

# Emotion Oriented Systems - Threats to User Autonomy

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## Overview

### I. The Concept of Autonomy

- 1) Procedural Conditions of Autonomy
- 2) Respect for Autonomy on the Proceduralist Account

### II. Autonomy and Persuasion

- 1) Threats to User Autonomy by Emotion Oriented Systems  
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# I. The Concept of Autonomy

## I.1

### Procedural Conditions of Autonomy

- a) Self-reflection
- b) Rationality
- c) Procedural Independence
- d) Self-Trust, Self-Esteem, Self-Worth

Conditions a) - d) are necessary conditions of autonomy.

## Self-reflection

### *Self-awareness*

Reflecting on “who one is”, i.e. the beliefs one has, one’s deepest motivational dispositions, values, desires and goals, one’s position in a social environment.

### *Self-understanding*

Reflecting on how one came to have / why one has these beliefs, desires, goals, etc. (causal processes & influences of social environment)

### *Self-evaluation*

Reflecting on who one wants to be, i.e. whether one wants to be a certain kind of person, to have certain desires, values, and goals

→ A person who engages in these modes of self-reflection is intelligible to herself and arrives at a relatively stable self-conception which reflects her deepest commitments and concerns. In addition, she is less vulnerable to manipulation.

## Rationality

### *Means-End-Reasoning*

Figuring out the necessary means to achieve certain goals. Acting in an instrumentally rational way.

### *Rational Coherence*

Detecting and resolving possible conflicts between desires, goals etc. Coordination of one’s goals and projects.

### *Critical Reasoning*

Distinguishing from among the multitude of possible choices, activities, and relationships those that are favorable to self-governance from those that disadvantage self-governance. Responding rationally (from the background of one’s self-conception) to advices and arguments by others.

→ A person who displays rationality of all three kinds is more apt to achieve her goals, she is more intelligible to herself and exhibits a greater degree of control over her life.

## Self-Respect, Self-Trust, and Self-Esteem

### *Self-Respect*

Seeing oneself as a competent deliberator and legitimate author of one's decisions and goals.

### *Self-Trust*

Having an open and trusting relationship to one's feelings, desires, emotions, and so on.

### *Self-Esteem*

Conceiving of oneself and of one's projects and goals as worthwhile.

→ A person who does not stand in these practical relations to herself is not able to successfully exercise her capabilities for self-reflection and rationality. Self-respect, self-trust, and self-esteem are socially constituted feelings, i.e. they are dependent upon the recognition of others.

## Procedural Independence

### *Basic Idea*

For a person to count as autonomous, it does not suffice that she *actually* has a stable self-conception, is self-aware, shows self-understanding and displays a high degree of rationality. In addition, the person must have *arrived at* this state in a procedurally independent way.

### *Procedural Independence*

A person - in the process of self-reflection and rational deliberation - must be free from influences which

- a) subvert her capability for self-reflection
- b) undermine her capability for rational reflection
- c) diminish her self-respect, self-trust and self esteem

## Respect for Autonomy

### *Initial Characterization*

Respect for autonomy = respect for a person's procedural independence.

This amounts to the claim that we should not interfere with a person's capabilities for self-reflection and rationality and with her feelings of self-respect, self-trust and self-esteem.

### *The Person-Relativity of Respect*

Whether something is an instance of interference - of disrespect for autonomy - cannot be answered objectively. It can only be answered with reference to the actual effects on a person's capabilities

### *"Low Autonomy, High Respect"?*

If a person has low autonomy, many instances of persuasion, manipulation etc. will count as disrespect for her autonomy. This is due to the fact that her procedural independence is easily undermined.

In normative contexts, we need to appeal to conditions of normality - what can be reasonably expected from a mature person.

## II. Autonomy and Persuasion

## Hiding true intentions

A emotion oriented system does not inform the user that it will try to persuade him.

### *Possible Threats*

The person cannot become aware of her social environment and therefore lacks self-awareness.

As a consequence, she is not able to adequately deal with the information provided to her and cannot engage in critical reasoning.

### *Ethically permissible? (from the perspective of autonomy)*

"It depends":

Should we rationally expect that the user knows or comes to know that he is being persuaded?

## Hiding important information

An emotion oriented system hides important information

### *Possible Threats*

A person cannot engage in effective *means-end reasoning* because it is based on incomplete information.

Dependent upon the kind of information: Detrimental to self-understanding or to self-evaluation.

### *Ethically permissible?*

"No"(but: depends upon the kind of information): it is unlikely that it can be expected from the user that he has access to these information.

## Lying

An emotion oriented system lies to a user.

### *Possible Threats*

A person cannot engage in effective *means-end reasoning*, because her reasoning is based on false premises; the same holds for self-evaluation.

A person's self-respect might be diminished - she might be confronted with information which do not cohere with her other beliefs and, in consequence, the person might doubt that she is a competent deliberator; especially when the false information are presented in certain authoritative ways.

### *Ethically permissible?*

"No"

## Inducing negative emotions

An emotion oriented system induces negative emotions on part of the user.

### *Possible Threats*

The induced negative emotions (e.g. shame and self-hatred) can undermine a person's self-esteem; this inhibits her ability for self-evaluation.

### *Ethically Permissible*

"It depends": Can we reasonably expect that the user is able to resist the influence of the negative emotions on his self-esteem?

## Inducing Extreme Emotions

An emotion-oriented system induces extreme positive/negative emotions.

### *Possible Threats*

A person's capabilities for *self-reflection* are incapacitated.

A person is unable to exhibit rational control.

### *Ethically Permissible*

"No": It does not seem reasonable to expect from the user that he be able to resist the influence of extreme emotions on his capabilities

## Altering users' emotional state I

An emotion oriented systems alters a person's emotional state subliminally

### *Possible Threats*

The person might not be aware of the influence the emotion has on her actions or decisions (lack of self-awareness)

The person might lack self-understanding, since she cannot make sense of her emotional state - how she came to have it, why she has it

### *Ethically permissible?*

"It depends": Is it possible for the user to become aware of his emotion and of the processes that gave rise to it (making his emotional state intelligible to himself)?

## Altering users' emotional state II

An emotion oriented systems alters a person's emotional state against his own free choice

### *Possible Threats*

This is not a case of persuasion. It is plain coercion. A person is no longer able to exercise control over her life.

### *Ethically Permissible*

"No"