described the central reasons for this. However, there is a second version of the external standards objection to the PTFA that is much more respectable. This is the "understanding" version. It holds that the real problem with judging persons according to standards that did not originate in their culture is that it means judging them according to standards they cannot understand or with which they do not identify. I think that this is what many of the more considered critiques of human rights as external standards are actually about. Makau Wa Mutua, for example, argues that human rights are based on a language of entitlement rather than the language of duty he claims is more deeply embedded in African traditions (Mutua 1995, 334-345). Theresa Weynand Tobin claims that Sunni Muslim women often do not identify with the language of human rights, because they think of themselves in the terms of "Islamic discourse" (2007, 153).

Judging persons according to conceptions of the good they cannot understand is, on the whole, a bad thing, and it can have pernicious effects in development practice designed to respond to IAPs. It can produce three types of undesirable consequences. First, it may result in persons leading lives of non-endorsement of the opportunities available to them.[129] Although we should not expect persons to endorse all of the standards by which they are judged—contesting bad standards can be a part of a flourishing human life—it does seem that a life in which one has a positive attitude toward one's opportunities for flourishing is better than one that does not. In other words, if we think endorsement is a positive good, we want persons to identify with the norms that influence their lives.

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[129] I take this to be the worry motivating Qizilbash's (1998) view that using Nussbaum's list of capabilities in practice cannot form a basis for "consensual development."

Moreover, endorsement typically increases the success of development projects. Persons are more likely to participate in projects they themselves *recognize* as means of realizing functionings they desire. Second, judging persons according to a conception of the good they do not understand may not only fail to produce endorsement; it may produce active hostility toward public institutions. Persons judged by a conception of flourishing with which they do not identify may see themselves as objects of objectionable paternalism or may come to believe that public institutions are actually interested in harming them (which most certainly *has* been the case in many development programs).

Third, evaluating persons' lives with reference to normative conceptions they do not understand can obstruct dialogue between persons with suspect preferences and development practitioners. This is an important concern in projects designed to respond to IAPs. It is easy to imagine cases where practitioners suspect preferences that are genuinely *not* inappropriately adaptive, and the bearers of those preferences do not have the moral vocabulary to respond. This would disempower the bearers of suspect preferences vis-à-vis development practitioners and result in misguided public policy. We may also imagine cases in which practitioners attempt to persuade persons with suspect preferences of the value of some set of opportunities, but the language of the practitioner is totally opaque to them. Huda Zurayk, a Lebanese practitioner, offers an example of a conception of flourishing with which persons with suspect preferences may have difficulty identifying because of their cultural background. She says that women in the Middle East may have trouble relating to the idea of consensual sex. "Should every sexual act be consented to?" she asks. "If so, how can that be understood in marriages where the choice of the husband has not been subject to the consent of the woman" (Zurayk 2001, 26). I do not think that Zurayk's point here is quite that women in the Middle East do not value—or could not come to value—sexual

lives that were free of violence. Rather, the idea is that it will be difficult for persons who have never thought of consent as an important value in sexual life to formulate their needs and desires in a vocabulary of consent.

Should we expect interventions justified by the PTFA to have these types of negative consequences? The only honest answer to this question is to say that sometimes it will. In cases where the rifts between representatives of public institutions and persons with suspect preferences are particularly large, where representatives of public institutions act in bad faith (I discuss practitioner virtues at 5.4.3), or where insufficient time and resources are allocated to deliberation, we can expect public responses to suspect preferences to go awry. Moral understanding—especially across cultural difference is sometimes very difficult, and I do not mean to downplay this. But we also should not assume *a priori* that moral understanding is impossible. As Benhabib writes, in dialogue about divergent and convergent beliefs, "very often we do not know how deep these divergences are, or how great their overlap may be, until we have engaged in conversation" (Benhabib 2002, 136).

However, the PTFA possesses certain structural features that decrease the likelihood and severity of the types of negative consequences we are worried about. Its conception of human flourishing is vague and justificatorily minimal. As we have already seen, the vagueness of the conception promotes deliberation; accurately interpreting it in a given context will often require taking the first-person perspectives of persons with suspect preferences into account. Done well and in the right circumstances, this type of discussion can deliver endorsement rather than hostility (or neutrality). Persons whose preferences have changed as a result of participatory development programs often report positive attitudes toward the new functionings available to them.

Moreover, these positive attitudes often reveal an integration of new opportunities with previously existing belief systems. For example, some of the participants in the Oxfam rose cultivation project cited at 5.2.2 described themselves as valuing rose cultivation because it allowed them to engage in what they thought of as "holy work." Participants in an intervention to change maternal nutrition practices in Senegal by educating grandmothers "articulated this feeling: 'the grandmother activities have made us stronger than before. Not only do we have our traditional knowledge and experiences, but we also have the knowledge of the doctors" (Aubel et. al 2001, 67).

We should also remember that the conception of the good in the PTFA is justificatorily minimal. This improves the possibility of dialogue between persons with suspect preferences and development practitioners, for one can translate the conception into, and endorse it from, a wide variety of moral languages. Moreover, practitioners can, and should, become familiar with local moral languages to understand how they can be linked to the justificatorily minimal conception. Practitioners can disagree with participants about how they are linked, and participants can disagree with one another.

Some Middle Eastern women may indeed have difficulty relating to the idea of consensual sex as Zurayk claims, but nothing about the functioning of "being secure against sexual assault" (Nussbaum 2000b, 78) requires that discussions of sexual violence be framed in a language of consent. Middle Eastern women who are Muslim, for example, might understand sexual violence as a perversion of the type of love between husbands and wives prescribed in the Koran (Koran 30:21).[130] Or, perhaps actual discussion will reveal that

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[130] For an excellent attempt to elaborate human rights in the framework of Islamic texts, see Afkhami and Vaziri (1996).

Zurayk is wrong to suppose that most Middle Eastern women do not understand the idea of consensual sex.

Similarly, as Castle, Traore, et. al's studies of women's conceptions of reproductive health in Mali (2002) have shown, Malian women may not think of reproductive health in isolation from the idea of interpersonal relationships. Castle, Traore, et. al are quite right to suggest that this need not be seen as catastrophic for public policy motivated by the conception of the good embodied by the post-Cairo definition of reproductive health.[131] Rather, it can be seen as an injunction to justify reproductive-health related policies in a language that takes interpersonal relationships seriously (Castle, Traore, and Cisse 2002, 29).

We may have the lingering worry that the possibility of translation and interpretation from one moral language to another only accompanies *certain* deliberative conceptions of the good. It may be correct to say that Nussbaum's list of central human capabilities can function in this way, but it may not seem correct to say that the list of human rights can be seen in this way. After all, most of the examples of the external standards criticism I have cited here are criticisms of the human rights regime. I do not think the conception of flourishing embedded in the human rights regime must be described in the language of rights at the level of the types of interventions we are concerned with here.

The fact that human rights are *rights* clearly matters at the level of legal interpretation and implementation. However, it is by no means clear that this means development interventions motivated by rights must be formulated in the language of rights. Castle and Traore's study of women in Mali studied above is an example of the type of work that can be

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[131] The Cairo conference marked a considerable shift in the international community's justification of population policy—from understanding population reduction as an impediment to economic development to understanding individuals' reproductive health as an important social entitlement in its own right. See McIntosh and Finkle (1995). It essentially made reproductive health a human right.

done to discover the interface between conceptions of human rights and local moral languages. In asking women what they thought reproductive health was, they discovered that this idea was, for them, intertwined with the idea of loving relationships. Presumably this type of work can be done with any type of justificatorily minimal conception of flourishing.

A justificatorily minimal and vague conception of the good—the type we endorse if we endorse the PTFA—can be understood by persons from a wide variety of moral perspectives. This means that it is amenable to being understood, interpreted, and manipulated by persons with suspect preferences, and thus indicates that the PTFA does not justify subjecting persons to normative conceptions they cannot understand. The idea that persons should only be judged by normative conceptions that are generated by their cultures is simply not credible. Neither the genesis version nor the understanding version of the external standards objection is decisive against the PTFA.

5.4.3 The Homogenizing Objection

Another reason we may not want to authorize public institutions to use a conception of the good to identify and respond to IAPs it that it seems to commit us to a rather frightening grand objective—the project of making everyone in the world the same. Endorsing the PTFA means saying that preferences consistent with basic human flourishing are more worthy of social promotion than preferences that are not. It also means saying that human beings deserve access to conditions conducive to their basic flourishing and expecting many persons' preferences to change when they have access to conditions conducive to their flourishing. Does wanting all human beings to have access to conditions conducive to their flourishing mean wanting everyone to live under the *same* conditions? Does encouraging persons to change their preferences so that they are better adapted to

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good conditions mean promoting a world in which everyone has the *same* preferences? The homogenizing objection holds that it does.

Mistrust of objective conceptions of human flourishing in development practice is certainly justified. We know that such conceptions have rationalized many oppressive and totalizing enterprises in past and present development practice. Indeed, this is one of the most important lessons of the postdevelopment tradition I cited at 5.4.1. Translated into philosophical language, we can read many postdevelopment critiques of development as usual as saying something like this: Bad development happens partly because the West thinks it knows what human flourishing is. The development discourse conflates the functionings constitutive of human flourishing with the functionings men in industrial capitalist societies value. Thus, in the name of extending human flourishing, the West engaged (or engages) in a massive project of trying to transform the Rest into the West. I offered specific examples of this in my discussions of the Western assumption that a life that highly values connection to nature cannot be worth living at 5.4.1 and 5.2.2, so I will not repeat them here. What such examples are intended to show is that having an objective conception of human flourishing *can* mean having a specific picture of what human life should look like and attempting to uproot everything that does not look like that picture.

If public endorsement of the PTFA does indeed require this, public institutions are engaging in an especially pernicious task when they attempt to identify and transform IAPs. I do not think the PTFA justifies attempting to make everyone have the same preferences. Before I show how this is so, however, we need to bite the bullet and admit that endorsing the PTFA does mean trying to uproot *some* preferences, albeit uncoercively. We cannot endorse PTFA-guided public policy and simultaneously believe that difference (whatever this might mean) is an intrinsic good that is more important than the basic flourishing of human

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beings. Endorsing the PTFA will mean attempting to change preferences that detract from persons' basic flourishing and were formed under sub-flourishing conditions. We cannot get out of this.

However, it does not follow from this that the PTFA justifies trying to make everyone the same or even similar. Persons will have to lead very similar kinds of lives if they are to be recognized as flourishing by conceptions that are specific and/or not basic. A conception that defines a good human life as one that involves a 9-5 job, a house in the suburbs, two children and a minivan does hold that everyone should be pretty much the same. But the PTFA does not accompany a conception of the good like this one. It holds that everyone should have access to conditions conducive to functionings like bodily health and affiliation. But, because it is vague, it says nothing about whether one should be more focused on preventing illness or curing it, or what a family should look like. Moreover, because it is basic, it says nothing about whether it is better to be a vegetarian or a meat eater, or whether marriage should be about love, or duty, or not exist at all. Because the conception of flourishing is vague and justificatorily minimal, it does not morally evaluate many—even most—preference differences.

These features of the conception have an important practical consequence for the PTFA. The PTFA states that persons should live under conditions conducive to their flourishing and that it is legitimate for public institutions to attempt to change suspect preferences into preferences consistent with flourishing. But the deliberative conception of the good radically *underdetermines* what preferences should replace IAPs. In other words, as I claimed at 5.2.2, nothing in the conception of flourishing tells representatives of public institutions what IAPs should be changed *to*. This leaves communities and individuals much

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latitude to envision new ways of realizing their flourishing, ways that practitioners may never have been able to imagine or predict in advance.

The work of the Kenyan NGO, Mandaleo ya Wanawake to change the predominant tradition of female genital cutting provides an illuminating case in point. After conducting extensive participatory research, practitioners concluded that something needed to replace the practice of genital cutting if young women and their families were going to stop preferring it. They learned that part of the reason the preference for genital cutting was strong was that it was a coming-of-age ritual that played an important social role in the community. The solution they arrived at kept the coming of age ritual—in a new form without the genital cutting. Known as "Circumcision Through Words," this alternative ritual excludes "genital cutting but maintains the other components, such as education for the girls on family life and women's roles, exchange of gifts, eating good food, and a public declaration for community recognition" (Chege, Askew, and Liku 2001, 3). The transition from an IAP to a better one was not homogenizing in this case. Stopping genital cutting did not have to mean becoming "Western" or even becoming like other Kenyan women from ethnic groups or social classes that did not cut.

Working with a conception of the good that underdetermines human flourishing, as the PTFA does, allows IAP transformation not to be a simple zero-sum game. It makes possible solutions to IAPs that do not force persons to choose between retaining IAPs that harm their flourishing and abandoning cultural values that are important to them. In this case, authorizing public institutions to distinguish flourishing from nonflourishing preferences does not mean authorizing them to homogenize cultures.

5.4.4 The Passive Recipients Objection

A final objection we might raise against the PTFA is that it requires development practitioners to view persons with suspect preferences as moral patients. It may seem that suspecting the preferences of another person requires viewing that person as a passive recipient of one's help. The risk of this is exacerbated in practice by the fact that the practitioners doing the suspecting will often come from social groups that are privileged vis-à-vis those of the persons with suspect preferences. Consciously or unconsciously---persons from high castes are often habituated to looking down on those from lower ones, educated persons often feel superior to uneducated ones, and Northerners often think they know more than Southerners. Anne Ferguson provides an example of the latter sense of superiority in summarizing a critique by the Southern DAWN collective of the way most Women in Development (WID) projects in the 1990s were conceived by women from the North. Southern women "are subject to paternalism (or more appropriately 'maternalism')… by projects designed to benefit women seen as Other, as objects of relief rather than subjects who could take place in the planning process themselves" (Ferguson 1998, 100).

Before we can defend the PTFA from the passive recipients objection, we need to get clearer about what it is an objection *to*. It is an objection to certain types of practitioner attitudes and/or policies whose design suggests that their creators had such attitudes. We can imagine some ways of justifying third-party suspicion of and response to IAPs from which we could reasonably infer that their creators had such attitudes. An understanding of IAPs as substantive autonomy deficits, for instance, might be reasonably interpreted as based on the assumption that the deprived should not be consulted about their own interests. I pointed this out in the third chapter and at 5.3.2. Also, we might reasonably interpret the notion that IAPs are simply "bad" preferences as premised upon the belief that deprived

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persons are wicked or stupid. But the PTFA is neither a conception of substantive autonomy nor a purely content-based account of the apparent authenticity of IAPs. Moreover, as we have seen several times in this chapter, the PTFA recommends interventions that expressly do *not* treat persons with suspect preferences as moral patients. The PTFA valorizes the participation of persons with suspect preferences in the interpretation of the vague and justificatorily minimal conception of the good.

Still, individual persons may exhibit arrogant attitudes toward development beneficiaries regardless of the avowed normative conceptions that motivate them. Even those who avow the most radical commitments to empowering beneficiaries can fall into this trap. Indeed, we even find conceptions of development beneficiaries as passive recipients in postdevelopment critiques of development! Prominent postdevelopment theorists have portrayed development beneficiaries as having passively internalized the ideas of the dominant development discourse—to the point of comparing them to the recipients of a viral infection (Ziai 2004, 1048). The WID practitioners Ferguson refers to in the criticism I cited above were committed on paper to the idea of empowering women. It is commonly acknowledged in the literature on participatory development that facilitators can and sometimes do use participatory development methods to legitimize achieving "pre-determined objectives more efficiently and effectively" (Groot and Maarleveld 2002, 18).

The PTFA is not immune to being used by practitioners who happen to have condescending attitudes toward beneficiaries. We should not expect it to be. A project aimed at preference transformation can involve significant amounts of participation and still not respect its intended beneficiaries if the facilitator thinks she has all the answers in advance. We can imagine practitioners who do not know how to—or do not want to—listen to bearers of suspect preferences when they dispute her perception of them as deprived. We

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can also imagine practitioners who do not know how to take beneficiary suggestions about how preferences might be changed seriously. In short, we can imagine practitioners motivated by the PTFA manifesting the types of attitudes the passive recipients objection denounces, regardless of what the PTFA prescribes for them.

It should also be clear, however, that the possibility of perverse consequences in practice is not unique to the PTFA. Once participation is incorporated into an approach to IAP intervention, there is not much more that can be done at a theoretical level to prevent such perverse consequences. The only thing that can be done is to prescribe virtues to practitioners and to train them to develop these virtues. Ferguson urges practitioners to engage in "self-interrogation practices" (Ferguson 1998, 104). Ofelia Schutte claims that effectively listening to others across cultural difference means refusing to assume that one immediately understands what they mean. If the statements of the others can be "divided into three categories—readily understandable, difficult to understand, and truly incommensurable—one should never close the communication at the level of the first category, but should make the effort to let understanding reach into the other two domains" (Schutte 1998, 62-63).

Both of these proposals suggest important virtues for practitioners—virtues public institutions should make an effort to inculcate in them.[132] Fortunately, training practitioners in such virtues is perfectly consistent with the PTFA. The PTFA encourages participation and thus does not recommend that practitioners see persons with suspect preferences as passive recipients of their benevolence. Cultivating virtues of listening in practitioners implementing PTFA-motivated interventions can help ensure that such interventions

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[132] I have written elsewhere about virtues for development practitioners who wish not to confuse their interests with those of the communities with whom they work. See Khader (2006).

achieve their own goals. The passive recipients objection usefully reminds us that those implementing PTFA-motivated interventions should be attentive to the pitfalls of cross-cultural communication, but it does not give us grounds to reject the PTFA.

5.5 CONCLUSION

I have argued that we can respect moral diversity *and* endorse intervention motivated by the PTFA. PTFA-motivated intervention does not conflict with treating individuals as the ultimate authorities about the kind of lives they want to lead. It is not coercive, and it is fully compatible with individual participation in public discussion about the values a community should espouse. PTFA-motivated intervention is also consistent with wide divergence among cultures about what a good human life is. PTFA-motivated intervention will certainly mean the discouragement of certain cultural practices—practices that inhibit the basic flourishing of some people. But discouraging some practices does not mean homogenizing all cultures or objectionably judging cultures by standards external to them. Nor does it mean judging persons by standards they cannot understand or subjecting them to condescending treatment by development practitioners. Instead, it gives different cultures much latitude about how to make flourishing available in their particular cultural contexts.

If we recognize that we can respect moral diversity and support PTFA-motivated intervention, we can adopt a different, more nuanced view of what is at stake in diagnosing and responding to IAPs. Saying that some persons' preferences seem inappropriately adaptive need not be a matter of telling individuals or cultures that there is only one "right" way to live. Rather, there are a plethora of possible good human lives. Moving from IAPs ro better ones does not have to be about imposing the ideals of some on others. Sometimes it will involve taking strong stances about the acceptability of existing cultural practices. But it

does not always have to be a zero-sum game. Rather, it can be a creative process of

imagining how to change preferences *and* preserve values that are critically important to

persons and communities.

6.0 REIMAGINING INTERVENTION: HOW THE PTFA SHIFTS OUR SEMINORMATIVE ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 The PTFA and Motivational Paternalism

In the fourth chapter, I defended the PTFA from the charge that the practices it justifies are incompatible with moral diversity. In the course of this defense, I began to argue that the PTFA does not promote paternalism. I claimed that the PTFA does not justify paternalistic coercion and that it does not justify treating persons with suspect preferences as though they were less than autonomous.

However, I left one important set of concerns about the PTFA's potential paternalism unaddressed. Let us call these "motivational paternalism concerns." Policies can be paternalistic without promoting coercion or suggesting that potential objects of intervention are irrational. Paternalism can manifest itself in the attitudes that *motivate* a policy. We often think that the paternalist's belief in the superiority of *his* conception of the good as part of what makes paternalism objectionable.

I put forth the PTFA as a normative justification of public intervention in the self-regarding preferences of rational adult persons. It may seem that any public intervention in

the self-regarding practices of adults must be motivated by condescension. The PTFA will sometimes justify questioning persons' existing preferences and trying to change them. It will justify questioning persons' existing preferences—when these are preferences for things like malnutrition, illiteracy, or severe genital cutting. In some cases it will even authorize suspecting that persons' initial reports about why they are doing what they are doing are unreliable (as when they suggest that it is desirable for women to be malnourished, for example), or that those persons are motivated by concerns that they do not report (such as fear of violence). The PTFA will often justify suspecting that persons' choices are inconsistent with their deep desires for flourishing. It will, for instance, justify suspecting that a person's choices to malnourish herself or destroy her capacity for sexual pleasure are inconsistent with that person's deep desire for health---or suspecting that a person's choice to remain illiterate is inconsistent with her deep desire to develop her cognitive capacities.

Why would persons act in ways inconsistent with their flourishing? And why would we think public institutions could help them live in ways more consistent with their flourishing? One answer is that public institutions know better than persons what is good for them. This is the answer that will lead us to think that the PTFA embodies motivational paternalism.

But it is not the only answer. It is an answer that reflects certain deep assumptions about the world. In this chapter, I will suggest that endorsing PTFA-motivated interventions does not mean endorsing motivational paternalism.[133] Seeing how this is so is a matter of shifting certain assumptions about what the moral world we actually inhabit is like.

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[133] I have assumed that motivational paternalism is generally a bad thing. For an argument about paternalism in the diagnosis of deprivation that suggests otherwise, see Deneulin (2002).

6.1.2 The Argument of the Chapter

The argument of this chapter unfolds as follows: first, I show that the extent to which a political theory justifies intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences can be a function of that theory's semi-normative assumptions about the world rather than its explicit value-commitments. I do this by examining the explicit value-commitments that motivate Cass Sunstein's endorsement of public interventions aimed at increasing autonomy. Second, I attribute the idea of PTFA-motivated intervention as necessarily paternalistic to three semi-normative assumptions about the world. These are the assumptions 1) that persons' existing preferences reflect *their* conceptions of the good, 2) that persons' conceptions of the good are inflexible, and 3) that persons' reports about their values are transparent. I examine each of these assumptions in turn. I show that each of them implausibly describes the world we inhabit. I argue that the PTFA shifts these assumptions by asking to suppose that cases of deeply held conceptions of the good inconsistent with basic flourishing are exceptional. I also suggest that we can imagine strategies for IAP-transformation that are suited to the more accurate picture of our moral world that the PTFA allows us to paint.

To illustrate what is wrong with the picture of the moral world evoked by the three semi-normative assumptions-- (1,2, and 3 above) and to depict real-world strategies for transforming IAPs,-- I draw on examples from contemporary development practice. The examples come from the work of Sabina Alkire, Solava Ibrahim, and Pinar Uyan Semerci-- three social scientists who use Nussbaum and Sen's capability approach as a normative framework for assessing the flourishing of the global poor.

I understand something like the PTFA and a deliberative perfectionist conception to be motivating the work of the development practitioners they describe. These practitioners make assumptions about the deprivation of the persons with whom they work based on the

conditions under which those persons' preferences have developed and the conformity of those preferences with a deliberative conception of the good (a list of capabilities). They assume their beneficiaries want good lives and ask what might prevent beneficiaries from achieving good lives. The practitioners refuse to assume that they can understand preferences impacts on beneficiary flourishing out-of-hand. They want to understand suspect preferences from the perspectives of persons who hold them. They deliberate with persons with suspect preferences to determine how persons' preferences match up to an objective conception of the good, whether these preferences are worthy of further suspicion-- what should be done if they are.

6.2 DISENTANGLING INTERVENTION FROM PATERNALISM

My central claim in this chapter is that most PTFA-motivated interventions stop looking paternalistic once we unburden ourselves of certain implausible assumptions about the world. This claim may initially seem paradoxical. We will have difficulty accepting it if we think that intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences implies the belief that those persons are lousy judges of their own goods. It is therefore important for us to disentangle intervention from paternalism. We can do this by looking at an example of an argument for intervention that is a far cry from an acceptance of paternalism. It claims that intervention can improve autonomy. Examining this argument will help us to see that the difference between theories that promote intervention and those that do not is not always a difference of core values. It is sometimes a difference of views about *how to enact* those values in the real world—views that are inevitably influenced by assumptions about what the world is like.

6.2.1 Defining Paternalism

In order to show that not all intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences is

paternalistic, we need to get clear about what makes an intervention paternalistic. For the

purposes of this discussion, let us think of paternalism according to Seanna Shiffrin's

definition. Shiffrin offers a motivational account of paternalism that states that an action is

paternalist if it involves "aiming to take over or control what is properly in that agent's own

legitimate domain of judgment or action" (Shiffrin 2000, 216). Paternalism is one of the

muddier concepts in contemporary ethics, and it is out of the scope of our discussion to

engage the lively debate about what paternalism *is*.[134]

      However, Shiffrin's definition of paternalism is particularly useful for our present

discussion for two reasons. First, it allows noncoercive actions to count as paternalistic, and

we need a definition of paternalistic intervention that is not limited to coercive acts. We

already know that the PTFA does not justify paternalistic coercion (see 4.3.1). If our

definition of paternalism included only coercive acts, there would be no need for further

discussion of the PTFA and paternalism. Second, Shiffrin's definition of paternalism helps

us to understand why paternalism is usually a bad thing. Paternalism means taking control

from persons in spheres of life in which we think it is particularly important to have control.

I suppose in this chapter that this usurpation is generally a bad thing, because the argument

that the PTFA justifies paternalism would not be an argument *against* the PTFA if we did not

think something was wrong with paternalism. In affirming the general badness of

paternalism, however, I am not making the stronger claim that public paternalism is never

justified. We do not need to take a stance about the possibility of justifying paternalism to

claim that PTFA-motivated intervention is not paternalistic.

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[134] For philosophical discussions of paternalism, see Archard (1990), Arneson (1980), Feinberg (1989), Husak
(1981; 1989), Shiffrin (2000), and VanDeVeer (1986).

6.2.2 Sunstein's Autonomy-based Argument for Intervention

Straightforwedly paternalistic arguments for public intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences abound in philosophy, so the association of intervention with paternalism is not baseless. Aristotle argues that the state should attempt to reform the souls of adult persons who demonstrate an excessive love of pleasure (Aristotle 1999, 1179b-1180b). John Stuart Mill argues that persons should not be allowed to sell themselves into slavery, regardless of whether they do so voluntarily (2008). John Finnis, following Kant, justifies public interfere in persons' sexual behaviors on the grounds that persons are harming their own virtue by undertaking them (Finnis 1980). Susan Moller Okin suggests that public institutions should prevent adult women from undergoing clitoridectemy and that women who seek clitoridectemies should be approached as victims of a psychological disorder (1999).

Regardless of whether any of the above arguments are persuasive, we should not mistakenly conclude from their existence that paternalism is the only possible justification of public intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences. Some justifications of public intervention rest on values that seem compatible with even the most thoroughgoing antipaternalism. Sunstein's argument that public intervention can increase autonomy offers one example of such an argument.

It occurs in the context of a broader argument that liberal public institutions should not consider themselves bound to leave persons' existing preferences intact. Sunstein claims that we can imagine a class of cases in which public intervention will improve persons' autonomy (Sunstein 1991, 12). This class of cases comprises preferences that came into existence by nonautonomous or subautonomous processes. Preferences may be nonautonomously formed if they are influenced by lack of information, fear, or concern

about social acceptance. Sunstein's examples include preferences like the preference to consume dangerous products because one is unaware of their deleterious effects, the preference to adopt a traditional gender role because of fear of social stigma, and the lack of interest in theatre and art because of one's lack of exposure (Sunstein 19991, 12).

According to Sunstein, we can think of public intervention in cases like these as autonomy-enhancing, as "remov[ing]a type of coercion" (Sunstein 1991, 12). Intervening in a person's uninformed choice to consume a dangerous product by informing her of its dangers, for instance, improves rather than decreases her capacity for autonomous choice. It allows her to make choices that are informed and consistent with her value system.

All we can conclude from the existence of Sunstein's argument, however, is that it is possible to advocate intervention and avow a general antipaternalism. We cannot conclude that antipaternalism and interventionism are compatible, because there remains open the possibility that Sunstein has unacknowledged paternalist commitments. It may seem that what Sunstein is really doing is endorsing paternalism toward existing persons as a means of bringing about the autonomy of their future selves. Attempting to control a person's legitimate sphere of judgment now—even if it will increase their control in the future—still qualifies as paternalism.

To see how Sunstein is still susceptible to the charge of paternalism, take again the case of the person who consumes a dangerous product without full information of its dangers. Assume that the decisions about her bodily health lie within a person's legitimate sphere of judgment. It may seem that Sunstein implicitly holds that the choices of the present (or past) consumer are not worthy of public respect. It may seem that he is committed to the view that public institutions can legitimately take over persons' spheres of legitimate judgment when that will increase their future autonomy. That is, Sunstein must

still compromise the autonomy of present decisions in the interests of promoting the autonomy of future decisions. I do not think this view is a necessary part of Sunstein's argument. We can take Sunstein at his word that intervention in nonautonomously formed preferences is not paternalistic if we uncover the semi-normative assumptions from which his argument works.

6.2.3 Semi-normative Assumptions

Sunstein's argument need not involve an implicit endorsement of paternalism. Once we understand why, we will see both that 1) justifying intervention does not have to mean justifying paternalism and that 2) the extent to which a normative conception justifies intervention is partly a function of the semi-normative (and non-normative) assumptions that accompany it. If we think that Sunstein unintentionally advocates paternalism, I would tsuggest that it is because we think something like this:

Persons should have control over decisions in their domains of legitimate judgment. Public intervention in a person's domain of legitimate judgment removes that person's control in that domain. Sunstein advocates intervention in persons' existing (or past) preferences, so he advocates decreasing persons' existing control over decisions within their domains of legitimate judgment.

Sunstein clearly does not think that this is what he is saying. But before we isolate the part of the above view that he does not agree with, it is worth noting that he actually does agree with most of it. Sunstein presents personal autonomy as important and desirable; so we can reasonably expect him to have few quarrels with the principle that persons should have control over decisions in their spheres of legitimate judgment. He can also be presumed to agree with the principle that decreasing a persons' control over such decisions is paternalistic—and usually objectionably so. Somewhat puzzlingly, the value commitments

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that might incline us to think of Sunstein as paternalist are the very same commitments Sunstein affirms.

Why, then, does Sunstein not think of his argument as a justification of paternalism? We can answer this question by identifying the piece of the view above he does not agree with. Sunstein clearly does not agree that public intervention in a person's domain of legitimate judgment reduces her control over her decisions within it. Rather, his argument suggests that intervention can be a way of *increasing* persons' control over their spheres of legitimate judgment. Suggesting this is not Sunstein's way of denying or obscuring the fact that intervening in persons' existing preferences means treating those preferences as somehow illegitimate. We can understand Sunstein's argument as consistent with antipaternalism if we read him as saying something like this:

Persons should have control over decisions in their domains of legitimate judgment. Public intervention in a persons' domain of legitimate judgment sometimes removes and sometimes increases that person's control in her domain of legitimate judgment. In cases where persons have existing nonautonomous decisions in their domains of legitimate judgment, those domains are not controlled by them. To decrease a person's control over decisions in her domain of legitimate judgment is paternalistic, but intervention in nonautonous preferences does not do this.

What is the difference between the two alternative readings of Sunstein's argument? On a normative level, not much. Both prescribe respect for persons' spheres of legitimate judgment. We may think that different definitions of autonomy distinguish them, but this does not have to be the case. For example, both arguments make sense if we think of autonomy as full-information. I submit that the central difference between the two arguments is not a difference in moral judgments. Rather, it is a difference in semi-normative assumptions about the world. In the first reading, we assume that most persons in the world

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are already in control of their spheres of legitimate judgment. In the second, we assume that persons are often *not* already in control of their spheres of legitimate judgment. In the first, we generally associate intervention with paternalism, because we conflate respecting persons' existing preferences with respecting their autonomy. We exclude the possibility that they may not think of their preferences as reflecting their conceptions of the good. This entails a judgment about the prevailing conditions under which persons form and retain preferences in the real world.

If we can coherently characterize Sunstein's argument as nonpaternalist, we can see that advocating public intervention does not always mean thinking paternalism is a good thing. This is a first step toward distentangling intervention in self-regarding preferences from paternalism. Characterizing Sunstein's argument as built on the semi-normative assumption that real persons are often *not* in control of their domains of legitimate judgment also introduces us to one of the fundamental concepts with which I will work in the rest of the chapter: the concept of semi-normative assumption. Sunstein's assumption that the many preferences in the world are formed under nonautonomous conditions is one example of a semi-normative assumption.

A semi-normative assumption is an assumption about the conditions that prevail in the world that permits a certain normative judgment. It is usually not explicitly stated. Indeed, the person making the normative judgment might dispute the truth of the assumption were it to be explicitly stated. It does not belong to any particular moral theory; one can hold the assumption to be true and espouse a wide variety of moral theories. To return to our example from Sunstein, one may believe that the prevailing conditions in the world are often conditions of nonautonomy without subscribing to any particular moral theory. We may believe many preferences in the world are formed under conditions of

nonautonomy and simultaneously hold a wide variety of normative positions. For instance, we may take conditions of prevailing nonautonomy as an indication that their autonomy needs to be increased, or we may take this as an indication that autonomy is not really a good.[135]

We can shift our semi-normative assumptions without shifting our deep normative commitments. This is precisely what Sunstein's argument does; it retains a strong commitment to autonomy but draws different conclusions about how we should operationalize respect for autonomy in actual practice. However, I am calling assumptions like Sunstein's "semi-normative" rather than "non-normative," because assumptions like these often affect our ethical judgments. Assuming most persons *do* already have control over their domains of legitimate judgment may, for example, may lead us to think of non-interference is an intrinsic, or at least strongly presumptive, good.

6.3 HOW THE PTFA SHIFTS OUR SEMINORMATIVE ASSUMPTIONS

The above discussion of Sunstein shows that the extent to which a normative conception justifies intervention can be a function of the semi-normative assumptions that accompany it. It also gives us a sense of what semi-normative assumptions are. We are now poised to examine the semi-normative assumptions that shape our views about the (different) justification for public intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences with which we are concerned—the PTFA. The PTFA justifies noncoercive public intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences when those preferences seem inappropriately adaptive. As I explained in Chapter 3, the PTFA holds that we can assume a high level of coincidence

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[135] Indeed, some feminist theorists have cited the fact that persons' choices are usually not autonomous as evidence for the argument that autonomy is not a worthy value. See Code (1991).

between what persons deeply desire and what would contribute to their basic flourishing. Basic flourishing is defined according to a deliberative perfectionist conception that is minimal and vague. Public institutions can legitimately suspect that preferences against basic flourishing formed under conditions where basic flourishing is not available are inappropriately adaptive. They can legitimately intervene to attempt to make IAPs basic-flourishing consistent. Public institutions should intervene noncoercively, however, because the goal is to reveal the preferences to which persons are deeply attached— authentic preferences that would obtain under conditions conducive to basic flourishing.

The PTFA is a justification of intervention in the lives of persons who seem to have IAPs. If we understand responding to IAPs as an urgent political concern, it is probably because we think that subflourishing conditions are common and often prevent persons from living flourishing human lives. The PTFA generates a semi-normative assumptions that looks something like this:

PTFA Seminormative Assumption 1: *Deprived and oppressed persons' often choose practices inconsistent with basic flourishing without being deeply attached to those practices.*

A second semi-normative assumption should accompany the PTFA, although it is not generated by it.

PTFA Seminormative Assumption 2: *The effects of a given preference on flourishing are often difficult to ascertain.*

If the PTFA is meant to guide actual interventions, we need some sense of what those the practical contexts in which those interventions will occur are actually like. We know that transforming suspect preferences is not always easy. If the PTFA is true, why is it sometimes difficult to transform suspect preferences? This assumption helps us to understand why. Perhaps public institutions are wrong that the preferences in question actually impede

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flourishing because they do not understand the preferences in context. Or perhaps proposed strategies for transformation will have adverse impacts on persons' capacities to flourish that outsiders do not understand. Persons can have a tendency toward basic flourishing and simultaneously believe that maintaining a given suspect preference provides their best shot at flourishing.

In practice, these semi-normative assumptions translate into this practical suggestion: *We should not assume that most persons with subflourishing preferences arrived at under condutions unconducive to flourishing are deeply attached to those preferences.* Suspect preferences invite further investigation. When persons exhibit preferences that seem inappropriately adaptive, it is likely that they are 1) not deeply attached to those preferences or 2) that some interpretive error about the preference's effects on flourishing has occurred.

In the rest of the chapter, I attempt to demonstrate that shifting to these semi-normative assumptions can allay the suspicion that the PTFA justifies motivational paternalism. For the suspicion that the PTFA supports paternalism to be warranted, PTFA-justified interventions must involve some attempt by public institutions to take control of persons' decisions in domains of their legitimate judgment. For the purposes of this discussion, let us consider choices about the content of one's self-regarding conception of the good and how to apply it to lie squarely within persons' domains of legitimate judgment. To be paternalistic, PTFA-motivated interventions must involve some attempt on the part of public institutions to shift control of decisions about their self-regarding conceptions of the good out of the hands of individual persons and into the hands of representatives of public institutions.

I claim that PTFA-motivated interventions do not do this. This means that I hold more than that we *can* shift our semi-normative assumptions to make PTFA-motivated

interventions *look* less paternalistic. I am also claiming that the semi-normative assumptions that make the PTFA stop looking paternalistic are more accurate than the alternative. The semi-normative assumptions that make PTFA-justified intervention look paternalistic are based on an inappropriately idealized vision of the world and pose unnecessary false dichotomies. They paint an implausible picture in which persons form conceptions of the good absent the dominating influences of others and the state, in which it is always obvious *why* persons have the preferences they have, and in which their preferences are not subject to revision. The realities of oppressed and deprived persons challenge the semi-normative assumptions that make PTFA-inspired interventions look paternalistic. Three questionable semi-normative assumptions that make PTFA-justified intervention look paternalistic are: 1) that persons' existing preferences are authentically theirs, 2) that persons' conceptions of the good are inflexible, and 3) that persons' reports about their values are transparent.

6.4 ARE PERSONS' EXISTING PREFERENCES *THEIRS?*

If we assume that persons' spheres of legitimate agency are usually already within their control, PTFA-motivated interventions will usually appear paternalistic. It will seem that intervention in persons' self-regarding preferences typically involves decreasing persons' control over their capacities to form their own conceptions of the good and live according to them. Let us consider an empirical example of a PTFA-justified intervention that appears paternalistic if viewed through the lens of this assumption. Alkire describes an Oxfam-funded project in Khoj, Pakistan designed to teach illiterate women to read.

These women did not and could not read, and an outside observer could take this to mean that not reading was part of these women's conceptions of the good. An observer could support this assessment by noting that these women had made many choices in their

lives, and that the choice to read was not among these choices. If not reading was indeed

part of these women's conceptions of the good, public intervention that encouraged literacy

prevent them from actualizing their illiteracy-valuing conceptions of the good. It could seem

that this intervention was an attempt to wrest control over their ethical lives from them. But

the semi-normative assumption that non-intervention ensures persons' capacities to actualize

their conceptions of the good ignores important facts about the circumstances under which

real persons live, especially when they live under conditions of deprivation.

One reason it is misleading to assume that nonintervention best secures persons'

capacities to live according to their own conceptions of the good is that these abilities have

often already been limited by other agents. Intervention must only reduce a persons' ability

to live out her conception of the good if her choices are not already being interfered with.

But many deprived persons have suffered objectionable interference before IAP-

intervention. They may already be objects of paternalism, exploitation, or other forms of

interference that limit their capacities to actualize their conceptions of the good. The agents

of this limitation may be either public institutions or nonpublic actors. In cases where

persons are already being controlled by other actors, intervention may function to increase--

rather than decrease-- persons' control over their domains of legitimate judgment.

The semi-normative assumptions that accompany the PTFA allow us to view

intervention differently. They discourage interveners from assuming that persons cherish

subflourishing preferences adopted under subflourishing conditions. Instead, they encourage

public institutions to ask whether suspect preferences might be symptoms of deprivation.

Deprivation can work by placing key decisions about a person's conception of the good in

the hands of other agents. By suggesting that subflourishing preferences adopted under

subflourishing conditions often reflect the desires of other agents more than those of a

person with suspect preferences, the PTFA offers a picture of the world in which IAP-intervention is less likely to seem paternalistic. Let us revisit the example of the literacy project from Khoj, Pakistan. If we begin from the understanding that the women in question do not treasure their own illiteracy, and we acknowledge that they are subject to much interference by others, the literacy intervention can be seen as increasing women's capacities to live according to their own conceptions of the good.

6.4.1 Limits Imposed by Public Actors

Previous actions by public institutions may have imposed limits on a person's abilities to actualize her conception of the good. This should not be surprising because persons form and pursue conceptions of the good under certain background conditions, and those conditions are partly built by public institutions. A person's choice to openly practice a certain religion will certainly be affected by laws that promote or punish the practice of that religion; the values that are important to her will be affected by those that infuse the education she receives (if she receives public education); her choice to live in a certain type of family will be affected by the types of families her government supports and recognizes. Another way of saying this is that persons' lives have always already been intervened in by institutions. We must recognize that the previous actions of public institutions have not always had positive effects on persons' capacities to form or pursue *their own* conceptions of the good.

For example, persons' existing preferences may have been influenced by public policies that inhibited or failed to promote their intellectual capacities. We can imagine extreme cases of this in which public action (or inaction) caused persons' rational capacities to be temporarily or permanently impaired—in cases of prolonged malnutrition or torture

for example. More common are probably cases in which public institutions failed to promote the capacities associated with forming and acting according to a conception of the good—what Meyers would call "autonomy competencies" (1989). A lack of public education, for example, may fail to promote persons' development of the capacities that allow them to evaluate which courses of action best promote their conceptions of the good. This does not mean that a lack of public education is likely to push persons below some threshold level of rationality necessary for autonomy; I argued against this position in the second chapter. But it does mean that some persons' capacities to form and actualize conceptions of the good are often objectionably low and that public institutions are often to blame for this state of affairs.

We can see a very poignant example of this in the story of Nargis, a participant in the literacy project in Pakistan described above. Nargis' husband came home one day with divorce papers (on which her thumbprint had been forged) in his pocket. Her newfound literacy allowed her to read these papers and ask the elders in her family to intervene so that the divorce could be averted (Alkire 2005, 257). Nargis was better able to recognize and evaluate options for living in accordance with what she valued once the intervention had provided her the opportunity to learn to read; she could understand what the divorce papers were and decide how to react to them. Her initial capacity to live according to her conception of the good had been diminished by failures on the part of public institutions. If we think of the literacy intervention as diminishing--rather than increasing—public institutions control over Nargis' life, it (and other interventions under similar circumstances) starts to look less paternalistic.

Public institutions can also constrain persons' capacities to live according to their conceptions of the good by impeding their access to, or failing to provide them with means

that would allow them to actualize their conceptions of the good. Even if public institutions allow persons to develop the intellectual capacities necessary to form values and pursue and assess strategies for achieving them, institutions may deny persons the capacities to enact those values in meaningful ways. A person can have clear ideas about the good and what matters to her but be unable to act on those ideas. Her existing preferences may testify to choices made from a set of options already diminished by public institutions—choices that prevent her from living in a way that is acceptable to her.

The PTFA recommends intervention in cases where persons have preferences against basic flourishing formed under conditions where basic flourishing is not available. Public institutions structure persons' opportunities for flourishing, and we assume a tendency to flourish. We can thus expect frequent real-world cases in which persons are unable to live out *their own* conceptions of the good because public institutions have prevented them from doing so. In such cases, public intervention aimed at changing IAPs is not paternalistic. Intervention to expand their opportunities may be a way of removing existing impediments to their abilities to live according to their own values.

Examples from the lives of uneducated women recounted by Alkire and Uyan Semerci help us to see how public institutions can deny persons opportunities to lead the kinds of lives they want to lead. One of the women in Uyan Semerci's study in Turkey, "Ulivye, who is illiterate, still states her desire to learn to read and write and searches for courses. 'I really want to get an education'" (Uyan Semerci 2006, 14). Nargis, the graduate of the literacy program in Pakistan described above, wanted to be a doctor even when she was illiterate (Alkire 2005, 257). Conversations with these women revealed that they both clearly subscribed to conceptions of the good that value education. However, they initially lacked the means to live according to these conceptions of the good. Their governments had not

made literacy training accessible to them.

The PTFA would probably advocate intervention in cases in which illiterate persons lacked opportunities for literacy (assuming literacy is part of the deliberative perfectionist conception of basic flourishing). Would such interventions be paternalistic in cases like those of Nargis and Ulivye? It is difficult to see how it would be. Once we acknowledge that their existing preferences reflected the state's conception of the good more than their own, we can see such interventions as removing existing constraints rather than imposing constraints. Removing the existing constraints on their abilities to pursue literacy seems to have expanded their capacities to live lives meaningful to them. We can understand such interventions as moving persons' choices about the good life from the hands of public institutions to the hands of those persons.

6.4.2 Limits Imposed by Non-Public Actors

It is not only public institutions that can hinder persons' capacities to form and live according to their conceptions of the good. Persons in the real world are often victims of paternalism, exploitation, and domination by non-public actors—such as members of their families or communities.

Their existing preferences may not be the preferences they would hold absent this domination by others. Uyan Semerci's study of poor women migrants to Istanbul shows that husbands and other family members often limit these women's access to basic flourishing (if mobility and bodily safety are parts of the deliberative perfectionist conception supporting the PTFA). Some of the women state that their husbands and mothers-in-law prevent or have prevented them from moving outside of their neighbourhood. Some of these women even seem "to have internalized these constraints" (Uyan Semerci 2007, 207). Many of them

are also victims of domestic violence and sexual violence at the hands of their husbands (Uyan Semerci 2, 7-8).

We can also understand the case of Nargis from Alkire's discussion of the Khoj literacy project as a case of domination by a nonpublic actor. Recall that literacy enabled Nargis to understand the divorce papers in her husband's pocket. She responded to them by encouraging family members to intervene to prevent a divorce (Alkire 2005, 257). Above, I suggested that public institutions had denied her a capacity that was critical for evaluating her options in life—literacy. But we may also understand her husband as exercising control over her that prevented her from actualizing her conception of the good. He sought to divorce her without her consent and believed he could do so because she lacked the power to prevent him. Nargis clearly did not want a divorce, but his actions would have forced one on her had she remained illiterate. Nargis' pre-intervention state was one where her husband had much power over her capacity to live in accordance with what was important to her.

Both the women in Uyan Semerci's study and Nargis lived under conditions where others had much control over what they could and could not do. Intervention in cases like theirs need not be based on paternalist motives; it may based on a desire to increase persons' capacities to live the kinds of lives *they* want to live. The PTFA allows us to conceptualize intervention in this way, because it asks public institutions to look deeply into the causes of suspect preferences—to ask what types of conditions may be encouraging persons to hold preferences that seem inconsistent with their basic well-being. It shifts us from assuming that subflourishing preferences are cherished to assuming that they are often caused by domination. Weakening the forces of domination will improve persons' control over their spheres of legitimate agency.

6.5 ARE PERSONS' CONCEPTIONS OF THE GOOD INFLEXIBLE?

As we saw in the last section, one unwarranted semi-normative assumption that makes PTFA-motivated intervention look paternalistic is that persons' choices reflect *their* conceptions of the good rather than those of others. Another assumption that will make IAP intervention look paternalistic is the assumption that persons' conceptions of the good are inflexible. More specifically, the view that PTFA-motivated interventions are paternalistic may rest on the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between persons' preferences and their conceptions of the good.

To believe in a one-to-one correspondence between preferences and their conceptions of the good is to believe that any change to a persons' preferences would decrease the extent to which a person is living out her conception of the good. At a very basic level, this view is incoherent. It is incoherent for at least two reasons. First, we expect persons' preferences networks to include preferences that are both very trivial and preferences that are very important. So, for example, a persons' preference constellation of preferences may include preferences about what religion to follow, preferences about what leisure activities they enjoy, and preferences about what type of sweets they like best. It does not seem correct to assume that changes in all of these types of preferences would equally affect the meaningfulness of a person's life. The meaning of my own life would be much more significantly affected by a change in my religion than by a change in my access to chocolate.

A second problem with the idea of a one-to-one correspondence between conceptions of the good and individual preferences is this: we expect conceptions of the good to be formulated at a higher level of generality than many other preferences. Eating sufficiently may be an important part of my conception of the good, and my ability to live a life that is meaningful to me will be affected if I do not eat sufficiently. But I do not feel that my life is

in danger of losing its meaning when I cannot have what I want for dinner. Similarly, valuing income may be a part of a person's conception of the good, and shifting from one job to another may not affect her attainment of this good.

Despite its incoherence, the belief that conceptions of the good are inflexible can make PTFA-motivated intervention seem paternalistic. PTFA-motivated interventions will often involve attempting to change persons' existing preferences. If we believe that changing any preference will adversely affect a person's capacity to live a life she deems valuable, IAP-intervention will have to be paternalistic. It will seem that any questioning of what a person is already doing entails replacing her goals in her domain of legitimate agency with someone else's. So, for example, attempting to change a person's eating habits so that her nutrition improves will seem to have to be a way of impugning her moral capacities. However, once we acknowledge the possibility of flexibility to person's lower-order preferences, it becomes possible to imagine interventions that change a person's preferences without compromising her conception of the good.

The PTFA shifts our assumptions in a way that makes it possible to acknowledge the flexibility of some lower-level preferences. The PTFA tells us that persons do not usually cherish sub-flourishing preferences. This opens up the possibility that some subflourishing preferences are held for reasons other than that those preferences constitute their conceptions of the good. They may hold preferences for nonmoral reasons or because the preference is the best one available to them given their option set (but still not a part of their ideal conception of the good life), for example. This makes perfect sense once we acknowledge that persons translate their conceptions of the good into everyday choices under conditions of limited options and incomplete information. This is especially true for persons who live under conditions of deprivation. As a result of this, we should expect to

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see gaps between the choices persons make to live according to their conceptions of the good and the choices that would best actualize them. Let us examine some types of cases that arise in development practice where persons' existing preferences could be changed without undermining their conceptions of the good.

6.5.1 Knowledge Deficits

Mismatch between the courses of action that would best actualize a persons' good and those that they choose may result from knowledge deficits. A person can know what she values but choose ineffective or suboptimal ways of attaining it, because she does not know how to attain it. This is possible because values are somewhat abstract, and there is presumably a many-one correspondence between values and paths to achieving them. We may distinguish a person's conception of the good from her preferences about how to achieve it. For example, a person may value not being cheated financially by others in her community. There are many means by which she may attempt to achieve this end—some more effective than others. She may become friends with the shopkeepers in hopes that they will treat her better, threaten them when they take advantage of her, pray to God to ask for financial protection, start an organization for financial honesty, call the police when she is being cheated, etc. She may even value this end and do nothing, because there is no possible solution within her power.

We can easily imagine situations in which persons would change their strategies for achieving their values if they had new knowledge. For example, Alkire and Ibrahim describe cases of women who were unable to choose effective strategies for preventing being cheated because of lacks of knowledge. Some of the women who joined the Pakistani literacy project did so because they were tired of being unable to dispute the charges on the electricity bills

because they did not know how to read (Alkire 2005, 257). Their previous acceptance of dishonesty on the part of public officials was not based on the belief that this dishonesty was all right. Alkire and Ibrahim mention participants in a women's savings organization in Kerala described their former selves as fearing interaction with public and financial officials. "'When we used to walk into any bank or office, we were afraid. We did not know how to behave, but now we do'" (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007, 7). Similarly here, their earlier preference was not about a moral attachment to nonparticipation in public economic life.

The PTFA advocates intervention in cases where the knowledge-induced gaps between persons' goals and achievements are also gaps between basic flourishing and persons' actual achievements. Interventions to fill these gaps do not conflict with persons' conceptions of the good and do not appear paternalistic once we acknowledge the force of knowledge deficits as impediments to these women living the kinds of lives they wanted to lead. Persons are still in control of their spheres of legitimate judgment, because their values are not threatened by the intervention.

6.5.2 Opportunity Deficits

Persons in the status quo may also be prevented from actualizing their conceptions of the good because of reduced option sets. Alkire and Ibrahim cites the words of a poor woman in Ghana that capture this situation, "'you know the good , but you cannot do good; that is, such a person knows what should be done but has not got the means" (Alkire and Ibrahim 2007, 7). It is not only common for persons not to know how to get what they want; persons also commonly want things they cannot have. This can occur in all sorts of circumstances, but the PTFA will justify intervention only in a particular subset of these cases: cases where persons' desires for basic flourishing appear to be thwarted by deficient

option sets. It may seem that persons whose lives do not mirror some objective picture of flourishing must either not want to flourish or have no freedom of choice. However, persons may want to flourish, fail to do so, and simultaneously make meaningful choices because the alternatives from which they must choose are unacceptably limited. That is, persons must make *tradeoffs* between one basic functioning and another.

Such tradeoffs are possible, because the functionings constitutive of basic flourishing are presumably plural, and choices in the world have opportunity costs. It is sometimes prohibitively difficult to persons to make choices that allow them basic levels of all of the functionings constitutive of flourishing. For persons with very limited options, a choice to pay for one's education may unacceptably reduce one's access to nourishment, a choice to exercise choice in one's sexual life may unacceptably reduce one's capacity to appear in public without violence or shame, etc.

Uyan Semerci suggests that the women in her study value the capacity to limit the number of children they have, but their capacities to limit their family sizes are constrained by poverty, laws restricting abortion, lack of contraceptive knowledge and fear of public shame (Uyan Semerci 2006, 9). Some of them use dangerous means to prevent conception or induce abortion. We can find a vivid example of this in the narrative of a poor Turkish woman, Nalan Turkeli, quoted by Uyan Semerci:

> 'My husband does not want to use condom [sic]. Our discussions end in fights. Furthermore, we cannot afford it; we cannot find the money to buy it…. In the last couple of years, I have found my own way of protection. In well-boiled water, I put two drops of bleach with pure soap. I do not know to what extent it protects from the viruses' (Uyan Semerci 2006, 9).

Turkeli is clearly concerned about her reproductive health and wants to limit her family size. However, the ability to limit the number of children she has without sustaining a serious loss in some other important domain of her life—like access to income or bodily health—is minimal.

The PTFA would likely advocate public intervention to increase contraceptive knowledge or availability in a case like hers (assuming reproductive health or something like it is part of our deliberative perfectionist conception of flourishing). Such an intervention need not manifest paternalism. Giving her the option to limit her family size without surrendering other important functionings would likely improve her capacity to live according to her own values. Once we have the semi-normative assumptions that accompany the PTFA in mind, we can see cases of opportunity and knowledge deficits as already preventing persons from living the types of lives they want to lead. As Sen argues, "a person may entertain the hope of changing her preferences and may particularly resent its being assumed by some (by some 'opportunity accounting officer') that she is "stuck with that preference" (Sen 2002, 617).

6.6 DEEP PREFERENCES AGAINST FLOURISHING: AN OBJECTION

I have questioned the assumptions that suspect preferences reflect the desires of the persons that hold them more than the desires of other agents and that conceptions of the good are inflexible. Persons' abilities to actualize their conceptions of the good are often limited by the actions of other agents as well as deficits in knowledge and opportunities. However, it may seem that I have mischaracterized the ethical implications of intervention in such cases. I have repeatedly claimed that increasing persons' abilities to live according to their conceptions of the good is not paternalistic. In doing so, I have assumed that persons want, or could be persuaded to want, such interventions. What about cases in which persons *endorse* their limited control over their capacities to live according to their conceptions of the good—cases where persons deeply believe it is right for them to be deprived, oppressed, or dominated? Does non-intervention not decrease the control these persons' capacities to live

according to their conceptions of the good?

This objection is important. I will not respond to it by saying that persons cannot possibly want to have limited control over their lives. Such a response would beg the question of paternalism and ignore the fact that persons can become deeply attached to ways of life that do not optimize their capacities to live according to their conceptions of the good. It is perfectly imaginable that there are persons who deeply prefer their husbands make most of their life-choices for them, persons to whom public institutions never offered educations who now really wish to remain illiterate. Some of the women in Uyan Semerci's study, for instance, describe "'getting permission from the husband" or "'to move in such a way that you do not make a noise so that the mother-in-law does not oppose'" as forms of freedom (Uyan-Semrci 2007, 207).

However, we can believe these cases exist without believing these cases are the norm. The semi-normative assumptions of the PTFA indicate that deep preferences not to flourish are the exception rather than the rule. If such cases are exceptions, a political landscape that includes PTFA-motivated interventions will respect more persons' conceptions of the good than a political landscape that does not. Imagine we have two principles before us—a principle of nonintervention in suspect preferences, and a principle of intervention aimed at IAP transformation.

If courses of action following both principles will fail to improve some persons' capacities to live according the their own light, how do we choose between them? There seem to be reasonable pragmatic grounds for choosing between them. We should choose the principle that improves more persons' capacities to live according their conceptions of the good, as long as no rights violations take place. Since we are talking about noncoercive intervention here, rights violations are not obviously at issue. If the seminormative

assumptions that accompany the PTFA are true--as I think acknowledging the prevalence of oppression and deprivation forces us to admit-- we should choose the principle of intervention. It will improve more persons' capacities to lead the kinds of lives they want to lead.

Still, the PTFA probably does justify a degree of motivational paternalism towards persons who deeply want others, or circumstances, to control their lives. It will discourage public institutions from taking persons' initial reports that they want to be dominated or deprived at face-value, and some may see this, in itself, as constituting motivational paternalism. Without denying the possibility that there is some motivational paternalism here, I want to suggest that we can imagine strategies for intervention that offer significant protection to persons who deeply want others to control their lives and/or not to flourish.

PTFA-motivated intervention should include explicit attempts to sort persons who do not deeply prefer intervention from those that do. Making this distinction is a crucial to respecting the autonomy of persons who do deeply prefer their suspect preferences. Practitioners need to adopt virtues and strategies that allow them to usefully determine the extent to which a person is deeply attached to a preference. This will allow them to determine where preference transformation is a plausible objective. There are both pragmatic and moral imperatives for doing this.

Practitioners have developed a wide variety of strategies for determining persons' levels of and reasons for attachment to their preferences—especially tactics and tools for interviewing that ask persons to reflect on and report their reasons for holding the preferences they do. Alkire and Ibrahim have created practical tools for practitioners to use in understanding the values of persons with suspect preferences. Ibrahim has created a questionnaire for understanding the values of the poor and collected data from 80

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questionnaires at two different sites in rural Egypt. This questionnaire contains two sections, one that asks about ideas of a good human life and one that asks about the individual's values and her success at living in accordance with them (Ibrahim 2007, 5). The questions in the second section ask, about a number of different goods:

> i. Do you value………?
> ii. Why do you value……..?
> iii. Have you succeeded in achieving ………..?
> iv. Why have/haven't you succeeded in achieving…..? (Ibrahim 2007, 5)

These four questions allow the researcher to get directly at the question of whether persons' choices are the result of beliefs about values or constraints on achievement.

Ibrahim and Alkire have also developed a tool for measuring what they call "domain-specific autonomy" in the field. Their research tool includes a set of questions designed to assess the extent to which persons feel that they are decision-makers in domains ranging from household finances to politics. It also includes a three-question section about autonomy, based on the Ryan-Deci autonomy indicator, an indicator of autonomy developed by social psychologists that has been used effectively in a wide variety of cultures (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007, 27).

One way to determine whether persons cherish their suspect preferences is to ask them. This is exactly what Alkire and Ibrahim's indicators propose. Reasons to suspect preferences may sometimes remain--even if persons report that suspect preferences are part of their conceptions of the good, and both Alkire and Ibrahim want to leave open the possibility of legitimately questioning such reports.[136] In the next section I will begin to discuss potential reasons for suspicion of initial first-person reports. But even if reason for suspicion remains after initial questioning, tools like Alkire and Ibrahim's create a space for

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[136] Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) claim that data about well-being collected from persons that seem to have adaptive preferences need to be "cleaned" afterwards. It is unclear what this "cleaning" consists of, but it is clear that they want to subject first-person reports to further scrutiny.

dialogue about the reasons persons hold the preferences they do. It is a step toward an improved understanding of the values to which persons are deeply attached. It also makes possible a better understanding of the extent to which paternalism is a danger in any given case. This can help practitioners to avoid paternalism.

6.7 ARE PEOPLE'S CONCEPTIONS OF THE GOOD TRANSPARENT?

The PTFA suggests that persons are rarely deeply attached to preferences inconsistent with their basic flourishing. This means that the PTFA will sometimes warrant questioning persons' reports about their preferences as well as their behavior. When persons report wanting to live in ways that inhibit their flourishing or report priorities that seem out of line with what their basic flourishing would require, public institutions have a warrant for subjecting these reports to further scrutiny.

Interrogating persons' reports about what they want may certainly seem to require paternalism to justify. In order to see why it does not, it will be useful to look at some examples of development practitioners refusing to take preferences at face value, because they saw reports as obscuring underlying preferences for flourishing. During her study of women in squatter settlements in Turkey, Uyan Semerci concluded that many women in the settlement suffered from domestic violence. She reached this conclusion despite the fact that most of the women she interviewed insisted that domestic violence was not happening to them. Rather than reporting that they were sufferers of domestic violence, these women typically described domestic violence as a general problem, followed by "'not that I face[d] this problem" (Uyan Semerci 2007, 207).

For another example of suspecting persons' accounts of their preferences, we can look to Ibrahim's study in rural Egypt. Ibrahim remarks that a number of comments made by her

survey participants can be read as indicative of adaptive preferences. When discussing their poverty, they say things like, "One day is good, another bad, whoever accepts the least lives," "A person adapts himself to his conditions, I accept my destiny," and, "Thank God, I am satisfied with whatever God brings us" (Ibrahim 2007, 17). Ibrahim might have read these comments as an indication that her research participants really desired their poverty. Instead she wonders whether these comments reflect the adjustment of preferences to poor conditions (Ibrahim 2007, 16-17).

Both Ibrahim and Uyan Semerci read between the lines of the stated preferences of the populations with whom they work. I would argue that the way they read between the lines is partly normatively motivated. Uyan Semerci does not take her research participants at their words when they say they do not suffer from domestic violence. Her central reason for this is probably that something does not add up when women say that domestic violence is a problem in their community, but most say they are not suffering from it. But this factual problem is not enough to account for Uyan Semerci's conclusion that many of the women are actually suffering from domestic violence and not expressing it. After all, she might have surmised that the women were not telling the truth when they said that domestic violence was a general problem. I would suggest that Uyan Semerci understands these women as trying to indirectly communicate something about their suffering, because she sees them as engaged in a struggle against violence that they voice as well as they can. She expects freedom from violence to be something these women desire and reads their comment that domestic violence is a problem as an indicator of this. She also knows that they inhabit a cultural context in which there are great risks to admitting domestic violence.

Similarly, Ibrahim never entertains the idea that the rural Egyptian poor's high levels of life-satisfaction means that they are not deprived. She begins from the assumption that

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these levels of life-satisfaction are anomalous, that there is something requiring further explanation when persons seem to be contented with poverty that they have few options for escaping. This is a highly normative starting place, and we can see Ibrahim's questioning as motivated by moral ideals similar to those of the PTFA. She expects that her participants want to flourish and is convinced that something has gone wrong when they seem not to.

Ibrahim and Uyan Semerci both question persons' reports of their own preferences based on assumptions of persons' tendencies to flourish. We can easily see how such interrogation of reported preferences can appear paternalistic. It may seem that interventions like Ibrahim's and Uyan Semerci's must be motivated by second-guessing. It may look as though the practitioners are telling persons what they should care about—telling them what they should and should not perceive as problems. Or, perhaps more insidiously, it may seem as though the practitioners are telling persons that they are lying-- or that they are wrong when they report that they are happy.

But this characterization of the reasons for which practitioners might want to question persons' stated preferences is also based on a set of dubious semi-normative assumptions. In particular, it is based on the assumption that persons' reports about their values are transparent. If we assume that persons' reports about their values are transparent, it will appear that a normatively-driven process of questioning them will inevitably mean a desire to replace their values with someone else's But if we stop assuming that persons' initial reports about their values are transparent, we can see interrogating them as a way of finding out what the persons in question actually want. The PTFA shifts our semi-normative assumptions away from the assumption that the meanings of persons' reports about their values are immediately clear. For the PTFA indicates that some interpretive error has probably occurred if persons seem not to desire their basic flourishing.

We can easily imagine a number of problems with communication that will prevent persons' values from being initially transparent. One set of barriers to immediately understanding persons' statements about their preferences has to do with norms about what is acceptable to discuss in front of others. Interpreting persons' preferences in the real world usually involves one person telling another, or a group of others, information about their lives. There is no reason to expect that conversation about values should be more transparent than any other type of conversation. We should not assume that rules of etiquette, taboos, or the desire to save face automatically disappear in discussions about values. Moreover, we should not assume that there are no risks associated with offering true reports about one's life and what one wants. Development participants may tell practitioners what they think practitioners want to hear, or refuse to describe the extent of their deprivation, because they want to save face in front of their neighbors, for example.\

Uman-Semerci's work is full of instances where she reasonably interprets forces as inhibiting persons' full reporting of their preferences. The case of domestic violence described above provides one excellent example. Perhaps the women in question insist that they do not suffer from domestic violence, because they feel that it is something shameful to admit or do not want to shame their husbands. Similarly, Uyan Semerci concludes that abortion is common among the women in the community she works in despite the fact that most of them do not directly admit to having had them. The women in her study say things like this:

> 'Three of the babies have died. One of them died after four months of pregnancy.'
> -   'Why did they die?'
> -'I do not know. In the village I was not … conditions, in the village we look after the fields and could not take care of the baby. Unlike here…' (Uyan Semerci 2006, 9).
> Social forces other than taboo may also make persons' accounts of their preferences

warrant further scrutiny. Uyan Semerci notes that speech mannerisms common among Muslims

may make persons appear to be satisfied with their poverty. Semerci interprets the reports of the women with whom she works with the following assessment of Islamic traditions in mind:

> To be "thankful to *Allah*" and the tradition not to complain to the strangers make a powerful amalgam, particularly for women. "Thank God for what we have..." and "It can be worse" are repeated claims. Islamic belief, in my case, plays an important role for acceptance of the current socio-economic situation. The idea of faith and accepting the destiny, not to rebel and not to desire are all part of the religious teaching. The traditional act is not to complain and tell about the private lives, particularly not towards the strangers. (Uyan Semerci 2006, 27).

Uyan Semerci also points out that women are unlikely to report unhappiness if their husbands are around (Uyan Semerci 2006, 26). Once we recognize the possibility that social forces may prevent persons from offering complete reports about their deep preferences, it becomes plausible that interrogating their expressed preferences may offer a richer conception of what they value.

Another set of barriers to immediately understanding persons' reports about their values are related to the difficulties entailed in speaking about values. Persons may not always (and probably rarely do) fully understand their own values. In pointing this out, I do not mean to imply that other persons' reports about persons' values are more reliable than those persons' own reports. Rather, I want to emphasize that persons' conceptions of the good are likely not completely conscious or internally harmonious. The views of the women in Uyan Semerci's study about education provide an interesting case in point. They insist that their lives are over with respect to education, but they want very much for their children to receive educations (Uyan Semerci 2006, 25). This raises very interesting questions about whether these women value education. It seems plausible to take their comments about their desires for their children's education as an indication that they do. Perhaps they might even be capable of being persuaded to increase their own educations—despite the fact of their seeming belief that they have lost their chance.

Discussion about whether the consistency of their valuing education for their others

and not for themselves may help these women to clarify their own values. Sen has claimed

that discussion with others can help persons (and communities) come to better understand

their own values. He suggests that discussion is important to the processes of value-

formation and clarification (Sen 1999a). Alkire presents cases of development dialogues in

which practitioners cited values that the beneficiaries did not, and the beneficiary community

saw the new vocabulary as helpful:

> For example, in one assessment (of a training workshop) participants had been
> engaged in animated discussion about impacts for over half an hour. The facilitatot
> then began to ask strategically about other potential dimensions of impact that had
> not been mentioned, and began with 'knowledge'. Participants realized immediately
> that in the intensity of their conversation they had forgotten this impact altogether.
> Their final ranking showed knowledge to be one of the three most valued impacts.
> (Alkire 2005, 293)

Alkire illustrates that reference to values by practitioners can help beneficiaries enrich their

own conceptions of what they value. We can suggest in the same vein that discussion with

beneficiaries can improve practitioners' conceptions of their own values.

It is not only the case that persons may not understand their own values, it is also the

case that it may be hard to get at persons' beliefs about what it would take for them to

flourish. Much of the literature about adaptive preferences suggests that deprived persons

report being happy and concludes from this that persons' reports of well-being are

unreliable. However, it is far from clear that their alleged misconceptions of their well-being

precludes discussing their flourishing with them in a productive way. As Uyan Semerci puts

this point, persons' "stated happiness should not lead us to the conclusion that they are

unaware of the position they are in" (Uyan Semerci 2006, 26).

It is quite possible for them to report feeling happy (or indeed to actually feel happy)

and simultaneously to feel that they would be better off if they had better options. So, for

example, when Ibrahim's subjects say that they accept what they have and thank God, this

may not mean that they would stop accepting what they had and thanking God if they had

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more. Indeed, the same women in Uyan Semerci's studies who say that they try to remind themselves that things could be worse and who "try not to complain because it would offend Allah" (Uyan Semerci 2007, 210) also claim that education would make them "more human" (Uyan Semerci 2006, 23). Questioning persons' reports about their preferences may be a way of getting clearer about what those persons want rather than suggesting that other persons' conceptions of what they want are more important than their own. It may help both beneficiaries and practitioners get clearer about what they want and care about.

The PTFA shifts our seminormative assumptions away from the assumption that the normative implications of persons' accounts of their values are transparent. It indicates that something has blocked understanding when persons seem not to want to flourish and have lacked opportunities for flourishing. I have just suggested that miscommunications influenced by social forces, confusions about the relationship between happiness and flourishing, or the interrelations among persons' values may all misrepresent persons as uninterested in their flourishing. There is another type of misunderstanding that may misrepresent persons as uninterested in their flourishing. This is misunderstanding produced by practitioners' failures to understand the effects certain preferences have on flourishing.

It is often difficult for outsiders to understand the effects of some preferences on flourishing because they fail to understand the choice situations facing persons with suspect preferences. A preference may seem to have effects that it does not; it may seem, for example, that a person without a monetary income does not have access to food. If that person is engaged in susbsistence agriculture however, the judgment that this person's lack of income led to malnutrition would be misplaced. Moreover, if the functionings constitutive of a good human life are plural, it is possible that moving a person's preferences toward flourishing in one domain would involve unacceptable costs to her in others—and this is

why she is deeply attached to what may initially seem like an IAP.

Many of the women in Uyan Semerci's study prefer to perform housework and carework than to be employed by others. An outsider might wrongly conclude that this preference has only adverse effects on these women's well-being. However, Uyan Semerci asserts emphatically that these women achieve gains to their flourishing by staying at home. Their social status increases remarkably by virtue of their having children. Moreover, their children give them access to public space (schools, hospitals, etc.) that they would not otherwise have had (Uyan Semerci 2007, 9). This is especially comprehensible given that their main career opportunity outside of the home is to become domestic servants in other women's homes. Practitioners may mistakenly assume persons are uninterested in their flourishing, not only because they took their reports about their preferences at face-value, but also because they do not understand the utility calculations those persons are making.

The difficulties of speaking about values and well-being suggest that understanding whether persons have IAPs and whether those preferences should be transformed often requires discussion and not simple preference reading or reporting. Conversation has the potential to reveal that what seem like deep preference for a nonflourishing lifestyles may be something else. It may be endorsement of the best strategy for flourishing given the options (as in the case of the Turkish women who do not want to work outside the home), a type of subjective happiness that may be differentiated from flourishing (as in the case of the Egyptian poor who say they accept their poverty), or a simple reluctance to recount certain details because of fear of social stigma (as in the abortion and domestic violence cases above). Once we acknowledge that persons' reports about what they want might not be transparent, it becomes clear that interrogating persons' reports of their preferences need not be equivalent with telling them that their conceptions of the good are wrong or that they are

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unqualified to make decisions about their own good. It becomes plausible that asking deep questions about persons' preferences and values can be a way of respecting, rather than undermining, their conceptions of the good.

6.8 CONCLUSION

Development practitioners often encounter situations in which questioning persons' existing preferences seems to be the best way of respecting their desires. As the examples from Alkire, Ibrahim, and Uyan Semerci suggest, the deprived often live with constraints that prevent them from living out their conceptions of the good. Women may want to be literate but have lacked the opportunities; they may want to control their reproductive lives but not know how; they may want to resist domination that others hold over them because those persons have more resources or education.

Moreover, deprived persons may resent being thought of as deeply attached to living the way they are living just because they happen to be living that way. Better options might help them to better achieve their conceptions of the good. The woman in Uyan Semerci's study that uses bleach to prevent herself from conceiving may choose to do so, but this does not mean she would not prefer access to a safer, more reliable form of contraception. The Egyptian poor Alkire studies may make choices that are important to them, but questioning reveals that many of them do not like being poor.

Deprived persons also often report satisfaction with their lives for reasons that seem to have little to do with their conceptions of they good. They may describe themselves as resigning themselves to the conditions of the world because of shame or cultural speech patterns—as the poor in both Ibrahim and Uyan Semerci's studies do. Or, they may do so

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out of fear of stigma or shame as seems to be the case in the women in Uyan Semerci's partial reporting about abortion and domestic violence.

Failing to question preferences like the ones listed above does not seem to be a way of respecting autonomy. Rather, nonintervention in such cases is at best a way of ignoring the desires of many deprived persons. At worst, it is a way of perpetuating existing domination and paternalism. If we place examples like this at the center of our thinking--- the assumption that intervention must be paternalistic becomes questionable. Shifting our seminormative assumptions about the conditions persons live under suggests that intervention in some circumstances is a way of avoiding paternalism. If we stop assuming that most persons are already living the life that best approximates their conception of the good, we can evaluate PTFA-motivated intervention with greater clarity.

This is not to suggest that there is no such thing as paternalistic intervention. We can imagine ways of intervening in such conditions that would treat persons paternalistically--- ways that refused to take seriously beneficiary self-understandings, or that were downright coercive. But we can also imagine other types of interventions—interventions that allow for dialogue about whether persons really want to continue to live in the conditions they are living under and dialogue about what should be done about it. These are the types of interventions for which the PTFA provides a framework.

7.0 AFTERWORD: IMPLICATIONS OF MY JUSTIFICATION OF IAP INTERVENTION

7.1 RECAPITULATING THE ARGUMENT

In this dissertation, I have offered and defended a justification of public intervention to transform inappropriately adaptive preferences. The justification (encapsulated in the PTFA) is that persons are not usually deeply attached to preferences that are inconsistent with their basic flourishing. Basic flourishing, I have claimed, should be defined according to a deliberative perfectionist conception that is cross-culturally acceptable, minimal, and vague.

I have also placed some explicit restrictions on the type of intervention that are compatible with my justification. The PTFA justifies third-party suspicion that certain preferences are inappropriately adaptive. It does not justify coercing persons whose preferences seem inappropriately adaptive into living according to a particular conception of the good. A central aim of this dissertation is to point out that the space between suspicion and coercion is large.

There is a difference between preliminarily judging a person's choices and forcing that person to live in a particular way. Typical PTFA/deliberative perfectionism-motivated interventions will begin with a third-party suspecting that a person or group's preferences are inappropriately adaptive according to an objective conception of the good. However, such

suspicion need not be the last word. An objective conception of the good can be used together with local-level deliberation to accurately diagnose and sensitively respond to IAPs. Persons with suspect preferences can contribute information about why they have the preferences they have and the susceptibility of those preferences to transformation. They can also imagine ways of changing their own lives that go far beyond the visions of third parties.

I defended this type of intervention against some typical objections to public perfectionism. Objections on the grounds of paternalism or authoritarianism almost invariably accompany claims that a conception of the good should influence public policy. My justification of intervention in the lives of persons with IAPs is undoubtedly an argument for the use of a conception of the good in public policy. I have shown how it holds up against charges that it prevents people and cultures from living according to conceptions of the good that are authentically theirs. I have also defended it against the charge that it entails treating persons as though they are morally defective. I hope that, by responding directly to these criticisms, I have illuminated the possibility of a perfectionism that is sensitive to personal autonomy and cultural difference. I believe that the possibility of sensitively responding to the deprivation of real *existing* persons—persons who have not always had access to conditions conducive to flourishing—depends on the possibility of such a conception of the good.

This is what I have said so far. I will conclude by briefly discussing some questions raised by my argument for some related, existing philosophical conversations. These are the conversations about 1) the role of preference in an ethical theory, 2) the capability approach, 3) public perfectionism, 4) feminism and deformed desires.

7.2 THE NOTION OF PREFERENCE

Philosophers and economists often respond to the fact of preferences that seem not to represent the true desires of their bearers by refining the notion of preference. They attempt to sort preferences that should "count" in assessing an individual's desires and preferences that do not. There are two general ways of accomplishing this sorting: one we might call "retrospective" and another we might call "excavatory."

Retrospective approaches say that we can find out whether a preference should be decisive or not by looking at the history of that preference. If the preference was formed in a certain way, it should influence what happens to a person. One example of a retrospective approach is Feinberg's voluntariness test (1989). Although Feinberg does not use the language of preference, he claims that we have a warrant to question courses of action in which persons harm themselves. We question them on the grounds that it is unlikely that they have been chosen voluntarily. When we question them, we want to find whether they were chosen voluntarily. If it turns out they were, we should respect such choices and allow persons to act according to them.[137]

Excavatory approaches say we can find out whether a preference should count by looking at how deep it is. "Deep" here does not mean the same thing as it does in my conception of deep preference. Rather, it means higher-order preferences. The idea is that persons' lower order preferences are more subject to adaptiveness than persons' higher-order ones and that it is only the higher order ones that should be decisive. So, the preferences that matter are persons' existing preferences about their preferences. We should not respect preferences that people do not *want* to have. We might think of Nussbaum's

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[137] Sunstein (1995) implies a similar sort of voluntariness test when he says that preferences that were not autonomously formed were subject to being overridden.

prescription that development practitioners should "probe more deeply" (Nussbaum 2000b, 42) when they encounter preferences that seem to endorse existing deprivation as one excavatory approach.

To my mind, excavatory and retrospective views are not very amenable to practical application. They rest on restrictive assumptions about moral psychology. More specifically, they treat persons as engaged in a unilinear struggle to realize certain fixed conscious values. Persons' values are fixed and the goal of preference suspicion is to bring persons' preferences into line with them. Retrospective justifications of preference transformation cannot take seriously the fact that persons may become attached to preferences whether or not they were autonomously chosen.[138] A woman may have come to eat less than her male relatives out of habit, but it does not follow from this that her subjective happiness will not be harmed if she stops doing it now.

Excavatory accounts of preference transformation cannot take seriously the fact that persons are often engaged in internal struggles about what their values are and which values are most important. Such accounts also have trouble handling the fact that it is not always clear how a new option would fit into persons' existing value-systems. As Sen asserts, "The line may be hard to draw between having preferences over preferences and being able to use that as the basis of preference reform" (Sen 2002, 617). Whether she should learn to read may be an open question for a woman who has never had the opportunity to do so. Pondering the question may cause her to realize that female seclusion is an important value to her, or it may cause her to realize that she is tired of being secluded. I think there is little reason to assume that what she does in such questioning is simply the interpretation of a

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[138] For example, Hirchmann claims that the extent to which a preference is socially constructed determines its worthiness of public respect (2002, 96). This ignores the possibility of internalizing socially constructed of norms.

preexisting network of deep values. She may rather be engaged in altering her beliefs in a way she would not have if the option of literacy had not been presented to her.

There are certainly a large number of cases in which IAP-intervention prevents persons from having to live according to preferences they do not want to have. The woman in Uyan-Semerci's study who has always wanted to get an education might very well be persuaded to join a literacy program on the grounds that she never liked being illiterate anyway. However, I do not want to say that the *only* legitimate preference transformation is transformation intended to discover persons' existing values and realize them. Preference transformation may also involve helping persons to reflect on and change their higher-order values. A woman may begin a consciousness-raising program truly believing that women are inferior to men—as did Nargis from the Khoj literacy project "who used to think women were like a bud." As long as there are respectful limits set on the *way* this encouragment takes place, I think preference-transformation aimed at *changing* rather than just *revealing* persons' deep values can be acceptable and important.

This is why my justification of IAP-intervention offers neither a retrospective nor am excavatory account of which preferences should count. On my view, the difference between preferences that should count and preferences that should not is not determined by the order or historical origin of those preferences. Rather, it is determined by whether those persons remain attached to those preferences even after being exposed to opportunities that seem more conducive to flourishing.

My view is different from retrospective accounts because it allows that preferences can have been adopted involuntarily and still have weight. A woman can be deeply attached to the preference to be illiterate even if she became illiterate because her parents actively prevented her from going to school. If an adult woman does not want to become literate to

the extent that it would require her to be coerced, my approach says her preference should be respected.

Showing how my account is different from the excavatory account is more complicated. I do use the language of "deep preference," but by deep I do not mean "higher order." My understanding of preferences that count does not assume there are flourishing higher order preferences behind persons' actions if this means that these higher-order preferences are stable and transparent to them. To say that a person's subflourishing preferences are not deep, in my view, is to make a claim about what they could be *persuaded* to do rather than what they already explicitly want to do. The propensity to flourishing I describe need not be a conscious or rigidly-structured one. A woman may not think of herself as wanting to become literate. When the opportunity becomes available and is presented to her as attractive, however, she may discover that she does. Preference transformation may not just be a matter of public institutions learning about her; it may be an opportunity for her to learn about herself.

The fact that I do not see getting to the roots of preferences to be the most important strategy for changing them explains why I have used the term "preference" very untechnically throughout the dissertation. I sometimes speak of persons' actions revealing preferences. For example, I suggest that we can plausibly read a woman's turning her micro-loan over to her husband because of fear of violence from him as a choice that values bodily integrity. Other times, I speak of persons' initial reports of how they feel about what they are doing as preferences. I say, for instance, that it is reasonable to subject a person's claim that they do not want to eat sufficiently to further scrutiny. I do not think my untechnical use of the term "preference" is a problem for my argument, because finding out which preferences were – or have always been-- the "true" ones is not an important for my purposes.

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Preference transformation, is, for me, fundamentally a *prospective* activity that should done on terms that beneficiaries will accept.

My refusal to say that preferences must already exist in their final forms to count in social evaluation makes my view of preference belong to the same family as those of Rawls and Sen. Like them, I think that we should focus on respecting *persons* and not preferences. The goal need not to be to find underlying preferences that can be respected, but rather to make decisions that *persons* can endorse. This belief underlies Sen's idea that the most positionally objective preferences should be decisive in making social policy; preferences become more objective through taking in information from others, and this is a real process that takes place over time (Sen 2002, 463-483). [139]

Of course, I disagree with Sen that we just want to encourage the *objectivity* of preferences. I think we want to encourage the *goodness* of preferences. But I agree fundamentally with Sen that we need a view of respecting persons' desires that does not mean assuming that these desires are always conscious and unchanging. To put this sentiment in Rawls' words, we want to avoid treating persons as "passive carriers of desires" (1996, 186).

7.3 THE CAPABIITY APPROACH

My argument in this dissertation also possesses implications for ongoing philosophical conversations about the capability approach. The capability approach is an approach to social distribution developed by Nussbaum and Sen that says that says that the

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[139] Alkire (2002) argues that development, like medicine, should be motivated by the idea of informed consent. Although I think this view is problematic, it, too, refuses to equate respecting persons with respecting their existing preferences.

currency of social distribution[140] should be a set of capacities to be and do. I am overall quite

sympathetic to this approach. Even if the argument of this dissertation does not require the

capability approach (the deliberative perfectionist conception need not be a list of

capabilities), Nussbaum and Sen have been key figures in drawing the attention of ethicists,

economists, and development practitioners to the problem of IAP. For the reader who is

interested in the development of the capability approach it will be useful for me to briefly

point out 1) the implications of my argument for the ongoing debate about whether we need

a list of capabilities and 2) the differences between my justification of IAP-intervention and

Nussbaum's.

7.3.1 The Need for A Capabilities List

Nussbaum and Sen disagree with one another about whether we need a list of valued

capabilities. Sen thinks we do not need one. He opposes stipulating a list for three distinct

reasons. First, stipulating a list in inconsistent with respect for pluralism of value. Different

communities may value different things, rank values differently, and understand their values

in different terms. Second, creating a list deprives communities of the opportunity to engage

in discussion about values and what is important to them. Third, a list may not be

particularly practically useful—especially because it is likely to be "tremendously

overspecified" (Sen 1993, 47).

My argument in the dissertation can be read as contributing to the debate about

whether we need a list of capabilities. Sen's arguments are not just arguments against listing

capabilities; they are general arguments against using an external conception of the good to

diagnose deprivation. In contrast, the fifth chapter of this dissertation defends the use of a

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[140] I borrow the idea of a "currency" of social distribution from G.A. Cohen (1989).

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conception of the good to diagnose deprivation. It contains specific responses Sen's arguments against listing capabilities. There, I claim that a generally formulated and minimal list is quite compatible with pluralism of value. Excluding some particularly bad preferences from being compatible with flourishing does not mean saying that we cannot have meaningful differences about what kinds of human lives are good. I also argue that public discussion about values is perfectly compatible with an objective conception of the good; a vague conception often *needs* public discussion to be interpreted. I respond to Sen's third objection by saying that a conception of the good can actually be practically useful. Being able to understand different practices as different ways of realizing the *same* general good can help rather than hinder understanding across difference.

Thus, my arguments in the fifth chapter imply that Sen's objections to a capabilities list are objections only to lists of a certain kind—maximal and specific lists. Moreover, my dissertation provides a positive argument for why we should want a capabilities list. I argued—throughout, but especially in the second chapter-- that we simply cannot coherently diagnose and respond to IAPs without a conception of the good. What troubles us about adaptive preference is not simply that they are adapted to conditions; it is that they are adapted to *unacceptable* conditions. We need a conception of the good to differentiate acceptable from unacceptable condidions. Moreover, identifying IAPs requires the possibility of third-party suspicion of preferences. This, too, requires an objective conception of the good.

If we want the capability approach to be useful in identifying IAPs, we need a capabilities list. It is clear that Sen wants the capability approach to be useful for responding to IAPs. He repeatedly discusses the problem of persons adjusting their preferences to constricted option sets (Sen 1985, 191; Sen 1990a, 126; Sen 2002, 634). My argument

suggests that Sen's own goals for the capability approach would be better served with a capabilities list.

7.3.2 Nussbaum's Discussions of IAPs

Nussbaum's version of the capability approach includes a list of basic human capabilities. Nussbaum clearly holds one advantage of her approach to be that it provides reason for questioning IAPs. She has written explicitly about the usefulness of her capability approach for identifying and responding to them (Nussbaum 2000b, 111-161; Nussbaum 2001). I believe that my argument in the dissertation is consistent with Nussbaum's project, and this is why I have used Nussbaum's capabilities list as an example of a deliberative perfectionist conception. My argument does not require Nussbaum's capabilities list, however, since any number of other deliberative perfectionist conceptions will do. Further, I have taken no stance here about the usefulness of the capability approach in general. Still, it is worth distinguishing the approach to responding to IAPs I have defended from the one Nussbaum explicitly defends. While I see few explicit contradictions between Nussbaum's and mine, my discussion contains some concerns that are distinct from Nussbaum's.

Nussbaum's discussion of IAPs mostly treats their existence as a test for a certain type of theory. She begins with examples of actual persons who have IAPs—women in Southern India who stay in abusive marriages or who do not seem worried about their poor sanitary conditions (Nussbaum 200b, 112-113). However, these women serve primarily as an example of the problems with subjective welfarism and the idea of preference. Nussbaum spends the majority of the discussion claiming that we need a process for choosing basic political principles that does not devolve into aggregating persons' preferences. I agree wholeheartedly with Nussbaum on this point.

My discussion of IAPs has a different emphasis, however. It attempts to say what public institutions should do when confronted with actual cases of seeming IAP. Although Nussbaum does tell us briefly that public institutions should "probe more deeply" (Nussbaum 2000b, 42) when confronted with cases of seeming IAP, she does not elaborate really tell us *why* or what the moral implications of this position are. My PTFA offers an answer to this *why*. Public institutions should probe more deeply because persons have a basic tendency toward flourishing, and this means that these preferences could likely be changed.

We should notice that Nussbaum might not agree with this reason. Indeed, some of her theoretical commitments preclude it. I say that we need a notion of the good based on how persons would normally develop in order to say that some adaptations are *inappropriate*. I have claimed that this notion is perfectionist. Nussbaum is adamant that her capabilities list does not represent a perfectionism—that it is to be endorsed only "for political purposes" (Nussbaum 200b, 77; Nussbaum 2006 79). This means I make metaphysical claims that Nussbaum might not agree with. However, I have a hard time seeing how Nussbaum can coherently express the kind of concern with IAPs she expresses without avowing some underlying some perfectionist commitments. She may have some other way of justifying this concern that she has not yet stated, or there may be some way of thinking of the moral problems of IAP that I have overlooked. Thus, the extent of our divergence on the perfectionism issue remains to be seen.

I also elaborate much more fully than Nussbaum what development practitioners should do when they encounter suspect preferences and what we need to believe for such an approach to be justifiable. Nussbaum says nothing about why development practitioners should probe more deeply rather than simply override preferences when they encounter

cases of seeming IAP. Indeed, sometimes Nussbaum seems committed to saying that such preferences should be overridden. She calls into question the capacity of deprived persons to make choices on a few occasions (Nussbaum 1999, 45; Nussbaum 1999, 50; Nussbaum 200b, 53).[141] It is thus possible that she thinks IAPs are substantive autonomy deficits. I lay out the problems with thinking of IAPs as substantive autonomy deficits in the third chapter.

I list a number of explicit reasons persons with IAPs should participate in their preference transformation rather than have new preferences imposed on them. Among these are the fact that there is no reason to assume that persons with IAPs are irrational and the fact that outsiders are not usually equipped to evaluate the meanings of preferences on their own. I also say that persons should participate in deciding how their preferences should be changed because the PTFA on its own cannot determine which flourishing-consistent course of action should be undertaken. Any number of possible interventions can improve persons' access to sexual health. The existence of a deliberative perfectionist conception does not say whether attempting to change men's attitudes about condoms, increasing women's access to income, or better translating information about condoms into local belief systems is the best way to do this; on the other hand, there are good reasons that persons with suspect preferences should influence these decisions.

7.4 PUBLIC PERFECTIONISM

I have claimed that we cannot justify IAP-intervention without referring to a perfectionist conception of the good. I have also claimed that the necessity of subscribing to

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[141] In all of these passages, Nussbaum hints that persons who lack certain material supports cannot make choices. Nussbaum offers no sustained discussion of her conception of autonomy, but one way of interpreting these passages would be as the kernel of a theory of substantive autonomy. Like Raz, Nussbaum may mean that one only really has choices if one has good options.

a conception of the good need not prevent us from endorsing IAP-intervention. If my justification of IAP-intervention is to be acceptable, we must believe that it is sometimes acceptable for public institutions to promote a conception of the good. Whether promoting a conception of the good is acceptable is a subject of much debate in contemporary political philosophy. The philosophers termed "liberal perfectionists" argue against the idea that promoting a conception of the good makes a society illiberal. They claim that certain types of perfectionism are compatible with a wide variety of conceptions of the good and deep respect for individual choice.[142] My overall argument falls under the rubric of liberal perfectionism.

My argument in the dissertation likely raises two questions for the reader interested in public perfectionism. First, she may want to know whether my argument implies that IAPs are merely a special case of a larger category of self-harming preferences that I believe require public intervention. Second, she may wonder whether the limits I have placed on coercion are too categorical.

7.4.1 Self-Harming Preferences

I have argued that IAPs are deficits in the capacity to lead a flourishing human life and that this is part of what makes them worthy of public concern. It is clear, however, that IAPs are not the only possible types of deficits in flourishing. Even persons who have had manifold opportunities sometimes express preferences that are bad for them. We know of persons who do not seem deprived who consume dangerous and addictive drugs, engage in risky sexual behavior, and are apathetic about political life, for instance. Should I not be

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[142] Chan (2000) and Raz (1988) argue explicitly that liberalism and some state perfectionism are compatible. For other views in this family,-- not necessarily framed in the terms of perfectionism--see Kymlicka (1991) and J. Cohen (2001.

arguing—as many liberal perfectionists argue-- that all self-harming behaviors merit public concern—regardless of the conditions that produce them?[143]

I am not ready to give a definitive answer to this question, but I will say that I am sympathetic to answering it in the affirmative. In the dissertation, I have focused on IAPs and persuading those who see them as a problem that there is a conception of the good underlying their intuitions. Briefly, however, my sense is that our willingness to endorse intervention for *all* self-harming preferences will be a function of the frequency with which we expect-- and weight we assign to respecting-- worthy self-sacrificing preferences. That is, our tendency to support or reject intervention for self-harming preferences in general will depend on whether we think the middle-class white man who is not eating adequately is more likely to have an eating disorder, to be fasting for religious reasons, or some combination of the two. Pragmatic considerations will also play a role. If we think self-harming preferences on the part of the non-deprived are extremely rare, we may think the costs of intervention outweigh the benefits.

The argument of my dissertation *does* suggest one justification for a wider range of suspect preferences--one that I am interested in further pursuing. I claimed that the idea of IAP rests on perfectionist assumptions. The PTFA indicates that human beings have a tendency to develop in a certain way and that preferences that seem contrary to this development are worthy of public suspicion. The PTFA thus includes some idea of what is normal for human beings. But the PTFA focuses on *basic* flourishing— in other words, the floor of the normal. However, most conceptions of the normal include both ceilings and floors. It may not only be deprivation that causes objectionable self-regarding preferences.

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[143] See Raz's criticisms of the harm principle (1988, 420-429).

Excess and wealth may do the same. The PTFA opens the door to claiming that *decadent--* and not just inappropriately adaptive—preferences may be worthy of public suspicion.

7.4.2 Appropriate Paternalistic Coercion?

In addition to wondering whether I have unintentionally made a wider argument for public-intervention in self-regarding preferences, the reader interested in public perfectionism may wondered whether I have excluded coercion too categorically. I have claimed that rational people should not be coerced. My arguments against coercion in the name of the PTFA can be found in the fifth chapter. It is probably true that there are some goods or ways of depriving oneself of them (irreversibly, for example) that are so basic that coercion is justified in securing them. I do not claim to know where this threshold is, but it seems clear to me that there are many ways in which a person can have suspect preferences but not merit coercion.

One reason I have argued for a vague conception of the good is that it discourages us from thinking according to a particularly pernicious dichotomy. This is a dichotomy that says that responding to IAPs faces public institutions with two choices—leaving preferences alone or coercing their bearers. The deliberative perfectionist conception encourages arriving at solutions that are acceptable to persons with suspect preferences *and* consistent with an objective conception of the good. In the vast majority of cases, coercion should not be our response of first resort.

7.5 FEMINISM AND DEFORMED DESIRES

My argument for public intervention in the lives of persons who seem to have IAPs also has implications for the ongoing feminist conversation about "deformed desires." Feminists often point out that the forces of masculine domination can work *through* women's

own acts and desires.[144] My overall argument has important implications for the feminist conversation about how to identify and respond to such desires. My argument may not seem to contribute much to the ongoing discussion of deformed desires in first world women, but I want to point out here that it does. It also has interesting consequences for the debate about the agency and the attribution of deformed desires to women.

7.5.1 Deformed Desires and First World Feminism

What can my analysis here offer to the existing discussion of IAPs in first world women? Most of the examples I have used in this dissertation come from the lives of third world women. I suggested in the introduction that this is not because IAP is uniquely a phenomenon of third world women. Feminist literatures in the first world often identify deformed desires on the parts of women in the first world. Among desires they identify are the desire to remain with abusive partners, to subscribe to oppressive norms about beauty and sexuality, and to be "subservient housewives." The reader interested in sexism and deformed desires may have been left wondering wonder whether my argument can actually apply to cases that made first world feminists worry about IAPs to begin with. By focusing on basic flourishing, am I left with nothing to say about the woman who has subscribed to oppressive beauty standards or the "subservient housewife?"

Before I respond to this question, I want to bring one of its key assumptions. The question suggests that first-world women do not have preferences that impede their basic flourishing. This is simply not true. Subscribing to oppressive beauty standards may cause women to deny themselves food or develop compulsive exercise habits. Of course some

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[144] Bartky (1990), Mill, (1997) and Wollstonecraft (2004) (among others) have made very persuasive arguments to this effect.

habits that may seem to fall under this group—like anorexia—are more aptly classed as diseases rather than deformed desires. It is far from clear that all of them are. Or take the preference to be a "subservient housewife." Women in the United States whose income comes only through a partner are susceptible to dramatic forms of deprivation—like poverty and homelessness-- if something alters the arrangement.

Still, there are preferences we may want to call "deformed" or "inappropriately adaptive" that do not adversely affect basic flourishing. Women may prefer not to speak in the college classroom, think it is more important for women to attract men than to develop themselves, or believe that their sexualities should be sources of shame. I doubt we can expect a deliberative perfectionist conception of the good—on which there is broad international consensus—to say that these preferences warrant suspicion.

However, it seems to me that my argument about the structure of the suspicion that another's preference is inappropriately adaptive still applies to such cases. I do not think we can coherently make the case that most of the first world preferences above represent deficits in procedural autonomy, and I think it would justify unacceptable coercion to treat these preferences as lacks in substantive autonomy.

Moreover, it seems to me that the judgment that such preferences are inappropriately adaptive is not identical to the judgment that those preferences are bad according to some *comprehensive* conception of the good. That is, saying that women's preferences to see their sexualities as shameful seem inauthentic is a different type of judgment from the judgment that persons who prefer to eat meat should become vegetarians or that persons should read rather than watching television. The former judgment suggests that women's beliefs about their sexualities are the result of a system that denies them opportunities to flourish. The

belief that one's sexuality is shameful is not a belief that one would hold given conditions conducive to basic flourishing.

There is a difference between the judgment that shame about one's sexuality is inappropriately adaptive and the judgment that cutting off one's capacity for sexual pleasure through clitoridectemy is inappropriately adaptive. However, I would argue that it is a difference of degree rather than a difference of kind. It is a difference about where the floor of basic flourishing is. Once we recognize this, we can imagine more expansive IAP-interventions on more local levels. If not being ashamed of one's sexuality is part of the basic conception of flourishing held and democratically legitimated by a particular society—I see little reason we cannot justify IAP-intervention using the PTFA's logic.[145] The change is just a matter of shifting from the broader deliberative perfectionist conception to a more local one.

7.5.2 Feminism, Agency, and Oppression

Now that we have seen the continuity between the most damaging IAPs and more controversial ones, we can turn to the question of agency. A significant challenge faces feminists who want to theorize oppression. This is the challenge of speaking of oppression without dehumanizing oppressed persons. We know that some persons are oppressed. But we also know that oppressed persons make choices, choices that can be deeply important to them. To speak of oppressed persons merely as victims, then, runs the moral risk of transforming those persons into moral patients or reactors rather than real persons who care deeply about certain things.

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[145] We may not want to endorse intervention on behalf of a more local conception of basic flourishing if that conception conflicts with the more global one, however.

This danger of transforming persons into moral patients is real. Some feminist approaches have described women in ways that make them come off seeming morally defective or as dupes of false-consciousness. Simone de Beauvoir, for instance, repeatedly describes women as "mutilated" (Beauvoir 1993). Other feminists in this vein have claimed that oppressed persons have no choices—usually by saying that they lack the conditions it takes for their choices to "count." A different feminist approach has responded to this problem of treating women as defective by refusing to treat women as—to use Mohanty's term once again—"unconscious reactors." Rather than treating women as unconscious reactors, this second feminist approach attempts to see women as agents. It valorizes the choices and meaning that women make despite difficult circumstances.[146]

However this tendency to valorize agency comes with its own difficulty. If we say persons can still make meaningful choices under terrible conditions, how can we say something is wrong with those conditions? If persons can live flourishing lives under conditions of oppression, how can we make the case that oppression takes something away from them? And if oppressed persons can make choices, how can we say that some choices are—to invoke Ruddick's expression once again-- "choices no one should have to make?"

Theorizing about IAPs runs us headlong into this dilemma. We want to say conditions of oppression and deprivation can induce persons to have preferences that are inconsistent with their deep desires. But can we say this without saying that persons with IAPs are somehow defective or denying the fact that they do make meaning and make choices? My argument in this dissertation is one attempt to theorize IAPs that respects depressed and deprived persons without implying that they do not exercise agency.

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[146] Two areas in which the feminist debate between about whether women are victims or agents plays itself out quite dramatically are the debates about prostitution and Islamic veiling practices. For a summary of the former discussion, see Miriam 2005. For a summary of the latter, see Bracke (2003) and Hirschmann (2002).

I have argued that IAPs are not deficits in autonomy. This is significant for questions about the agency of persons with IAPs. Persons who are autonomous can make choices and evaluate options, and I have claimed that most persons with IAPs possess this capacity. As I have reiterated on several occasions, most forms of oppression do not destroy persons' capacities to reflect upon the good and what is good for them. Thus, my view is consistent with the idea that oppressed persons have agency. It does not imply that persons with IAPs are morally defective, stupid, or passive. Moreover, my justification of IAP-intervention encourages taking the perspectives of persons with IAPs seriously rather than coercing them.

However, the approach I have developed here does not end with simply celebrating the fact that persons with IAPs can make choices. It acknowledges that their desires and their abilities to realize choices in accordance with them can have been objectionably constrained. It also takes a strong ethical stance: *having choices is not enough*. A person may only have *unacceptable* choices available to her. A choice that a person makes from among only unacceptable options, on my account, is not as likely to reflect a person's deep desires (and thus not as worthy of basic respect) as a choice made from among acceptable ones.

Although I do not claim that my argument has solved the problem of speaking of oppressed persons in humanizing ways, it represents one way of moving beyond the stalemate that condemns feminists to either seeing women as passive victims or uncritically celebrating their agency. We need moral conceptions that allow us to respect the oppressed and deprived as persons who care deeply about certain things without thereby accepting their deprivation. Working out such conceptions is vital to the task of imagining ethical responses to deprivation.

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