

# THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF ECOLOGICAL AUTONOMY

By

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(Under the Direction of Beth Preston)

## ABSTRACT

The prevailing way to think about individual autonomy has been shaped by two central enlightenment-era concepts: the individual conceived as the atomistic self and autonomy required for moral agency and responsibility. However, these concepts are problematic because they largely ignore externalities in social contexts in that obstruct autonomy. Replacing atomistic individualism and autonomy with ecological counterparts reveals a spectrum of internal and external dimensions. Autonomy must include action and requires a new set of competency and authenticity conditions. Positing these reveals a wider range of autonomy obstructions. To understand their scope, the epistemic, political, and moral aspects of autonomy are underscored. Constraints obstruct thinking and action, competency and authenticity, and arise internally and externally. While community can obstruct individual autonomy, it also generates and sustains it. To understand how, community must be co-defined with place. I argue that individuals and autonomy are ecological. I define place and community as mutually constitutive companion concepts with alternate emphases. Place emphasizes physical and social, natural and artificial environments, but includes

people and social practices, while community emphasizes social practices, knowledge, and values, but includes environments. I argue that place and community generate environmental resources necessary for ecological individualism and autonomy. The concept of community autonomy has gained traction in various areas, including Food Justice, Communitarianism, and Collective Epistemology. I review versions of community and community autonomy from these areas. While each has merit, they lack a sufficient epistemological account of how individual beliefs are aggregated into collective beliefs and decisions. Therefore, only notions of external community autonomy exist. On my view, community autonomy consists internally in an ethos and institutional structure specifying procedural relations, seen primarily in the model of aggregating individual judgments into collective ones. It exists externally in the relationships it has to other communities. Individual autonomy can be a model for community autonomy, but competency and authenticity conditions are needed.

INDEX WORDS: autonomy, environmental philosophy, social philosophy, community

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## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### i. Paper I

The problem addressed in this paper is that atomistic conceptions of the individual and liberal accounts of autonomy that follow do not fully consider environmental conditions and so cannot accommodate context, particularity, and relationality of individuals and external obstructions to autonomy that arise from one's social and physical location. Consequently, reconceiving the individual and autonomy as ecological or partly environmentally constituted is needed. Autonomy has been conceived as the internal capacity to think for oneself competently and authentically (in a way that is truly one's own). On my view, introducing the external dimension allows for another capacity of autonomy: action. Accordingly, a new set of competency and authenticity conditions are needed for it. Positing them allows environmentally arising obstructions to autonomy to be seen. Externally arising obstructions affect thought and affect action.

Descartes conceived the leading notion of the modern individual as essentially only mental. Kant thought autonomy consisted merely in the internal capacity to think for oneself, and that all obstructions to it arise from the individual. Rawls (1971) asserted that individuals can still maintain their identity even if environmental circumstances that determine it are not considered. Dworkin (1988) and Frankfurt (1988) posit a liberal autonomy that does not consider action as distinct from thought. Ecological feminist



philosophers offer accounts of the individual as partly environmentally constituted, e.g. Pumwood's (1993) ecological self and Code's (2006) ecological subject, as have philosophers of place (Malpas 1999; Preston 2003). Feminist political philosophers have conceived autonomy as relational, degree based, and contextual (Friedman 1997, 2003; Meyers 1989; Oshana 2006).

By using the ecological model of selfhood, I show how the self is related to other individuals and environments. This enables an ecological treatment of autonomy, which now can be seen across two dimensions: internal thought and external action. I revise traditional competency and authenticity conditions for thought, and posit new competency and authenticity conditions for actions. This allows socially arising obstructions to autonomy to be seen. I review internally arising obstructions that affect competency and authenticity of thought and action, and concentrate on highlighting the nature of socially arising obstructions to competency and authenticity of thought and action.

## **ii. Paper II**

Traditionally, the individual is treated as the central holder of autonomy, and community is its leading opposition. The problem is that the ways in which one's social and physical context generates autonomy have not been fully considered. Having previously discussed the socially arising obstructions to autonomy, I argue that social resources are also necessary for its generation and sustainability. On my view, the environment is comprised of two companion concepts: place and community. Place is primary and denotes the natural and physical location while community is the social

context of environment, but the two overlap. From the physical environment arise basic conditions for sense perception, orientation, subjectivity. From the social environment arise language, values, knowledge, and traditions. The place-community dyad provides resources necessary for competency and authentic thought and action.

Feminist philosophers and philosophers of place argue that the self is ecologically situated (Haraway 1988; Plumwood 1993; Code 2006) and geographically grounded (Casey 2001; Preston 2003). Autonomy scholars have recognized that the social context determines what is available to be chosen (Raz 1988; Oshana 2006). Scholars ranging from geography to philosophy argue that place is a “regional” concept that includes geographic location, social locale, and sense of place, which includes shared values, knowledge, and practices. Philosophers have theorized community differently. Collective epistemologists provide a consent-based model (Gilbert 1989; Tuomela 1982). Communitarians provide a values-based model (Sandel 1998; MacIntyre 2007; Taylor 1989; 1992;). But a place-based model is necessary to account for pluralistic individuals who do not consent and who may not share values.

By using the place-based model I show how externally arising resources that are both natural and social generate the conditions for autonomy. These include phenomenological resources that ground sensory perception and orientation, hermeneutical and epistemic resources such as language and place-based knowledge, moral and political resources such as place-based values, and existential resources concerning identity. I show how each of these corresponds to the four conditions of

autonomy— competency of thought, authenticity of thought, competency of action, and authenticity of action— providing the generating resources for each condition.

### **iii. Paper III**

Autonomy is traditionally treated as the capacity for independent thought of individuals, but it is also applied to communities. Community autonomy is treated as an external capacity of sovereignty and the negative right of noninterference. But while external community autonomy has been posited, it has not been given a treatment according to competency and authenticity conditions. Further, because autonomy is ecological, then it is both an internal and external capacity. Accordingly, an account of internal collective autonomy is missing from the discourse. I define community and then revise traditional accounts of sovereignty to make external autonomy more ecological, positing competency and authenticity conditions, and I posit new competency and authenticity conditions for internal collective autonomy.

Community and community autonomy are discussed in food justice, political philosophy, and collective epistemology, but each posits insufficient models of both concepts. Scholars in food justice conceive community as a regional, culturally specific subgroup within a larger country and autonomy as noninterference (Pena 2003; Mares and Pena 2011). Communitarian philosophers argue that community is the city or state, which is grounded on shared values (Sandel 1984; 1998; Etzioni 1999; Taylor 1989; MacIntyre 2007). They too treat external autonomy as noninterference. Collective epistemologists have a model for community as a contractual social group, and autonomy as the aggregation of individual beliefs and decisions into collective ones

(Gilbert 1989; 2002; 2006, Tuomela 1992; 2011). Each model has a benefit, but none can accommodate both internal and external community autonomy. To do so, community must be co-defined with place to highlight the various dimensions— physical location including environmental resources, social locale, and sense of place.

I argue that a community may be internally and externally autonomous. External autonomy includes not only noninterference, but also eco-sovereignty (Dahbour 2013), which is the right of self-rule of people and sovereignty over environmental resources necessary to maintain a community's collective identity. This is the external competency condition: political and ecological independence. The external authenticity condition ensures that such action is culturally appropriate to a community's collective identity. The collective internal competency condition consists in an institutional procedure to aggregate individual beliefs into collective ones. The internal authenticity condition ensures that collective beliefs extend from a culturally appropriate ethos that frames the social context of the community and entails constitutive goals, beliefs, and standards of collective thinking, and secondly that those beliefs are genuinely representative of individuals within them.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

### **i. Paper I**

The most significant contribution from this paper is the idea that autonomy, not just individuals, can be seen as ecological. This means that both are determined by environmental conditions. Consequently, autonomy has two dimensions: an internal dimension of thought and an external dimension of action. While many scholars have

offered competency and authenticity conditions for internal autonomy, my account advances two sets of competency and authenticity conditions, one of thought and one for action. The inclusion of the external dimension allows socially arising obstructions to be seen, and as well as the ways they obstruct both thought and action.

The treatment of autonomy as ecological expands the feminist account of relational autonomy by showing that the larger environment is social, not just familial, and its physicality shapes how individual autonomy is exercised. Regarding discourse on adaptive preferences, I make distinctions between false preferences and false needs. The former are oppressive adaptive preferences, and the latter are the same but treated as necessary. This allows for greater nuance in distinguishing what oppressive obstructions to autonomy are and how they operate, both externally and internally.

## **ii. Paper II**

The most significant contribution from this paper is the idea that place and community can be seen as companion concepts that generate the resources needed for autonomy of thought and action. I situate the ecological self within place as the natural and physical context and within community as the body of interdependent individuals dwelling in a locale. Because places have particular natural and physical features along with social ones, including place-based values, knowledge and practices, then individuals and autonomy are partly constituted by such features. From them, various resources necessary for autonomous thought and action are gained. Such resources are subjective orientation and perception, place-based language, knowledge, and practices, and place-based values, morality, and ethical thinking.

Within the discourse, this paper's significance comes in theoretically developing place and community as companion concepts, which means parsing out leading notions of each to see how they mutually constitute one another. I consider values and consent-based models, but posit place-based as the most promising model. This model asserts both natural and social environmental conditions as constitutive of place and the community within. The second major contribution is developing an account of how autonomy is socially generated, rather than an innate capacity of reason. By extension, the contribution is underscoring the generative effects, rather than the merely obstructive effects of social resources on autonomy. I show how place generates resources necessary for competency and authenticity conditions of both thought and action.

### **iii. Paper III**

This paper's most significant conclusion is that autonomy can be applied to communities, not just individuals, and it can be applied ecologically. This means that communities can think, not just act, collectively and for themselves. To do so, competency and authenticity conditions for thought and action must be met. I treat these conditions ecologically, situating communities within and around other communities, and view communities internally as composed of a political body of interdependent individuals dwelling in an environment. The place-based model of communities is the only one that treats individuals ecologically, incorporates social and physical environmental features, and accommodates pluralistic communities.

While collective external autonomy has been discussed, I posited competency and authenticity conditions for collective action, which I have seen no one do. And I posit it as ecologically situated in relation to environmental resources, the use of which is necessary for a community to maintain its identity. Secondly, I posit internal collective autonomy, which has not been applied to communities in autonomy discourse, and offer competency and authenticity conditions for it. The central contribution here consists in positing that communities need an institutional structure that specifies aggregation procedures to transfer individual beliefs and decisions into collective ones. Only then can communities be both externally and internally autonomous.

## **THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF ECOLOGICAL AUTONOMY**

The prevailing way to think about individual autonomy has been shaped by two central enlightenment-era concepts: the individual conceived as the atomistic self and autonomy required for moral agency and responsibility. However, these concepts are problematic because they largely ignore externalities in social contexts in that obstruct autonomy. Replacing atomistic individualism and autonomy with ecological counterparts reveals a spectrum of internal and external dimensions. Autonomy must include action, not just thought, and so requires a new set of competency and authenticity conditions. Positing these reveals a wider range of autonomy obstructions. Constraints obstruct thinking and action, competency and authenticity, and arise internally and externally. In section I, I define ecological individualism and autonomy. In section II, I develop a theory of ecological autonomy by providing two sets of competency and authenticity conditions, one for thought and one for action. In section III, I outline obstructions to autonomy that arise internally. In section IV, I outline obstructions to autonomy that arise externally. In section V, I connect these obstructions to the debate between adaptive and false preferences, and argue for additional categories.



## I. INDIVIDUALS AND AUTONOMY

### i. Atomistic individuals and autonomy

Immanuel Kant (2014) pioneered the liberal concept of autonomy. Autonomy is the capacity to use reason to think for oneself in order to emerge as a cognitively self-sufficient individual. Kant employed the Cartesian individual, critically referred to as “atomistic.” Reason is the dominant capacity that enables and obligates the individual to free himself from ignorance and dependence on others. From an atomistic individual, an atomistic autonomy followed. It advanced only the internal epistemic dimension of autonomy and held reason as the central universal competency condition. Kant thinks only the internal process of rational preference formation is a *primary* condition of autonomy, whereas action is a component, but only secondary (Kant 2014). Conceiving autonomy only as an internal capacity prevents the external dimension from being considered, which is typically where the most inimical autonomy obstructions arise.

Liberals continue to view autonomy as a universal internal capacity for independent rational choices (Rawls 1971; Dworkin 1988; Frankfurt 1988). This is flawed because it is predicated on a notion of individuals stripped of their social location (race, class, gender, environment etc.) and culture-based identity. Conceptions of the individual self determine notions of autonomy. When the individual is conceived without social and somatic aspects, then autonomy obstruction that occurs in the external dimension is not considered. This reflects problematic limits in traditional notions of the individual and autonomy.

## ii. **Ecological individuals and autonomy**

Conversely, social and feminist philosophers conceive autonomy as a matter of degree, reject the monolithic emphasis on reason in critical reflection, and argue that autonomy arises in the ways we relate to others. To do this, the atomistic self is rejected in favor of the social self. Individuals are conceived as essentially relational, embodied, and socially embedded (Friedman 1997, 2003; Meyers 1989). A new conception of the individual enables a new conception of autonomy, *viz. relational autonomy*. Autonomy is relational because its generation is affected by and extends from others and its practice occurs in relation to others. Autonomy is practiced across intersecting relationships of interconnection and interdependence. Autonomy is enabled by parent-child or romantic relationships, and can be obstructed by abusive or oppressive relationships. Sometimes individual autonomy is obstructed by the presence of another person, one who is powerful, intimidating, or has social authority over someone else. Additionally, the social and physical environment provides a number of resources necessary to think and act autonomously. These include relationships of nurture and care from family and friends, a social world that enables a variety of commodities, lifestyles, and identities to be available.

Some scholars include natural environmental considerations along with social ones as being constitutive of individuals. Val Plumwood (1993) calls this the “ecological self,” while Lorraine Code (2006) calls it the “ecological subject”. Humans are dependent on the earth, its resources and ecological systems. Other scholars posit the natural physical environment’s role in enabling subjectivity, experience, and perception and identity

(Malpas 1999; Preston 2003). Both natural and social environmental resources affect not only the ecological individual's identity, but the very capacity to think and act, and what is available and accessible to be chosen. In expanding the notion of the social self to be ecological by including a wider set of autonomy-generating and obstructing resources, a similar expansion of autonomy is needed— ecological autonomy.

The conceptual starting point is the socially embedded, physically embodied, environmentally dependent individual, and a notion of autonomy that is degree-based and ecologically relational. Whereas relational autonomy focuses on family as the most effective social source on individual autonomy, I emphasize multifarious environmental relations individuals have to others. These include relations to family members, but also to friends, colleagues, communities, institutions, and environments, especially natural environments and ecological systems. Further, “ecological” captures inter-relationality, inter-dependency, and an essential *systems* perspective, including both social and physical environments. Because environment contextualizes how it is practiced, ecological autonomy is better suited to accommodate the contextual and degree-based nature of autonomy. If autonomy is degree-based and is affected by the individual in relation to the physical and social environment, then while one's global autonomy is generally consistent, one's local autonomy varies depending on a variety of external factors, including environment and the particular choice or action at hand. Ecological autonomy is a constitutive account because the ecological self is partly environmentally constituted. Not only do social and natural environmental factors affect the practice of autonomy, they are among the essential conditions needed to generate it. Because

environmental resources are required to generate autonomy, then lack or an unfavorable distribution of them can obstruct its generation or sustainability (Brisson 2000; Oshana 2006).

My view is that there are internal and external dimensions to ecological individualism and autonomy. The internal dimension captures thought, reflective endorsement, rational and emotional intelligence, and cognitive particularities of individuals that frame their perceptions and relations to the external. The external dimension captures action, empirical negotiation, environment, and particularities of places that frame perception and social relationships. Some features will fall under both dimensions, reflecting intersectional relationality. The dimensions also work in tandem. Race, class, and gender are external insofar as they are social concepts regarding political bodies, but internal insofar as they process, inform, and frame thinking. Social aspects are internalized in thinking and thought is externalized as action.

## **II. ECOLOGICAL AUTONOMY CONDITIONS**

Having defined ecological individualism and autonomy, I now provide a theory of ecological autonomy. Expanding autonomy from mere thought to include action contextualized in an environment requires not only reconceiving those conditions for internal autonomy, but it also demands an additional set of competency and authenticity conditions for external autonomy. Scholars discuss two central conditions for internal autonomy. “Competency conditions” require a procedure for autonomous thinking, while “authenticity conditions” require that procedure to be *genuine*. How competency and authenticity conditions are conceived will be determined by ecological

individualism and ecological autonomy. Because autonomy has a central epistemic component, not just political or actional ones, then not only must the individual be conceived as social, but so too must a social epistemological analysis be employed.

Ecological thinking is Code's term for both the systemic and individualistic social nature of epistemology (Code 2006). Knowledge systems are social and individuals using them are socially interrelated and epistemically interdependent. Social aspects affect knowledge formation and exchange. Some scholars argue that knowledge is not produced by individuals, but by communities (Nelson 1992). While notions of "rugged individualism" and atomistic independence have underwritten autonomy from the enlightenment throughout liberalism, no one is an epistemic island. While one must think for oneself to be competently autonomous, thinking *for* oneself is not necessarily thinking *by* oneself, nor without a set of socially produced and reified epistemological norms. Competency is not only consistent with garnering information and justification from others, but this social dimension is also sometimes necessary for it. Epistemology is thus *social*. Individuals must collect relevant epistemic data from others for one's preference to be informed, and they must reflectively endorse them for consent to be given.

The external dimension shapes the distribution of social resources necessary for autonomy, affecting how thinking is generated, practiced, and sustained for individuals. In turn, when thought is externalized as action, it follows from the internal dimension having been shaped by preceding social externalities. The entwined nature of the two dimensions illustrates that both individual identity and autonomy are generated,

sustained, and can therefore be obstructed by social location. Consequently, both the individual and autonomy must be conceived as ecological to accommodate the interrelated metaphysical and epistemic nature of each concept. Reconceiving the individual precedes reconceiving autonomy, and demands that competency and authenticity conditions must also be reconceived for thinking, and moreover requires a new set of competency and authenticity conditions for action.

**i. Internal competency condition**

Many contemporary philosophers such as Friedman (1997; 2003) argue that internal competency involves a process of “reflective endorsement.” One critically examines a plurality of considerations, reflects on their merits, and chooses according to one’s interests. Dominant procedural accounts hold that autonomous choices are not value-laden but content neutral; they require only a process of critical reflection and endorsement (Dworkin 1988; Frankfurt 1988). There are varying degrees of criteria for competency. While some accounts require only a minimalist or “thin” set of conditions, most accounts of relational autonomy require a “thick” set. On thin accounts, competency requires only the negative condition of a *lack* of obstruction to the minimal requirements for competency, e.g. absences of pathology, cognitive impairment, or direct coercion (Buss 2005; Narayan 2002). On thick accounts, positive conditions that emphasize either procedural or substantive constraints are required for competency. This means that preference formation must develop in a certain way, for example through reflective endorsement. On substantive accounts, preferences have to be sufficiently moral to be autonomous (Benson 1991; Wolf 1987). Truly autonomous

preferences cannot for example perpetuate the oppression of the individual. Thick accounts are the norm in feminist approaches (Stoljar 2015).

Substantive theories of autonomy are normatively constrained, requiring choices to be moral. Normative constraints may vary from weak to strong. On weak substantive accounts, moral conditions are thin and on strong accounts they are thick and directly apply to preferences. Some weak accounts include normative constraints not directly on preferences, but on preceding self-regarding and other-regarding dispositions (Govier 1993; McLeod 2002). This means that while actions themselves do not need to be moral to be autonomous, they must be motivated by certain substantive background dispositions. Strong substantive accounts do require decisions and actions to be directly moral, at varying thresholds. But decisions and actions are still born from a process of internal thinking and belief formation.

One question is whether substantive constraints have scope over the internal process of reflective endorsement, or over the external conditions that generate, sustain, or obstruct it. A central premise of my theory is that the internal and external dimensions of autonomy are entwined, and particularly that the external social conditions affect the quantity and quality of internal autonomy. So, substantive constraints do not need to have direct scope over internal autonomy, but only over the preceding external conditions that affect it.

On my view, internal competency requires a thick set of positive conditions. These include cognitive ability, availability of preference-making contexts, and access to a reasonable range of options. One must think, form preferences, and have a reasonable

amount of viable options necessary to make a meaningful choice. Internal competency also involves a thin set of negative conditions. These include a lack of cognitive impairment, lapses of rational or emotional intelligences, and the absence of direct coercion. One's cognitive skills and rational and emotional thinking must be present and sufficient, and one must not be coerced to choose or act.

I distinguish between direct and indirect coercion. Direct coercion occurs when a person is forced to choose or act, such as when a robber wielding a gun tells a bank teller to hand over money, who then obliges. Indirect coercion occurs when a person chooses or acts based on coerced background conditions, such as being deceived by others. Indirect coercion is a form of autonomy obstruction not because it is immoral to deceive others, but because deceiving them may preclude sufficient epistemic formation of beliefs necessary for informed choice. Autonomy is often discussed in issues of applied ethics, such as euthanasia, and informed consent is held as an essential condition (Lomelino 2015). This suggests that more pertinent than *substantive* constraints on autonomy are *epistemic* ones.

Competency of internal autonomy includes not only the use of rational intelligence, but also emotional intelligence. Karen Warren (2000) defines emotional intelligence as the part of the self that feels and cares, and which works in tandem with the part that thinks. Both the rational mind and the emotional mind are aspects of the brain (the neocortex and the limbic system respectively). Emotional intelligence includes compassion, empathy, and love, which Rousseau also posits as natural moral capacities integral to human development, and which accompany natural metaphysical capacities



of reason, free will, and self-improvement (Rousseau 1754). So, there is both contemporary and historical precedent for thinking that both rational and emotional capacities inform autonomy competency.

**ii. Internal authenticity condition**

For internal autonomy to be *genuine*, authenticity conditions are required. Preferences must be formed by an individual, but also for reasons that are truly her own. Authenticity is a concern because although an individual may make a choice, it may not *truly* be her own if she is under various internal or external constraints, or direct or indirect coercion. On my view, authentic choices must include consideration of *pertinent* information. One must consider the knowledge, information, and premises one has in mind that frame reflective endorsement. Just as authenticity does not primarily entail moral constraints, it also does not entail constraints on epistemic truth. While autonomy has an epistemic dimension, it does not consist in propositional truth or falsity, but the subjective preferences of individuals based on their knowledge and thinking. Yet knowledge is relevant because one forms preferences based on background epistemic conditions. One may have false, incomplete, or partial information, or one may be deceived by others or self-deceived.

For ecological autonomy to be authentic, it must involve not just *any* reflective endorsement, but *critical reflective endorsement*. This entails the negative conditions of a lack of self-deception and deception from others, and other forms of indirect coercion. It also entails two positive conditions. The first is that an individual must consider pertinent information in the procedure. What counts as *pertinent* will depend on the

circumstances regarding the individual, the preference, and the context in which it is made. For example, one may prefer to eat meat, but fail to critically examine the conditions of animal agriculture for lack of inclination or effort. If one does not consider the range of options or what each option really entails, then the choice is not sufficiently attuned to the available data, and so on my view would not be authentic. The other positive condition is a range of sufficiently different and viable options from which to form a belief, preference and decision. If one must make a choice, and the only option available or accessible is X, then although a “choice” is being made in the most general sense, it lacks a surrounding range of options needed to be *genuine*. Options must be *viable*, there must be a reasonable and pragmatic opportunity to select and utilize them. Without viability, options would be only formal or theoretical, not authentic.

On my view, choices are truly one’s own when an individual takes ownership of them— when one *owns* one’s choices. What is it to own an internal choice? It is first to meet competency conditions. To *own* a preference, choice, or decision, one must have clearly articulated reasons to which she gives consent. Owning a choice is parallel to owning, for example, property. For Locke, property arises through labor, because that is the “proper” use of land. In actively laboring the land for cultivation, a relationship with it is developed. The relational laboring is what creates ownership— I own the land because I engaged the process of cultivating it.

With internal ecological autonomy, a similar relationship must be developed between oneself and one’s choices and decisions. Here, *active* character arises from intellectual labor. It is a process of not simply *reflecting* upon a plurality of available

options, but doing so in a way that is *critical*. This involves considering the pertinent information in an active fashion where one seriously engages a set of questions about the possibilities of choice— what the options are, what their consequences entail, what is most reasonable or desirable, etc. Considering pertinent information is crucial to *truly* own one's choice, because it demands that one consider not only the required information, but the varieties and contingencies at play, particularly how external social contingencies affect internal procedure, which provides nuanced and textured consideration. When one examines the possibilities, considers their merits and faults, then one is in an epistemically better position to make a choice— one *owns* it by thinking through it thoroughly and forming a choice based on active reflexive consideration (Benson 2005).

**iii. External competency condition**

On my view, ecological autonomy requires an additional set of competency and authenticity conditions for action. Competency for autonomous action entails positive conditions, including having physical ability, skills, techniques, and embodied know-how required to act. Just as one must competently think for oneself in forming a preference, so too must one competently externalize that choice into an action. If one forms an internal preference to be vegan, one must be able to locate, access, prepare, and consume such foods. If one did not know how to do these things, then one would only be internally autonomous in choosing such a lifestyle. To be fully autonomous, one must know how to materialize an internal choice into embodied action within a social and environmental context. Otherwise, autonomous choice does not reach fruition in

competent action. This underscores why autonomy must be external, not simply internal.

One's ability to externalize an internal choice into action is affected by the socio-environmental context. This means that competency also entails the negative conditions of not being directly coerced, constrained, stymied, or obstructed from performing an action. Such obstructions concern both the social and environmental context. For example, if a prisoner whose arms are bound to a wall is asked to choose between apples that he cannot reach, then the preference is exclusively internal, for he is precluded from externally choosing through action because of social conditions. For the choice to reach fruition, the prisoner would need to be able to attain his preferred apple. As another example, one may prefer to drink cold brew coffee, but find oneself in a cafe that sells only iced coffee and espresso. This example illustrates the environmental constraints that obstruct internal preferences from externalizing into action. Only when internal preferences materialize into action is the fullest expression of autonomy reached.

**iv. External authenticity condition**

On my view, authenticity conditions concern whether actions are *culturally* appropriate. Authenticity for internal choice ensures that beliefs and decisions are truly one's own, that is, genuine. Because beliefs and thinking are primarily internal, then they are indexed to the individual. Because actions are external, and occur in socio-environmental contexts, then while actions come from the individual, they are indexed to the socio-cultural standards in which they occur. The external competency condition

illustrates that to perform an action correctly, it must meet standards outside the individual. It must cohere with what is socially seen as sufficient. Likewise, the external authenticity condition requires that actions cohere with what is culturally appropriate. Cultural appropriateness is what is genuine for action, because socio-cultural standards are the basis that allows actions to be true in this sense. If there were not such standards outside the individual, then there would be no difference between competency and authenticity— to do something at all would be to do it genuinely. To eat Chinese food authentically with chopsticks is not simply to find some way to use the sticks to pick up the food, but to use the sticks in a particular, culturally appropriate way by gripping them one-handed with the thumb, index, and middle finger. This reflects once again that the sense of self (*auto*) I begin with is not the isolated atomistic individual, but the embodied ecological individual embedded in and dependent on an environmental context from a social position. Further, the sense of rule (*nomos*) I use is physically embodied and socially embedded, which indexes action to the environment.

Authenticity of action entails the positive condition that actions are appropriate to a specified culture, community, or social context. Culture, community, and social context involve a number of features including shared practices, traditions, values, and knowledge. Actions are indexed to such social features. While social context constrains autonomy of action, and one feature of it is cultural values, the condition is still not substantive, or at least exclusively focused on *moral* substance. Rather, both moral and non-moral values are features of a cultural or community context. One can act inauthentically regarding another's community, e.g. offering pork to a halal Muslim. One

can act inauthentically regarding one's own community. If an Indian is vegetarian for cultural reasons, then she must be able to prepare Indian vegetarian foods, not simply any vegetarian foods. Because ecological identity is often intersectional, one may belong to multiple communities, and one's actions might be culturally appropriate to some, but not all communities to which one belongs (Meyers 2000).

### **III. INTERNALLY ARISING CONSTRAINTS**

A wider set of constraints and obstructions to autonomy can be seen across the internal and external dimensions. This means that some obstructions arise internally and others arise externally. Some internally arising obstructions constrain thinking and others constrain action. Likewise, some externally arising obstructions constrain thinking and others constrain action. Because traditional accounts of autonomy posit only the internal dimension, then only internally arising obstructions to competency and authenticity are considered. On ecological autonomy, both the internal and external dimensions are posited, which enables a new externally arising set of obstructions to competency and authenticity to be considered.

In sections III and IV, I outline two sets of constraints primarily through food choices: internally and externally arising constraints. The first set of constraints arises internally (from the individual), and affects competency and authenticity of thinking, and competency and authenticity of action. The second set of constraints arises externally (from the environment), and affects competency and authenticity of thinking, and competency and authenticity of action. Food choices are illustrative because subsistence needs are universal and foundational, involve various external and internal

features, and reflect three key dimensions of autonomy: the epistemic, political, and moral. Food choices also highlight the entwined nature of the internal and external dimensions along with the social nature of epistemology.

While internally arising constraints to competency and authenticity of thought have been well covered in the traditional liberal discourse, ecological autonomy expands the two categories of internally arising constraints to four by positing the external dimension. Consequently, internally arising constraints to competency and authenticity of action can now be considered. While this is important, ecological autonomy's main contribution will be to highlight the four categories in which externally arising obstructions to autonomy occur. This is not available at all on traditional accounts of autonomy, which is why some critical philosophers (Code 2006) continue to view the concept of autonomy skeptically. However, conceiving the self and autonomy as ecological allows for a naturalized treatment of externally arising constraints that illuminates the limits, but also the prospects for a critical autonomy.

**i. Internally arising competency constraints on thought**

Constraints on competency of thinking arise *internally* when one expends insufficient will or effort to think independently. Consider one who pays no attention to the nutritional content of food for lack of effort, not lack of ability. Here, one has alienated one's autonomy because one has forgone utilizing the capacity. To refuse or to make insufficient effort to think for oneself, to fail to examine available options and form a preference according to one's interests and intelligence when one is capable of doing so bespeaks a tragedy of autonomy: the failure to use a capacity that offers

ownership over one's choices and imbues greater meaning and value into one's existence through active and reflexive intellectual self-engagement.

Kant saw laziness and cowardice as the two central impediments to autonomy of thought (Kant 2014). Laziness occurs when an individual holds himself back from utilizing autonomy, while cowardice is when an individual allows himself to be held back from utilizing autonomy by the intimidation of others. Kant acknowledges obstructions to thought that arise internally. He calls those who think for others and upon whom unenlightened individuals rely "guardians." Those who rely on guardians to think for them alienate their autonomy by eschewing intellectual labor needed for competency. "If I have... a physician who prescribes my diet... I have no need to exert myself" (Kant 2014). It must be noted that because Kant treats autonomy primarily as a capacity for independent thinking, not necessarily action, then the obstructions to autonomy that arise socially, but affect one internally, are not considered. On Kant's view, while the guardians do arise socially, he thinks that it is still up to the individual as whether to follow them.

**ii. Internally arising authenticity constraints on thought**

Some internal constraints are self-imposed and affect authenticity. Individuals who fail to *critically* consider a variety of relevant options in forming beliefs and making decisions do not meet authenticity requirements on my account. This could also be because of a lack of sufficient will or effort to seek out relevant information and discover possible options. Those who patronize industrial animal agriculture without critically considering its conditions and ecological impact do not think and decide for



themselves authentically, even if they may do so competently. To reach genuine preference formation, critical reflection of pertinent information is needed. Without it, ownership of one's preferences required for authenticity is not met.

Individuals may fail to critically consider options even as they are able because of a chosen identity, which sometimes stifles critical thinking. Suppose an individual self-identifies as a hunter and meat eater. He may have been raised in a hunting community, and may connect his sense of self to a familial line of hunters. He may not consider the issue of animal rights critically first because he identifies as a meat eater, and consequently is confident that he would never change his mind, so knowing the conditions seems moot. Secondly, if such a person gets the majority of his meat through hunting, then that person might use it as the standard to judge the issue, and thus might not critically consider the issue of animal welfare in industrial animal agriculture. Similarly, an individual may identify as an animal lover and vegan and may contend that it is universally wrong for humans to kill nonhuman animals. She may not critically consider the issue of hunting, which concerns complexities regarding land and ecosystem management. These may include overpopulation of animals that may need to be hunted for the survival of other species. They may also include cases of invasive species that threaten lands, waters or other resources on which other nonhuman animals rely. So, either chosen identity can obstruct authenticity by stifling critical thought. Notice that for authenticity I am relying as much on *nomos* (ruling) as *auto* (self). Authentic choice does not simply come from an individual self, but rather comes

from the individual through critical thinking. Such is the way one genuinely rules oneself, because only then can one truly own a choice.

**iii. Internally arising competency constraints on action**

Constraints to competency of action arise internally for some of the same reasons as constraints to competency of thought. Sometimes individuals do not expend sufficient effort to learn how to perform an action or cultivate a skill. Individuals are able to perform an action, but are unwilling to undergo the training needed to act, and consequently do not develop the ability. Additionally, one may lack self-confidence in their ability to perform an action. In this case, an individual has the potential to cultivate a skill, but for reasons of insecurity forgoes the effort needed to cultivate it.

However, some internally arising constraints on competency of action arise not because one has the potential to perform an action, and does not, but precisely because one lacks the ability and potential. For example, some individuals lack a refined palate. For them, being a sommelier is virtually impossible, although that is their will. Here, the cause is not lack of effort, but lack of ability, and it arises not because one makes no attempt to perform an action or set of actions, but because one simply lacks the potential to cultivate a skill at all.

**iv. Internally arising authenticity constraints on action**

Constraints to authenticity of action arise internally when individuals fail to act in a culturally appropriate way. In these cases, the constraint is not lack of ability to perform an action at all, but lack of will to do something in a culturally appropriate fashion. One may not act authentically on purpose or out of ignorance for what is culturally

appropriate. One may not know the conventions of eating Ethiopian, and elect to pick the food up with a fork, rather than with the Injera. Alternatively, one may act with the intention of doing something they know to be contextually improper because they disagree with a particular convention. For example, an atheist might choose to refrain from saying “under God” in the pledge of allegiance. Such might have been her autonomous choice, but it would not be an authentic rendering of the pledge.

#### **IV. EXTERNALLY ARISING CONSTRAINTS**

##### **i. Externally arising competency constraints on thought**

Externally arising constraints obstruct competency of thought particularly by preventing social goods necessary for proper cognitive development and sustainability. Consider how the availability of nutritious food and education affects the socially embedded individual’s capacity to think. Studies establish that intake of healthy foods leads to better psychological health (Wrigley et al. 2003; Cummins et al. 2005). Cognitive development is essential for individuals to think for themselves and make choices. Typically, foods children are exposed to in formative years determine preferences for years to come. We become conditioned to want the foods we first eat. The availability and access to foods thus correlates to what individuals can buy, what informs and determines their preferences, and their ability to enact choices. It is also determinate of various health statuses that affect other current and future choices. If cognitive development is weakened, then externally arising constraints obstruct competency of thought.

Additionally, lack of availability or access to sufficient education that outfits

individuals with critical thinking skills, knowledge, and information can constrain the individual epistemically, creating longer term obstructions to the competency of thinking. Individuals need formal and informal education to cultivate and rarify their autonomy. They must be exposed to an array of issues, ideas, and options so that they can form preferences from among them. But if a society or community does not make such social goods available and accessible, then one's capacity for autonomy cannot be intellectually materialized. Some might confuse lack of availability and access with insufficient will or courage to think critically for oneself (Kant 2014). They think that despite external constraints, individuals have the equal universal ability enabled by reason to be autonomous. They do not fully appreciate how the internal capacity to reason and make choices for oneself is determined by one's social environment and the social goods necessary for them that society makes available and accessible.

**ii. Externally arising authenticity constraints on thought**

Possibly the most problematic externally arising constraints are to authenticity of thought. They arise from the social environment, but affect one's internal ability to genuinely think for oneself. I highlight coercive advertising as instances of what Herbert Marcuse calls "false needs" (1991) and in section V distinguish them from what many autonomy scholars call "false preferences" (Cudd 2006). Each suggests that external social conditions coerce individuals into choosing prevailing cultural standards by compelling them to adopt socially required modes of thinking and acting. One defining condition of false needs and preferences is that they occur structurally, not merely incidentally, and are oppressive. The difference between the two is that one is socially

necessary and the other may not be. False preferences arise from internalized oppression. Individuals might reason for themselves, but use an oppressive type of thinking and make the kinds of choices that perpetuate their oppression (Freidman 2003; Cudd 2006; Khader 2011). Marcuse calls the process “introjection” and sees advertising as the central means through which it occurs.

Marcuse (1991) argues that society creates “false needs”. False needs oppress individuals by demanding their assimilation to standards of external social culture and internal thinking. For Marcuse, there are two types of needs: vital and false. Vital needs are required for *biological* survival, e.g. food, water, and shelter, while false needs are every other need society imposes. These are *needs* because they are required for *social* survival, but what they actually are depends on the particular society. A need in this sense is a requirement for something treated as necessary that reflects some social or cultural status or identity. While false needs are determined by social and cultural standards, not biological ones, the two can overlap. In contemporary society, one needs a smart phone, computer, Internet access, and identity lifestyle reflected in the products one consumes, particularly food. Without them, one cannot maintain social standards seen as necessary, reinforced by cultural knowledge, values, conventions, and traditions and reified through the culture.

False needs externally arise but are primarily internal authenticity obstructions because they concern distinguishing choices that are truly one’s own from those that are socially imposed but oppressive. Because Marcuse posits only two categories, he does not consider varieties of social needs. For him, all false needs are “false” in being

unnecessary for biological survival and in being created by society. But some social needs are *oppressive* and seriously obstruct autonomy, while others are simply socially born, and may only trivially obstruct autonomy. False needs constrain authenticity of thought by minimizing individuality, critical rationality, and obstructing organization of true interests and values in preference formation. So, I distinguish between social and false needs. On my view, vital needs are required for biological survival, and social needs are required for social survival. “False needs” denote *oppressive* social needs. Food is a need consumed for biological and social survival, as it is a means through which political, moral, and identity-based choices are made. Food is a global or universal need but with local and particular social meaning. Everyone consumes food in culturally determined ways, but some modes of production and consumption are false because they are oppressive, such as social identification with harmful foods. Oppression stems from harmful structural and systemic conditions of society perpetrated upon social groups of individuals at a variety of intersections (Young 2004).

Society creates an intellectual atmosphere that trivializes, marginalizes, and overwhelms individual thinking. False needs are not merely internalized as singular instances of oppressive preferences. Rather, an entire framework of rationality and thinking are internalized. Marcuse calls this *technological rationality*, a type of reason subservient to one-dimensional needs and values. Society prescribes thought and action that reinforces this prevailing dimension. Thinking is one-dimensional because it is confined by and to the cultural and cognitive norms and standards of society.

“Technology also provides the great rationalization of the unfreedom of man and demonstrates the “technical” impossibility of being autonomous, of determining one’s own life... Technological rationality thus protects rather than cancels the legitimacy of domination, and the instrumental horizon of reason opens on a rationally totalitarian society” (Marcuse 1991, 159).

Authenticity requires the use of critical reason. Critical reason’s power is its capacity to be used to transcend prevailing social values, knowledge, and frameworks of thinking, and to enable individuals to autonomously choose such values and frameworks. To be sure, critical reason is the *sine qua non* intellectual capacity of internal autonomy. But it becomes mitigated, relegated, and displaced by technological rationality. Because technological society penetrates individuals, internal thinking is weakened, critical reason is warped, and external use of it is socially marginalized. When individuals think and act outside of one dimensionality, others do not take them seriously, and they are socially discouraged from being authentically autonomous in thought.

Advertising is seemingly omnipresent, encountered first externally, but it becomes internalized and constrains thinking. Typically, advertisements present monological arguments that pivot on creating a feeling of lacking in the audience, followed by the commodity that is said to fill the gap. Consequently, spectators are exposed to techniques of manipulation aimed at instilling insecurity satisfied only by the commodity. When treated in singular isolated instances appealing to vital or social needs, advertising hardly seems like a serious autonomy obstruction. When seen contextually and systematically as a culture of false needs— as a central means of

reifying oppression of technological society—advertising is a constant, omnipresent system of internal manipulation, a prime obstruction to internal authenticity.

Advertising is not reducible to advertisements. An advertisement is the marketing of a specific product for sale by a company that may appear on television, in print, or the Internet. Advertisements appeal to demographics and present brand identities. They are modes of self-regard that link brands to personal identity, which is internal, but becomes action-directing. However, both the presentation of products and lifestyles transcend overt adverts. For example, not only is there actual product placement in films, but films generally are advertisements for lifestyles, modes of thinking, and accounts of such ideas as love, courage, and justice. Shaping dominant notions of such ideas is a central effect of the culture industry (Horkheimer & Adorno 2007). Most problematic is that advertising *works*! It succeeds in manufacturing wants, transforming them into false needs, and linking them to identity. The focus on identity is to ensure loyalty in consumerism and it works most effectively when identities are established in consumers' lives sooner.

Consider *Hot Cheetos and Takis*, a song performed by a group of Minnesota children called Y.N. Rich Kids the video for which was widely circulated and reported, including by NPR and *The Washington Post*. The song was produced by Minneapolis' North side community YMCA after school program, and is a paean to honor the kids' favorite snacks—Hot Cheetos and Takis (a brand of mini rolled tortilla corn chips). Their spirited and infectious music along with its adorable topic resulted in over nine million YouTube views (Judkis 2012). Most discourse on the song focused on the cute novelty of African



American children delighting in their favorite snacks. But there was no comment on the fact that the area where the YMCA is is itself a food desert. To be sure, Cheetos take extra measures to ensure that the orange residue sticks to fingers as an ephemeral way to brand bodies, indeed to merge the brand with the body and to implant the identity connection in the mind. The idea that “you are what you eat” generates new ominous meaning when identity is seen as arising from the brand, rather than the nutrition. This example shows marketing toward children, establishing brand loyalty and tastes from an early age.

Although the song was treated as emblematic of choice and empowerment, it is more representative of successful identity branding and the creation false needs. The optimism that accompanied these goods belies their harmful causes and effects. Such foods produce higher rates of obesity, cancer, and can stymie cognitive development. Linking brands and junk foods to social identity of individuals and communities enables unhealthy foods to become the culturally accepted norm. Seen through introjection, false needs, and the internalization of false preferences, the song is a catchy tune of individual and community oppression. My point is not to scorn children for fetishizing unhealthy foods, for they are not informed, responsible, and autonomous in the same ways adults are. However, it is to show that dominant culture creates technologies of identity branding and targets children. If individuals socially identify with products as kids, they will likely stick with them throughout life (Raley 2006).

### **iii. Externally arising competency constraints on action**

Externally arising constraints on autonomy obstruct action. To illustrate the

externally arising constraints on competency of *action*, I discuss food deserts. A food desert is a census area of at least 500 individuals that lacks a grocery store within a one-mile radius in urban areas and a 10-mile one within rural areas (USDA 2016b). In 2010, the USDA found that 17.2 million households or 14.5% of households were “food insecure.” “Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (USDA 2016c). The USDA's Economic Research Service estimates that 23.5 million people live in food deserts. More than half of those people (13.5 million) are low-income (USDA 2016a). Many low-income denizens lacking transportation cannot access surrounding markets. Whether one can depends on one’s social location in the surrounding environment. If one lives in a food desert but is of an economic status that affords a car, the area will not be experienced as a food desert to that individual. If a food desert has sufficient and reasonable public transportation for denizens to access approximate groceries, then it may not produce negative effects. Autonomy is obstructed particularly for those of low economic means in areas that lack sufficient infrastructure. This reflects both the environmental, contextual and degree-based nature of autonomy.

Food deserts can stymie competency of action in various ways: obstructing food access, producing negative cognitive and physical health outcomes, and conditioning tastes and future choices. Because groceries are unavailable or inaccessible, then low-income individuals preferring fresh foods cannot externalize their choices as actions. Accordingly, many resort to bodegas, gas stations, and fast food restaurants, which sell mainly sugary, fatty, junk foods. Consequently, higher rates of obesity, cancer, and heart

disease, and lower rates of cognitive development abound in food deserts (NYLS 2012).

Negative health consequences produced by food deserts undermine autonomy in a variety of ways. In these areas, higher rates of obesity and increased rates for cancer and heart disease occur. One study found that the highest levels of obesity (32–40 %) were found in census tracts with no supermarkets (Larson et al. 2009 ). It also showed that better access to healthy foods leads to better intakes. Additional studies have shown that better access to supermarkets is associated with reduced risk of obesity and better access to convenience stores is associated with increased risk of obesity (Wrigley et al. 2003 ; Cummins et al. 2005 ). Greater availability of fast food restaurants and cheaper foods correlates to poorer diets. Cognitive development is crucial not only for extant individuals, but also for future individuals. The availability and access to foods thus correlates to what individuals can buy, what informs their choices, and their ability to enact those choices. It is also determinate of various health statuses that affect other current and future choices.

**iv. Externally arising authenticity constraints on action**

Externally arising constraints obstruct authenticity of action. This concerns obstructions on culturally appropriate preferences. Consider an Arab-American Muslim who prefers a Halal Mediterranean diet, but who, because of limited transportation, effectively experiences her community as a cultural food desert. She might not be compelled to drink alcohol or eat pork, but she could not access ingredients seen as essential to maintaining that diet, such as fava beans, tahini, or meat that has undergone the requisite slaughter procedure. Autonomy to live authentically according

to Arab-Islamic standards is obstructed by lack of availability and accessibility to goods necessary to make those choices and sustain that identity.

## **V. DISTINGUISHING FALSE NEEDS AND PREFERENCES**

In social and relational autonomy, philosophers debate how obstructive externally arising constraints are, and whether social limits merely require *adaptation* of preferences to attainable options, or whether preferences are oppressive. The question concerns the difference between contexts that demand adaptive preferences and those that demand oppressive false preferences. Under non-oppressive social conditions, individuals form preferences for what they want based on their critical reflective endorsements of what they know and their evaluation of available options. Oppressive contexts can obstruct competency and authenticity of thought and action. While some scholars have traversed this, missing from the discourse are distinctions between the desires that are socially imposed and are oppressive, from those that are not oppressive, and between false preferences and false needs. Positing these helps elucidate some extant confusion in the debate, and provides additional nuance in externally arising autonomy obstructions. Making these distinctions is necessary to know whether obstructions are serious, oppressive, and compulsory.

### **i. Adaptive Preferences**

Jon Elster (1982; 1983) advanced the notion of adaptive preferences, which are secondary choices made when primary options are inaccessible. He uses the example of a fox that pursues other options after suspecting that grapes he cannot reach are sour. As Elster notes, individuals sometimes change their preferences upon learning new

information and evaluate options differently. This is a *preference change*. But individuals also alter their preferences based on habituation and resignation. This is an *adaptive preference change*. It is an unconscious change because of its habitual nature. An adaptive preference “is causal process taking place behind my back, not the intentional shaping of desires” (Elster 1982, 224). This is more of a drive than a want, which occurs when one cannot attain what one *really* wants. For Elster, some preferences are primary and non-adaptive (what one really wants), while others are secondary and adaptive (what one wants given available options).

There are two problems with Elster’s view. The first is that it does not take into account oppressive conditions that cause the need to adapt. Whether adaptive preferences are oppressive depends on the preference, social conditions, and the extent to which the choice is compulsory. In a non-technical sense, most preferences are socially adaptive just because the environment and individuals’ social location within it affect needs, wants, thinking, and available options. Individuals form preferences and habits from social locations within social contexts. Some combination of what is available, what is accessible, and what individuals prefer determines their choices. Individuals have autonomy obstructed when they cannot access preferences that they reflectively endorse.

On my view, some adaptive preferences are trivial while others are serious. *Trivial* autonomy obstruction is incidental, whereas *serious* autonomy obstruction is structural. For example, one may prefer organic Gala apples, but find that the grocery carries only non-organic Galas and organic Fujis, and one chooses the latter after a reflective

endorsement. Seen on a spectrum, the choice was largely autonomous, though adapted to what was available and attainable. However, insofar as the original preference could not be satisfied, autonomy was minimally obstructed. This obstruction is *trivial*—relatively unimportant, incidental, and non-oppressive, rather than *serious*— *structural*, systemic, and oppressive. Conversely, individuals in food deserts do not simply lack a specific type of food, but rather lack access to fresh foods in a country that has sufficient wealth to treat food access as a political right.

A second problem for Elster’s notion of “adaptive” is that all preferences are adaptive because choices are made from social locations within social and natural contexts that determine not only what is available to be chosen, but also social values, cultural practices, habits, traditions, and prevailing ways of thinking, which determine one’s competency and authenticity of choice. By focusing on adaptive preferences, Elster’s account suggests that there are preferences that are non-adaptive. But on my view, because individuals are ecological (partly constituted by their environments), then all preferences must be seen as having formed within social contexts and from social locations. This means that all preferences are social, that is, adaptive to the conditions of society within which one makes choices. Society, community, and a sense of place shape the type of thinking, the social values and cultural frameworks that determine preference formation, as well as predominant modes of habituation. Some choices are preference-based, while others are need-based. Elster’s account does not accommodate the reality that all preferences are socially born and so adaptive, nor does it distinguish between social preferences and social needs. Making this distinction reflects the

contextual and degree-based nature of autonomy and is necessary to see the difference between the types of choices that society requires from those that it encourages.

## ii. **False Preferences**

False preferences are oppressive social preferences. Feminist scholars have argued that accounts such as Elster's cannot accommodate internalized oppression—preference formation based on reasoning that perpetuates one's own oppression. Elster argues that adaptive preferences are formed without one's control or awareness (Elster 1982). Scholars describe the structural and systemic nature of false preferences as "life-long habituation" because of their internalized nature (Nussbaum 2001, 80; Sen 1995; Benson 1991). Examples often focus on issues of sexual and gendered oppression. Nussbaum describes the case of Vasanti, a poor Indian woman who chooses to stay in an abusive relationship because surrounding social and personal conditions have led her to think that she is condemned to suffer, even though she recognizes that suffering is not good in itself (Nussbaum 2001, 112). Benson discusses a case of gendered fashion, describing a bright and accomplished student who nevertheless has somatic self-doubt, and takes extreme measures to change her appearance to meet prevailing standards of beauty (Benson 1991, 389). The concern is that a lack of self-worth is motivating her choices to go to extreme measures to alter her look, raising concerns of authenticity regarding who she really is and what she truly wants.

However, not all scholars think that false preferences are nonautonomous. Friedman (2006, 146) argues that it is possible for individuals to autonomously choose actual or perceived oppressive options, as long as the choice is a result of the procedure

of critical reflection. Khader cautions against “confusing deprivation with difference” (Khader 2011, 12). One may think that the choices of others with which one disagrees or sees as oppressive must be nonautonomous when factors such as social and cultural differences motivate the perception of deprivation. In some cases, individuals are not *deprived* of access to choices, but rather they consciously choose options different than what an outside observer thinks is preferable or non-oppressive (Khader 2011, 12-13). For Khader, while all preferences are influenced by social conditions, some are inappropriately adaptive because they are influenced by *bad* social conditions, which impede resources necessary to flourish. I combine these points by Friedman and Khader to highlight the external oppressive conditions that obstruct one’s ability to think critically. On my view, preferences are false when they obstruct the authenticity of autonomy and are oppressive.

The problems with the feminist account is that false preferences need to be distinguished from false needs, because the difference between structural oppressive causes and real but individuated causes of oppression must be accounted for. Also missing is some basic account of social needs that are not oppressive. Further clarity is enabled by the four categories of, social preferences and needs, and false preferences and needs. Also, by defining authentic thought as consisting in critical thinking among an array of viable options, then the pitfalls of appealing to authenticity as choices made by one’s real self can be avoided. One such problem is that because of the nature of the socialized self, appealing to one’s *true* self outside of one’s environment is epistemically



unclear. Appealing to critical thinking allows for a genuineness that is individualistic but also culturally appropriate.

### iii. False needs

False needs and false preferences are distinct, although they sometimes overlap. Individual choices essentially respond to both needs (what one must have) and preferences (what one wants). Some needs are vital and others are social. The difference between a need and a preference is that the former is necessary and the latter is not. The requirements for vital needs are clear because they are biologically determined and virtually universal. Social needs vary in what they are, what they require, and how individuals respond to them by type or token. A token preference could be within the realm of a type of need; one needs food to survive (type) but doesn't vitally need *this* particular food (token), and so it is a preference. But that person does have a social need to express a variety of types of identity-based preferences (moral, political, cultural) through food choices. Maintaining identity is itself a social need. Social needs are necessary to maintain social or cultural status.

Because individuals are essentially socially embedded, and non-vital needs and preferences occur in social contexts, then all non-vital needs and virtually all preferences are essentially social. Just as individuals do not determine vital needs, individuals also do not determine social needs. Rather, the latter form from collective and communal action. Individuals find themselves in preconditioned social contexts and must negotiate what is available and accessible within them. Although individuals can and sometimes do transcend their external conditions, and social groups of individuals

can collectively change those conditions, individuals typically must respond to their unchosen circumstances, particularly cultural ones. Individuals make preferences within social and cultural circumstances. The autonomous choice for an individual to maintain cultural identity through culinary practices responds to a social need shaped by cultural circumstances. So, all preferences or needs influenced, shaped, or framed by non-vital circumstances are social and individuals form autonomous choices within these contexts.

Both false preferences and false needs are oppressive, but the latter carries more compulsion. Because of the subtle and covert ways society makes certain things compulsory, oppression may or may not be epistemically transparent to individuals. When choices are false needs, the ways in which one assents to them are more obscured. In false preferences, one may have more epistemic transparency because while choice is constrained, it is still made by the individual. In false needs the social causes of the necessity are more structural, systematic, and entrenched, whereas in false preferences the causes are oppressive and real, but can more likely be overcome. An example of a false preference would be addiction to cigarettes, while an example of false needs would be the *Hot Cheetoes and Takis* case. While the nicotine in cigarettes creates a need in a sense, the choice to begin a habit that oppresses one's body was the individual's. Conversely, the choices to eat unhealthy foods associated with individual and collective identity concerns external conditions one cannot control extending from the structure of the social context. A false preference is an oppressive social preference, but one not seen as socially necessary. Alternatively, false needs are oppressive and

necessary—at the structural level, society compels individuals to have them. This makes them choices only in the sense that they are non-vital needs, but ones that are compulsory. Whereas false preferences have a far less degree of compulsion, though they are encouraged, and they do not necessarily extend from structural level of society. For this reason, individuals are in stronger positions to resist false preferences than false needs, although both work from without to penetrate within individuals.

While social and feminist philosophers broadly focus on race, gender, and class-based social obstructions to authentic autonomy, Marcuse provides the resources for analyzing socially arising obstructions to it that essentially affect all members of society, even if they do so in different ways. This is because society shapes dominant modes of thinking, which determine preferences, not simply preferences themselves. He provides an account of the means of introjection by positing technological rationality within a context of technological society. By aligning Marcuse with the social and feminist camp of autonomy scholars, the variety of obstructions to autonomy that arise externally can be seen, which can then be examined by how they parse out along lines of race, class, and gender. Further, only by seeing the social structure from which autonomy obstructions arise as a technological arrangement can its social and instrumentalist nature be revealed. Recognizing this is necessary for understanding that the consequences of the structural arrangement are not natural and inevitable, but rather social and alterable such that autonomy can be generated and sustained, not just obstructed, by social conditions.

How the social structure is generative or obstructive of autonomy depends on the socio-political environment, which is true regarding food production and access. Because economic and technological means to provide food are available, lack of access is a political obstruction that should be seen as a distributive injustice of social goods. Given that autonomy-obstruction is expressed across epistemic, political, and moral, dimensions, “choosing” unhealthy foods in cases where healthy or culturally appropriate options are systemically inaccessible can be seen as instances of false needs. While some individuals who have access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods may still choose unhealthy ones, preferences can be false or inauthentic when those options are not available or when they are motivated by technological rationality that distorts critical thinking in the process of reflective endorsement. Regarding food, a pervasive climate of advertising facilitates a dearth of critical thinking, particularly by encouraging food preferences to be linked with certain prescribed social identities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Replacing atomistic individualism and autonomy with ecological counterparts reveals a spectrum of internal and external dimensions. I have outlined what the internal and external dimensions of ecological autonomy are and how social obstructions negatively affect both competency and authenticity of external action and internal thinking. First, I argued that notions of the individual and autonomy need to be expanded to include action and the environment. Second, I argued that this expansion requires a new set of competency and authenticity conditions for action. Third, I argued that this expansion allows a wider array of obstructions to autonomy to be seen,

internally, but particularly externally. Lastly, I argued that the ecological view allows certain environmental obstructions to autonomy to be seen as not only false preferences, but also false needs.

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## **PLACE, COMMUNITY, AND THE GENERATION OF ECOLOGICAL AUTONOMY**

Traditionally, autonomy is viewed as an epistemic capacity of individuals to think for themselves, while community is held as its central obstruction. Autonomy is the internal capacity to freely use reason to form beliefs and preferences that are truly one's own. Accordingly, natural and social externalities have not been included in the generation of autonomy (Kant 2014; Rawls 1971; Dworkin 1988). But if individuals are ecological, not atomistic, and are constituted in part by their environments (Plumwood 1993; Code 2006), then autonomy is both an internal and external capacity to think and act for oneself in relation to other individuals and social and physical environments. On my view, while community can obstruct individual autonomy, it also generates and sustains it. To understand how, community must be co-defined with place. In section I, I argue that individuals and autonomy are ecological. In section II, I define place as the social and physical environment, and natural and artificial environment. In section III, I define community as the political body of interdependent people engaged in social practices, knowledge, and values. Place and community are mutually constitutive companion concepts. I argue that place and community generate environmental resources necessary for ecological individualism and autonomy. In section IV, I define the resources and show how they constitute the ecological self. In section V, I show how social resources generate ecological autonomy.

## I. ECOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALS AND AUTONOMY

If autonomy is ecological, it must be generated and sustained in part by the community, not by the individual alone. This contrasts with the traditional liberal view stemming from Descartes and Kant, which holds that community is the *sine qua non* obstruction to individualism and autonomy. Others impede, obstruct, or preclude one's ability to think and act. On this view, autonomy is a capacity of thought alone that arises from the ability to reason. For Descartes (2003), existence is essentially mental, not embodied. For Kant (1996), one is not truly free unless one is rational. Autonomy is a matter of intellectual self-sufficiency. Traditional and contemporary philosophers have not investigated the ways in which the generation of autonomy is dependent not simply on the ability to reason, but a variety of other resources that arise externally and socially, not from the individual alone. To reconceive autonomy as ecological, the individual must first be metaphysically and epistemologically reconceived as ecological.

### i. Ecological individuals

Social and feminist epistemologists have made considerable gain in reconceiving individual selves and contextualizing knowers. Donna Haraway (1988) advocates situating individuals in cultural, social, and historical contexts, and treats knowledge itself not as absolute, totally independent from its human producers, or objective and universal. Likewise, Val Plumwood (1993) and Lorraine Code (2006) conceive the individual as the ecological self and ecological subject respectively. The individual is physically embodied, socially embedded, interrelational, intersubjective, and constituted in part by the environment. Edward Casey's "geographical self" situates and

orients the individual in place. For Casey, “*there is no place without self and no self without place*” (Casey 2001, 2). The self is embodied and inhabits material existence in a circumambient landscape. “The self has to do with the agency and identity of the geographical subject; body is what links this self to lived place in its sensible and perceptible features; and landscape is the presented layout of a set of places, not their mere accumulation but their sensuous self-presentation as a whole” (Casey 2001, 1). While the ecological self speaks to *social* location’s effects on the individual, the geographical self speaks to the effects of the *physical* location of individual. If the individual is ecological, then autonomy is as well.

My work connects social and feminist epistemology and autonomy discourse with place studies at the crossroads of Philosophy and Geography. The first camp provides resources to situate individual knowers in social locations seen within larger social environments. The central point is to show how the social environment and one’s social location within it— the mode through which one relates to the environment and other individuals— shapes what is and can be known. The second camp provides resources to complete the picture by highlighting the effects of the physical environment not only on what is and can be known, but also by giving rise to phenomenological conditions for autonomy, such as subjectivity, perception, and experience. The two camps are a fitting combination because each gestures toward the other. While the social and feminist camp underscores an individual’s location within the social environment, they also posit the individual as essentially embodied in the lived material world. While philosophers of place underscore the role of the physical environment in orienting subjectivity, they also

recognize that place includes both the natural physical environment and the built physical and social environments. The latter includes place-based knowledge, values, and practices. So, to understand how the generation, practice, and sustainability of autonomy functions, individuals must be seen as ecological and situated in a social location within the larger physical and social environment— place and community.

## ii. **Ecological autonomy**

Some scholars have argued that resources for autonomy are social, but none have explored both the internal and external dimensions of ecological autonomy. Joseph Raz (1988) argues that the social environment enables individual autonomy. Because autonomy consists in the capacity to form one's own choices from among a plurality of "acceptable alternatives," then having a range of options available is necessary. Social conditions affect the existence, availability of, and access to options. Society enables availability of and access to goods. Some goods are commodities, such as food options. Other goods concern background institutions that frame social relationships, which Raz calls "collective goods". "One cannot be a barista, a surgeon, or [an architect] in a society where those professions, and the institutions their existence presupposes, do not exist...[for] an architect is one who belongs to a socially recognized profession" (Raz 1988, 205). Raz recognizes that "common culture," a prominent aspect of place and community, also enables individual autonomy (Raz 1988, 247).

Raz rightly highlights how social aspects of the environment provide various goods for individuals to choose. He distinguishes between the *capacity* for autonomy and *making* autonomous choices. I have discussed this distinction as being between internal

and external autonomy, i.e. the capacity to think for oneself in preference formation vs. the practical means to act and achieve that choice in embodied lived existence. Raz discusses how collective goods provide options for individuals to enact their internally formed preference. I am highlighting how the social and physical environment enables the capacity for autonomy in addition to available options to act on it. This stems from place's background enabling conditions for subjectivity, and place-based communities shared knowledge, values, practices, and histories.

Mariana Oshana (2006) argues that the degree of autonomy one has will be determined in part by the kind of society one lives in and what it makes available. She argues that social-relational properties are necessary for autonomy. A certain social background, including institutions, within which individuals think and act for themselves with social and psychological security is required for autonomy. Oshana argues the social environment's main role is to not interfere with individual autonomy. She conceives many relational properties as *negative* political conditions of autonomy. I am highlighting not just the negative, but also the *positive* conditions coming from the environment, and I am highlighting not just the *social*, but also the *physical or natural* environment as constitutive of autonomy, conceived as the place/community dyad.

Individuals and autonomy are ecological because they exist in interdependent relationships with others within a larger system. "Ecological individualism" asserts that individuals exist in relation to the larger environment, particularly physical and social systems, and are constituted in part by their environments and the topography within them. Individuals are embodied and situated in social locations of class, race, and

gender. They find themselves in a cultural milieu that includes historical, social, and material features, which frame their sense of subjectivity, identity, and empirical perception. Individuals find themselves at a place in history, which has preceded them, but which frames their existence and identity. Individuals exist in interdependent social relationships with family, friends, and community members. Individuals are embodied in material relationships with others in their community, and inherit shared values, traditions, and frameworks of thinking from them.

Individuals also exist in dependency relations with natural and physical environments. This includes the landscape, terrain, geography, topography or the presence and distribution of natural resources particular to certain places. Autonomy develops in relation to the physical environment, and one's capacity to think and act will be shaped by it. This can be seen in the background conditions of autonomy. Autonomy is the capacity to think and act for oneself in a way that is truly one's own. To think at all from an individual perspective requires a number of resources, many of which arise from the *physical* environment, (including grounded perception and experiential orientation), not just the social one. Because the external environment provides various resources needed to generate autonomy, it is not generated from internal capacities alone. Autonomy is ecological because it is a capacity of individuals that operates in relation to a variety of externalities seen within a system.

## **II. WHAT IS PLACE?**

The place one is from and in provides resources for the background conditions of autonomy. This occurs from both the physical and social environment. The physical



environment provides an orientation to the world that makes subjectivity, perception, and experience possible. The social environment provides cultural frameworks of thinking, systems of values (cultural, social, moral), traditions, and practices. Place is universal and particular—all individuals are always situated in a place, but the actual place in which their lived experience occurs differs. Once one has developed the capacity of autonomy with intellectual maturity, then one is in a competent position to live autonomously. But how autonomously one can actually live depends on the society one is in. Society is a broad way to think of place/community. It is more specific the more localized it is: society, country, state, city, and neighborhood. One lives in a society, but may travel to various places within it, and difference in locality can make for difference in autonomy. In order to see the affects of the place/community dyad on ecological autonomy, each must be defined in relation to one another. Place and community give rise to environmental resources necessary for autonomy.

Place is the lived environment where embodied individuals dwell. Place is a “regional” concept containing various aspects. Geographers identify four essential aspects of place (Agnew 1987; Cresswell 2004). First, place is a geographical *location*. All places have a physical location that can be mapped according to fixed objective coordinates. While a place is not reducible to landscape, its location depends on it being a material setting on the natural earth. Second, place is a social *locale*— its material presence is a setting within which interdependent social relationships occur. Place involves shared dwelling, knowledge, values, practices, traditions, and histories. Place also involves artifice, technology, and material culture. Humans design artifacts, use

technological instruments, and build places. Third, “sense of place,” captures its subjective, psychical, and relational aspects, which are sustained through shared narratives and histories. Places are loci of social meaning, felt relationality, and emotional attachment. Fourth, place is distinct from space. While space is an abstract blank default, place is concrete, particular, and contributes to the character of things within it. “Space’... [is] the encompassing volumetric void in which things (including human beings) are positioned and ‘place’ [is] the immediate environment of a lived body—an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural” (Casey 2001, 1). Place is therefore both physical and social, both natural and artificial, and both objective and subjective.

**i. The difference between space and place**

Space is a measure of length, or a homogenous extended realm. It is abstract, blank, and devoid of particular character. Place is an open but bounded region, which has a particular location and character (Malpas 1998; 1999). Plato and Aristotle each used the notion of place to capture the idea of containment, but had different conceptual schemas. For Plato, place is grounded in *chora*, meaning a receptacle for things and qualities to come into being. By itself, it is invisible, characterless, and indeterminate. It is an extended open realm in which being is situated. This notion is more akin to space. Conversely, Aristotle uses *topos*, conceiving place as *site*. It is “the first unchangeable limit of that which surrounds” or the inner *surface* of the body, which encloses. To exist, a body needs a surrounding body— a *place*. Place then is tied to *dimension*, not abstraction. Place is a matter of containment, while space is a matter of extension.

Casey explains that over time, space came to be treated as an abstract homogenized region of containment and eventually a system of simple locations. In turn, place became *mere location*, and lost importance. It was treated as secondary to space and seen as contingent and incidental. This is illustrated in the Cartesian and Kantian treatments of place. For Descartes, space was “homogenous, isotopic, isometric, and infinitely (or, at least indefinitely) extended” (Casey 1996, 20). Space was formal, but also essentially the same thing as matter or extension, and so space had no qualities that were not present in matter. In this schema, place was a secondary aspect of extension, sometimes meaning the volume of space or “internal place,” and sometimes meaning location/position, or “external place”. Kant made time and space the central concerns of his first critique (Kant 2008). For him, space is empty and abstract: it has no meaning until particular things begin to occupy it and give it character. Because it is abstract, it can be knowable through, for example, geometry or other abstract descriptions. Space and time are “pure forms of intuition” located within the subject.

Philosophers of place have continued to underscore the difference between place and space, but they privilege place and discuss the various ways it affects the elements within it. Paul Thompson (2010) describes space as blank and place as “fecund” because of its various aspects and resources that help constitute the character of the things within it. Because places have individual character and particularities specific to them, they cannot be known in advance, but only as lived and dwelled. Place is fecund or productive of the being within it because it generates its own meaning. Place generates meaning in our lives, rather than receiving all of its meaning from us, as space does.

## **ii. Place as physical location**

Various philosophers of place discuss its material setting and physical location. Malpas (1999) defines place as an open but bounded realm with its own character, structured by the interrelations among its parts— its topography. Sagoff (1992) argues that place necessarily involves a specific and delineated location. Because of this, places are sedentary and essentially connected to land. Norton and Hannon (1998) argue that while places are typically locational, they allow for the conditional transferability of certain senses of place and place-based knowledge, because some are primarily grounded in shared values, practices, and traditions (i.e. social locale), which can be sustained across different locations. This reflects that the boundaries of a place are determined both by physical and social or phenomenological features. Because people decide how to mark boundaries, and establish it in community knowledge, practices, and traditions, then even the physical location of place is in part created through social conventions.

## **iii. Place as social locale**

While place involves the physical environment and its resources, both natural landscape and built artifice, it is also tied to social environment which includes shared values, practices, and traditions. For Sagoff, land becomes place when it is characterized by the ways it constrains, frames, and contextualizes human activity (Sagoff 1992). This is what happens to land when it comes to function as a locus of relational value regarding cultural, social, and biological human needs. Place is experienced through felt relationality— in lived experiences captured through feelings. Such feelings may be

collective in a community and connect to shared memories and histories. Sagoff argues that place also functions as *res publica* or the commons. In being an area that is freely open for use by citizens, place and its physical and social containments function as shared resources. Sagoff notes that while place incorporates the natural landscape, it is essentially a cultural artifact. Place has a social essence, which I argue arises from community. Community is a body of people living in a place, developing it physically through artifice and technology and developing it socially through relationships of perception, knowledge, and experience. Sense of place, place-based knowledge and values are enabled by the social activity of a community.

Lee Caragata discusses place as a center of mediation with two central functions. First, place provides the space for association and mediation, and second it represents and reproduces itself socially to its inhabitants. The first function reflects the political nature of place while the second reflects the intersubjective, emotional attachment of a sense of place, which is socially created and culturally mediated. Just as Sagoff and Thompson say that place gathers, Caragata says that place socially unifies and forges a community, or “public,” with a sense of identity and connection to place. The political dimension of place is seen in the way it distributes resources. The social dimension is seen in the way place emerges as a locus of social meaning, cultural identity, and felt value. A place sustains itself over time and across generations by reproducing the social relationships, knowledge, values, practices, and traditions that embody it. This occurs through culturally mediated and socially activated senses of place.

#### **iv. Sense of place**

Having a sense of place consists in habitual felt relationality between oneself and one's place, including its physical and social features, people, knowledge, values, practices, and traditions. For Sagoff (1992), place is a cultural artifact that mediates the concepts of nature and the environment. Place combines the meaning we associate with nature and the utility we associate with the environment. When environment is seen as place, moral and cultural obligations to it arise. Place fosters respect for our surroundings arising from relations of harmony, partnership, and intimacy. A sense of place connects to a sense of temporal community— consistency with the past and continuity with future across generations. Place brings individuals together because it is a locus of shared dwelling. Place-based values are those that arise from a place and characterize its social locale, which are entwined with place-based knowledge. Among various types of place-based values are historical, moral, epistemic, and aesthetic values. Place based values are place-relative because they emerge from social locales.

Ian Howard (1998) argues that sense of place involves both physical and social relationality. It involves an intimacy with landscape and natural environmental features and resources. The social and physical aspects of place are often entwined. People identify themselves and their community through natural landmarks, and develop land according to social needs and interests. Humans tend to belong to communities in places and human conflict attests to how important this is— humans are territorial. Sense of place can be akin to love and pride of place. It reflects felt commitment and connection to place, and is a source for socially mediated meaning. Howard thinks the

more integrated in a place and community one is, the more developed knowledge, intimacy, felt relationality, and understanding of it one may have.

Place is then a regional concept incorporating physical features of the natural landscape and its resources, and social features such as knowledge, values, traditions, and histories. The social features and the use of natural resources imply the presence of people in a place. When people are dwelling in a place in interdependent ways in relation to the physical environment, they are a community.

### **III. WHAT IS COMMUNITY?**

Scholars have discussed a number of bases to ground community, among them consent, values, and place. While the first two are sometimes at play in community, they are not sufficiently robust to be the leading criterion for community. Consent-based models do not work for larger, more diffuse groups. Shared values-based models do not work because values by themselves are not sufficiently unified to cohere a community. Using place to ground community is more advantageous. My view is that community and place are co-constitutive concepts with alternate emphases. Place emphasizes physical and social environments, but includes people and social practices, while community emphasizes social practices, knowledge, and values, but includes environments. While others hold views consistent with this (Sagoff 1992; Norton and Hannon 1998; Thompson 2010), none have expressly explored community and place as co-constitutive or in relation to autonomy. Emphasizing place provides the conceptual resources needed to understand community and autonomy generation.

**i. Consent-based model**

Community is not merely a small consent-based social group with narrow ends such as a reading group as social epistemologists Gilbert (1989) and Tuomela (1982) describe. On this view, a social-group must form according to a specified procedure based on mutual consent in a social context where communication is clear and organized. For example, Gilbert requires four conditions for the formation of a social group. “The first is the “willed unity condition.” In order to form a group, individuals must have a willingness to join together (Gilbert 1989, 183). They must have a common bond and an “intention of unity,” the intention to collaborate as a group. Typically, the reason to form a group is for a common purpose, shared goal, or what Gilbert calls a “joint commitment.” Having a joint commitment is necessary but not sufficient for a group because it needs to be communicated among individuals. The second is the “expression condition,” which entails that the willingness to join together must be expressed. Third is the “common knowledge condition.” In order to form and act as a group, members must have some knowledge in common that contributes to their collaboration. This shared knowledge includes that the willed unity condition is satisfied on the basis of the satisfaction of the expression condition (Gilbert 1989, 221). Lastly, members must recognize that the group exists, and must therefore have “consciousness of unity” in addition to unity. Consequently, members will think of one another as “us” and act in terms of “we” (Gilbert 1989, 223)” (Chackal 2016, 135-136).

The problem is that this notion of social group formation does not consider communities whose members are diffuse and dispersed along multifarious social lines,



nor does it accommodate boundaries as subjective, phenomenological, or otherwise not merely objectively determined. Regarding membership, when individuals are constituted in part by their communities, they are already embedded within them by the time they could consider consenting. While a consent/contract-model can work for smaller community groups, it is not sufficiently robust to accommodate larger ones. This suggests that there are at least two categories of community. One follows the consent-based model and requires specified procedures to form and aggregate individual actions into collective ones. The other does not follow the consent-based model.

**ii. Values-based model**

The communitarians use the second model and argue that communities are grounded on a substantive notion of shared values (Sandel 1998; MacIntyre 2007; Taylor 1989; 1992;). Sandel (1998) argues that not only is the community constitutive of the individual, but when individuals imagine themselves in the Rawlsian original position, they are already partly constituted by social values and cultural thinking arising from their community. It is conceptually erroneous to think that they could (or should) make social prescriptions of universal justice or values from behind the veil of ignorance. Individuals are grounded in social location, constituted by communities and their values and moral culture. This is seen even in pre-societal liberal notions of citizens as free, equal, and pursuing the good, and society as fair, just, and progressing toward the common good. MacIntyre (2007) argues that shared values and moral culture in a community frame the individual's thinking and self-reflection, and individual ends are

pursued within social settings according to shared values and common virtues, which help unify one individuals into a community.

Taylor (1992) points out that problems in pluralistic society often arise because of a clash of social values and moral culture from among various sub groups within a diffuse community. Pluralistic communities however are made up of various subgroups, each with distinct sets of values. So, on the communitarian model, pluralistic societies are not communities because they are not unified by shared values and common culture. That the communitarian model cannot accommodate pluralistic communities is a considerable problem.

Grounding communities in shared values is reasonable, since community members often share a considerable number of values, especially those rooted in place. However, communities contain diverse individuals and groups with varied values, which may or may not be commensurable with each other or with predominant community values. Communities may be multicultural and contain smaller communities. While there may be shared values indexed to specific aspects of a community's interests, such as availability of healthy foods, the reasons for this and underlying values (health, environmental, religious) may differ. Often those groups with the most power and social capital may have the most publically represented values. While dominant, they are by no means exhaustive of the varieties of values in a given place. Further, while shared values may be present, they are certainly not the only condition of communities, but rather should be seen with knowledge, practices, traditions, memories, and histories, and on my view, place. This suggests that while shared values are present in a

community, they are not by themselves strong enough to socially unify communities. A theory of community based on a variety of features (not just values) and a naturalized formation process is needed. On my view, community is rooted in place.

### **iii. Place-based model**

Scholars working at the intersection of Philosophy and Geography discuss the philosophical significance of place, particularly concerning agriculture and environmental ethics. While Sagoff (1992), Norton and Hannon (1998), and Thompson (2010) each discuss community and place together, none explicitly addresses the relationship between them or their co-constitutive nature, nor do they explicitly ground community in place. However, they do provide the resources for my argument to ground community in place. I argue that place emphasizes the environment, while community emphasizes social activity. The environmental features of a place are both natural and artificial. The physical environment includes location, natural landscape, and its topographical constituents, including other biotic members. Because the physical environment precedes the social one, those features of place are primary, and the social features of community follow. The artificial environment includes human-built structures, for example, farms, buildings, and cities. The social environment of place arises from community and includes shared knowledge, values, practices, and histories. The cultural mediation based in place informs how the physical environment is viewed and how the artificial environment is developed.

The social activity of community develops environment into a place in two ways—by framing how the natural physical environment is viewed and by developing the

environment through artifice. For example, place boundaries are both physical and artificial. Physical features may mark some boundaries, but that they represent boundaries at all is a social convention. Other environmental features are artificial because they are produced through human labor. Communities construct edifices, build roads, and develop cities according to cultural practices, knowledge, and values. For example, the Incas built trails in connection to archeological complexes along the Andes Mountains to circulate goods and for ritualistic purposes. What they built reflected who and where they were (community and place). Machu Picchu includes the Andes natural physical environment, the built citadel, and Incan social practices, knowledge, and values that shaped its development and meaning.

The environment of a place also develops the social activity of community. Cultural practices, knowledge, and values of community arise in relation to physical and social environments. For example, the Inuit maintained hunting and gathering practices in part due to the dismal prospects for agriculture in arctic climates. Likewise, wine arises from Napa Valley because the coastal climate and landscape is ideal for growing grapes, and consequently wine practices are able to develop. Not only do place-based cultural practices arise, but also place-based knowledge (Howard 1998; Preston 2003). Knowledge arises within a community over time in the exchange of techniques, skills, and information generated by place and from a community's cultural mediation through which the world is made intelligible. This could be knowledge of landscape, biotic members, or the medicinal effects of a plant exclusive to a particular place.

A community's sociality and culture gives rise to sense of place and place-based values. Values arise out of a community's culture, and individuals collectively upholding those values sustain a community and place across generations (Norton and Hannon 1998). Southern friendliness gives rise to grocery-line chatter. As southerners collectively practice this, the place comes to be known for its values of "southern hospitality." Place-based models accommodate diffuse communities and are characterized not only by social values, but also social practices, traditions, and histories. Further, place-based communities are characterized by natural physical environmental features such as ecosystems, landscapes, and resources. The place-community dyad is where ecological individuals are grounded and marks a source for autonomy generating resources.

The place-based model is better than the consent-based model because it can accommodate communities that are not based on express consent, which are all diffuse communities. Individuals are born into communities they eventually become self-aware in and once they are, they are already deeply physically embedded within them by the time they are able to articulate and express consent. Further, because individuals are constituted in part by their environments, then environments are already metaphysically within individuals by the time they could express consent. Consequently, individuals are not in position outside diffuse communities to consent to them. The place-based model avoids this problem by viewing individuals as constituted in part by their environments and grounds community in a variety of features of place.

Similarly, the place-based model is better than the communitarian model because the latter cannot accommodate pluralistic societies, given that they are not based on shared values. The place-community dyad posits shared values as one among a variety of features that ground community in place, including the physical environment, shared knowledge, practices, traditions, histories, and sense of place. Positing multifarious features in the groundwork avoids the shortcomings of accounting for community based only on a single feature that may not be present or as cohesive and unifying as the communitarians contended. Because the place model posits various features and recognizes pluralities of particular communities within the diffuse community, then it is better suited to handle diversity laden within the community of communities.

#### **IV. PLACE, COMMUNITY, AND ECOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM**

There are a variety of resources arising from place/community that constitute the ecological self and generate and sustain autonomy. In this section, I will delineate the resources and show how they constitute the ecological self. In the next, I will show how they generate ecological autonomy.

There are various resources arising from the place/community dyad—phenomenological, hermeneutical, epistemic, moral, political, and existential— and each contributes to constituting the ecological self. The dimensions are revealed only when individuals are seen as ecological because they concern various aspects of embodied existence gained through lived experience, not just mental existence. Some resources concern what is *internal* to the self and others concerns what is *external* to it, and many concern both. Internal resources include those necessary for cognition—

subjectivity, perception and experience. External resources include those necessary for embodied being and action— grounded orientation to the world. Some resources are natural, such as subsistence resources, while others are social, such as language. Some resources are physical, such as land, while others are psychical, such as identity resources. The entwined nature of the internal and external dimensions allows for intersections of resources.

**i. Phenomenological resources and orientation of place**

Phenomenological resources concern the earth as a natural, physical grounding apparatus that orients individuals mentally and physically through perception, subjectivity, and experience. Phenomenology concerns embodied lived experience and emphasizes the relational epistemic ties individuals have to the empirical world. Experience is physical and psychical, natural and social, objective and subjective. Ordinary, everyday experience is largely subjective, relative to physical location and embodied and cultural perception arising in relation to it. The natural earth is not a static mechanical object, but an organic, changing, open, and dynamic landscape (Abrams 1997). Different perception of it from positions of place within it makes the world show up to individuals differently. Positions of place include geographical location and cultural milieu that develops from it.

The body is the central apparatus of perception. Perception is enabled subjectively by the body and objectively by locational grounding on the physical earth. Place consists in the material setting of both the physical world (including landscape and location) and the social world (locale), which enable and shape bodily perception. One inherits a type

of body shaped by natural and social history, which partly determines how the world is experienced. Being born with a certain kind of body, for example, female or one of color, can link one into existing histories, set one up for certain physical and social experiences, and arouse certain perceptions and being-in the world. Such experiences will be indexed to place and will differ accordingly. Social aspects also determine what and how individual bodies perceive. Because the physical world is perceived through particular bodies and cultural frameworks, it shows up differently. Place determines how the world is perceived, and perception is an essential feature of the ecological self.

Malpas argues that orientation to place is constitutive of subjectivity, perception, and experience, not just cultural and personal identity. Place is an open but bounded realm with particular character, structured by the interrelations among its features. It is not merely an objective structure of interchangeable locations of objects (Malpas 1998). Place is not simply subjective either, because it is not dependent on subjects. Rather, it is the domain in which subjectivity comes into being. Malpas argues that the structure of subjectivity is given in and through the structure of place because human being is a form of being-in the world that involves oriented, bounded location. Place is constituted by the topography of features within it. In turn, place shapes those features, including subjectivity. Subjectivity involves perception, experience, and thinking, all of which are exercised through cultural and personal identity. Malpas argues that subjectivity cannot be grasped independently of a larger structure that encompasses other subjects, objects, and events. The very content of a subject's mental life, including character, self-identity, and self-conception, are tied to place.



Christopher J. Preston also argues that place grounds knowledge, perception and experience, and that the place where individual minds are, including the social and physical environment and its constitutive relationships, affect knowledge production. Preston discusses two approaches for conceiving the mind and knowledge. The first is the *cognitivist* approach. It likens the mind to a computer and models human cognition accordingly— knowledge is uploaded to the mind from external sources. Knowledge acquisition is like linear computation. The mind takes in inputs, codifies them into symbols, and processes them according to rules to produce outputs. The mind is essentially a “symbol manipulator” absorbing and computing objective knowledge about the world. The neurobiology of the brain is akin to the electronic circuitry of the computer (Preston 2003, 28).

Preston favors the second approach, the *enactivist* model of cognition. It rejects cognitive science’s view of the alienated mind in isolated cognition from the world, along with its emphasis on internal symbol manipulation. Instead, enactivism posits that sensory experience is shaped by cognitive structures, and the two are entwined. The world appears to humans in ways that reflect facts about cognition, particularly that “the inputs and the cognitive structures that operate on those inputs cannot be entirely separated from one another” (Preston 2003, 29). This view then follows Kant in incorporating a synthesis of mind/world. However, the mind is conceived as the brain within a head on a body within an environment. Embodied cognition provides a richer, fully situated contextualization. This view of the mind coheres with evolutionary theory because it views mind as an extension of the structures necessary for sensorimotor

experience. By keeping the mind embodied and environmentally grounded, cognition can be seen as an animal capacity, not one of disembodied isolated minds. With the focus on embodiment, then cognitive particularities that arise from place can be utilized to account for varieties of knowledge.

**ii. Hermeneutical and epistemic resources and place-based knowledge**

Place makes the world intelligible and epistemically accessible by providing a number of resources. Hermeneutical resources are social and artificial rather than natural and physical. They allow the world to be intelligible. While the physical world provides an objective layer that makes *sensible* perception possible, the social world provides features that make *intelligible* perception possible. Among other features, these include shared language, concepts, and ideas. Language is part of the larger inherited cultural framework through which the world is encountered and understood. Other features include shared cultural meanings, modes of thinking and reasoning, traditions, and histories. Both thought and action gain purpose and meaning from the material and social context in which they occur. Often, outsiders will not be able to make sense out of thoughts and actions that extend from a community because they lack experience. A *sense of place* means having hermeneutical and epistemic resources appropriate to it.

Epistemic resources concern what is known in and of the world. Place provides what is available to be known as well as social resources needed to impart shared knowledge. Community involves shared social practices, knowledge, and an epistemic culture. Place-based knowledge reflects a community's cultural mediation— *how* things are known. It

consists of a body of knowledge— *what* is known. And it reflects patterns of thinking and reasoning that give rise to knowledge. Epistemic resources include access to education and programs that outfit individuals with reliable cognitive practices and skills to negotiate places. This includes formal education and the non-formal exchange of ideas and practices.

In addition to the physical environment grounding the ability to perceive, the cultural environment frames *how* the social and physical world is perceived and understood. Preston identifies two approaches to examining the human influence on conceiving and encountering the environment: the scientific approach and the cultural approach to naturalizing the environment. The former seeks to understand mind and the world through the natural sciences. The latter seeks the same, but by using historical, ethnographic, and sociological methods. The cultural approach is aligned with the post-structuralist view that language and social practice influence how the world appears to humans, and denies any context-independent view of it. Those who naturalize culture do not think that science can give us an understanding of the world without human language and social concepts. Even scientific facts are culturally mediated and naturalized through culturally shaped notions of objectivity.

### **iii. Moral and political resources and place-based values**

Community involves shared values, virtues, duties, responsibilities, and identities. These enable individuals to make moral sense out of their actions, encounters, and narratives, and help individuals negotiate moral conflict. Moral resources are characterized by ethical traditions, customs, and moral language. They allow individuals

to express ethical commitments, and provide community-formed moral frameworks. Place-based values concern not only shared moral values, but also what and how things are valued. A type of landscape gives rise to valuing its particularities in a way that an outsider might not. Having or identifying with certain values depends on being embedded within a place. Place-based or place-relative values exist in all cultures, although their form and content differs according to their particularity. These values are moral, aesthetic, historical, etc. They arise through generations of wisdom, embedded within lived experience, encoded in cultural knowledge and attitudes, and situated in cultural capital such as myths and practices (Norton and Hannon 1998). Political resources reflect the social dimension of place and community, and include institutions such as laws, rights, and legal procedures, and participation in shared resources, e.g. agricultural, educational, and land resources. They determine what is and can be done in a place.

#### **iv. Existential resources and identity**

Existential resources include those necessary for identity and meaning. The identity of subjects, which includes both their self-definition and their identity as perceived by others, is inextricably bound to particular places. Without the overarching structure of place, subjectivity could not be. Subjectivity is a structure that is embedded in a world of other subjects and of multiple objects. Mental life is dependent on the subject's active engagement with the surrounding environment. The specific dependence of self-identity on particular places is a consequence of the way self-conceptualization and conceptualization of place are interdependent elements within the same structure.

Places of dwelling are internalized and then externalized. Places carry us when we are within them, and we carry places within ourselves along our ways.

Self-identity is not tied to *any* simple location within some purely static space. Rather, self-identity develops in relation to active engagement with place. Through relational activation, place generates and affects self-identity— identity and images of persons become intimately bound to particular places within which their lives occur. Individual connection is captured by sense of place. Having a sense of place involves a feeling of connection and belonging to one's home, landscape, and community members, and experiencing one's identity as entwined with them. Landscape itself is the backbone of the physical environment and the connection felt to it should not be underestimated. Neither should the prominent features of the social environment, such as cultural memory and place-based narratives. Through them, a place's character is related to, memorialized, and kept alive.

## **V. PLACE, COMMUNITY, AND ECOLOGICAL AUTONOMY**

In this section, I show how resources extending from the environment generate and sustain autonomy. Autonomy of thought and action must each meet competency and authenticity conditions. For internal competency, one must think for oneself and endure a process of critical reflective endorsement. For internal authenticity, choices must be *truly* one's own. For external competency, actions must meet sufficient skill. For external authenticity, they must be culturally appropriate.

**i. Internal competency**

Many of the resources outlined in the previous section are at play across all four conditions. I will discuss the most representative resources for each. For internal competency, two representative resources are phenomenological and hermeneutical. Internal competency consists in one's ability to think for oneself— to follow a cognitive procedure of evaluating circumstances, options, and wants in a given decision. One must critically reflect upon and then endorse a preference. This is essentially an individual cognitive skill— critical reflective thinking. Individuals form preferences from options that natural and social environments make available and accessible. Phenomenological and hermeneutical resources are necessary for this internal capacity to develop and be exercised.

Phenomenological resources enable subjectivity, perception and experience, constitute the self and its ability to think, and determine how preferences form. Subjectivity is essential to the individual. Without it, there is no internal self (*auto*). Choices are made from positions of subjectivity, and subjectivity requires thinking. Cognition is determined by the ways individuals perceive and experience the world. This conditions critical thinking as it is exercised in forming preferences and making choices. Hermeneutical resources are needed for preferences and choices, beliefs and decisions to be intelligible and meaningful. Thinking individually is channeled through cultural frameworks, community language, and place-based knowledge and values. Choices are made from situated positions within social histories and count on them to be intelligible and meaningful. Without such features, individual thinking necessary for belief and

preference formation could not generate or be intelligible. Without their continuation, thinking could not be sustained. I think, therefore I exist ecologically. I would not be able to think or exist without an environment, embodiment, and other selves. My ability to linguistically recognize myself as thinking and therefore embodied being depends on it.

**ii. Internal authenticity**

Internal authenticity requires that beliefs and decisions, preferences and choices are truly one's own. This means that the procedure of forming them must be genuine, and not produced by manipulation, domination, or other oppressive constraints, which may arise internally or externally. To be internally authentic, choices must be appropriate to one's identity, particularly self-identity. Accordingly, two representative environmental resources are existential and epistemic.

Existential resources are necessary for identity so that one's choices maybe indexed to it. Identity arises internally from oneself and externally from one's natural and social environment. Because ecological selves are contextualized within natural and social environments, then forming preferences that are genuine to one's identity requires resources from them. Individuals make choices based on who they are and who they are is mutually constituted. One's identity is formed not just from self-definition, but also from how others see an individual—social-recognition. Choices may be made with others witnessing them in mind so that a person can gain social-recognition. Individuals often need it to gain a sense of their identity at all. Further, some social identities are available only in certain places (Raz 1988). One needs to dwell near water to be a fisherman, and salt water to be a shrimp fisherman. One must be an Inuit with special

rights to be permitted to hunt whales. The autonomy and knowledge required is dependent on one's identity, which is inextricably bound to place.

Epistemic resources concern the formation of authentic beliefs and decisions. When individuals genuinely think for themselves, they do not simply make choices from among varieties of commodities. Rather, they flex autonomy's epistemic nature by forming beliefs and decisions that are truly one's own. To form beliefs and decisions, information from one's environment including place-based knowledge is essential. This is because authenticity is linked to place-based knowledge and values. Being true to oneself in belief formation involves making use of collective epistemic resources in one's social environment.

### **iii. External competency**

External competency consists in having sufficient empirical skills to perform an action. It is physically embodied and socially located know-how. Because knowledge to perform an action and availability of social positions of action are required, the two representative environmental resources are epistemic and political.

Epistemic resources are necessary to perform an action, such as knowing how to locate, identify, harvest, and prepare chanterelles. Not only are skills of embodied knowledge taught by others, but why certain knowledge and practices arise in certain communities concerns the social response to the natural environment. Because *that* resource is in the environment, *this* skill was able to develop according to *this* knowledge. Some types of knowledge are place-based, such as knowing which areas of a river are safe to travel, or knowing how to avoid dangerous animals in a landscape.



Having such knowledge requires being-in and engaging both the physical and social terrain. Some instances of knowledge may be time-specific and lost if forgotten, such as knowing exactly how ancient Egyptians were able to move large stones to construct the pyramids.

Political resources are necessary for individuals to learn to do certain things and be certain identities in society. They are necessary to generate and sustain particular actional skills, but are also practices, habits and traditions that sustain identity over time. Education and job training that society makes available are examples of political resources needed for actional skills. Professions and lifestyles that society makes available concern what individuals can be in terms of social identity. Political goods also include what is available to be chosen “acceptable alternatives” in society (Raz 1988). These include a variety of viable options of commodities and collective goods, such as types of professions and legal procedures.

Laws, rights, procedures are political resources that enable individuals to have security, knowledge, and recourse. For example, political goods frame food production and consumption. First, there are laws of public health and safety, e.g. concerning agriculture or marketing. There are political programs that ensure access to food, for example SNAP. Second, communities can enact individual rights enabling autonomy for consumers, e.g. concerning production conditions of food, or consumption rights to buy from farmers directly. Third, there are laws that protect certain food practices, for example in relation to religion. While political goods contribute to autonomy of thought, they generate and maintain autonomy of action because of their external social nature.

#### **iv. External authenticity**

Authenticity entails that actions are culturally appropriate or socially genuine. Accordingly, it is directly dependent on, generated and sustained by cultural standards of place and community. Cultural and subcultural standards provide the metrics for judging whether actions are appropriate to perform in a given place or community or subgroup. The representative environmental resources are moral and hermeneutical. Moral resources concern place-based values. Actions carry moral significance and must be consistent with cultural standards, shared values, and relevant place-based knowledge. Authenticity itself may not carry substantive constraints, but whether moral actions are culturally appropriate is a question of authenticity.

Hermeneutical resources concern social meaning and cultural interpretation. For actions to be authentic, they must be contextualized within cultural frameworks of meaning and understanding. For example, it is inappropriate to offer pork to Halal Muslims, forks to Sushi eaters, or meat to vegetarians. Cultures have various culinary traditions in food preparation that require certain procedures, techniques, instruments, and practices to be used. Cultures set bars for authenticity on a variety of fronts, from culinary practices to various other aspects of culture. Without place and community setting the bars for cultural appropriateness, authenticity of action would have no grounding.

MacIntyre (2007) argues that communities provide social “settings” which individuals choose to frame their social lives within traditions and history of a community, and provide existential meaning and purpose. Settings are frameworks in

which action occurs. They reflect cultural and place-based values and practices. Examples include institutions such as marriage, professions, such as academic Philosophy, and cultural archetypes such as the rock star. Settings tap into the larger history of a place, and just as there are histories within histories, there are settings within settings, and various overlapping and intersectional settings. They call for certain kinds of character, intentions, virtues and pursuits. Settings involve certain aims in which individuals pursue goals and in which they need to be certain kinds of character with relevant virtues to be sustained in the pursuit of goals. It is the setting, arising from place/community that gives meaning to actions and pursuits, culturally situates them, and makes them intelligible, meaningful, and coherent.

**v. Example 1: wisdom and autonomy**

A vivid example of autonomy being generated by place and community is illustrated in Keith Basso's article, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on A Western Apache Landscape*. Basso discusses the importance of place in producing knowledge, values, and identity. Place is not just constitutive of knowledge conceived as facts, but also as cognitive know-how. Wisdom consists in knowing how to use knowledge in *appropriate* ways— it is the mark of good thinking. Autonomy is distinct from wisdom— it is thinking *for oneself*. The ecological self as environmentally constituted fits with Basso's claim that wisdom is the good use of collective place-based knowledge, values, and sense of place. As such, wisdom supervenes on many of the same environmental resources required for autonomy. Not all autonomous thoughts and actions are wise, but all wise thoughts and actions are autonomous— they require competency and authenticity of thought and

action from the individual in application of place-based knowledge, values, and identities. Wisdom is thinking well, autonomy is truly thinking for oneself. Living wisely consists in skillful, culturally appropriate habitual character and action. So, there is an illustrative parallel rooted in place-based thinking and action between wisdom and autonomy.

Basso details the theory of Apache wisdom (*'igoya'i*) stemming from Cibecue, a western settlement of eleven hundred people on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in east-central Arizona. Wisdom is conceived as “a heightened mental capacity that facilitates the avoidance of harmful events by detecting threatening circumstances when none are apparent” (Basso 1996, 73). Wisdom is generated and sustained by three conditions described in Apache as smoothness of mind (*bini goodilikooh*), resilience of mind (*bini gontliz*) and steadiness of mind (*bini gontdzil*). These are not innate mental capacities, but rather cognitive competencies that must be cultivated through adoption and application of place-based knowledge, values, and identities. These three conditions can be mapped onto autonomy’s four conditions.

*Smoothness of mind* is the primary condition for wisdom and it entails having a “cleared space” and “an area free from obstructions” to think well. Mental smoothness arises from the two preceding conditions, mental resilience and mental steadiness. Mental resilience combats *externally* arising obstructions and distractions. Mental steadiness combats *internally* arising ones. “An area free from obstructions” is a negative condition requiring lack of obstruction to thinking, similar to the negative condition of non-domination in autonomy. “Cleared space” requires the positive

condition of competent thinking, which is the competency condition of internal autonomy. Accordingly, it requires phenomenological and hermeneutical resources. Wisdom is thinking well, thinking is cognitive negotiation of issues according to place-based subjectivity, perception, and experience. Wise thinking must extend from a true sense of self, because it is negotiated according to one's environmentally constituted identity. As such, wisdom requires internal authenticity and utilizes existential and epistemic resources. Because wisdom consists in embodied experience, then similar conditions for internal competency are present for external competency. Skills, techniques, and know-how are necessary for wise actions, which are received from others. As such, they supervene on place-based epistemic and political resources. The nature of what wisdom is will be place-relative and culturally different. This suggests that wise action depends on cultural appropriateness— the requirement for authentic action— and so makes use of place-based moral and hermeneutical resources.

Basso suggests that wisdom supervenes on autonomy— the cognitive and actional skills for which require both individual effort and environmental resources. “On the one hand, it is the responsibility of individuals to critically assess their own minds and prepare them for wisdom by cultivating the qualities of smoothness, resilience, and steadiness. On the other hand, instruction is needed from persons sympathetic to the endeavor who have pursued it themselves with a measure of success (Basso 1996, 75). Responsibility is individual effort to think for oneself, while instruction and sympathy are social resources. Wisdom is activated by the individual and the place/community dyad, through material embodiment, social embeddedness, and lived experience. Knowledge

and wisdom arise through active engagement with place, which reflects why communicating place-based knowledge from an insider to an outsider is often difficult. It is not the kind of knowledge that is always transferable. The optimal way to discover such knowledge and wisdom is living in a place and with its community. When an outsider visited the reservation seeking to understand how its place-based knowledge was acquired, an elder replied by highlighting the lived ecological relationship one needs with the physical and social environment:

“How will you walk along this trail of wisdom? Well, you will go to many places. You must look at them closely. You must remember all of them. Your relatives will talk to you about them. You must remember everything they tell you. You must think about it, and keep on thinking about it, and keep on thinking about it. You must do this because no one can help you but yourself. If you do this, your mind will become smooth. It will become steady and resilient. You will stay away from trouble. You will walk a long way and live a long time” (Basso 1996, 70).

This shows the internal and external dimensions relevant for both autonomy and wisdom, and illustrates ways each is generated by place and community.

**vi. Example 2: orientation and autonomy**

Autonomy depends on subjectivity, perception, and experience of the world, which is shaped by language and cultural frameworks. Cognitive scientists Lera Boroditsky and Alice Gaby posit that time and space are experienced differently by different cultures (Boroditsky and Gaby 2010). They argue that experience of the world is grounded by language and embodiment in physical environments. As Thompson (2010) notes, communities are formed on the basis of shared language. Language frames how the

world is experienced, including how time, space, and place are experienced. Experience of them conditions further experience of the world.

Boroditsky and Gabby study the Pormpuraaw, a remote Aboriginal community on the west coast of the Cape York Peninsula in Australia. Unlike English speakers who use *relative* spatial terms such as right and left, members of Pormpuraaw and similar linguistic communities use *absolute* spatial terms— north, south, east, and west. In order to speak such languages, members of these linguistic communities must stay oriented to the physical world. In Kuuk Thayorre, one of the languages in the study, instead of saying “Hello” to one another, community members say, “Which way are you going?” which elicits a response from among 80 different choices of locational direction.

If one does not *know* where one is, one lacks the internal autonomy to think past “Hello” in conversation, and the external autonomy to move beyond where one geographically stands. Boroditsky lived in this community for several weeks. Initially, she had difficulty orienting herself according to these spatial conditions and language. Over time, she oriented to the land and was not only able to communicate where she was, but she also gained a new internal cognitive perception of where she was located and where she was heading. After a week, she began to see something different in her mind. It was a module that showed a bird’s eye view of where she was, along with a red dot moving across the landscape, which represented her, in a similar fashion to what is seen on smart phone map applications. Amazed by this new orientation, she remarked to a local about her new perception of the world, to which the local responded, “How else would you see it?” (Radiolab 2017).

The import for autonomy from this example comes in the recognition that what one is able to do (external autonomy), such as walk in a certain direction or communicate that fact to another, is dependent on place-based thinking— including participating in a language, which is dependent on being part of a community. Because Boroditsky was an outsider, she did not have the background linguistic framework that would orient her to the land in a culturally appropriate way. But through living in this place among other community members, and being compelled to adopt local language— and consequently local thinking— a new place-based orientation was generated, and over time, the autonomy to think and act in terms of absolute spatial directions was developed. This is the case not only for internal autonomy of thought, but also external autonomy of action, where cultural appropriateness is required for authenticity.

## **CONCLUSION**

I have argued that individuals and autonomy are ecological because they are constituted and activated by relationships to physical and social environments seen as the place/community dyad. Place and community are co-constitutive and ground a number of resources necessary for the generation and sustainability of autonomy. By employing ecological individualism and autonomy, the ways in which they are relational and environmentally formed are revealed.



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## COMMUNITY AUTONOMY FOR ECOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALS

Traditionally, autonomy is seen as a capacity for independent thought and action of individuals, not groups. Yet the concept of community autonomy has gained traction in various areas, including Food Justice, Communitarianism, and Collective Epistemology. I review versions of community and community autonomy from these areas. While each has merit, they lack a sufficient epistemological account of internal collective autonomy—how individual beliefs are aggregated into collective beliefs and decisions. On my view, community autonomy consists *internally* in an ethos and institutional structure specifying procedural relations, seen primarily in the model of aggregating individual judgments into collective ones. It exists *externally* in the relationships it has to other communities to be free from interference and to have sovereignty over environmental resources necessary to sustain its identity. Individual autonomy can be a model for community autonomy, but additional competency and authenticity conditions are needed to account for collective belief and action. I argue that only notions of external community autonomy exist in the three models. I first expand the traditional criterion for external community autonomy so that it is ecological, and then articulate an account of internal community autonomy.

### I. ECOLOGICAL AUTONOMY: FROM INDIVIDUALS TO COMMUNITIES

In Moral and Political Philosophy, autonomy is treated as an individual capacity for competent and authentic thought, which requires conditions for each. Persons are

autonomous because they can think for themselves and their thinking is truly their own. Individuals think for themselves when they endure a process of “reflective endorsement” (Friedman 2003) in which they consider the merits and drawbacks of a variety of options and form a belief, preference, or decision from among them. In addition to this positive condition, autonomy includes the negative condition of non-domination such that individuals are free from interference that would preclude them from thinking for themselves (Oshana 2006). When individuals meet these two requirements, they fulfill the *competency* condition for autonomy. When thinking is truly their own, and not the product of external manipulation or internalized oppression, then individuals meet the *authenticity* condition for autonomy. This is a version of a procedural account of autonomy, which concerns what I call internal autonomy of thought, essentially an epistemic capacity. When autonomy is treated only as an epistemic capacity, not an actional one, then environmental features external to the individual that may affect choice are not considered.

In contrast to this traditional model, I employ a notion of the social individual as the ecological self (Taylor 1989; Plumwood 1993; Code 2006). This notion contrasts with the atomistic self, and posits individuals as situated within and constituted in part by environments. Environments are both social and physical, and both natural and artificial. For example, one inherits a physical body from others. To survive and flourish, the body is situated within relationships of nurture and care. The body is seen socially in terms of gender, race, standards of beauty, which carry histories of predetermined social relationships, and which affect various aspects of the self, including identity. The

body is dependent on the environment for survival (the earth and its ecological resources), and the individual's sense of subjectivity, experience, and perception is grounded in and dependent on the physical environment (Malpas 1999; Preston 2003). Moreover, the self is geographical (Casey 2001), because it exists in particular places and gains resources from them. From the social world one also inherits language, culture, class, and such things determine what is available for the individual to choose.

I have elsewhere developed a version of relational autonomy pioneered by social and feminist philosophers (Oshana 2006; Meyers 1989; Friedman 1997; Christman 2004) that I term *ecological*. Ecological autonomy and selfhood are contrasted with traditional liberal notions, which treat autonomy only as an internal capacity for thought. (Kant 2014; Rawls 1971; Dworkin 1988). Scholars discuss competency conditions, required for thinking, and authenticity conditions, required for thinking to be genuinely one's own. In contrast, ecological autonomy is situated within social and physical, natural and artificial contexts, viewing action and thought as materially embodied and socially embedded, and in part constituted by one's environment. Viewing autonomy this way enables its external dimension to be seen— action in context. On my view, autonomy consists in the capacity for external action, not just internal thought. Accordingly, an additional set of competency and authenticity conditions for action must be met. Competency consists in individuals having the embodied know-how to perform an action, while authenticity consists in those actions being culturally appropriate. External autonomy is essentially an actional capacity indexed to a socio-cultural milieu.

In addition to environments constituting individuals, they also generate autonomy. Ecological autonomy is internal (thought) and external (action), relational, contextual, and degree-based. Situating autonomy and individuals ecologically means contextualizing them within physical and social systems and considering the affects of those systems on individuals and possibilities of choice available to them. Autonomy is environmental and contextual. Because individuals can move between some physical and social systems, for example by going to a different place or being part of a different community, then one's identity and degree of autonomy may shift according to where one is. Autonomy is relational and extends from one's identity. One gains aspects of one's identity through particular contexts and relationships. One's identity may also be intersectional and even contradicting in ways (Meyers 2000). Just as places and the type and distribution of their resources help constitute individuals and generate autonomy, the environment also contains features that can obstruct it.

In this paper, I address the following question: if autonomy is primarily an individual capacity of persons, how can it be applied to groups? Moreover, if autonomy is ecological, how does it exist for collectives? In order to expand autonomy from an individual capacity to a collective one, then two new sets of competency and authenticity conditions are needed— one for collective thought, and the other for collective action. Collective autonomy is internal and external, relational, contextual, and degree-based. External autonomy concerns how a collective exists and acts in relation to other collectives within the global world. A community is externally autonomous if it is at liberty to exist as a group, make its own decisions, and perform its



own actions free from outside obstruction. This is a negative condition of non-domination and noninterference (Oshana 2006). This is the prevailing concept of community autonomy in Political Philosophy and in Food Justice. While external autonomy is one dimension in which a collective can be autonomous, what is missing from this discourse is how a community could be internally autonomous. To achieve this, a procedure is needed to aggregate individual beliefs, preferences, and decisions into collective ones. A path has been forged for this objective in collective epistemology. Discourse concerns how groups can form beliefs and knowledge, and the relationship between individual and collective beliefs and knowledge.

Collective epistemologists provide resources to show how individuals can exist and think as a group, but they lack those needed to show how such a “plural self” (Gilbert 1989; 2002; 2006) relates to those individuals and collectives outside of it. They do not consider the external socio-political conditions that enable plural selves to be independent and self-ruling. Combining the resources from Political Philosophy and Collective Epistemology, I argue that ecological autonomy for communities consists externally in eco-sovereignty (Dahbour 2013), or independence, rights over local environmental resources, and the right of culturally appropriate self-rule. It consists internally in having a procedure that aggregates individual beliefs into collective ones in a culturally appropriate way. I provide competency and authenticity conditions for both external and internal community autonomy to show how collective thought and action functions genuinely.

The ecological community and autonomy follow the models of the ecological self and autonomy. First, both the individual and the community are seen across internal and external dimensions. Each community and individual is seen as a collective subject that can authentically think and act for itself, and is always contextualized within a social and physical environment that entwines the two dimensions. Second, autonomy is ecological because for both communities and individuals because it is contextual, degree-based, and is generated by the social and physical environment. Third, both individual and collective ecological autonomy require competency conditions for thought and action. This means that ecological autonomy requires four total sets of competency and authenticity conditions, two for the individual capacity (thought and action) and two for the collective capacity (thought and action). I first review three insufficient models of community and collective autonomy to illustrate their flaws and that they offer only insufficient versions of external autonomy. I then assert my own definition of community and collective autonomy, and provide a set of competency and authenticity conditions for each. Following, I review some potential problems for authenticity of collective action and thought

## **II. THREE INSUFFICIENT MODELS OF COMMUNITY AUTONOMY**

I review three models of community and community autonomy from discourse in Food Justice, Communitarianism, and Collective Epistemology. While each discourse contributes to notions of community and community autonomy, particularly external autonomy, they all lack an “institutional structure” of aggregation enabling internal autonomy. In Communitarianism, “community” is applied to cities, countries or society

at large, and “community autonomy” is typically cast as sovereignty or the right of self-determination. These concepts can apply to smaller localized communities, such as unions and neighborhoods. This is also the model represented in Food Justice discourse, given that many structural issues regarding food production and consumption occur on a collective level, such as agricultural production and wholesale consumption. The problems in Communitarianism discourse are flawed notions of community and external autonomy, and also a lack of internal autonomy. The problem in Food Justice discourse is a lack of internal autonomy. While collective epistemologists have a notion of internal autonomy, they lack an account of external autonomy, and use a flawed notion of community.

**i. Food justice model**

Just as individuals exercise autonomy over preferences and the values and interests that inform them, communities may exercise autonomy over the background conditions of food availability, access, and agricultural sovereignty. For these reasons, my paradigm model of communities is place-based, and I focus on communities that organize around issues of food justice. Such communities have made gains in articulating a notion of external autonomy, including food sovereignty and food security, but still need an institutional structure of aggregation to have internal collective autonomy.

Food Justice scholars Mares and Pena conceive community as a regional, culturally specific subgroup within a larger country, and are centrally concerned with local agricultural-based communities. They recognize the nation state, but are rightly critical of the ongoing effects of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and the agribusiness,

which can create oppressive top-down laws, policies, and regulations that impede a community's ability to pursue identity-based, culturally specific agricultural practices. In situating local communities within larger ones, this model illustrates a socio-ecological web of community, and in highlighting both the obstructive and generative effects of the encompassing community on local ones, the need for community autonomy is seen. Further, Mares and Pena rightly ground community in a regional place, rather than merely the nation-state, and emphasize traditional, local and place-based practices that utilize environmental resources and sustain community identity.

Mares and Pena conceive community autonomy as the right to formulate decisions that determine a local community's production and distribution of food (Pena 2003; Mares and Pena 2011). Autonomy is an *external* capacity allowing communities to act with sovereignty from outside agents, other communities, or the state. Food sovereignty is more conceptually robust than food security. Whereas *food security* treats food as a nutritional commodity, *food sovereignty* incorporates deeper social and cultural meanings with place-based identities and agricultural practices (Mares and Pena 2011, 208). While sovereignty is necessary for community autonomy, it concerns only how communities relate to the encompassing community, or other local communities. This model omits an account of *internal* autonomy— an institutional structure to aggregate individual beliefs and decisions into collective ones. This is required so that a collective can think, form beliefs, and act for itself, not simply exist independently. Without an aggregation procedure, communities cannot be internally autonomous. Moreover, Mares and Pena's notion of community autonomy needs to

include sovereignty over ecological resources that are necessary for identity-based and culturally specific agricultural practices, viz. *eco-sovereignty* (Dahbour 2013).

Food preferences are an illustrative category concerning autonomy for individuals and communities because of their individual and collective, universal and particular, and personal and cultural nature. Because food choice concerns the *availability* of and *access* to nutritious and culturally appropriate food, then this occurs both at individual and collective levels. Individuals make their own choices, but from particular social locations that affect their access, and from socio-political contexts that determines what is available to be chosen (Raz 1988). Food choice is fundamental, universal, and necessary because it is a subsistence need of all embodied beings. But food is also incidental, particular, and a matter of individual want. Food preferences reflect moral, cultural, political, and shared identity-based practices, not just personal identity. Food is not simply a category of nutritional commodities, “but rather a set of social relations and cultural practices, including foodways and heritage cuisines that constitute a larger whole” (Mares and Pena 2011, 199). Food type, availability and accessibility are thus based in place and community. Because autonomy extends from social background conditions that are epistemic, political, and moral, and given that these are collective resources, then individual preferences are shaped by collective social resources.

Individual and community identity is gained and sustained through personal and collective autonomy. Mares and Pena consider communities with already articulated cultural identities and food practices advocating for autonomy in order to exercise and maintain their identity. They argue that communities must have the autonomy to create

“autotopographies— self-telling through place shaping” (Mares and Pena 2011, 208).

Narrative is widely acknowledged as a way to articulate and sustain individual and collective identity (MacIntyre 2007). A community must have autonomy to retain its culturally specific identity as well.

On my view, communities must have sovereignty to have both external autonomy and internal autonomy. Thinking collectively is predicated on community formation, and specification of common goals and values, cultural ethos, and aggregation procedures. This is collective action environmentally contextualized to acknowledge other communities and the encompassing community. Sovereignty allows a community typically with an already formed cultural identity to cohere and proceed with its practices. Because doing so necessarily involves forming beliefs, knowledge, and decisions to then enact them as actions, then a procedure of aggregating individual beliefs and actions into collective ones is necessary for a community to think and act collectively. Otherwise, the community proceeds without meeting competency and authenticity conditions for internal autonomy. When it does this, then any beliefs, knowledge, and decisions that are said to come from the community as a collective may actually only come from particular individuals with the most social power within the group. Unless this is a chosen model for aggregation by the community, then it does not reach the level of cohesive internal selfhood (*auto*) needed for a collective self (community) to autonomously rule (*nomos*).

## ii. Communitarian model

The communitarians (Sandel 1984; 1998; Etzioni 1999; Taylor 1989; MacIntyre 2007) argue for a concept of community grounded on shared substantive values. On this view, common values provide the basis for social bonds. I discuss Sandel and Etzioni's representative accounts of community and community autonomy. Community is society in the broadest terms, but it can be localized as state (most paradigmatic), city, and neighborhood. Shared values are the necessary background condition for communities to cohere. If the community was not based on some shared values, then laws, procedures, and policies could not develop because choosing them is predicated on the former, for example, valuing freedom, equality, and the democratic process.

Sandel observes three conceptions of community: the instrumental, the sentimental, and the constitutive (Sandel 1998). The first is premised on a classical notion of self-interested individualism and conceives community as a social mechanism of purely instrumental terms. Community is not desirable in itself, but given our social nature, it is necessary for survival and preservation of individuals as they pursue private ends. The sentimental model (which Rawls endorses) posits some shared final ends among individuals, who regard community as a good itself. Despite its recognition of shared goals and interests, the sentimental model still conceives the individual as being fully formed prior to community formation— the *original* position— and so views the individual as antecedent and prioritizes individual interests over collective ones (Rawls 1971). Sandel favors the constitutive model of community, which rejects the idea that individuals exist atomistically with developed identity, motivations, and ends completely

apart from those of others or their environment prior to being part of a community. Instead, it views individuals as partly constituted by their communities— the *social* environment— and because individual identity is not fully formed antecedent to belonging to a community, it follows that ends, goals, and resources will overlap, intersect, and be shared among individuals constitutively.

Community autonomy is conceived as a negative condition of noninterference from external parties. Etzioni (1996) discusses community autonomy primarily in terms of localized communities within the larger nation state community. He identifies ten “core elements” that characterize community, autonomy, and the relationship between smaller communities and the “community of communities”. Key elements include democracy as a value, a constitution and set of rights, and the idea of layered loyalties. Loyalty must characterize the relationship between smaller communities and the larger community. Loyalty is *layered* because certain loyalties supersede others. If one is in a smaller community, then one may have loyalty to it, but one must have a more fundamental loyalty to the encompassing community and its constitution, rights, and values. Communitarians prioritize values over procedures, which are codified by the constitution and bill of rights.

Community autonomy is treated as the liberty smaller communities have to make decisions regarding their community, free from interference from the larger community, but always consistent with its fundamental social values and procedures. “All these communities must act within the values embodied in the constitution” (Etzioni 1996, 201). While this is external autonomy, it represents only its most minimal condition—



noninterference. Etzioni acknowledges this minimalism and points out that it is difficult to add further conditions because the relationship between communities is determined by “specific lines between the legitimate domain of specific communities and of the community of communities, which are continually contested and redrawn” (Etzioni 1996, 201). Nonetheless, there are three problems with this account of community autonomy. The first is that it is based on a flawed notion of community generally, the second is that it omits internal autonomy of thought, and the third is that mere noninterference is insufficient for external autonomy.

First, assuming cohesive values of communities is problematic and well noted in the critiques of Communitarianism (Gutmann 1992). The notion of community values is plausible, since community members often share a considerable number of values, especially those rooted in place. However, communities contain diverse individuals and subgroups with varied values, which may or may not be commensurable with each other or with predominant community values. Communities may be multicultural and contain smaller communities. While there may be shared values indexed to specific aspects of a community’s interests, such as availability of healthy foods, the reasons for this and their motivating values (health, environmental, religious, etc.) may differ. Often subgroups with the most power and social capital have the most publically represented values. While dominant, they by no means exhaust the pluralities of values that may exist in a given place. Further, while shared values exist, they are certainly not the only condition of communities, but rather should be seen along with shared knowledge, practices, traditions, memories, and histories, and on my view, a sense of place. So, a

theory of community based on a variety of constitutive aspects (not just values) and a naturalized formation process are needed.

Additionally, differences in formation and type of communities must be considered. I highlight two types of communities that differ in formation, size, and purpose: the societal or *diffuse* community and the particular or *contractual* community. When community is cast in broad societal terms, analyses should begin *in media res*, rather than from an abstracted pre-political state of affairs in either state of nature or original position terms. Paradigmatically, individuals find themselves already embedded within a formed societal community by the time they begin thinking and acting autonomously. Selfhood is already constituted by it by the time one could consent to community formation and membership. One may give tacit consent by remaining in a community, but this hardly implies consent to the broader social terms of the community. When community is considered so broadly, then while members share certain resources, knowledge, values, and environments, they do not necessarily know all of each other, they do not necessarily act on behalf of each other's interests, and they may not even think of themselves as a cohesive and well-defined community. This community is societal, diffuse, and captures the broader and background notion of community.

Secondly, the communitarians lack an account of collective internal autonomy of thought. Sandel (1984) notes that the shift from small, localized communities to the centralized nation state moves procedures away from legislatures and political parties to institutions insulated from direct democratic pressures. In assuming internal cohesion based only in community values, and in acknowledging the diminishment of local power,

a procedural structure needed for internal community autonomy is absent. Because autonomy entails thinking (the formation of beliefs and decisions) and action (the carrying out of those beliefs), then it is unclear how this happens at the community level, and whether this autonomy is a “higher order” autonomy distinct from the aggregate of individual autonomy.

Third, the communitarian account of sovereignty suffers the same problem as the food justice account— it lacks inclusion of sovereignty over environmental resources seen as constitutive of collective identity and necessary to sustain community values and practices. Communitarian sovereignty lacks eco-sovereignty. While the collective epistemologists also suffer this problem, they do offer an account of internal autonomy.

### **iii. Collective epistemology model**

Discourse concerning collective belief and action in social epistemology can assist with the institutional structure needed for collective internal autonomy. Gilbert (1989; 2002; 2006) and Tuomela (1992; 2011) each discuss social groups as distinct from the aggregate of individuals within them. Gilbert and Tuomela use the term “social group” rather than “community,” and do not address autonomy *per se*, but their ideas are nevertheless instructive, if not unproblematic for community autonomy. First, their notion of community is smaller, grounded on shared goals, and contractual. Second, they provide an account of collective belief and decision formation required for internal community autonomy.

On Gilbert’s view, a social group is a collective of individuals who have willingly cohered for a particular purpose. Community is smaller, clearly specified, and

contractual, which contrasts with the diffuse community espoused in food justice and communitarianism. For Gilbert, a social-group must form according to a specified procedure based on mutual consent in a social context where communication is clear and organized. Gilbert requires four conditions for the formation of a social group. First, “the willed unity condition” requires that individuals have a *willingness* to join together (Gilbert 1989, 183). The “intention of unity,” requires an intention to collaborate as a group based on a common bond. Typically, the reason to form a group is for a common purpose, shared goal, or what Gilbert calls a “joint commitment.” Having a joint commitment is necessary but not sufficient for a group because it needs to be communicated among individuals. Second, “the expression condition,” requires that the willingness to join together is *expressed*. Third, the “common knowledge condition” requires that members have some knowledge in common that contributes to their collaboration. Shared knowledge includes that the willed unity condition is satisfied on the basis of the satisfaction of the expression condition (Gilbert 1989, 221). Finally, members must recognize that the group exists, by having “consciousness of unity” in addition to unity. Consequently, members will think of one another as “us” and act in terms of “we” (Gilbert 1989, 223), and this recognized consent is the basis for community. “Us” and “we” thinking is not only a consequence of community formation, but is constitutive of it. Individuals typically communicate a “general willingness” to cohere before a specific willingness is negotiated and goals are discussed (Chackal 2016, 135-136).

“We-thinking” involves thinking of a new kind, which for Gilbert arises with a larger self born from group formation— “the plural subject”. We-thinking occurs when individuals think as a group on behalf of the group’s interests, rather than merely as individuals for individual interest. The distinction occurs because a group can form beliefs and decisions differently than individual members, and how it does is not necessarily reducible to that of individual members. After forming, communities negotiate how to aggregate beliefs and act through a procedural structure determined by group members and their conventions. Belief formation will depend on a community’s background social and cultural conditions and will proceed according to its institutional structure. The former include aspects pertaining to a group’s culture and history, which Tuomela calls its “ethos.” An institutional structure is a set of procedural rules specifying how individual beliefs, decisions, and actions will be aggregated into collective ones.

There are benefits and problems with the collective epistemology model. First, Gilbert provides a different type of community, second the importance of an articulated joint commitment, and third Tuomela provides the notion of ethos and institutional structure. Not all communities are societal and diffuse, but certainly the encompassing community is. Nonetheless, particular communities form for shared goals and on common values, such as food cooperatives or worker groups. A robust account of community and autonomy must include varieties of communities. But there are also problems with this model. Tuomela rightly notes that a problematic aggregation structure can make some group beliefs “spurious,” while an appropriate one can make

them “genuine” (Tuomela 2011). Yet, he does not specify which procedures are spurious and which are genuine. Answering this is necessary to formulate competency and authenticity conditions for internal collective autonomy. While Gilbert requires that social groups must jointly commit to collectivize for a common purpose based on shared knowledge, she does not commit herself to any particular aggregation structure. Also missing from this model is an account of external autonomy, a broader notion of community, and an account of how the conditions in the encompassing community affect the prospects for contractual community autonomy.

### III. COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

On my view, a community is a type of social group comprised of people living interdependently in a place. I am concerned with place-based communities because their universal and particular topography concerns both individual and collective autonomy. Place is a regional concept with various aspects, including both the natural and social environment. Place is *geographical* location— the physical environment, some of which is natural and some artificial. Place is *social* locale— the social environment, which includes language (Thompson 2010), modes of experience and perception (Malpas 1999; Preston 2003), place-based knowledge and values, common culture, shared habits, practices and traditions, and memories and histories (MacIntyre 2007). Place, unlike space, contextualizes, colors, and constitutes the elements within it. While place is universal (everybody exists in a place), it is also particular (people exist in distinct places). While place is objective (geographical location and social locale), it is also subjective (individuals relate to places in ways that are their own). Relationality

often involves a *sense of place*, which captures an intimate felt connection to place-based knowledge, values, practices, traditions, and history. Having a sense of place is paradigmatically gained through embodied dwelling in a place and acclimation to its community and environmental culture (Norton and Hannon 1998; Sagoff 1992).

Place and community are companion concepts with alternate emphases. Place emphasizes the natural and social environment, which includes people, while community emphasizes people, but on my view includes environments. The natural and social environmental features of a place, along with people dwelling in culturally specific ways, underscore relational interdependency inherent to the place/community dyad. Recognizing how people dwelling in a place are interdependent on natural and social resources facilitates viewing individuals as ecological, and highlights the organic bonds that provide the basis for both diffuse and contractual communities. A community is thus a social group of people dwelling interdependently in a place and engaged in common practices involving shared resources. These may be environmental resources, such as lands and waters, and they may be social resources, such as food, housing, and education, or they may be cultural resources such as language, cognitive frameworks, and localized knowledge, values, and traditions.

Diffuse and contractual communities will vary in size, membership, and purpose. Paradigmatic diffuse communities are cities, states, countries, and society in the broad sense. Paradigmatic contractual communities are agricultural groups, neighborhood associations, unions, and protest groups. One is typically a member of multiple communities, and exists in overlapping ones. The size of a community will depend on its

place, geography, and number of members. A necessary condition for community membership would be living or owning property in a place, or otherwise being dependent on or connected to the resources of it. Most paradigmatic are small-scale communities that call for engaged citizenship motivated by solidarity of goals, values, and culture.

The internal and external dimensions of ecological selfhood and autonomy entwine and affect one another, which also occurs at the community level. A community's internal autonomy or ability to think for itself by aggregating individual beliefs into collective ones is predicated on its external autonomy or ecosovereignty from other communities or the encompassing community. Such parties can stop communities from forming as independent communities (sovereignty) and can obstruct them from making autonomous decisions (self-determination). This can be seen in issues concerning food, land use, and other ecological resources. Some indigenous groups claim rights to certain lands and environmental resources that may exist within the encompassing community. The encompassing community can obstruct a local community's right to access resources or preclude them from carrying out actions that utilize them. Given the entwined nature of the two dimensions, then an appropriate concept of sovereignty that allows a notion of collective external autonomy to arise is needed.

#### **IV. EXTERNAL COMMUNITY AUTONOMY CONDITIONS**

For external autonomy, I use Omar Dahbour's concept of *ecosovereignty*, which has two central conditions. "First, it designates the right of self-rule of a people inhabiting distinct countries. Second it establishes the right of sovereign people over the resources



necessary to sustain their life and habitats” (Dahbour 2013, 206). This theory places motivation to form a sovereign community as grounded in “political independence and integrity of ecological regions as opposed to states,” and emphasizes “the rights of *indigenous peoples* to lands and resources necessary to sustain their distinctive way of life” (Dahbour 2013, 206-07). Additionally, it “provides a rationale for *food sovereignty*—the right of local food producers to take measures to maintain the viability of their production and markets... [and] it “justifies a certain understanding of *environmental security*— namely, the rights of peoples to protect the ecological integrity of their community” (Dahbour 2013, 206). I employ ecosovereignty as external autonomy on my ecological framework. It is best suited to allow individuals to collectivize based in shared goals and values regarding land and resource use and food production, and coheres well with a notion of place-based communities.

**i. Competency condition**

From Dahbour’s *ecosovereignty*, competency and authenticity conditions for external collective autonomy can be drawn. In autonomy discourse, competency is required to specify the conditions that allow autonomy to be sufficient. The competency condition is sovereignty and has two senses. The first is political independence— the right of a community of self-rule. Political independence is needed for a local community to exist at all, and to pass laws, free from outside interference. The second condition is ecological independence— the right a community has over regionally based environmental resources. The two conditions are fitting because they reflect the alternate emphases of the place-community dyad: the socio-political environment and

the physical environment. The socio-political environment includes the encompassing community's political atmosphere. Conditions must be in place to enable smaller communities to form as self-ruling localities. Localized collective autonomy is not absolute, but exists relationally on a spectrum within the domain of laws specified by the encompassing community, reflecting layers and webs of communities, and layered loyalties that follow that structure. Similarly, the physical environment is shared by the encompassing community, other communities, and the nonhuman biotic ecological world. Social ecology is entwined with physical ecology. Use of environmental resources is required for a community to be sustained, but sovereignty over them is necessary for the community to sustain itself. The ways in which the community competently sustains its identity, traditions and practices overlaps with the authenticity condition.

**ii. Authenticity condition**

In autonomy discourse, authenticity requires autonomy to be genuine rather than false. On my view, authenticity consists in culturally appropriate action. Collective action must be appropriate to the community's cultural identity. External autonomy involves not merely collective action, but prior to it, community formation. This concerns the particular community's identity contextualized within the identity of the encompassing community. A community must be socio-politically sovereign to form with character and identity, and articulate shared goals, values, and relationships of interdependency. Such identity generation and sustainment may be dependent on culturally specific environmental resources— places, lands, flora, fauna, biotic systems, ecological relationships, etc.— along with social practices, techniques, and traditions utilizing such

resources. Identity is crucial because it is that against which actions are cast as culturally appropriate.

External collective autonomy entails having shared knowledge and commitment to collectivize. It requires having certain background conditions necessary for a general willingness to join together. Individuals dwelling in a place must organize into a community in order to collectively think and act. They may be motivated to do so when thinking as ecological selves in recognizing their interdependence in relation to a place. After organizing, they must specify a procedural structure of aggregating individual beliefs into collective ones. Just as an individual must form a preference given her varied and sometimes competing interests, so too must a community adjudicate varied individual beliefs into collective ones.

To be authentic, a community action must be true to its identity, and internal culture. A community must represent in action what it collectively determines in thought, and the ethos that underpins the internal process of belief formation must produce an action representative of it. Community identity represents a number of elements, particularly social knowledge, values, and practices that create the standard against which community actions are judged as authentic. Community identity concerns not only such aspects of its internal state which are materialized in action, but because neither individuals nor communities are atomistic, then collective identity also includes a communality's identity in relation to other communities, including the encompassing community as well as outside ones. A particular community gains aspects of its identity by standing in certain relationships to others. If aspects of its identity are linked to other

communities, then the standard for authenticity will accord with such multidimensional identity. To illustrate, a neighborhood acts authentically when it chooses an artist to paint a mural representative of the community's identity, values, and practices. A religious community acts authentically when it holds a Seder that follows preparation, cooking, and eating procedures appropriate to its knowledge, values, and practices.

Further, community autonomy may be externally inauthentic. An external constraint would be an obstruction from another community within the encompassing community, the encompassing community itself, or an outside community against the community acting in culturally appropriate ways. For example, a community of free and equal citizens acts inauthentically when it applies the law unequally. A particular community acts inauthentically when it illegitimately attempts to alienate itself from the encompassing community. A particular community might be constrained from acting authentically because of obstruction from the encompassing community. For example, global corporations mandate top-down agricultural practices that obstruct local farmers' ability to use specific resources, like local seeds, rather than patented ones, or use specific techniques, like grafting rather than monoculture (Shiva 2000). Another example is when an outside community attempts to seize ecological resources seen as necessary to sustain the cultural identity of a community. While such a community might survive in one sense, they lose integral aspects of cultural identity when impeded from access to and use of environmental resources.

## V. INTERNAL COMMUNITY AUTONOMY CONDITIONS

### i. Competency condition

On my view, the central competency condition for internal community autonomy is a procedure to aggregate individual beliefs and decisions into collective ones. Scholars call this an “institutional structure” (Petit 2011). I discuss three central models of aggregation: voting, operative member, and expert panel models. Some models are summative, while others are nonsummative. Summative accounts hold that the relationship between individual and collective belief is a matter of having an aggregation procedure in place. Collective beliefs are, in one calculation or another, the *sum* of individual beliefs. Nonsummative positions hold that collective beliefs are not the sum or aggregate of individual ones (Petit 2011). Rather, collective beliefs arise through a non-summative procedure, the voting structures for which differ. There is still a procedure of aggregation, but it is not simply summative. Aggregation models specify the procedures by which community rules (*nomos*) itself (*auto*). Collective beliefs, decisions, and actions follow from the formation of a collective self. Individuals must be autonomous before the collectives they form and the beliefs and decisions that follow from them are. Collective autonomy thus supervenes on individual autonomy, although the way it does will differ according to aggregation models. Because the group ethos and any decision to use an expert panel or operative member model was chosen through a majority vote, then there is a general summative model used to select instances in which nonsummative models may be used.

In community formation, after each individual expresses a willingness to join the community, there will be an interim period in which a community articulates its culture, ethos, and considers models for aggregation through a voting process, which the summative account ought to be used to form. The summative model should at least initially be used because it is the intuitive choice for communities that value freedom, equality, and direct democracy. On my view, the way to aggregate individual beliefs is through a democratic voting process, where all members have voting rights and collective beliefs and decisions require a simple majority and each competent community member has an equal right to vote. Individuals are competently autonomous when they can think for themselves, and authentically autonomous when their thinking is truly their own. When a plurality of individuals expresses a joint willingness to collectivize as a community that values freedom, equality, and the democratic process, then before other models of aggregation are chosen for future collective belief formations and decisions, communities should adopt a summative, simple majority account of voting to specify later procedures. This allows for procedural elasticity— the community can use this initial model to vote on future models, some of which may be chosen specifically for particular issues, beliefs, and decisions. While a community could use the summative model for all votes, they may choose a non-summative model in certain cases. Some procedural openness is intended so that varieties of communities have multiple options for culturally specific situations.

This interim period should be used as a forum for discourse so that a community can articulate its common values, shared goals, and collective ethos. An essential function of

place-based communities is to operate as sites of discussion, negotiation, and contestation (Carataga 1998). Individuals join communities to have their voices better heard or to create a collective voice that will be better heard. Communities must hold a forum to allow and foster critical discussion and debate on issues generally to meet competency, and in the interim period as a space in which a community culture and ethos can be articulated and codified. Community culture includes the constitutive characteristics of the place/community dyad— shared knowledge, values, interests, and goals. Community ethos includes its character, practices, traditions, and history. The interim is a period in which community purposes, positions, and procedures are considered and chosen, a notion of the community's common good is articulated, and in which other communities or outside individuals begin to recognize the community as externally autonomous over itself and regional ecological resources. As this period proceeds, communities may consider varieties of aggregation models.

Non-summative accounts do not treat collective beliefs as the sum of individual ones, which typically applies to operative member and expert models. On the operative member model, community belief and decision power is ceded to a select member of the group. The chosen member is empowered by the community to think and act for its common good. The expert model is when one or a panel of individuals forms collective beliefs and decisions based on their expertise. On this model, an individual or panel is chosen as representative because of their particular knowledge, experience, and expertise, typically seen as necessary or integral to belief formation germane to that issue. While beliefs and decisions may be chosen by an individual, because the choice to

take this approach was consented to by community members, then it still counts as collective belief and action. Additionally, the individual or panel is thinking in the collective “we-mode,” not the individual “I-mode,” (on behalf of the group, not oneself or themselves). On my view, a community can make use of all three models, depending on what is collectively seen as culturally appropriate to the issue, belief, or decision at hand. However, communities must use the summative model both in the interim period and in choosing when use of other models is appropriate. When a community chooses and follows this aggregation procedure, it meets the competency condition for internal autonomy.

**ii. Authenticity condition**

On my view, there are two central authenticity conditions for internal community autonomy. First is a culturally appropriate ethos that frames the social context of the community and entails constitutive goals, beliefs, and standards of collective thinking. As Tuomela notes (2011), a community’s ethos and procedural structure are mutually constitutive because the type of aggregation model chosen is indexed to community standards and cognitive practices. A community must articulate its values, standards, and a teleological notion of the common good.

Place-based communities are characterized by shared language, knowledge, values, practices, traditions, and histories. Individually and collectively these aspects should be seen on a spectrum, rather than all-or-nothing. Where each or all are on the spectrum is also affected by which type of community it is. At the societal level, there is typically a prevailing shared set of broad cultural values, but different subcultural and



countercultural values also exist. At the local level, communities must “reflectively endorse” a set of community values. When individuals form a contractual community, they do so from social locations within the societal community. Because it still has scope over smaller ones, the encompassing community has prevailing characteristics that will inform how the particular community characterizes itself and structures its procedures according to an ethos. However, the local community is autonomous when it chooses which general characteristics to import into the encompassing community's social structure, and which subcultural, countercultural, or new cultural values it prefers to adopt. In forming a constitution, a community can articulate its values, knowledge (for example indigenous over western scientific knowledge), practices, and procedures in ways that demonstrate what is culturally appropriate to it. This could include rejecting prevailing norms, values, and practices of the general diffuse community, and indeed forming community for the express purpose of contradicting them.

The second requirement of the authenticity condition is that collective beliefs must be genuinely representative of individuals within them. Representative includes being illustrative of individual beliefs within the community in the voting model and of the collective interests of individuals (e.g. operative member or expert models). Individuals typically join social groups and communities to achieve ends that they cannot as individuals. In doing so, they cede a certain amount of individual autonomy to join the group. This follows from consenting to form and have membership in the community, and by agreeing to follow its procedures and their outcomes. But in giving up a certain amount of individual autonomy, there is a good faith expectation that community belief

and action will achieve the desired ends of individuals directly, or create the possibilities and opportunities for individuals to achieve them on their own. Without such an expectation, then individuals may lack a motivation to collectivize. Consequently, aggregation must be appropriately representative of the collective individual wills and the common good to sustain the community.

There are multiple ways to structure how individual votes are aggregated on issues not simply of collective preferences and decisions, but on what counts as knowledge within the community, and what should be done on the basis of that knowledge. Because of the various models of aggregation, collective beliefs and decisions may be formed that misrepresent individual votes and logic (List 2011; Pettit 2011). Consequently, communities must choose procedures that genuinely represent the beliefs, decisions, and actions of their individual members. In examining various considerations that problematize authenticity conditions. Tuomela's distinction between genuine, spurious, and mixed beliefs can be utilized. Genuine or authentic group beliefs are those that are representative of individual beliefs. Spurious or inauthentic beliefs are those that are problematically misrepresentative (Tuomela 2011). Mixed are those somewhere in between. I consider two instances of inauthentic group belief: coercive power and a problematic aggregation model.

There are various ways collective thinking and action can be spurious or inauthentic. I have previously discussed a variety of obstructions to individual autonomy, some of which constrain externally, and some of which constrain internally. Regarding *individuals* within collectivities, an example of an external constraint would be a single

or plurality of individuals who use coercive power over other individuals to compel them to vote a certain way, or the use of aggregation models that did not have sufficient collective consent. An internal constraint would be individuals who are not thinking for themselves, or in the we-mode, but who help form a collective belief or decision. An internal constraint would include individuals who refuse to vote, or misinformation that corrupts individual thinking, and would include the use of coercive power.

Gilbert notes that social groups have “coercive power” over individuals (Gilbert 2004). Because groups are comprised of interdependent individuals in socio-political contexts, social power can coerce individuals to consent to a collective will that is contrary to their individual will, or be made to cast a misinformed vote or one that is not truly their own because of pressure from particular members or those external to the community. Because authenticity is a matter of what is appropriate to cultural identity, then while cases against it can still meet competency, they nevertheless obstruct the community from acting on their procedures in ways specific to their ethos and articulated identity. Because authenticity concerns cultural identity, and because cultural identity, particularly of indigenous peoples, supervenes on culturally specific uses of certain ecological resources, then situations in which culturally specific resources or techniques are impeded obstruct authenticity of collective action.

Community autonomy may be internally inauthentic in two ways. The first is when belief or decision formation is based on the use of *coercive power*. Coercive power may emerge in a variety of ways across different models. On the summative model, one or more members of the community could pressure other members to cast votes a

certain way. Similarly, an individual member might have social power over the expert panel or operative member such that the former controls the latter's vote. Also, one member of an expert panel may pressure another to vote a certain way. Social pressure and power can be used to intimidate, coerce, or otherwise illegitimately compel individuals or key members to vote in some fashion. An example would be when one member threatens to harm another in some way if he does not cast a certain vote.

The second way community autonomy is inauthentic is when individual members on any model fail to employ we-thinking that aims toward the common good. When they are in the I-mode, then thinking is not collective, it is not communal. When individuals knowingly make a choice that contradicts the collective ethos or common good, then it is not culturally appropriate. An example would be when a member votes only on behalf of his own interests (I-mode), not on the interests of the group (we-mode). Another would be when a member votes for something he knows contradicts the common good.

While all individual beliefs and decisions must be made in the we-mode, not the I-mode, and while there may be various options under the former, members might coerce an individual to vote a particular way. Coercive social pressure would violate authenticity conditions because it is an *illegitimate* way to compel others. On my view, legitimacy consists in *rational* persuasion, not simply persuasion. Illegitimacy includes the presence of forces that corrupt individual and collective thinking, or otherwise obstruct an autonomous reflective endorsement. It is important to note however that legitimacy and authenticity in general is not a *substantive* constraint— it is not based in moral value. Although many scholars do put such constraints on authenticity of

individual autonomy (Benson 2005; Govier 1993), I do not include this requirement. It's possible for collectives to make competent and authentic beliefs and decisions that do not achieve its desired ends and even produce consequences that counter its aims, and even still those that are immoral— especially when differences in aggregation models are overlooked. Legitimacy ensures that the procedure of aggregation is authentic to the competency expressed in the community constitution and in its ecologically self-articulated notion of the common good. The place/community dyad is a site of public exchange, contestation, and negotiation of ideas (Carataga 1998). Within this social space, ideas must be debated to reach a reflective endorsement. To be sure, members will try to change the minds of others, but debate must occur legitimately.

*A legitimate way to debate and compel others is through rational persuasive power.* Because communities are social sites of contestation, negotiation, and dialogue, there must be periods in which various opinions on the issue at hand are considered. A community must establish a forum for members to introduce information, pose questions, debate arguments, which will typically precede a vote. Just as an individual must heed various internal aspects— needs, wants, and interests— in relation to one another before forming a preference, so too must a group consider various members' views in the forum. While social power is present within community relations, I view persuasive power as the authentic way to compel others. Coercion within the group should be seen as an internal constraint on community autonomy.

In addition to collective beliefs aggregated on the basis of coercion, or a lack of collective thinking, they are also inauthentic when they are spurious or

misrepresentative of the collective. Summative aggregation may seem straightforward when there is consensus on background epistemic conditions needed for collective thought, including general knowledge, particular information, and the relationship between multiple points being debated. However, when these elements are complicated, problems may occur. Discourse in judgment aggregation (List 2011, 2012; Pettit 2011) shows the complications that arise and varieties of options in aggregating propositions about what is believed, known, and what should be done on the basis of that knowledge.

List and Pettit have outlined various problems that apply to the question of authenticity of collective beliefs within the voting model. The “doctrinal paradox” and the “discursive dilemma” illustrate that different ways of structuring the voting process produce different outcomes and varied levels of representation. Depending on the structure of the votes along with the logical connection between them, a group can hold a belief not held by any member and the majority vote can fail to endorse a view held by the majority. The doctrinal paradox shows that differences in aggregation yield different outcomes. Additionally, the discursive dilemma illustrates *the rationality challenge*— to ensure that beliefs collectively endorsed by the group are consistent with one another. This dilemma shows that a group may not achieve consistent collective judgments even when all members hold individually consistent judgments.

Consider a food cooperative community that has elected a panel to determine whether something that is organic is chemical free, and whether it should be sold at the co-op on this basis. They consider the following:

p: organic produce is chemical free

$p \rightarrow q$ : if organic produce is chemical free, then organic produce can be sold at the co-op

q: organic produce can be sold at the co-op

**Table 3.1**

	<b>p</b>	<b><math>p \rightarrow q</math></b>	<b>q</b>
Member 1	True	True	True
Member 2	True	False	False
Member 3	False	True	False

Conclusion-based			<b>False</b>
Premise-based	<b>True</b>	<b>True</b>	<b>True</b>

The paradox arises because the type of procedure used in aggregation yields different outcomes. List (2011) and Petit (2011) each distinguish between “conclusion-based” procedures and “premise-based” procedures. In the first, each individual member casts a vote on the premises and produces a conclusion. The conclusion is rational because it follows from the premises. The panel then takes a collective majority vote on the

conclusion. When using this procedure, the group may not meet the rationality challenge, even as each individual does. Notice that although a majority of individuals endorsed the first two premises, a majority did not endorse the conclusion. In the premise-based procedure, the group makes a collective judgment by majority vote on each premise, then derives its collective judgment on the conclusion from the aggregate of the premises.

This example reveals complexities in aggregation even on the simplistic expert panel model of just three members. To be sure, the complexities increase with the number of members. This is why the expert panel and operative member models are sometimes advantageous— they allow groups to divide the epistemic labor across fewer members, an advantage for larger communities. Additionally, a model in which several panels are tasked with a specific task could also be used. The “distributed premise-based procedure” allows individuals or subpanels to specialize on different premises and give judgments on them. The group then makes a collective judgment on each premise through a majority vote on each premise from the experts, and then the group derives its collective judgments on the conclusion from the collective judgments on the premises (List 2011, 228). List thinks that in reaching group knowledge, there are epistemic gains from democratization— making a collective judgment on each proposition through majority voting, disaggregation— separating collective judgments on premises from those on conclusions, and allowing conclusions to be derived from the votes on the premises, and distribution— when faced with a complex epistemic task, dividing its subtasks among various subgroups or panels.



The discursive dilemma is a generalized version of the doctrinal paradox. It shows that a group can have a belief that no individual believes. My example is borrowed from Petit (2011). Suppose a co-op is debating whether to impose an employee pay cut to improve workplace conditions. They consider whether 1) a workplace danger exists, 2) improvement is an effective measure, 3) pay-sacrifice is bearable for the workers, and 4) conclude whether it should be implemented.

**Table 3.2**

	<b>Danger?</b>	<b>Effective?</b>	<b>Bearable?</b>	<b>Pay-sacrifice?</b>
Member 1	Yes	No	Yes	No
Member 2	No	Yes	Yes	No
Member 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Conclusion-based				No
Premise-based	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notice that a collective majority vote on each of the premises yields an affirmative to the question of pay-sacrifice, even though no individual member's logic yields that, and so the conclusion-based approach would ultimately result in the negative.

The variations of aggregation procedures and their different outcomes may affect authenticity. Because collective autonomy is premised on the collective self and

collective thinking, knowledge formation, and action that it enables, then the premise-based procedure seems *prima facie* more authentic. This is because collectively aggregating premises through a majority vote and deriving conclusions from them seems more representative of true collective thinking because the process itself is collectivized. Alternatively, the conclusion-based approach only collectivizes the conclusion or epistemic product. And that perhaps suggests a less cohesive collective self. I have argued that even individuals on the operative member model must think in the we-mode. But an individual thinking on the collective behalf is not always equivalent to a plurality of individuals thinking collectively. Nevertheless, a review of these two problems shows that both premise-based and conclusion based-procedures create situations that may rightly be called misrepresentative. Authenticity is thus something that will emerge in a group over time, and which is subject to debate, contestation, and negotiation.

## **CONCLUSION**

I have argued that communities can be autonomous across both the internal and external dimensions. A community is a body of interdependent individuals dwelling in a place with a collective identity. A community's external autonomy of action consists in not only freedom from interference from outside communities or the encompassing community, but also in sovereignty over ecological resources and their utilization necessary to sustain a community's identity. A community's internal autonomy of thought consists in a collective ability to competently and authentically aggregate individual beliefs into collective ones. Communities must do this according to an

institutional structure or procedure to aggregate individual beliefs into collective ones. Such a procedure must be competent and authentic. Authenticity consists in a community ethos and in representativeness of collective beliefs. While a variety of aggregation models can be used within the community, they should be representative of the individual votes within them.

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