

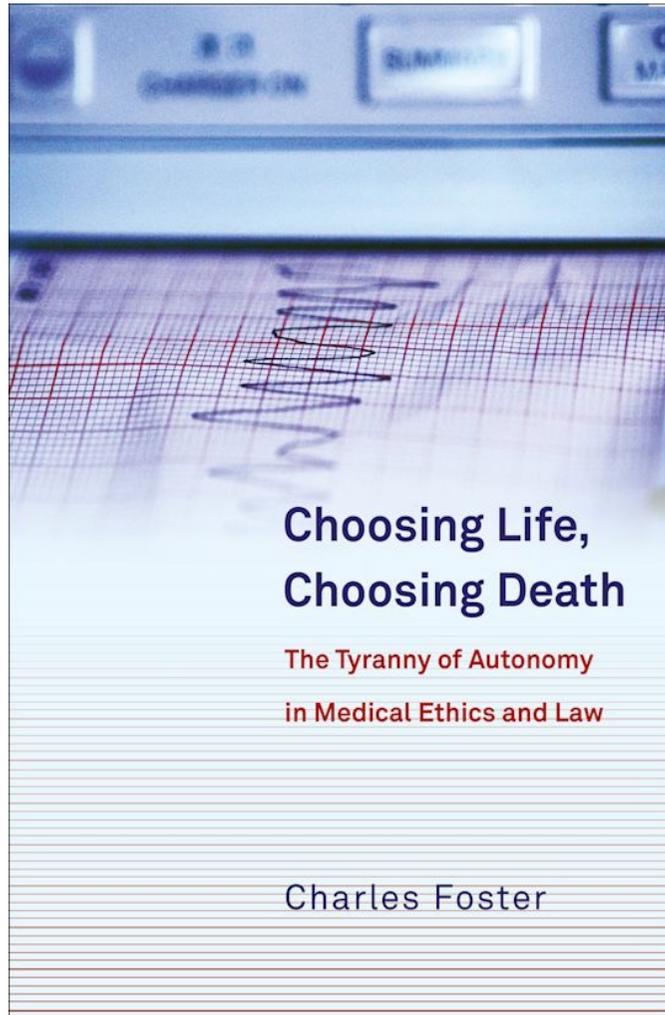


22 Types of Autonomy

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On 'autonomy' at medical ethics conferences

"A daring or naïve delegate might ask: 'Which theory of autonomy are you using here?', but it won't do his career much good. Everyone who is anyone knows what autonomy means, and it means the straightforward libertarianism of John Stuart Mill, Peter Singer and Julian Savulescu."

Autonomy at AABHL 2025

Twenty-two types
of autonomy: which
should we value at
the end of life?
Ian Maddox
id#1889

The psychological
impacts of
implantable
brain-computer
interfaces on
human agency and
autonomy
Frederic Gilbert
id#1948

Personalized
patient preference
predictors, being-
towards-death and
human autonomy
Zachary Daus
id#2046

Autonomy, self-
rule and decision-
making capacity: a
Spinozistic view
Simon Walker
id#2040



The American Journal of Bioethics

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Two Types of Autonomy

J. S. Swindell

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Published online: 08 Jan 2009.



Overview
– a call for
vigilance

Multiple senses of 'autonomy' – different senses have different arguments for due respect

Senses can be confused, and it can be easy to overlook clues in context

Examples from philosophy and bioethics literature

Respect for autonomy as *two distinct concepts* in organ donation: negative liberty, and autonomy as authenticity.





Categories of autonomy (1)

Non-agent (eg independence between variables)

Conscious vs unconscious agency (eg self-driving car, bacterium)

Of a **desire** vs of a **decision** vs of an **action**

Of a **person globally** vs of a **specific desire, decision or act**



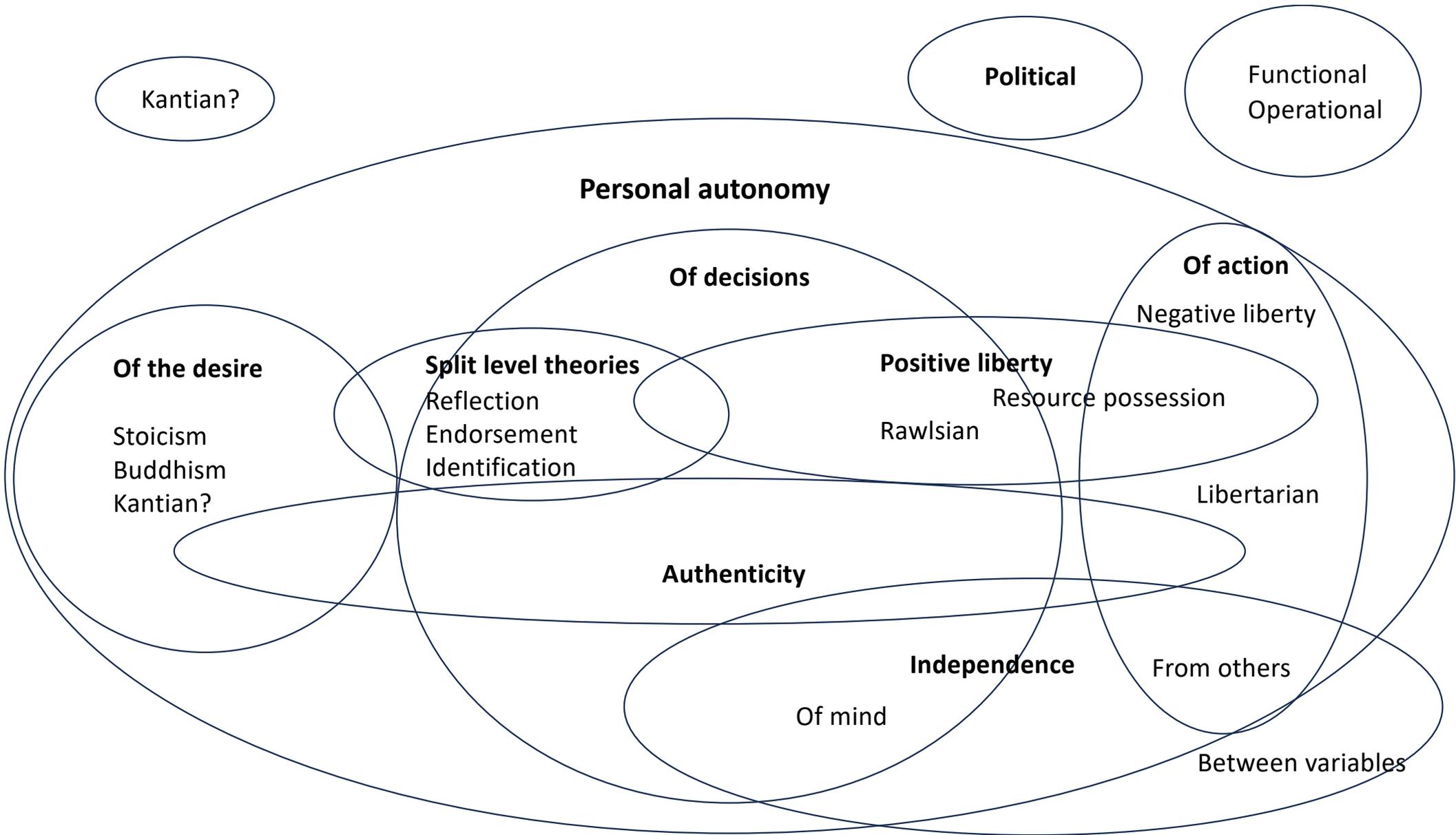
Categories of autonomy (2)

As a **negative** vs **positive** concept

Procedural vs **substantive**

As a **description** vs as a **rights claim**

Moral autonomy (Kantian)



Kantian?

Political

Functional
Operational

Personal autonomy

Of decisions

Of action

Of the desire

Split level theories

Positive liberty

Stoicism
Buddhism
Kantian?

Reflection
Endorsement
Identification

Rawlsian
Resource possession

Negative liberty

Libertarian

Authenticity

Independence

Of mind

From others

Between variables

Examples of the use of autonomy / autonomous

Independence between variables

Operational autonomy (eg self-driving car)

Functional autonomy (eg bacterium)

Political autonomy (eg of a nation state)

Free will

Kantian

As rationality

Relational

Belief-desire pairs (action theory)

Independence from *others*

Independence *of mind*

Negative liberty

Libertarian

Voluntariness

As a process

Competence / capacity

Positive liberty

Rawlsian

As higher-order *reflection*

As higher order
endorsement

As higher order
identification

As possessing pertinent
information

As the range of options
available

'Life-plan' autonomy

As authenticity

Et al...



Is context
not
enough?

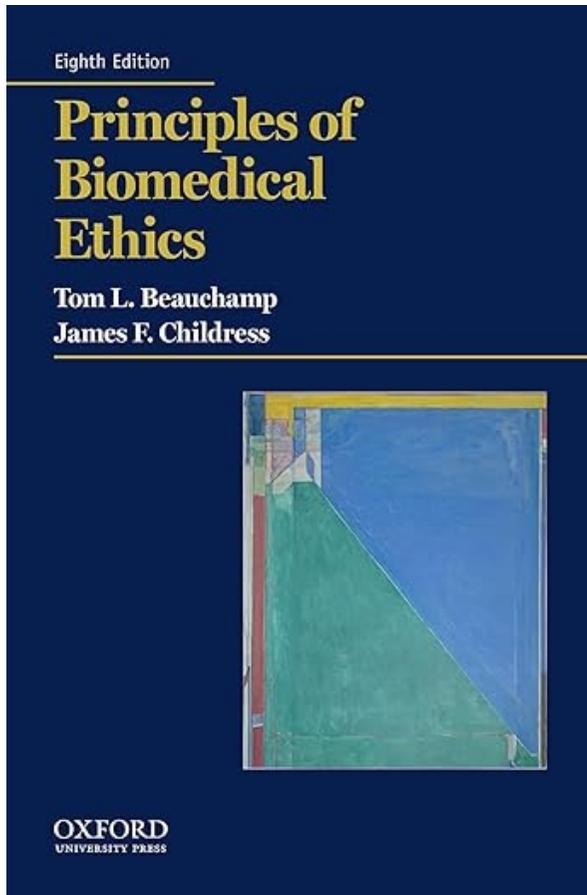
Limits of autonomy:

*Autonomy can be restricted if
one's autonomy does not reach
a particular threshold.*

Is context
not
enough?

Limits of autonomy:

*Autonomy₁ can be restricted if
one's autonomy₂₋₁₈ does not
reach a particular threshold.*



*“The autonomous individual **acts** freely in accordance with a **self-chosen** plan...”*
p101

*“...a person of diminished autonomy is... incapable of **deliberating** or **acting** on the basis of his or her desires and plans.”* p102

“Executorial” vs “Decisional” Autonomy

Examples

Received: 7 September 2022

Revised: 19 December 2022

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DOI: 10.1111/bioe.13138

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Autonomy to a fault: The confluence of organ donation, euthanasia, and the dead donor rule

Jonah Rubin MD^{1,2} 

Examples

Received: 7 September 2022 | Revised: 19 December 2022 | Accepted: 10 January 2023

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

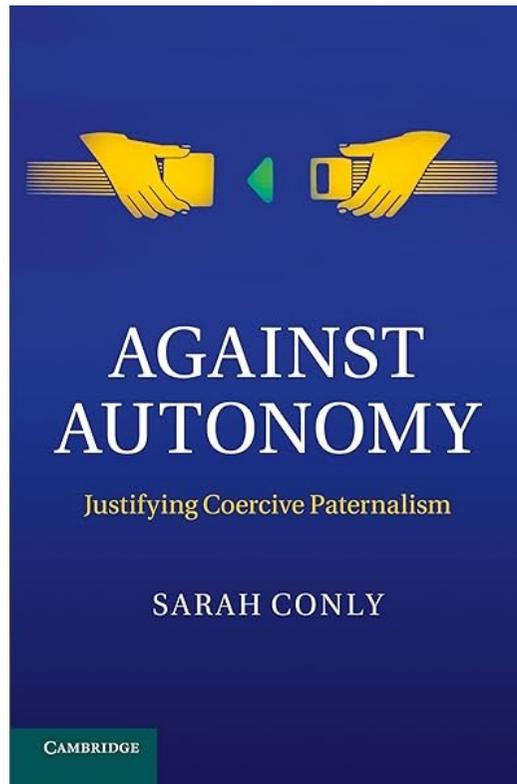


Autonomy to a fault: The confluence of organ donation, euthanasia, and the dead donor rule

Jonah Rubin MD^{1,2} 

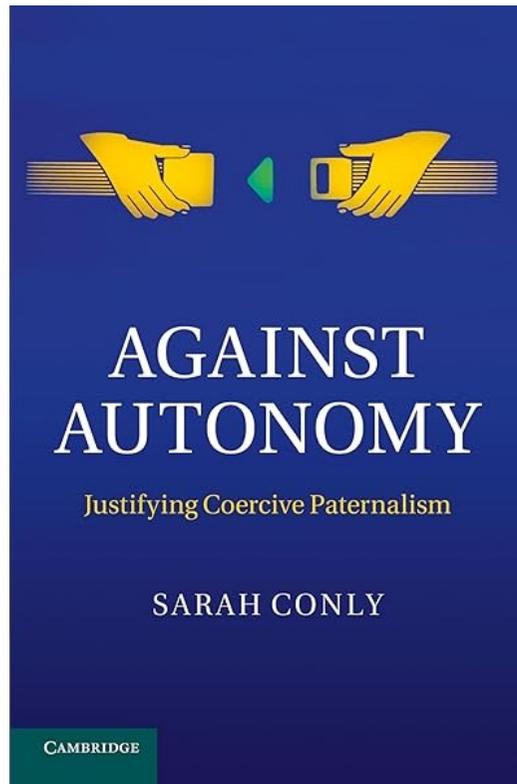
“In this Catch-22 of autonomy, an individual's autonomy must be limited by either allowing or forbidding organ donation with euthanasia.”

Examples



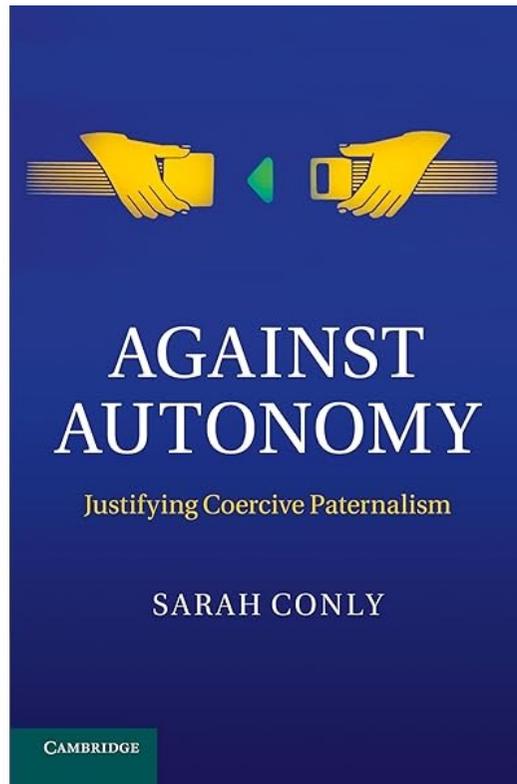
“In this book I recommend that we turn to a better approach, which is simply to save people from themselves by making certain courses of action illegal. We should, for example, ban cigarettes; ban trans-fats....”

Examples



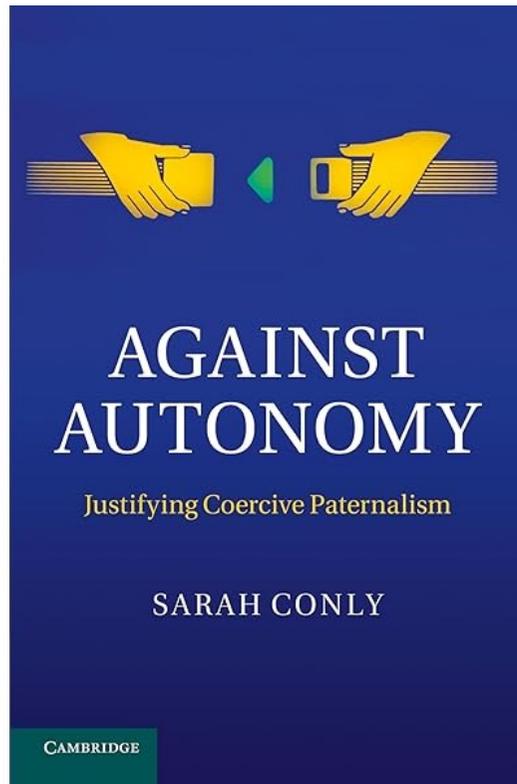
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Examples



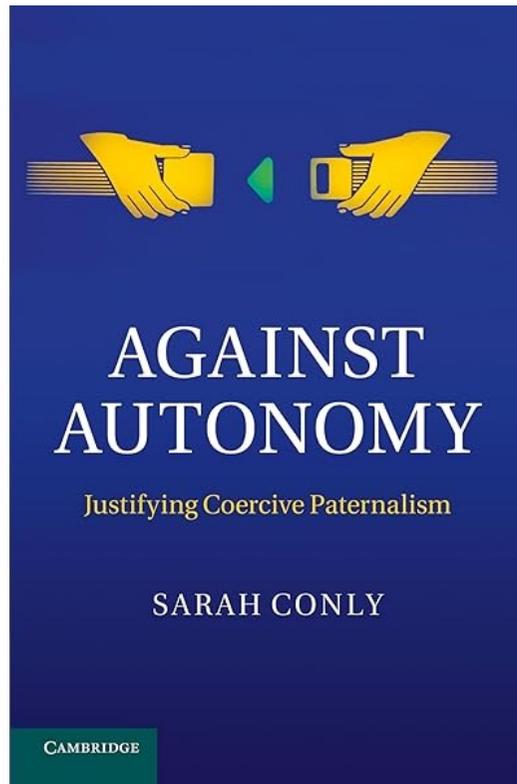
“I argue that, in fact, autonomy is not all that valuable; not valuable enough to offset what we lose by leaving people to their own autonomous choices.”

Examples



*“I argue that, in fact, **autonomy** is not all that valuable; not valuable enough to offset what we lose by leaving people to their own autonomous choices.”*

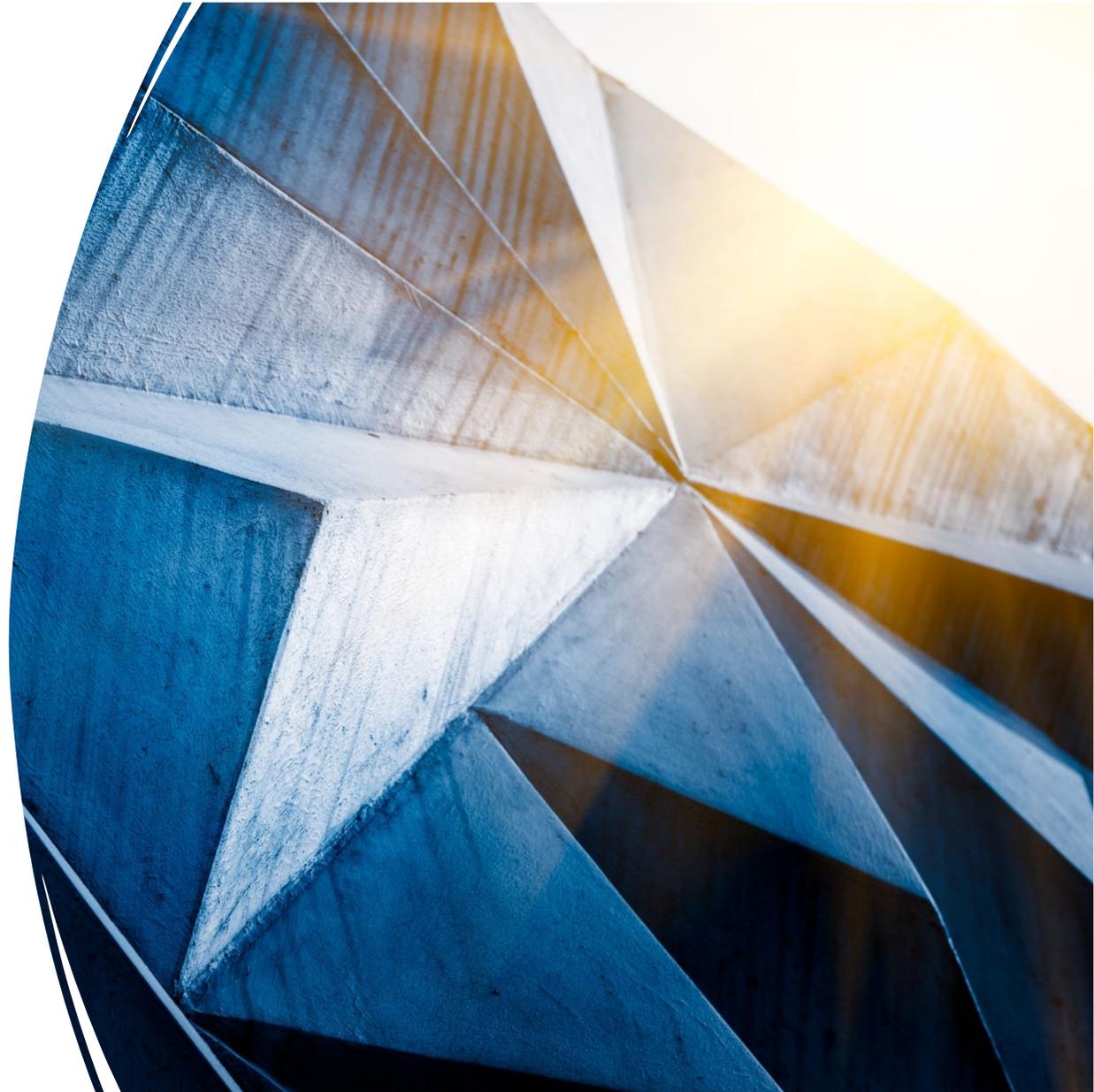
Examples



*“I argue that, in fact, **autonomy** is not all that valuable; not valuable enough to offset what we lose by leaving people to their own **autonomous** choices.”*

Which autonomy
to value at the
end of life?

- Negative liberty
- Authenticity



Questions?

