Self-autonomy Notes

Name:

Institution:

Self-Autonomy Notes

Self-autonomy, also referred to as self-governance, involves exercising authority over oneself and refusing control from outsiders or external forces. This means that an individual or group that is self-autonomous makes decisions about how to act, engages in the action, and makes conclusions based on personal judgment. Where the power involved in doing all this is political, then self-governance fails to exist (Buss and Westlund, 2018).

Despite the authority one has over herself or himself, it is possible for one to lack self-governance just like a political leader fails to govern the people who elect him or her. One can make decisions on how to undertake a specific task but have no control in undertaking such a task. Influence is one way through which self-governance is lost as one uses the power of such influence which is not an aspect of one’s authority. The tasks that one engages in are driven by various circumstances over which no one has control (p.2). This means that we act because circumstances require us to do so and this disapproves the authority we have while at the same time undermining our autonomy.

There are several factors that threaten our personal autonomy but the most prominent are addiction and brainwashing. Philosophers are, however, in disagreement about how such factors prevent self-governance. This depicts another aspect of lack of self-governance as an agent is unable to decide the right action and at the same time control his or her behaviors associated with such actions. Self-autonomy is, therefore, difficult to explain as the governed and governing agent are one and the same thing (p.2).

Self-autonomy entails various conceptions. The *coherentist* conception is where an agent is in governance of its actions only if the motivation and the mental state point of view are in harmony (p.3). The second conception is the *reasons-responsive* which states that the motives of a self-governing agent in undertaking a task must be as a response to a variety of reasons for and against the behaviors of choice (p.3). An individual who fails to recognize a variety of reasons for certain behaviors is likely to act against her goals and interests and this entails poor self-governance (p.4)

*Responsiveness-to-reasoning* conception emphasizes the importance of reasoning. A self-governing person must evaluate his or her motive in alignment with his or her desires or beliefs and then adjust the motives accordingly. This conception requires one to avoid the interference of beliefs or attitudes in acting. This view requires one to be flexible such that a self-governing person can change the way of acting if there is a good reason for doing so (p.4).

The *incompatibilist* conception is concerned with two factors: the determinants for lack of self-governance when one has a reason, and the factors that determine self-governance when one reasons. With this conception, one is not self-governing if there are independent causal powers that explain one’s actions (p.5).

There are some challenges to identifying the conditions of self-governance. Minimal self-governance requires one to exercise the power needed in engaging an action. None of the above conceptions explains how that should be (p.6).

Brainwashing can lead one to accepting a particular motive and this hinders self-governance. Having a plan is one way through which one maintains control of various actions. However, one can choose not to follow the time constraints presented by a plan or even adjust the plan in a way that he or she did not expect. Eventually, it emerges that no self-governance is exercised as one acts according to the circumstances of the moment. The plan fails to offer the freedom associated with self-governance and instead becomes a constraint (p.7).

Reference

Buss, S. & Westlund, A. (2018). Personal autonomy. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Stanford: Stanford University, Metaphysics Research Lab