

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A NONRACIST? : COSTELLO AND COETZEE ON THE LIVES OF ANIMALS AND MEN MICHAEL BELL pdf

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*Michael Bell goes even further; he suggests the discussion of animal subjectivity in *The Lives of Animals* is "a Trojan horse designed to deconstruct the nature of conviction in relation to all fundamental life issues" ().*

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Acknowledgments During the long process of writing this book, I have been fortunate to have friends and critics contribute to my thinking. Many readers of the manuscript deserve recognition, including Glenn Mackin, Matthew Sothern, David Watkins, Jamie Mayerfeld, Eric Rasmussen, my anonymous reviewers, and hapless panel and audience members at conferences. This book would not be possible without the enormous help I received from the University of Minnesota Press, especially from Pieter Martin. I appreciate his patience. Finally, I acknowledge the support and kindness extended to me by friends and family in this process, especially my parents.

Waking every morning at exactly 4: The careful precision with which he constructed his texts on epistemology, morality, and politics was exceeded only by the care with which he tended his body. By all accounts, this guiding mind of the Enlightenment, the representative of reason, was also a bit of a health nut. Critics of postmodern critiques of the humanist subject have often accused postmodernism of killing not only the contemplative subject but also the sense of Kantian wonder and optimism. Most troubling to those who argue for the sanctity of the subject is the rejection of the possibility of autonomy, or self-rule. The concept of autonomy has an extensive biography, tracing back to the Greek origins of the term *autos* self and *nomos* law, originally referring to a collective that ruled itself or generated its own laws without outside imposition. The sovereign undivided subject could serve as the guarantor of order. In Roman thought, the *patria potestas*, or law of the father, granted the male head of household sovereign power over the members of the household who were incapable of rule and thus required a single power to govern. In much modern political thought, especially liberal theory, the concept of autonomy has shifted from being used to describe governance at a collective level to being an individual characteristic that determines the parameters of legitimate political authority. The normative ideal of individual autonomy introduced a profound shift in thinking about human subjectivity and good government, changes that were linked to processes of democratization and the rise of liberal theory and its critics. Order was less a matter of centralized power and more a matter of balancing the varying interests of individual subjects. Consequently, much thinking about the maintenance of political order has focused on securing the autonomy of subjects against heteronomy, or perceived threats to the ability of the subject to govern itself. Emily Gill describes the features of this bounded self and the various threats to the autonomous self: First the individual must be free to act without compulsion or threat from external forces. Finally, the individual must prescribe for himself or herself the law to be followed, rather than allowing his or her will to be determined by customs, practices, or the will of other individuals. The focus on the autonomous subject as the means and ends of political action has important consequences for thinking about politics and the nature of freedom. If autonomy is both the condition of boundaries and the process by which boundaries are drawn between the self and the world, it also implies the necessary boundaries of the political sphere. Autonomy becomes the precondition for participation in the democratic polity since the right to self-governance is dependent on the judged capacity of that individual to govern herself. In spite of the ubiquity of autonomy in the philosophical and cultural milieu, the concept itself has gotten relatively little attention among scholars associated with postmodernism or postfoundationalist thought. Debates about autonomy remain primarily between political philosophers attempting to pin down a coherent concept or liberal theorists who take autonomy as a normative ideal that underpins liberal practices. The paradox of self-governance is that freedom is found in self-limitation, creating a compulsion to exercise power over oneself. However, the consequences of this paradox of the interrelationship between autonomy and heteronomy remain to be explained. However, rather than further elucidate the theoretical argument about the concept of autonomy, this text instead examines how autonomy is experienced with particular attention to the practices of the self that are required of us in order to be seen by others and our self as autonomous.

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The following chapters trace autonomy and its paradoxical linkage with heteronomy through the various ways autonomy is not merely an idea but also a set of practices. The purpose is to further understand the ways that autonomy as the ability to self-govern remains a powerful way to determine who may occupy the status of political subject. This distinction frames an apparent tension within Foucault between his characterization of self-governance as a form of power relations in his work on governmentality and his characterization of self-governance as an ethical strategy of freedom in his work on the ethics of care. Examining this tension highlights the continued political importance of autonomy and the necessity of examining the practices of autonomy in context. This tension between autonomy as a discourse of law whereby the self must limit or constrain itself or risk becoming a nonsubject and autonomy as creativity in which the compulsion to self-regulate can produce new and unexpected forms of subjectivity frames the Introduction xv following four chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 explore ways in which the requirement to self-regulate has privileged certain forms of subjectivity and excluded others primarily based on the ability to appropriately regulate the body. The need to shape the development of subjects to ensure that they become productive citizens allows intervention into the lives of subjects deemed not-yet-autonomous. Chapter 3 focuses on the drug war and the perception that drug addicts, unable to regulate their own physical desires, are the antithesis of autonomy and thus must be regulated for their own good. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the creative potential of autonomy by exploring ways that the impulse for self-governance can produce new forms of subjectivity and ethical challenges to the power relationships that shape the present. Animal rights provide one opportunity for this analysis as the distinction between human and animal has been one of the most important means of measuring the autonomy of human subjects. However, animal rights may challenge human sovereignty only if it challenges the assumption that human and animal are so easily distinguished. The demand that we be allowed to self-govern is also a command that we do so. He spends several pages describing his erotic response to the act of physical discipline and the profound impact it had on his relationships with women, his sexuality, and his sense of self. This ribald confession from Rousseau is a more titillating formulation of his famous paradoxical statement of the complementary nature of force and freedom. Ironically, the act of disciplining induces Rousseau to control his physical impulses, not through suppressing those impulses but by making self-control the source of pleasure. As the exercise of self-governance, autonomy is fundamentally also a practice of self-limitation. While this process of self-limitation is often understood as oppressive, it can also be a source of pleasure and self-creation. As a young child being punished for misbehaving, he unwittingly stumbled on the conceptual puzzle of autonomy at the heart of modern subjectivity and democratic theory. The norm of autonomy underpins, among other things, the possibility of the rights-bearing subject, theories of individualism, and conceptions of unitary identity. This chapter seeks to bring the idea of autonomy into dialogue with postfoundationalist political thought—especially that of governmentality scholars and deconstructionist literature—by noting the ways that many of the crucial paradoxes within the category of autonomy are also at work in challenges to the modern subject. In order to bring more sympathetic accounts of autonomy into dialogue with critics of the concept, this chapter traces a tension within scholarship examining later works of Foucault between the critique of self-governance in his genealogy of liberalism and his embrace of self-governance in literature on the care of the self. My argument is not that the concept of autonomy can provide a bridge between disparate bodies of literature but that thinking through the paradoxes of autonomy is useful for thinking about politics in the absence of the sovereign subject at the center of modern political thought. I lay out the ways the tension between the juridical and creative dimensions of The Choice of Law 3 autonomy that is present in the thought of theorists of self-governance mirrors tensions within the idea of the technology of the self within Foucault, who at times seems to both critique and embrace the norm of self-governance. My brief examination of the autonomy literature is focused primarily on Kantian formulations of autonomy in order to emphasize a few important concepts. As a genealogy it is necessarily incomplete and is not intended as a thorough survey of the vast literature on autonomy. Instead I focus on three authors, Kant, Habermas, and Castoriadis, to provide a map of some of the most theoretically useful

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puzzles with regard to the idea of autonomy. My goal is to highlight several shared themes or tensions within the concept of autonomy. How do we learn to judge whether or not the autonomous subject has been successful in doing so? The second is a tension between the normative or lawmaking portion of the concept—the *nomos*—which encourages self-legislation, and the more creative compulsion of self-invention generated by the idea of autonomy. The goal of exploring these tensions is to frame a discussion of the later Foucault, focusing on two major strands in his thinking. The second strand comes from the care-of-the-self literature, in which Foucault argues that processes of self-critique can in fact be politically and ethically productive as a form of resistance to power. Enlightenment emphasizing universality, rationality, and conformity and the second embracing self-questioning Gordon , 71 I argue that Foucault is in fact articulating a relationship between the juridical 4 The Choice of Law and ethical components of autonomy that can be useful in imagining a postfoundationalist politics. This chapter lays out this theoretical discussion and makes a case for the importance of autonomy even in light of the critique of the subject, though not as a reconstructed, abstract concept. In laying out this account my goal is to suggest that autonomy ought to be a central category for discussion within postfoundationalist politics and between modern and postmodern thinkers. Modern political thought has grappled with the autonomous subject as a member of a political community and with the implications of living with others. In the former, he envisions a form of autonomy that involves an independent and fetterless subject completely unencumbered by social ties or outward forces and thus who responds merely to internal or physical demands. The work of Kant can be seen as grappling with the unsatisfactory alternatives proposed by Rousseau. In submitting to a foreign will, the individual would abandon independent rational capacity in favor of a unitary collective will. True autonomy would require a more rigorous conceptualization of the autonomy of the individual will that could on the one hand preserve the independent self while, on the other, acknowledging the responsibility of living with others. First, morality requires autonomy of the will, or the ability of the individual to formulate and act on its own reasons that it could, in turn, formulate as universal Dodson , This is a more complex concept than simply an unfettered will that acts; it is also a will that acts according to reasons. For Kant, these reasons are not arbitrary or subjectively determined but ought to be according to a universal rationality. At the same time, the moral law is also the product of a universal rationality that exists external to any individual rational will. Thus for Kant autonomy is not merely a will capable of choice but also a will capable of generating its own principles and holding itself accountable to those principles in legislating and executing its own moral law Bielefeldt , Thus Kant believes he has preserved the autonomy of the subject in a more sophisticated way than Rousseau by preserving the principle of self-government and retaining subjective judgment. In this he includes the explication of a single set of rules that may be blindly followed. The law must remain abstract and universal, created by individual, autonomous wills without imposition from the outside. Yet Kant also posits that threats to autonomy may be internal to the subject, stemming from any source that might interfere with the process of reason, including physical sensations or personal desires. An autonomous will is therefore not beholden to the. The autonomous subject must be able to distance herself from her own empirical conditions including the body and self-legislate. Autonomy is thus not an attribute of human beings but an activity that transforms the self into the subject of contemplation and author of the decision. Thus subject is ultimately determined by the universality of rationality. He emphasizes that autonomy does not exist in a lawless freedom of the will but in tying our will to the law that must, as a moral law regulating our relationships with others, be universal. Autonomy is not anything goes, but rather it is constituted by the act of making the law. In examining just two of the post-Kantian accounts of autonomy in Habermas and Castoriadis, we can see an emergent tension regarding the relationship between the auto and the nomos, or between an emphasis on self-creation Castoriadis and the law Habermas. Unpacking this distinction can provide a framework for discussing the two apparently contradictory positions taken in Foucault toward processes of self-governance. Therefore, autonomy is located not in the private generation of a moral law but in the political process of generating public laws, endorsing a robust democratic polity as the means through which autonomy can be achieved:

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Private autonomy is usually understood as rights and liberties possessed by individuals that are then enacted or protected by public authority. As Habermas describes it: The autonomous subject is self-determining in an ultimate sense in giving shape to her own autonomy. On the one hand, the law is democratic in providing a medium for the stabilization of expectations, or a way of coordinating social action through a shared language. The law provides a structure through which the democratic process may be enacted. Habermas also values the coercive power of the law that makes it a more powerful tool for social coordination than the moral law. The law, on the other hand, is designed as a system of action and moves the interpretation of morality from a private, cognitive act to a public moment of deliberation on what norms may be established in law and how they ought to be applied. Further, the law may coerce appropriate action in accordance with autonomous deliberation. And, as with Kant, the activity of autonomy is not arbitrary but determined by the limits of rationality. The idea of political culture is critical in Habermas, establishing the external conditions necessary for individual subjects to achieve their autonomy, conditions that must include the coercive force of the law to bind subjects to the laws that they have generated. Unlike Habermas, who places importance on collective processes of positing the law, Castoriadis emphasizes collective processes of self-formation. He argues that autonomy is not found merely in the process of a subject individual or collective generating laws but in the production of the subject itself. Castoriadis casts his argument in sweeping terms:

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