

# The Place of Autonomy in Joseph Raz's Liberal perfectionism

Exploring valuable autonomy

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Word count: 8828

9-1-2020

## **Abstract**

By writing the book *The Morality of Freedom* (1986) Joseph Raz made the most influential contemporary contribution to liberal perfectionism. In his book, Raz defends a form of liberal perfectionism by focussing on the role of autonomy in relation to valuable goods. For him this leads to embracing the concept of valuable autonomy: autonomy limited by valuable goods.

In this thesis I critically analyse Raz's core concepts and the form of liberal perfectionism to which these concepts contribute. I make clear that the main critique of Raz comes down to the risk of paternalism and that it is essential to understand Raz correctly to substantiate these forms of critique. In the end, I show that it is precisely because of missing the point of valuable autonomy that paternalistic critiques towards Raz miss their effect.

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## Introduction

In the classic version of political liberalism, the focus was mainly on liberty for the individual. Liberals such as John Stuart Mill and Wilhelm von Humboldt argued that the only reason the state was allowed to infringe the freedom of the individual was to prevent him from harming others.

Later on political philosophers such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin argued that liberalism demanded the state to be neutral. The fact that the state should be only very limited in the possibility to infringe the freedom of the individual, would result in a need for the state to be neutral among conceptions of the good. The liberty of the individual would not allow the state to impose nor promote a conception of the good.

Nevertheless, for someone like Mill promotion of the good life was actually compatible with liberty for the individual. As long as the conception of the good would not be forced upon the individual it was a good thing to reason about conceptions of the good life. In this way, it would be possible to convince an individual that certain styles of life would be better for him (Hurka, 1995, pp.1-2).

The tradition of thinking about a form of liberalism in which there is room for a specific understanding of the good life is still of great importance in contemporary liberal theory. One of the most influential recent contributions to this tradition is the book *The Morality of Freedom* (1986), in which Joseph Raz establishes an account of liberal perfectionism. In the liberal perfectionism of Raz, autonomy plays a crucial role. According to Raz, promotion of valuable goods is compatible with respect for the autonomy of the individual citizen.

Still, there seems to be a tension in respecting the autonomy of the individual on the one hand and promoting valuable goods on the other hand. If promoting valuable goods limits the individual in his possibility to choose autonomously, is it possible to combine the two notions?

A good understanding of the different concepts that Raz uses is crucial to answer this question. Misinterpretations of Raz, for which Farrell (1991) is a foil in my thesis, have led to critiques that do not form a real threat for Raz. I think that a better understanding of the role of autonomy in Raz's liberal perfectionism, can put more flesh on the bones of critiques on Raz. Therefore, the main objective of my thesis will be to dig into Raz's idea of liberal perfectionism and analyse the role that autonomy plays in his theory. My central question will be as follows:

What is the place of autonomy in Joseph Raz's liberal perfectionism?

In order to answer this central question, I will discuss several sub-questions. The sub-questions are as follows: What is the relation between autonomy and liberal perfectionism? What is the relation between autonomy and the good life? In what way can valuable autonomy contribute to the good life? To what extent is there a risk of paternalism in Raz's theory?

## The place of Raz's concept of autonomy

In order to get a better understanding of the role of autonomy within Raz's theory of liberal perfectionism, it is necessary to know what his liberal perfectionism consists of. There are several elements of liberal perfectionism to which Raz commits himself. In her book *Liberal Perfectionism: The Reasons that Goodness Gives* (2014), Couto mentions some of the basic characteristics of liberal perfectionism. To make the liberal perfectionist position clear, she distinguishes between liberal perfectionism and illiberal perfectionism. In contrast to illiberal perfectionism, liberal perfectionists think of state intervention as an illegitimate way to promote goods. In addition, the goods that the state promotes should have a liberal point of view. Hence, the liberal perfectionist distinguishes himself from the illiberal perfectionist by being in favour of *non-coercive* measures to promote goods that are liberal in essence (Couto, 2014, p.1).

In his book *The Morality of Freedom* (1986), Raz commits himself to these important notions of liberal perfectionism. He is in favour of goods that are essentially liberal and he thinks that these goods may only be promoted and protected non-coercively. For this reason, Raz thinks there is an essential role to play for autonomy. Raz argues that the liberty that is of concern to him is mainly a concern for personal autonomy (1986, pp. 203-24). Personal autonomy can be contrasted with moral autonomy. Moral autonomy is the Kantian version of autonomy as self-enacted principles by which the individual rationally legislates himself (Raz, 1986, p.370). Instead, personal autonomy is a particular ideal of self-chosen well-being. Personal autonomy is concerned with the particular preferences of the individual.

To understand the relation of autonomy and well-being, we have to consider autonomy as a form of achievement. It is an ideal of a way of life that can be achieved by the individual. In the ideal, the individual sets pursuits and goals for himself. He is not only autonomous in formulating these pursuits and goals, he should also autonomously strive for them (Raz, 1986, pp. 295-297). Autonomy is concerned with the whole process, it is about the outcome and the way in which one achieves the outcome. These two elements contribute to one's well-being, because the individual will experience that he can strive for his goals and that he is the one who achieves his goals. The individual who lives up to this ideal is, according to Raz, 'in part the author of his life' (Raz, 1986, pp. 204-206).

Although the formulation of pursuits and goals consists in individual preferences, for Raz we can still have a general idea of what makes a life *successful*. I think that in this part of his argumentation, we can observe Raz's project of liberal perfectionism and the way in which it relates to autonomy. Even though the importance lies in the autonomous life, in having personal autonomy to set preferences, that does not mean that one should be neutral with regard to what makes such an autonomous life successful. There are several features that contribute to a successful life for an individual (Raz, 1986, p.289). Raz defines this sense of what a successful life entails in the following way:

*'Our notion of a successful life is of a life well spent, of a life of achievement, of handicaps overcome, talents wisely used, of good judgment in the conduct of one's affairs, of warm and trusting relations with family and friends, stormy and enthusiastic involvement with other people, many hours spent having fun in good company, and so on..'* (Raz, 1986, p. 306).

This definition shows that the goal of a successful life is not something that the individual can achieve all by himself. First, there is a clear importance of social relations for the well-being of the individual. The well-being of the individual consists in the social relations he or she has with other individuals. In addition, the individual needs to be provided with the right conditions to lead a successful life. Therefore, an autonomous life and the resulting successful life are not things that the individual can reach all by himself. Later on in this thesis, we will see the consequences of the help one needs, according to Raz, to make a life successful. This help leads to discussions about the risk of paternalism in Raz and related restrictions on autonomy of the individual. Valuable autonomy will be the crucial concept in which the freedom of the individual and the restrictions on his autonomy are balanced. However, here I want to focus on the conditions necessary for personal autonomy.

Raz identifies three requirements that have to be met in order for the individual to achieve an autonomous life. These requirements are: appropriate mental abilities, an adequate range of options, and independence. Each of these components is a necessary but not sufficient element of the autonomous life. Only combined are the elements sufficient to experience personal autonomy (Raz, 1986, p.372).

I will now discuss these three elements starting with the appropriate mental abilities. Raz characterizes the autonomous life as a life freely chosen. In this way, the primary focus of the ideal of the autonomous life is not what it results in but how the life came to be. The agent needs the capacity to influence the way this life came to be. Therefore, the agent needs to have the mental abilities to formulate his goals in life and be able to put his goals into practice, realize the way he wants to live. Minimum rationality, the mental capacity to formulate one's preferences and convert them into concrete goals is necessary for the individual to enjoy the autonomous life (Raz, 1986, pp.372-373). By formulating the appropriate mental abilities requirement in this way, the number of people able to achieve the ideal of the autonomous life is already limited by this first requirement. Naturally young children will not yet be able to enjoy the autonomous life, because they are not yet able to see their lives as 'stretching over time' (Raz, 1986, p.371), seeing the impact that certain choices will have on their lives. However, there might also be adult groups that lack this capacity, for example because these people suffer from a mental illness.

The second requirement is that of having an adequate range of options. It is essential for the ideal of an autonomous life that the options an individual has in life, are adequate. This adequacy consists in the balance in short-term and long-term choices. The options of autonomous individuals cannot simply consist of short-term choices nor strictly be long-term choices. There must be both

long-term and short-term choices. In addition, there must be choices that are in between these extremes (Raz, 1986, p.374). This is important to Raz, because the choices should not limit the autonomy of the individual. When the individual's choices are unbalanced, he can be forced into choosing a particular option. Someone who is forced into predominantly considering short term solutions, for example because he is poor and lives life day by day, cannot live autonomously. He does not have the possibility to achieve his goals and pursuits, because he is in need of basic provisions. Therefore, this element is essential for the autonomous life (Raz, 1986, pp. 376-377).

In addition, the requirement of an adequate range of options commits one, according to Raz, to value pluralism. Raz explains value pluralism as the idea that there are various forms and styles of life which illustrate different virtues. Choosing a style of life makes one committed to specific virtues. The different styles of life cannot normally be a part of one and the same life. A person cannot at the same time possess all the virtues of two completely different roles in society. Therefore, these lives are incompatible. The example that Raz gives is that of a nun and a mother. One cannot possess all the virtues of being a mother and at the same time be a nun, because some of the virtues in one role exclude some of the virtues of the other role (Raz, 1986, p.395). For upholding a view of value pluralism, the mere acceptance of these exclusionary roles is not enough. One also has to accept that, as a result of the exclusionary roles and the distinct virtues that come with these roles, there is an impossibility of moral perfection. When one chooses a form of life, this limits his possibility to attain certain virtues. Therefore, it is not possible for the individual to reach all the virtues and as a result reach moral perfection (Raz, 1986, p.396).

According to Raz, seeing autonomy as an ideal commits one to a view of value pluralism. An autonomous life requires the possibility for an individual to freely choose his own pursuits and goals. I think that for Raz autonomy commits one to value pluralism because value pluralism shows that different forms of life are valuable for their own reasons. Thus, embracing value pluralism leaves room for the individual to autonomously choose the way he wants to live his life. Different lives display different virtues and none of them displays an 'ultimate' way of living. The form of life one has is maximal when the person who has this life cannot add more virtues to his life. Therefore, a belief in value pluralism becomes a belief in the possibility of different forms of maximal lives. In this way, being in favour of autonomy commits one to embrace (weak) value pluralism (Raz, 1986, p.398).

The last necessary component of the autonomy of the individual is independence. Independence relates to the ideal of autonomy in the light of social relations. The social relations of the individual must be proper in order for him to be autonomous. It is important that social relations do not force the individual into a choice. The will of the individual may not be subject to that of another individual, because this limits the freedom to choose of the individual. Not being independent in one's choices is inconsistent with the ideal of autonomy (Raz, 1986, p.378).

## **The relation between autonomy and the good**

Now that I have explicated the idea of autonomy and its necessary conditions in Raz' theory, it is time to look at the way in which the concept of autonomy relates to goods and the good life. Before getting into the relation between these concepts, it is important to understand Raz's notion of goods and more specifically, valuable goods. These goods are of primary importance for understanding Raz's theory, for it is with respect to these goods that the autonomy of the individual may be limited. Raz makes a few distinctions among goods and by this clarifies how goods relate to another. In addition, there is a gradual difference between goods, some being more important than others.

Raz firstly distinguishes between instrumental goods and valuable goods. The difference between instrumental goods and valuable goods relates to the fact that these goods do not depend to the same extent on the consequences that they bring about. Whereas the value of instrumental goods depends solely on the consequences that they bring about, the value of valuable goods is independent of its consequences. Valuable goods do not need to be justified by the consequences that they bring about (Raz,1986, p.200).

For the sake of clarity I will illustrate this first distinction by looking at the importance of sport. For me, running has instrumental value, I do not like running on a rainy afternoon because of the running itself but am willing to do it because of the consequences that it brings about. Afterwards, I will feel better and it is healthy. On the other hand, an athlete might value the running in itself. It will have the same consequences for him, but the difference is that he likes running for its own sake. In this way, the activity of running is valuable for him, because he likes the activity in itself.

Raz further distinguishes three types of goods within the category of valuable goods. The most important distinction<sup>1</sup> is that between constituent goods and intrinsically valuable goods. Both constituent goods and intrinsically valuable goods are good in themselves. However, these goods differ in the extent to which they have value in themselves. Other than intrinsically valuable goods, constituent goods need to be justified by referring to other values, they form constituent parts of these values. Intrinsically valuable goods are good in themselves and, therefore, do not need to refer to other values (Raz,1986, p.200).

I will illustrate this once more with the example of running. Although running might have intrinsic value for you, most of the time an explanation of why you want to run will refer to other values. So, you like running, but when asked why, you may say that you feel happy when doing it. The activity of running as a hobby, is a constituent element of your happiness, it contributes to your happiness. Happiness is something that is intrinsically valuable and needs no further explanation, because it is valuable in itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Not only do I think that it is the most important distinction for Raz's theory, but also is it the most important distinction among goods for the subject of this thesis.



In this way, we should think of the relation between constituent goods and intrinsically valuable goods. To understand Raz's project of liberal perfectionism, it is important to place autonomy within this scheme of goods, because that shows us what role there is to play for autonomy. Firstly, we can determine that autonomy is a valuable good. So, the autonomous life is a life that is of value for its own sake. Moreover, within the category of valuable goods we determine autonomy as a constituent good. The autonomous life is not intrinsically valuable, according to Raz, but merely valuable because of the intrinsically valuable good to which it contributes. The intrinsically valuable good to which it contributes is the good life. Living the good life is a good that needs no further explanation, it is good in itself. It is with respect to the good life that autonomy holds a subordinate position (Raz, 1986, p. 408). The position that autonomy holds has consequences for where the concept of autonomy consists in. Autonomy should be directed towards the good and so there might be no need for bad options, because they do not contribute to the good.

For me, two worries arise because of this view on autonomy. First, I have a worry about the lack of bad options and the possibility to establish moral virtue. Most of the time we think of creating moral virtue as doing something bad in order to understand that it is better to do what is right. However, if in Raz's ideal of autonomy, there will not be a need for morally bad options, how are we to develop moral virtue? The second worry is that autonomy is not unconditionally valuable in Raz's theory. When the ultimate concern is to have a good life, what result might this have for autonomy? If there are other ways or even better ways in which one can achieve the good life, does autonomy still hold value then? To an extent Raz, answers to these questions in his book and I will take his answers into account (Raz, 1986, p. 380), when critically analysing these questions in the remaining of this chapter. Doing so will further clarify the relation between autonomy and the good.

The first question or concern relates to the way in which Raz seems to exclude morally bad options from his autonomy concept. When talking about the adequate range of options requirement, Raz states that autonomy should be directed towards morally good options. This results in the idea that liberal governments should focus on providing individuals with morally good options and try to eliminate morally bad options (Raz, 1986, pp. 380-381). The question arises, also raised by Raz in his book, whether it would be problematic to eliminate morally bad options. When autonomy should be directed towards the good and merely consist in having to choose among morally good options, this might create a problem for the individual developing his moral virtue.

Raz himself presents an answer to this first question. For Raz, a worry that an agent will not be able to make morally bad choices would only be justified if it is possible to eliminate *all* morally bad options from the world. However, Raz does not think that it is possible to eliminate all morally bad options from the world. In addition, he emphasizes that within a good option there are various possibilities for vicious *actions*. Thus, eliminating morally bad options will not result in a world where

all morally bad options have disappeared nor in a situation in which the individual cannot undertake morally bad actions anymore (Raz, 1986, p.381). Eliminating morally bad options is, therefore, compatible with the possibility to do something which is morally bad, for example prohibiting guns does not mean that the morally bad option of getting a weapon nor the vicious action of murdering has disappeared. It merely means that it is harder to achieve the morally bad goal of murder. In addition to this, Raz thinks that eliminating bad options is compatible with developing one's moral virtue. The morally good will be those in society that are able to neglect the temptations and pressures that are normal in a society. The individual will still be autonomous in his pursuit for the good (Raz, 1986, pp.380-381). Lastly, eliminating bad options will not be a problem for the individual's possibility to freely choose. Among morally good options there is still a great variation of options. Because Raz embraces value pluralism in his theory (as discussed in the previous chapter) it is possible to choose a form of life with its own valuable virtues. The agent will have a wide range of options to choose from when his options are reduced to morally good options (Raz, 1986, p.381).

However, I have a difficulty with this argumentation of Raz. I think that referring to the impossibility of eliminating all morally bad options in the world does not take away the concern that morally bad options are *unnecessary* for his ideal. For Raz's ideal of autonomy, morally bad options are unnecessary, because they do not contribute to the good life. Raz explicitly states this when he establishes his core concept of valuable autonomy, which will be of later concern in this thesis. Here, I merely want to say that Raz, while discussing valuable autonomy, states that it would be preferable to *non-autonomously* be provided with the good than to autonomously choose for the bad (Raz, 1986, p.412). For me, this results in a concern that it will be very hard and maybe even impossible to apply our common sense understanding of developing moral virtue on the ideal of autonomy in Raz's theory.

I think we have a common sense understanding of developing moral virtue for which having morally bad options is essential. Developing moral virtue consists in doing morally good and morally bad things. When doing something that is morally bad, the individual agent can learn to develop his own moral virtue. The agent is not simply provided with the moral principles that he should apply in life, but instead learns what is good and bad himself, thereby creating an aversion for morally bad things and embracing the moral good. For the purpose of establishing moral virtue, having morally bad options is a *necessary* condition.

Seen in this light, Raz's reply that it will be impossible to eliminate all morally bad options from the world, is unsatisfactory. I think that Raz is right in this claim, but I not think that Raz is right in defending his ideal by referring to the real world. That does not take away the concern for the position of bad options in his ideal. Especially because Raz, in his book, mainly refers to autonomy as an ideal and thereby shows the importance of understanding this concept as an ideal. Thus, the fact that for Raz's ideal of autonomy bad options are unnecessary, is worrisome. The problem remains that for Raz's ideal of autonomy bad options are unnecessary, while bad options are necessary for developing moral virtue This could be a huge problem for the moral agents that live up to Raz's ideal

of autonomy, because it seems hard for them to develop moral virtue. In the final chapter on paternalism, we will see that Raz's exclusion of morally bad options in his concept of autonomy is not correctly understood by his critics. Therefore, I want to emphasize the importance of this observation here.

The second question or concern is related to the value of autonomy in itself. We value our autonomous lives, but when we follow Raz's theory it becomes hard to value our autonomous lives as such, without referring to other values. For Raz, autonomy must be used for the good, it is a constituent element for the good life and merely has value when it is used for the good. However, if the concern for autonomy is in the end a concern for the good life then what would happen if autonomy is not the best way to reach a good life? Has autonomy any value *qua* autonomy?

When autonomy is not of value *qua* autonomy, it seems unnecessary to promote autonomy towards *every* individual. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ideal of the autonomous life is not something the individual can achieve all by himself. Instead, the individual must be provided with the right conditions. For providing individuals with the right conditions for autonomy, it seems problematic that the autonomous life is not intrinsically valuable. If, for some people it does not contribute to a good life, why is it necessary to provide individuals with the conditions for autonomy? It might even be unjustified to provide individuals with the conditions for the autonomous life when they do not want to be autonomous.

Raz, however, thinks that it is legitimate to promote autonomy towards the individual even if he is not in favour of it, because of the importance of autonomy for our social relations and the societies we live in. Thus, an individual may oppose being autonomous but live in a Western society that has an autonomy-supporting culture. The well-being and the possibilities for the individual to achieve his goals depend on the social relations and the society he belongs to. Therefore, in these societies the individual has a greater chance to achieve his goals and pursuits if he lives autonomously. The autonomous life is not simply a goal that the individual can strive for or not. It is a feature of the culture and the environment of which the individual is a member. Since Western individuals mostly live in societies in which the social forms are based on individual choice and since the options for an individual are in general limited by what is available in his society, an individual in these societies can only have a prosperous life once he is autonomous. Thus, it is because of the general character of autonomy-supporting environments that personal autonomy is valuable in these societies (Raz, 1986, pp. 390-394).

Still, for me there remains a worry about the value of autonomy not being unconditional. Our autonomy-supporting societies seem to be stable now, but that is not a guarantee that it will remain this way. Once our pursuits and goals can be achieved otherwise, autonomy will become of less value (Waldron, 1988, p.1121), that is when we defend autonomy in the way Raz does. This is problematic because we value our autonomous life, not only because of the contribution to the good life, but as

something additional to that, we value being ‘the author of our lives’. As we value this so much, it feels insufficient that we can only defend autonomy as helping to reach a good life. We would want something more than that, to defend it as better than other ways to reach a good life. Raz, however, does not give us the conceptual tools to view our autonomy-supporting society as something more than an option to reach the good.

## **The role of valuable autonomy**

After discussing Raz's concept of autonomy and the relation his concept of autonomy has with the good (life), I think the focus should now be put on valuable autonomy. The concept of valuable autonomy summarizes the different aspects of autonomy that I discussed previously in this thesis. Moreover, I think that by looking at valuable autonomy one can understand how liberty and perfectionism for Raz can be compatible. It is because of the importance of intrinsically valuable goods that autonomy may be limited. Autonomy is in the end a constituent element of the good life. The concept of valuable autonomy is presented by Raz as a conclusion of his doctrine of autonomy-based freedom. I think this autonomy-based freedom can be seen as the position of Raz within the debate on liberal perfectionism, because autonomy-based freedom balances the freedom for the individual and limitations of that freedom which it justifies by pointing at the importance of valuable goods. I will discuss the two main limitations of autonomy-based freedom that Raz mentions, which is where Raz's concept of valuable autonomy consists in.

The first main limitation of autonomy is a further explanation of the adequate range of options which is one of the necessary requirements of autonomy. As we previously noted (in chapter 1), one of the requirements for autonomy is that the individual has the possibility to choose among an adequate range of options. However, in his justification of the doctrine of autonomy-based freedom, Raz emphasizes that the requirement does not entail that any particular option is required. It is a natural feature of our modern societies that available options change all the time. In addition, governments play their role in the change of options, they make sure that the adequacy of options remains the same or that options do not change when that would harm too many individuals. For the requirement of an adequate range of options, it does not matter that the options change as long as they remain adequate (Raz, 1986, pp. 410-411). To illustrate this, suppose I like sports a lot and it does not really matter to me which sport as long as it is a ballgame. First, there was a possibility to play both tennis and football in my neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the number of members of the football club decreased enormously and the club went bankrupt. Instead, the municipality built new sport facilities allowing all the members of the municipality to play basketball. Although the options have changed, the adequacy remains the same.

The change in options becomes problematic, according to Raz, once people are committed to a specific option (Raz, 1986, p. 411). Since a valuable autonomous life consists in the possibility to achieve one's goals and pursuits in life, taking away an option is harmful for individuals. Taking away an option of people who are already committed to that option and for whom it is part of their projects in life, is obviously more harmful than taking away an option that has never been available to them.

A loss of autonomy will always be worse in the case of people that are committed to an option, for whom it is part of their projects in life. Therefore, this group is of main concern when changes in options arise.

I have a difficulty with this first limitation explanation. I think that Raz is clear in his explanation of why an adequacy of options needs to be protected and that it is necessary for governments to play their role in this. I think that intervention by the state to initiate or direct the economic and technological processes in a society is nowadays commonly accepted. In addition, it seems necessary for the autonomy of the citizens that the state intervenes in these processes in order for the options to remain adequate. However, I think that Raz's gradual difference in options to which people are committed and options to which no one is committed is harder to uphold. According to Raz, a limitation of the options of the individual will have more negative effect on the individual once he is committed to one of the options available in his society. However, it seems hard to take away options without thereby harming certain individuals, as Raz seems to suggest (Raz, 1986, p. 411). There will always be individuals benefiting from certain options now and suffering when these options are taken away. So the distinction between options to which individuals are committed and options that no one is committed to, seems inadequate. Once we take committed individuals into account it will be almost impossible to take away some of the options. A possible solution to this would be to have a standard which gives one the possibility to determine the harm that is done by taking away an option. For example, focusing on the number of people that are committed to an option or the length of their commitment to the option. This creates the possibility to make gradual differences in taking away options. However, Raz does not provide us with such a standard and therefore it remains unclear how we are to judge these matters correctly.

The second main limitation of autonomy-based freedom is with respect to autonomy directed towards the good. The autonomous life should be directed towards the good. Only in this way can autonomy contribute to a good life. By means of this second limitation of autonomy, Raz establishes the concept of valuable autonomy. As discussed when we were looking at the relation between autonomy and the good, Raz merely gives a conditional argument why autonomy is needed, namely because of the autonomy-supporting societies we live in. In these societies autonomy is essential for living a good life. Raz holds his concept of autonomy to be compatible with bad options, but does not think that they are necessary for the autonomous life, because these options do not contribute to the good life. Instead, autonomously choosing for bad options could make one's life worse than had one *non-autonomously* been provided with the good (Raz, 1986, p. 412). Therefore, Raz thinks that the autonomous life can be limited to good options and this provides him with a justification for his concept of valuable autonomy. Valuable autonomy needs to be understood as the concept of autonomy that fits Raz's liberal perfectionism. It is the liberty of the individual to choose between valuable goods. It is the level of autonomy that is necessary to contribute to the good life.

I think that in general this second limitation of autonomy-based freedom nicely fits Raz's account of liberal perfectionism. When the ultimate concern is directed to the good life it seems necessary that autonomy will also be directed towards the good life. It is not the autonomous life that is valuable as such, instead it is the level of autonomy that contributes to the good life that is of concern. Therefore, the level of autonomy with which the individual is provided must always be proportional to its contribution to the good life. This obviously asks for autonomy directed at the good. Still, that does not mean that the position of Raz on autonomy is uncontroversial. It has a clear risk of becoming paternalistic. I think that until this point, we have already seen various examples of Raz preferring the good life over autonomy which makes, I think, a paternalistic critique possible. It is, however, essential for a paternalistic critique to have a good understanding of the concept of autonomy in Raz. In the last chapter I will address the concern of paternalism and show the importance of a good understanding of autonomy in Raz.

## **Raz's liberal perfectionism and the risk of paternalism**

When presenting the concept of valuable autonomy, Raz is already aware of the fact that this concept is vulnerable to the critique of paternalism. The idea that the state should be able to have an influence in promoting the good for the individual seems to run the risk of becoming overly paternalistic. To an extent Raz embraces the idea of paternalism. In his autonomy-based concept of freedom it is indeed the state that is justified in limiting the options for the individual. This is because the state needs to promote valuable goods towards the individual. Still, Raz clearly does not want to embrace a picture of the state acting like 'Big brother', rigorously infringing the autonomy of the individual. After Raz has presented the concept of valuable autonomy he gives two arguments why he does not think that his idea of autonomy will lead into an overly paternalistic state.

The first argument he presents is that his liberal perfectionism does not provide the state with unrestricted power to act. According to Raz, the state obtains a right to promote a certain option towards the individual when this can really be said to be a valuable option. Still, if the state is likely to judge the value of an option incorrectly, it will lack the authority to judge at all. Raz thinks that his discussion of state authority is sufficient to show that the state will not misuse its power (Raz,1986, p.412). I do not want to go into Raz's discussion of state authority, because I do not think that this is necessary to raise some issues with this argument.<sup>2</sup> Raz downplays the risk of a paternalistic state by focusing on the tools that will be given to the state to influence the goal of valuable autonomy. So, the state will only obtain the right to promote a certain good when it really is a valuable good. The question remains how the individual can be sure that the state will judge these matters correctly. There seems to be a risk that the state misuses its power to promote certain goods that it thinks to be good. However, it remains unclear how the state will be able to judge the matters correctly and what would be the way to correct the judgment. Among the goods that are valuable there seems to be room for interpretation. The state will ultimately have to decide whether the good is valuable or not, whether it contributes to the good life. This seems to be a very difficult task, because Raz does not give us the tools to recognize these goods as such. A legitimate form of state authority therefore does not take away the concern that it will be very difficult for the state to judge these matters correctly. In addition, it does not take away the concern that it will be hard for individual citizens to correct these judgements.

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<sup>2</sup> In the part of his book in which Raz justifies a certain form of state authority, he also talks about valuable goods. However, I think that this justification of authority merely shows the way in which state authority is ultimately grounded in valuable goods. It does not show how an authority should judge whether a good is valuable or not, it mainly shows that the authority is legitimate because of the need of valuable goods for the individual. Therefore, I do think that a notion of state authority will take away the concern that the state will have a difficulty in judging which goods are valuable nor that it is able to misuse its power in judging what the valuable goods are.



The second argument that Raz gives is an emphasis on the importance of autonomy and value pluralism in his concept of autonomy-based freedom. Raz states that because he has incorporated in his theory that the individual should be able to live in accordance with his own perception of the good life (value pluralism) and because the individual should be able to create his life himself (autonomous life), his liberal perfectionism does not run the risk of paternalism (Raz, 1986, p.412). In this argument Raz shows that he thinks that his theory is resistant to the concern of being overly paternalistic. He does not think that it will become a problem for autonomy, which is his main concern. I think that the way in which Raz has established his core concept of valuable autonomy, makes him less vulnerable for the paternalistic critique. Therefore, he can have an adequate response to his critics. The way he does this, needs further explanation.

So, Raz does embrace a basic account of paternalism, but does not think that embracing paternalism is necessary to defend his position. Instead of calling himself either a pro-paternalist or an anti-paternalist, he wants to focus on the role that paternalism can play with regard to autonomy. His main concern is that paternalism would limit his concept of valuable autonomy. Therefore, he distinguishes between the use of paternalistic measures in instrumental goods and in intrinsically valuable goods. Only intervention in goods that are instrumentally contributing to the good life is legitimate for Raz. The measures undertaken to intervene in these instrumental goods do not infringe autonomy. The mere focus on intervening in these goods is improving the safety for the ones that are engaged in such activities and for the society as a whole. The individual is subject to an intervention that is done to prevent this person himself (Raz, 1986, pp.422-423).

In this way, the relation between valuable autonomy and paternalism for Raz becomes clear. The autonomy of the individual is limited by paternalism when the individual's autonomy is not directed to the morally good of either himself or the society. Infringing autonomy by paternalistic measures is allowed when these goods are not part of the intrinsically valuable goods. These infringements are not allowed when these goods do form a part of the intrinsically valuable goods. Then the paternalistic measures would limit the autonomy of the individual in a harmful way (Raz, 1986, pp.422-423). Additionally, Raz gives two restrictions on the perfectionist/ paternalistic policies which will have to prevent the paternalistic state from becoming Big brother. First, the paternalistic policies will have to be compatible with respect for autonomy. They must, therefore, be confined to the creation of the conditions of autonomy. Second, they must respect the limitation on the use of coercion that is imposed by the Mill's harm principle<sup>3</sup>, as well as the analogous restriction on manipulation.

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<sup>3</sup> I will not discuss the harm principle of John Stuart Mill here, because it seems to me beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I want to mention here that Raz expands the scope of the harm principle by including the possibility to protect the individual for the harm he can do to himself, in addition to protection of harm that he can do to other individuals.

The compatibility of autonomy and paternalism remains the main concern for Raz. However, not all liberal theorists hold the view that paternalistic measures will not harm the autonomy of the individual. One of the most clear opponents of Raz on the compatibility of autonomy and paternalism is Gerald Dworkin (1988). In Dworkin's account of paternalism, a violation of autonomy is inherent to the notion of paternalism. Dworkin formulates his argument as follows: Autonomy is the right to freely choose among a number of options. Paternalism, on the other hand, involves depriving the individual from the right to choose what he or she already decided or depriving one from the right to freely deliberate about what one wants to decide. Thus, paternalistic measures will result in an infringement in the autonomy of the individual (Dworkin, 1988, p. 123).

I think that Dworkin is right that embracing paternalism will not leave autonomy unattached. However, I think that it is important to see here that Dworkin and Raz do not hold the same view with respect to autonomy. Whereas for Dworkin any infringement in the freedom to choose is a problem for autonomy, Raz has already limited autonomy to valuable autonomy. For valuable autonomy, infringing the right to choose does not matter as long as it is compatible with the requirements for autonomy. So, we have to formulate a critique towards Raz, thereby taking his own notion of autonomy into account. For the way this is done in the literature, I will use Farrell (1991) as a foil. Farrell (1991) bases himself on Dworkin and thinks that it is possible to criticize Raz because of an inconsistency in Raz's concept of autonomy and the concept of paternalism. For the purpose of showing the truth of his claim, Farrell distinguishes between different forms of paternalism and autonomy and places the concepts of Raz in this scheme.

Farrell (1991) argues that Raz's concept of autonomy can be summarized as the capacity to exercise choice. What matters for this 'type' of autonomy is that impediments are taken away, thereby creating an opportunity for the individual to exercise meaningful autonomy. Farrell contrasts this conception of autonomy with autonomy as the capacity to choose and autonomy as derived from the moral law. I think that it is clear that Raz's concept of autonomy does not consist in applying the moral law, because Raz mentions this himself (Raz, 1986, p.370). However, I do not think that Farrell is right in the distinction between autonomy as the exercise of choice and autonomy as the capacity to choose in Raz. I think that for Raz, the exercise of choosing already presupposes that the individual has the capacity to choose. In order for the exercise of choosing to take place, the requirements of autonomy have to be met. Among these are mental abilities and independence. Therefore, the capacity to choose seems to me, to be a prerequisite for Raz for the exercise of choice.

Furthermore, Farrell (1991, pp.56-57) mentions a few criteria which make it possible to summarize Raz's position on paternalism. At first, Farrell thinks that Raz holds a pure instead of an impure vision on paternalism. In the pure sense of paternalism, the group of people whose freedom is restricted is the same as the group of people that benefits from this restriction. In addition, Farrell thinks that Raz is in favour of cooperative instead of conflictful paternalism. Cooperative paternalism means that the paternalistic measures are undertaken in order to improve the competency of the

individual in the long run. I suppose competency here refers to the capacity to make good choices, but Farrell does not explicate this. Lastly<sup>4</sup>, Raz's paternalism is characterized by non-coercion instead of coercion. I think this needs no further explanation (Farrell, 1991, pp. 55-56).

So, the reason why for Farrell this results in an inconsistency between autonomy and paternalism in Raz is because the exercise of choosing (autonomy) is limited by non-coercive paternalism. As long as certain valuable goods are promoted towards the individual, he will not be able to be free in his exercise of choice. Therefore, embracing Raz's concept of paternalism will always lead to a limitation of Raz's concept of autonomy. This makes the concepts inconsistent. However, I do not think that Farrell is right in his conclusion. By limiting the concept of autonomy in Raz's theory to the exercise of choosing, Farrell misses the distinguishing element of Raz's concept of autonomy. This distinguishing element is autonomy directed towards the good, *valuable* autonomy. For Raz's valuable autonomy, the exercise of choosing should be directed towards the good. As a result, there is not an inconsistency with paternalistic measures that non-coercively promote the good towards the individual, since paternalistic measures that promote the good are a part of valuable autonomy.

I think that this shows that Raz's concept of valuable autonomy already includes the paternalistic measures that he later on discusses in a reply to the critique of paternalism. Therefore, I do not think that Raz is vulnerable for the critique of an inconsistency because of his paternalism. Paternalism and autonomy can, in my view, not be taken separately in his theory. However, that does not mean Raz has entirely solved the problem of paternalism. I think that the risk for Raz of being overly paternalistic becomes most clear when looking at the way he establishes his concept of valuable autonomy. I think that in this thesis, I have shown that at times Raz makes choices that run the risk of being too paternalistic, for example the fact that for the ideal of valuable autonomy bad options are unnecessary. A good understanding of Raz's core concept of valuable autonomy, which was the central aim of this thesis, is essential to formulate adequate paternalistic critiques towards Raz. A further analysis of the role that paternalism plays in the establishment of valuable autonomy, could put more flesh on the bones of a paternalist critique against Raz. This is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

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<sup>4</sup> I am aware that Farrell makes one more distinction between active and passive paternalism. However, he admits that he is not sure which of these applies to Raz. Therefore, I leave this distinction out of my discussion of Farrell and Raz.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, the main objective has been to dig into Joseph Raz's liberal perfectionism and discuss the role of autonomy in his theory. In his book *The Morality of Freedom* (1986), Raz establishes a contemporary version of liberal perfectionism. For Raz, autonomy is an essential concept to balance the freedom of the individual with the promotion of valuable goods. The personal autonomy of the individual should be limited proportionately to the promotion of valuable goods.

Raz argues that there are three requirements that have to be met for the individual to be able to live an autonomous life. The individual needs to have appropriate mental abilities, an adequate range of options and independence. An adequate range of options is the most demanding requirement of autonomy. This requirement asks for an outbalanced variety of options between long-term decisions and short-term decisions. Moreover, Raz thinks that adequate options should be connected with value pluralism. Value pluralism gives the individual the possibility to freely choose a form of life that is valuable to him, because it emphasizes the value of different styles of life. By achieving goals and pursuits himself, the autonomous life can contribute to the well-being of the individual.

After explaining the general role of autonomy in Raz's theory, I critically analysed the role of valuable goods and the role of valuable autonomy. Raz distinguishes different types of goods. The most important type for this thesis has been valuable goods that are not intrinsically valuable, because this is what autonomy is for Raz. Autonomy is not a valuable good in itself but merely valuable as a constituent element of the good life. Raz argues that, for being a constituent element of the good life, autonomy can mainly exist in morally good options. I showed that limiting the options for the individual to morally good options can be problematic for developing moral virtue. Moreover, I discussed that Raz does not embrace autonomy unconditionally and that this is unsatisfactory for how we value our autonomous lives. Valuable autonomy is essentially autonomy used for the moral good. In my discussion of valuable autonomy, I showed that there are problems with the option-commitment that Raz discusses.

In the end, I discussed the paternalistic critique against Raz. I defended Raz's theory against the claim of inconsistency by Farrell (1991), because Farrell does not adequately take into account Raz's limitation of autonomy within valuable autonomy. Still, I think that there is room for discussion of paternalism in Raz when focusing on the role that paternalism plays when Raz establishes his concept of valuable autonomy. I think that I have showed in this thesis that Raz, in establishing his concept of valuable autonomy, frequently makes choices that can be argued to be too paternalistic. A further analysis of the role of paternalism in the concept of valuable autonomy can put more flesh on the bones of a paternalistic critique on Raz.. However, that analysis was beyond the scope of this thesis.

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