Thought Paper

Name:

Institution:

Thought Paper

The article written by Buss and Westlund (2018) and which focuses on self-autonomy is quite insightful. There is a lot to learn and this starts with the definition of self-autonomy. The authors define self-autonomy as the element of having authority over oneself such that one has the freedom to decide what he or she can do without a command from elsewhere. However, self-autonomy is presented as something that is hard to achieve as various occurrences in life are characterized with influence.

I agree with the authors that influence is a major characteristic of almost everything that one does. While one may make all the decisions about what to do at one specific time, one does not have control over what happens and is actually forced by circumstances to do what he or she has to do (p.2). An example is when one falls sick and must make a decision about whether to go to hospital or not. This person will be influenced by the condition of the body and how he or she feels about the same. In this light, one may decide to go to hospital because of the physical pain he or she experiences. This means that the pain will be the main factor driving the individual to go to hospital rather than personal authority.

The conceptions of self-autonomy as presented by the authors are also a source of knowledge as far as self-autonomy is concerned. The authors present four conceptions which include the coherentist, reasons-responsive, responsiveness-to-reasoning, and the incompatibilist. The explanations given for each conception are quite convincing and leave the reader with the basic knowledge about self-autonomy and how it is exercised. With the coherentist conception, one gets the view that one’s actions must be guided by the thoughts and motivation (p.3). For instance, one cannot do something to harm himself or herself where the intention is to ensure wellness. Suicidal attempts, for instance, are harmful to oneself and do not align with the motive of wellness.

The reasons-responsive conception requires one to have a range of reasons for engaging or not engaging in a specific task (p.3). Where the reasons for engaging in a specific task are more than the reasons against engagement, then the individual can justify an action by stating the benefits. For instance, taking a lot of water can be beneficial to the body while excess of it can be harmful. Where the benefits of taking excess water are more than those of taking just a little or no water, then an individual can take lots of water or even excess.

The responsiveness-to-reasoning conception emphasizes the fact that one must think before acting. This means that when one chooses a specific action, it is appropriate to change the action when one finds a reason for such a change (p.4). For instance, one may decide to go out to watch a movie with friends but then realize that he or she could spend such time reading notes in preparation for an upcoming exam. Changing one’s mind in such an instance is reasonable and it entails self-autonomy.

With the incompatibilist conception, one has no self-autonomy if there are causal powers that are independent in explaining a particular action (p.5). For instance, when one is sick, pain can cause one to go to hospital. The idea of maintaining one’s well-being is another causal power that is independent. In this sense, there is no self-autonomy in the actions taken.

Based on these explanations, it emerges that self-autonomy is an aspect that is quite hard to accomplish.

Reference

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