

# Defining Human Autonomy: Towards an Interdependent Model of Human Agency

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## **Overview: An interdisciplinary approach between sociology and social psychology**

How could I argue with a Nobel Prize winner? I admire Daniel Kahneman's work, not only his contributions to behavioral economics, but also his later work on wellbeing and happiness. Kahneman demonstrated, for example, that high income improves the evaluation of life but not necessarily emotional well-being (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). On the other side, a lack of money creates considerable misery. I had three critical extending thoughts on his well-supported study. The first was that the investigation was limited to addressing individual well-being and life evaluation of a population. In collectivist cultures, for example, group-identities and their social positioning play a significant role in perceived collective well-being, not only income.

Secondly, instead of money we could place general lifeworld resources, e.g., access to healthcare, decent housing, childcare and education for the public. In cultures that offer such resources, such as Scandinavian countries, income inequalities are moderated and lesser income is not tantamount to sliding into poverty and misery.

The third thought was that what makes people happy or unhappy is equally dependent on the degree to which they are able to govern their lives, their degree of autonomy. Life satisfaction measures only relate to outcomes that have accumulated over many years. By contrast, rational agency, the ability to create desired futures and enjoying access to options for making relevant decisions appear at every step of our life. To be in the driver's seat of our life appears equally important to well-being. People become increasingly unhappy the moment they are marginalized, disempowered and when they are forced against their will to deal with discriminating conditions, rather than creating their own. This Blog entry investigates human agency and its self-regulating structure. It asks about the critical key-ideas that constitute autonomous human life.

Albert Bandura's concept of an 'Agentic Psychology' (Bandura, 2006) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2012) belong to the most influential approaches in contemporary psychology to position human autonomy at the core of scientific research. It is argued in the following that although current theory and research rest on valid intuitions and solid findings regarding human autonomy, an extended framework is required to offer a more socially-coherent understanding of human agency. By exploring the concept of autonomy proposed by philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, it is investigated how an intersubjective approach to autonomy can provide additional insights for psychological theory. It is argued that Habermas' concept of human autonomy implies fundamental psychological competencies which cannot be conceptually separated from cognitive faculty when dealing with historically and culturally grown social identities.

Keywords: autonomous versus heteronomous social regulation, private autonomy, social autonomy, moral autonomy, accountable agency, authentic identity  
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## **1. Introduction: Where our folk understanding of autonomy fails**

Many people's naïve understanding of autonomy entails that we can lead our own life according to our will, according to what we want for ourselves, free of material deprivation and independent of external obligations, governmental control and social pressure. This understanding of private autonomy, as it has been originally framed by Locke and Hobbes, is still the dominant view of modern liberalism and libertarianism.

Supporting the libertarian definition of autonomy as individual independence, Markus and Kitayama's (1991) influential concept of group-independent (individualistic) versus group-interdependent (collectivistic) cultures defines that Western cultures promote individual independence and separateness of others, whereby Asian, African or Middle-Eastern cultures, prioritize family- and group obligations over individual freedom.

Ryan and Deci (2006) disagree with this idea vehemently and remark that by not differentiating between autonomy and individual independence, cultural relativists imply e.g., that women or Asians do not need autonomy. Their counter-argument is that fitting within a group, acting in accord with traditions or following parents is not a sufficient criterion for a lack of autonomy as long as people internally agree to care for others. The argument against a simple libertarian definition of autonomy (as the absence of compromising external constraints for the individual) can be expedited even further: if autonomy cannot make affirmative commitments to substantive social values, then it remains unclear how such position grounds *any* particular value commitments. Generally speaking, universal values such as the respect of others or the appreciation of socio-cultural scaffolding would be, counter-intuitively, excluded by a liberalist-libertarian understanding of human agency.

We can act for ourselves as individuals pursuing personal interests, but we can equally act by taking the interests of others wholeheartedly into consideration without compromising personal integrity. Depending on one's cultural perspective, somebody's individual freedom might be perceived as somebody else's selfishness. Identifying autonomy narrowly with individual independence can, to this extent, not pass as a culturally unbiased perspective.

Another argument rarely considered when discussing individual liberties is the influence of internal disrupting factors on the self, such as anxieties, fears, personal vulnerabilities, mental disorders or pathological personality traits, rendering individual agency compromised. An unquestioned assumption of libertarian philosophy is the sanity and justified perspective of personal decision-making. But what if the individual proves manipulative, deceitful, prone to impulsive risk-taking or simply exercising poor judgment? Individual as well as collective agency are to this argument constructed neither unipolar autonomous nor heteronomous, but they co-exist as a system of mutual checks and balances.

Bandura (2006) addresses the issue of collectivist versus individualist perspectives more pragmatically by differentiating between individual, proxy and collective agency. Besides individual agency, proxy agency regulates cases of indirect control, e.g., when we act on behalf of others or acquire resources via others. In addition, collective agency underpins the fact that in today's interconnected world we rarely act by ourselves, but within teams and under the moderating influence of larger groups. To limit autonomy exclusively to individual independence would, in the light of real-world interconnectedness and pervading globalization, not conclude relevant and meaningful theory.

## **2. Intersubjectivity as the key to understanding human autonomy**

SDT as well as Bandura agree that strong interactions between individual and collective autonomy exist. Ryan et al. (2005) point out that we depend upon others who support autonomous regulation. SDT has yielded much research investigating the inhibiting influence of socio-cultural systems on autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Autonomy, in SDT, is not defined by the absence of external influences, but by one's assent to such inputs. Collective autonomy is experienced by processes of endorsement and decisive identification.

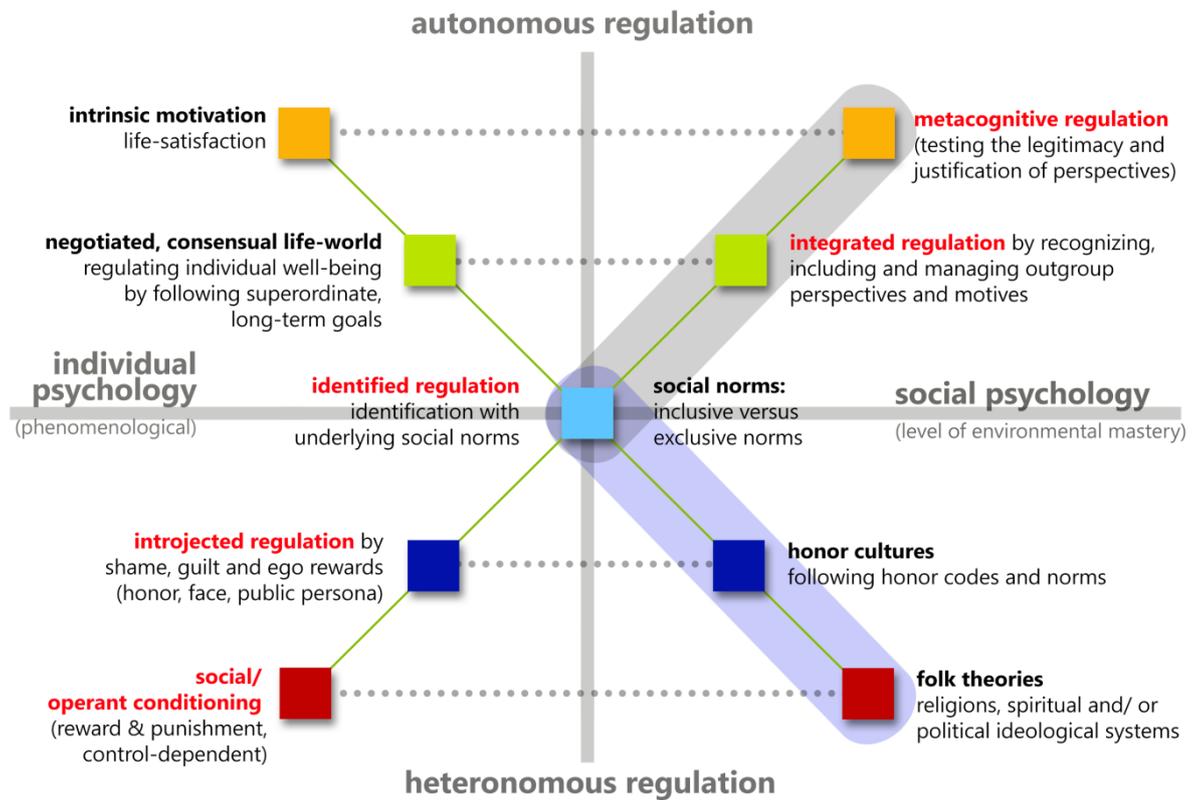
Following the philosophical outlines by Heider (1958) and deCharms (1968), SDT insists on the principle of personal causation. Autonomy, literally, means self-governance in SDT and it rests on intrinsic motivation. The critical question from a socio-cognitive perspective is if intrinsic motivation provides not just a necessary, but a sufficient account of personal autonomy. After all, if assent is an integral element of collective autonomy then an individual's motivation must be equally based on good implicit or explicit reasons for such agreement. The

question is if intrinsic motivation can be conceptualized devoid of cognitive agency, e.g., by solely and automatically following intuitive goals that seem to develop us as an authentic person, or in tandem with self-reflected awareness about intrinsically-motivating reasons.

In this context, SDT (Ryan, Kuhl & Deci, 1997) has developed a comprehensive model of motivation which explains the continuum of heteronomous and autonomous regulation. In SDT, motivation ranges on the scale from amotivation (impersonal) to external regulation (highly controlled), introjected regulation (moderately controlled), identified regulation (moderately autonomous), to integrated and intrinsic regulation, both latter types being highly autonomous. External regulation is better known from behaviorism under the term of operant conditioning (Skinner, 1953). It is argued in the following that integrated and intrinsic motivations, to be truly autonomous, require the involvement of metacognitive reasoning. This notion implies that an individual asserts herself to behave according to good reasons and is capable of evoking intrinsic motivation via acts of personal rationalization.

Culturally-bound identities develop, as described in SDT, on a continuum between various types of heteronomous and autonomous social regulation. Christine Koorsgaard (1996) coined the term 'practical identity' representing this notion. Practical identity, which is governed by locally-grounded heteronomous and autonomous types of regulation, manifests peoples' socio-cultural reflection on values and normative self-concept. Practical identity is in the following is referred to as 'practical agency'. An initial mapping of individual phenomenology to heteronomous versus autonomous regulation-types, largely congruent with SDT, is summarized in Figure 1. Intersubjectivity, within the presented coordinate system, implies that subjective internal motivations, reflections, desires, experience and conscience do not stand in isolation (or prior) to the social world, but are socially constructed. Agentic psychological experiences and processes '*are in virtue of being elements of our interaction with others*' (Anderson, p.93).

## Social Regulation Continuum



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**Figure 1:** Indicated in red are types of social regulation which are set within a coordinate system between the axis of autonomy versus heteronomy and individual versus social psychology. Autonomous regulation extends to the conscious recognition of outgroups, whereby heteronomous regulation deals predominantly with internal role beliefs to ensure ingroup coherence.

### 3. Bandura's concept of agency and the question of free will

For Bandura (2006, 1977), the self is socially constructed through transactional experiences with the environment. Analogously to SDT, it is cognitive competencies that enable agency, namely intentionality, future-directed forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness. Agency, for Bandura, is not represented by the metaphysical assumption of a 'free will', but by the ability to make causal contributions to the course of events. Bandura's latter notion is a

novel reply to reductionist biology and neuroscience who regard individual autonomy as an illusion created by the brain (Pinker, 2000). Following Bandura's argument, even if mental processes were in fact fully determined by underlying brain processes, the probabilistic nature of physics would still allow for us to draw causal and conditional inferences to sequences of events. Reductionist arguments are to this extent not tangent and relevant to cognitive ability. Habermas' argument resembles Bandura's: if we assume that autonomous agency is defined as the ability to respond to socially constructed reasons, it is convincing to conceptualize human agency as a natural part of the social world.

Identity theory, the assumption that physical states are identical to mind-states, is more an academic proposition rather than a scientific theory. The problem of Identity Theory is that it is theoretically and practically impossible to prove that a person's subjective experience equals corresponding 'objective' brain-states. Any methodology would require admitting a first person self-report (and all its uncertainties) as evidence to prove identity to an objective account, which would be self-contradictory to its truth proposition. To argue with Karl Popper, Identity Theory can, for this reason, not be methodologically falsified and therefore does not qualify as a scientific theory.

Alternatively, a more pragmatic and intuitive idea would be to understand the mind as the action that the brain (as a biological organ) performs. The brain performs the correlated action of mind, which, empowered by the resource of context-separated memory, is capable of remodeling neuronal connections, enabling both upward and downward causation between brain and mind. Unlike routinized minds, the mind can go offline and direct focus on mental content, away from environmental stimuli (Vierkant, 2013). By formulating mental content independent of external influences, we are endowed with the capacity to conceptualize competing mental models to make sense of the world. The latter is no trivial fact considering that heteronomous regulation can hinder and distort cognitive ability and learning.

Regarding reductionist hypotheses, research on human memory and underlying learning processes stand on solid ground and there are no reasons, rather than ideological, to reduce the complexity and richness of mental processes and their meaning towards a single-minded, convergent proposition.

#### **4. Habermas' five dimensions of autonomy**

In his insightful introduction to Habermas' concepts of autonomy, Joel Anderson (Fultner, 2011) explains the key ideas of an intersubjective account of autonomy by their absence. He writes "To lack *political autonomy* is to be subjected to illegitimate domination by others, specifically by not being integrated in an appropriate way in processes of collective self-determination. To lack *moral autonomy* is to be incapable of letting intersubjectively shared reason determine one's will. To lack *accountable agency* is to behave as a result of compelling forces rather than to act for reasons. To lack *personal autonomy* is to be unable to engage in critical reflection about what to do with one's life. And to lack *authentic identity* is to have one's claim to recognition vis-à-vis others get no update" (Anderson, p. 91).

The five mentioned key concepts of autonomy shall be explained in detail.

##### **4.1 Socio-political autonomy in relation to private autonomy**

For Habermas, private and public autonomy evolve reciprocally within social interaction. To this extent, they presuppose each other and emerge jointly. The intersubjective role of both types of autonomy is formulated stronger as compared to SDT or Bandura. Private autonomy does not only become *difficult* when public autonomy erodes and dissolves, as Anderson points out, it ceases to exist. Without a social framework that guarantees a person legal rights, impartial democratic institutions, provisions such as healthcare, education, opportunities to work, income, decent housing and general social inclusion, private autonomy cannot materialize. Private autonomy is in this light a fundamentally social construct, which resonates with Vygotsky's assumption (1978) that individualism can only develop within adequate social scaffolding.

Habermas refers to these conditions as 'lifeworld resources'. Private autonomy cannot practically be separated from the very social conditions and resources that enable and develop it. Ryan and Deci (2011) recognize the influences that social contexts exercise on inhibiting or developing autonomy and intrinsic motivation. To this account, it is of interest to psychology how individual and collective practical agency develops as either socially inclusive mindsets (in the form of solidarity, democratic ethos and public empathy for others) or socially exclusive

concepts (in the form of privilege, the protection of group rights and social hierarchies), this is how lifeworld resource management is psychologically constructed.

The architecture of the lifeworld is not arbitrary but requires being rational to support its members developing and maintaining personal autonomy. This implies psychological prerequisites such as successful childhood socialization, a functional public education system and independent media allowing for the open discussion and negotiation of societal problems.



**Picture above:** Public education is a good example for the social scaffolding of individual autonomy by providing lifeworld resources. Image by The Portsmouth Grammar School

#### **4.2 Moral autonomy**

Moral self-determination is for Habermas indistinguishable to a determination by reason. Bandura elaborates from a psychological perspective “In the development of moral agency, individuals adopt standards of right and wrong that serve as guides and deterrents for conduct. In this self-regulatory process, people monitor their conduct and the conditions under which it occurs, judge it in relation to their moral standards and perceived circumstances, and regulate their actions by the consequences they apply to themselves” (Bandura, 2006, p.171, see also

Bandura 1991). Self-regulation and monitoring are metacognitive competencies that involve the cognitive evaluation of circumstances.

Analogously, Habermas' extends, beyond automatic self-regulation, to cognitive competence for the evaluation of goals, attitudes and behavior. This entails not only reflections about mental content and how it is processed, but the ability to metacognitively question how our goals, attitudes and behavior affect others. Under heteronomous influence, practical agency can effectively compromise cognitive capacity, e.g., when people follow ideologies or become obsessed with defending group privileges. In such cases, they typically demonstrate limited motivational and cognitive capacity to consider the perspectives of others.

This conundrum recognizes Hegel's argument against Kant's deontology; put more simply, that morality is not a faceless abstraction of universal principles, but a rich tapestry of peoples' conflicting desires, personal goals and motives, natural interests, beliefs, shared cultural values, behavioral patterns, emotive-cognitive limitations and underlying life experiences.

Without being able to reflect on the constraints that are imposed by practical agency, local identity cannot constitute moral status. Peoples' intentions and behavior might be justified from their personal perspective, they may be experienced as morally right in *local context*, but they may not have moral worth in the light of inherent intersubjective obligations and norms. Folk beliefs about moral legitimacy usually lack justification in *every context*, which is addressed in the light of meta-contextual and intersubjective validity.

This is why it makes sense to psychologically frame in-situ *cognitive agency* as a function of our *practical agency*, but defining *socio-cognitive competence* as the general ability to reason practical agency across contexts and integrating with the perspective of others. The latter empowers moral agency as the ability to take intersubjective perspectives and claims into consideration.



**Picture above:** *The behavior of enraged football hooligans is governed by group aggression as an example of heteronomous regulation. Perceived rivals are not only socially excluded, but intentionally harmed in the absence of cognitive capacity. Photo: AFP*

#### **4.3 Accountable agency**

As a result of moral agency (the ability to reflectively respond to socially constructed reasons), we hold each other accountable to this extent. We decide whether somebody's attitudes and behavior is either praiseworthy or blameworthy, and we usually expect of others (as we do of ourselves) that we can justify our actions, that we know what we are doing. Since *accountable agency* is expressed by reciprocal social expectations, it has normative character. Without such accountability, responsibilities cannot be defined. It is no small matter if people only assume or think that they are responsible, or if they also *feel* that they are responsible, that they demonstrate a genuine motivation to translate thought into corresponding behavior. We may call this ability *executive moral agency*.

Psychologically, there are limitations to accountability, such as e.g., in the case of mental disorders or learning disabilities. An assertion to reason can only be performed in the discursive exchange with other reason-holders. As concluded previously, practical agency empowers and limits cognitive agency, and subsequently in-situ moral agency. Like in the case of cognitive competence, moral agency requires being differentiated from moral accountability. A person might display limited moral agency, such as in the case of drunk driving, but is still morally responsible for her actions in the light of intersubjective reason.

On a wider scale, the major challenge of a technology-driven world is compounded by the fact that responsibilities are diluted and distributed over complex systems. This is why we differentiate e.g., between primary and secondary affected groups - those who are directly affected by new technologies, policies and social changes, and those who are indirectly affected. More than often, we are psychologically disconnected from the consequences of our actions. We may not realize that some of the products we buy depend on the exploitation of others far beyond our borders. Likewise, environmental disasters do not know national borders and secondary affected groups might span across generations, such as in the Bhopal gas tragedy. Beyond the psychological challenge of lifeworld-complexity, Bandura (2007) has exemplified '*selective moral disengagement*' as a major topic in social psychology. Moral disengagement in the case of ecological sustainability is for Bandura defined by "reducing accountability by displacement and diffusion of responsibility; ignoring, minimising, and disputing harmful effects; and dehumanising and blaming the victims and derogating the messengers of ecologically bad news" (Bandura, pg.8). Bandura (2016) illustrates mechanisms of moral disengagement in complex societies in case studies involving the entertainment industry, the gun lobby, the corporate world as well as the social psychology of terrorism and counter-terrorism.



**Picture above:** *The Bhopal industrial disaster left 600,000 people exposed to toxic gases with an estimated death toll of 15,000. Even 30 years later, many women who were exposed have given birth to physically and mentally disabled children. Archive Photo: AP Photo/Sondeep Shankar*

From the perspective of SDT, intrinsic motivation is required to exercise interventions promoting environmental and social sustainability. Since moral executive agency is grounded in autonomous, intrinsic motivation, contemporary social psychology needs to investigate and contextualize the psychological prerequisites enabling moral agency and moral executive agency.

#### **4.4 Personal autonomy**

Personal autonomy encompasses self-governance in the widest sense; to decide freely how we lead our life, how we bring up and educate our children, whom we love, how we plan our careers or how we contribute to society. Philosophical approaches tend to define personal autonomy by universal standards, such as internal cohesiveness, reasons-responsiveness and so on. Habermas' concept avoids abstracted concepts and emphasizes the socio-historical development of autonomous agency. To this argument, personal autonomy is defined by the competencies required to navigate through an increasingly complex and globalized world.

We have to make dramatically more decisions as compared to our grandparents and parents and have to deal with widely expanded options for decision-making and assuming the responsibilities that these decisions imply. In this context, SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan 1995) has defined autonomy, competence and relatedness as core interrelating human needs. To avoid regress into heteronomy, personal autonomy depends on the acquisition of navigational competencies as much as it requires to be protected in terms of socio-political autonomy. In conclusion, we can conceptualize personal competence and social autonomy as the internal and external scaffolding required to develop human agency.

#### **4.5 Authentic identity (Authenticity)**

In Habermas' intersubjective understanding of autonomous selfhood, authentic identity is not, as one may intuitively assume, expressed by one's uniqueness based on assertive personal self-description. Authenticity is rather based on a two-stage process. The first step is to understand what and how one feels, thinks and behaves, while the second step tries to make sense of the experienced account. We attempt to render our personal existence intelligible, which entails the possibility to fail making sense of oneself. As such, we are naturally criticizable to ourselves. Authentic identity is neither based on blind self-assertion, nor decided by external majority vote but by entering an internal discourse attempting to figure ourselves out in a meaningful way, to make sense of ourselves.

Habermas links reflective self-description to public language when he elaborates: “From the ethical point of view we clarify clinical questions of the successful and happy, or better, not misspent, life, which arise in the context of a particular collective form of life or of an individual life history. Practical reflection takes the form of a process of hermeneutic self-clarification. It articulates strong evaluations in light of which I orient my self-understanding. In this context the critique of self-deceptions and of symptoms of a compulsive or alienated mode of life takes its yardstick from the idea of a consciously guided and coherent course of life, where the authenticity of a life-project can be understood as a higher-level validity claim on an analogy with the claim to truthfulness of expressive speech acts.” (Habermas & Cronin, 1996, p.341)

Claims to authentic identity can, in this extended definition, only be made by living a life that supports the truthful expression of feelings. This excludes the possibility of inauthenticity, the construction of a flawed or narcissist self-portrayal which deviates from the good faith we would reasonably place into an honest self-account. Placing a self-monitored account performs an act of vouching which is processed either internally by one's consciousness, or externally by one's self-positioning in relation to loved ones and friends. As Anderson notes to this point “Vouching is a matter of issuing to others a guarantee that one can make good (or fail to make good on) by living up to one's claim. (...) We can aspire, in private, to live up to certain goals, but we can vouch for ourselves only to others.” (Anderson, p.108)

Lastly, in avoidance of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), we try to align authentic identity with corresponding moral beliefs about the justification of supportive social conditions to serve personal autonomy. Personal identities based on heteronomous social regulation types experience authenticity in terms of fulfilling social obligations, complying to collective norms and executing moral agency in the light of group-interests. To this extent, group-interdependent identities are unable (or limited) in creating discursive internal accounts although the culturally embedded expression of feelings is genuine.

## **5. The five aspects of human autonomy in the light of psychological theory**

Lifeworld resources such as public education, a social market economy, reliable democratic institutions and fair public discourse are prerequisites to private autonomy. For this reason, social and private autonomy evolve reciprocally and in codependency. Since lifeworld resources are historically and culturally grounded, such resources are psychologically constructed within the spectrum of autonomous and heteronomous types of social regulation. In order to develop autonomy and relatedness, democratic institutions and organizations, such as people's workplace, need to accommodate opportunities for personal growth and the fostering of competencies. Without the support of lifelong learning initiatives and the continued care for people's professional development, to argue with SDT, social- and personal autonomy remain illusive, they are not empowered to carry agency in society.

From an individual perspective and in everyday life, private autonomy realizes as practical- and authentic agency. Practical agency is linked to the ability to make sense of our social world, which entails to question its fairness and openness, whereby authentic identity is linked to the ability to make sense of our autobiographic life. Both aspects of private autonomy are grounded in reason, the attempt to make coherent sense out of ourselves and the social world. Such an intersubjective and interdependent understanding of human agency is also compatible with established psychological frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) since social- and subjective norms and their underlying cognitive assessment are conceptualized as distinct factors evoking behavioral outcomes (see Figure 2).

The same applies to Triandis' Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour (Triandis, 1997, 1980) by including social roles and self-concept as critical elements of personal agency and recognizing the central function of affective motivation. By including role beliefs and habits, Triandis' model acknowledges the culturally-heteronomous aspects of practical identity that rational choice approaches neglect. The concluding argument of an intersubjective approach is that by grounding human agency in socially-constructed reason, we become accountable to ourselves and to others. The subsequent psychological ability to take over responsibilities is a prominent theme in Bandura's latest work, which investigates not only self-efficacy, but also the option of moral disengagement (Bandura 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2016).

Bandura's '*agentic*' approach is compatible with Habermas' sociological approach insofar he describes human behavior as a result of tradic codetermination, conceptualizing that the causes of human behavior are reciprocally rooted in personal (intrapsychic) determinants, environmental determinants, such as available life world resources, and behavioral determinants, such as socio-cultural mindsets and social practices (Bandura, 2008).

### **Summary**

SDT as well as Bandura's concept of human agency share much in common with Habermas' account of intersubjective autonomy, in particular in regard to the interactions between the individual, culture and society. This comes to no surprise since intersubjectivity, as defined in sociology, and interpersonal relations, as defined in psychology, share the basic assumption that social spheres are created by meaningful interactions between people. Habermas' approach extends psychological areas of investigations to the rational construction of the lifeworld and the management of lifeworld resources. Since social autonomy protects and empowers personal autonomy, empirical societal conditions for supporting autonomy cannot be methodologically separated from the constitution of personal autonomy. Bandura goes as far as to state that when looking at autonomy in de-contextualized isolation "Autonomous agency is an illusion." (Bandura, 2016, p.24).

Personal autonomy is not only, as elaborated in SDT, a matter of subjective well-being, but it entails the acquisition of competencies to support personal self-rationalization as well as the development of social resources with others. Moral agency and cognitive agency correlate and are measured against general cognitive competence to validate executive moral agency.

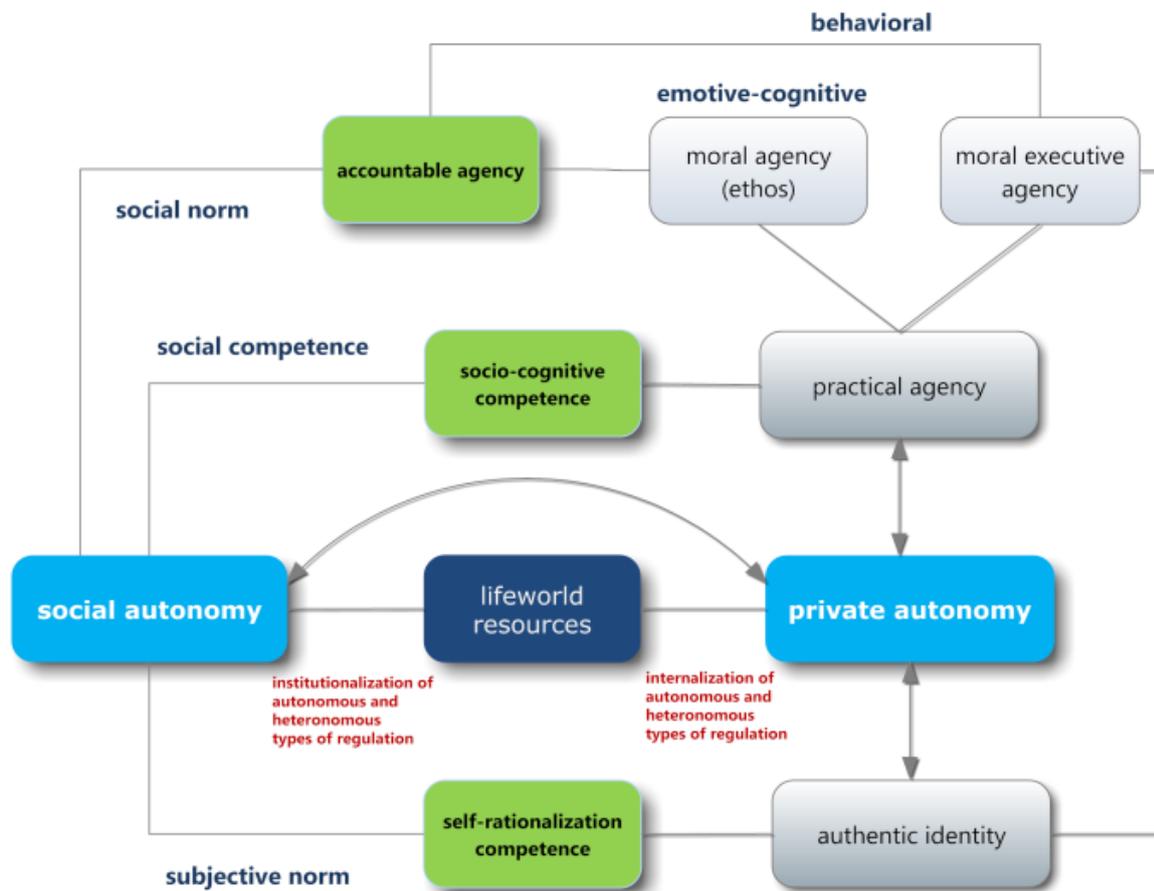
True moral autonomy encompasses the abilities of self-regulation and self sanctioning, emotive-motivational as well as cognitive resources. A mere cognitive understanding of moral problems would be incapable of evoking motivation to elicit behavior and prove epiphenomenal. In the worst case, the mere intellectualization of moral issues serves moral disengagement by formulating moral attitudes unilaterally, independent of underlying social causation and context.

Finally, moral agency evokes accountable agency. The corresponding psychological question is how we are willing to assume responsibility for our actions and how people are not simply blind onlookers on their behavior, as Bandura stated, but are capable of holding themselves and others accountable. Lastly, personal authenticity is viewed from an intersubjective perspective to how acts fit coherently into an overall life in order to self-support personal autonomy, e.g., in contrast to out-of-character behavior. This entails the ability to vouch for oneself and one's recognition by others to be willing and able to try. Authenticity concludes in the performative assertion that we are ultimately self-responsible for leading our life with others.

In conclusion, autonomy is dependent on internal and external scaffolding to evolve. The internal scaffolding of private autonomy is composed by authenticity and moral agency, relating to a person's intrinsic motivation, the external scaffolding is provided by available lifeworld resources and the rational construction of social domains. A holistic view of human agency requires to this argument to take all accounts into consideration: how we make sense of ourselves and of others, how we engage with others on a social level, how we construct shared lifeworld resources and how we hold each other accountable.

An overview of an interdependent model of human agency is visualized in Figure 2.

## Interdependent Model of Human Agency



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**Figure 2:** An interdependent model of human agency. Private and social autonomy evolve in codependency via the institutionalization of rational lifeworld resources. Practical agency and authentic identity develop as individualized aspects of socio-cognitive competence and self-rationalization.

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