

DON'T TELL ME TO CHANGE: A RIGHT TO NOT HAVE TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

Kenneth Silver

Abstract: I argue that, given the choice, we have a right not to undergo transformative experiences. We are entitled to affirm our previous autonomous agency by deciding in this way, and this right is grounded in the significance of our self-authorship. I further show that many of the suggested demands of morality involve transformative change, and so meeting these demands would involve not just paying a high cost, but forfeiting this right. Though this may be morally required, we may wrong ourselves in complying.

1 Introduction

There are many choices we could make that would lead to significant changes within us, altering our perception, reorienting our values. For example, the choice to become pregnant, or embark on a new career, or move to a different country. Who we become once this choice is seen through may shift our priorities, and often in ways that cannot be anticipated.

Within decision theory, there has been much interest in the question of how to model such choices involving so-called ‘transformative experiences.’ The standard assumption is that we model decisions on the basis of our current preferences, and where those preferences are known. The specter of transformative experiences, then, involves the question of how to model choices where our preferences will change over time depending on the choice made, and perhaps where those future preferences cannot be well-estimated. Paul (2014) takes these cases to deliver a blow to standard decision theory that must be accommodated. Others argue that standard decision theory does indeed have the resources to accommodate these cases (e.g., Pettigrew 2015; Isaacs 2020).

Apart from decision theory, though, there is an open question about the ethical implications of transformative experiences. Even those convinced that transformative experiences require no changes to decision theory at times suggest that such experiences might be morally significant (Isaacs

2020, 1082). After all, these are radical changes to our agential orientations. So, it is reasonable to expect there to be normative implications to acknowledging them.

In this piece, I want to quickly consider one such recently discussed upshot, and I will use it to advance a second. I will suggest that we have the conservative right *not* to undergo transformative experiences. Stemming from the significance of self-authorship, we have a right of self-affirmation, affirming who we are and decidedly not changing. After articulating this right, I show how it has implications for the debate around the demandingness of moral obligations.

2 The Right of Revelatory Autonomy

Farbod Akhlaghi has recently considered the question of when it is “morally permissible to interfere to try to prevent another from making a transformative choice” (2023, 4). He draws out that an important consideration militating against arbitrary interference with such choice is that it arguably infringes on a moral right. We have a right to what Akhlaghi calls ‘revelatory autonomy,’ which he characterizes as “the moral right to autonomously decide to discover how one’s life will go and who one will become by making a transformative choice” (8). If such choices can be spoiled in extreme circumstances, answering exactly when requires resolving the normative significance of rights more generally (an ongoing problem within normative decision theory).

Critically, this is not merely a right to autonomy, but rather the right to a *form* of autonomy involving discovering things about yourself. We have the right, Akhlaghi maintains, to have it revealed to us the kind of person we will become upon making a transformative choice (2023, 8). (This is the sense in which the autonomy is ‘revelatory.’) Putting it this way makes it sound a bit passive, like a right to a certain kind of epistemic good. But what is meant is closer to a right to engage in a form of agency involved in self-exploration and self-discovery. After all, he grounds this right in the value of autonomous self-making and self-authorship. So, it is the value in the agent’s contribution to her agency that in this case grounds the right to make transformative choices.

Akhlaghi does not connect this to a broader picture of rights; however, it is not hard to imagine a story on which a right of self-discovery follows from proper respect for the will. Alternatively, it is certainly in our individual interests to maintain this right. One can thus imagine how a right to revelatory autonomy would fall out of standard will or interest theories of rights.¹ So, I’m inclined to accept the picture Akhlaghi offers. And, as

¹ Akhlaghi also does not discuss the kind of right that is at issue (in a Hohfeldian sense), and I’m not sure it is just a single right. There is surely a *privilege* right in the offing insofar as one does not have a duty to not undergo the transformative experience. However, insofar as Akhlaghi is at pains to show how one’s making a transformative choice constrains others or

Akhlaghi himself ends by noting (11), there is clearly more to be said about the ethics of transformative experiences.

Notice that Akhlaghi's focus is purely on the negative case—the question of when we are permitted to *interfere* with a transformative choice. But what about the positive case? Under what circumstances are we morally permitted to compel someone to *make* a transformative choice or to simply undergo a transformative experience?

To use the language of compulsion, it may seem like we are never permitted to compel a choice, whether it is a transformative experience or not. But we often seem entitled to make choices that in fact compel others to decide in certain ways. If we are coming upon each other on a footpath, I may decisively move to the right of the footpath. In a sense, this compels you to move to your right to avoid a collision. You don't *have* to move to the right; you could continue on your way regardless, putting it back on me to avoid a collision. So, you do retain a choice in some sense. But morally, you ought to choose to move to the right of the footpath, and *I permissibly made it such* that you had to choose that way. So, in principle, it seems possible and all-too-common to permissibly compel someone to make a certain choice or undergo a certain change, although it impacts or concerns their autonomy.²

Perhaps we cannot engage in this conduct capriciously; we need some good reason to compel a choice. But, as in the footpath case, it might not take much. If we think about *transformative* choice, though, my intuition is that more is required. Someone cannot be compelled morally to undergo a transformative experience just to avoid an awkward collision, say. Why is that, and exactly what more is required?

3 The Right of Self-Affirmative Autonomy

In the movie *The Terminator*, Sarah Connor meets a man from the future and learns that she is going to have a child. Her son will train and galvanize soldiers in a future war against artificially intelligent machines, proving necessary in an existential contest over the fate of humanity. In other words, she needs to have this child. Now, in the film Sarah Connor is not presented with the choice of having a child or not. She only knows that she *will* have

gives others a duty not to interfere, it also seems that this is a *power*. It goes well beyond what can be established here, but given how some authors have characterized *standing* in terms of the possession of privileges and powers (at least in the context of the standing to blame) (Edwards 2019; Fritz and Miller 2022, §2), I wonder whether Akhlaghi is articulating a general standing with respect to our transformative choices lacked by others. Where this is standing regarding our making or firmly not making transformative choices, I would endorse this and take it to capture Akhlaghi's right and mine articulated below.

² Indeed, nothing more is meant by 'compulsion' here than Akhlaghi's discussion of 'interference.' We may just as well put the question: Under what circumstances are we morally permitted to interfere with someone's *not* undergoing a transformative experience? At issue is still this thin notion of interference, though putting it this way reads awkwardly.

a child.³ But imagine that Kyle Reese presents himself as a man from the future, and he demands of Connor that she become pregnant with a child, for the sake of humanity. (The gall of his demand would be increased were he to note further that he was to be the father.)

Notice that this is not a matter of Connor's volunteering some large but definite amount of time or resources for a good cause; it is a matter of her undergoing a permanent change to who she is as a person. As we know, choosing to have a child is the *paradigmatic* transformative choice.⁴ And it is clearly transformative in this instance. Before the conception, Connor is incredulous when confronted with the tales of the kind of person she is to become. As she says, "Come on? Do I look like the mother of the future? Am I tough? Organized? I can't even balance my checkbook" (1:07:40-43).

Given the stakes, I think there is a case to be made that she ought to have this child; nevertheless, this is highly demanding. Even if Connor should have the child all things considered, there is an intuition that it would wrong Connor to demand this. And we can do justice to this intuition by recognizing a right against being compelled to undergo transformative experiences (or being compelled to choose to undergo such experiences).

I began with this case because choosing to have a child is the paradigmatic transformative choice; however, compulsion around the having of children is already so invasive that it might confuse our intuitions (especially given the stakes of the case). After all, it may seem no less inappropriate (even if potentially justified) to demand that someone have a *second* child, and it's not as clear that having a second child constitutes a similar transformation. Still, I think the intuition continues to shine through in lower-stakes cases with somewhat less agential interference.

Going to university would be a transformative experience for any young person, and suppose it's a positive one. Nevertheless, it would seem wrong for parents to compel a near adult child to go to university. Suppose Samuel is seventeen and a strong student. In fact, suppose he has earned sufficient credits after his junior year in high school that he could enter university early, or he could continue high school and finish out his senior year. It may not wrong Samuel for his parents to compel him to go to school, period. (At least, we may judge parents to standardly be justified in interfering with their children in this way.) But I think it would wrong him to force him to go to university rather than finishing high school. Even if it would be a smarter decision to skip senior year, even if it would ultimately make him happier,

³ With that said, we do not need to get hung up on the implications of the metaphysics of time travel for this case. We can assume that the future is not literally set and here influencing the past. Perhaps it involves needless complication to involve time travel, but this is a famous case in media of a transformative choice with existential stakes.

⁴ This is not to say that it is *always* a transformative choice to have a child, or that there is some class of choices that are always transformative. That it is typically transformative is enough. I use the case simply because it is harder to deny that what is at issue here is the question of undergoing a genuinely transformative experience.

it interferes with Samuel too much to force this transformative experience on him. He deserves to see through his senior year, even though his senior year is likely not to be transformative (and instead will be cathartic, a celebration of his adolescent agency and achievements).

Or, consider someone who secures a job abroad in an extremely different cultural environment and requests their spouse to come with them for the job. Even if not expressed as a *demand*, and instead held clearly as a normative expectation, it seems wrong to expect this of someone. These things do happen in relationships, and maybe it's not inappropriate generally to accept jobs that will impact your partner's life in various ways (at least, after a discussion). Still, the more we emphasize how different life will be, the more transformative the experience will be, the more it seems inappropriate to hold someone to going through it.

It may be that alternative explanations are available. Being compelled to go to university or have a child may dramatically interfere with the previous plans and commitments that I have already made, for instance. Perhaps I have a right to see through my commitments, and this is what is infringed, not any right concerning transformative experience.⁵ The cases may work this way, but they might not. Even if a young adult has no alternative plans that are being interfered with, it still seems wrong to impose what will amount to a transformative choice.

If there is a right not to have transformative experiences or undergo transformative changes, what is the nature of this right? Unlike Akhlaghi's right to revelatory autonomy, affirming your decision *not to change* hardly seems a matter of a right to choose to learn something new about yourself. Instead, it is decidedly un-adventurous and un-exploratory. Nevertheless, I think you are generally entitled to be how you are, and to moreover affirm how you are when given the choice to change. Assuming you did not *just now* become autonomous, then you have been making autonomous decisions up until this point that have affected the kind of person you are.⁶

⁵ Ferrero (2010) compellingly argues that our decision to engage in some future conduct gives us (or our future selves) a defeasible exclusionary reason to engage in that conduct, and many scholars associate claim rights with the generation of exclusionary reasons. So, we may think that we have a moral right to see through our commitments that is threatened in these cases. Much as we might take ourselves to have the authority to make commitments and the right to see them through, my idea is more expansive: we have the authority to mold and preserve our orientation towards value as a whole.

⁶ Putting things this way suggests a certain kind of challenge: What if one *did* just become autonomous? Why think the right I will articulate below only holds for agents who have been autonomous for some time, enough to be affirming previous autonomous decisions? Doesn't this somewhat limit the scope of the right beyond what may seem appropriate, so that the newly autonomous (adolescents at some stage) have *no right* against being compelled to make certain transformative decisions, or the recently autonomous strangely have some weaker claim on affirming themselves than we might think? This deserves more discussion, but here I will bite the bullet. To compel someone newly or not quite fully autonomous to make a transformative choice is perhaps to compel them to take on some different orientation towards value. But if these agents are not fully autonomous (or were not), then the value orientation

So, you have a right to affirm your own autonomy and how you have autonomously made yourself to be. Even if a certain experience would change you in such a way as to make you (and society) better off, I think there is a right not to have that experience, to affirm who you already are. This suggests the following:

Self-Affirmative Autonomy. The moral right to autonomously decide to affirm how one's life has gone and who one has been by choosing *not* to make a transformative choice.

Of course, merely affirming one's life and choices may not seem all that valuable, let alone the kind of thing to which one would have a right. I might have even made bad choices in the past, or made myself into a bad person, and so this appears to be asserting a right to continue on in a life that is itself bereft of moral value or indeed dis-valuable. I will have more to say about this case below, but it's critical first to realize that the right in this context is not about a right to preserve the value (such as it is) in the life I have created, nor is it a right simply bent on securing a continuous or agentially cohesive life. Instead, I want to suggest that this right is grounded in the conditions for autonomous agency itself.

In his discussion, Akhlaghi too is concerned with how best to ground his right of revelatory autonomy. In particular, he is keen to make it clear that this right is not simply based in the value of free choice as such, or on the basis of the value of the choice made. On this, he says the following:

Why think there is such a moral value to autonomously making transformative choices that we have a moral right to do so?

The answer, I suggest, is the moral value of *autonomous self-making*. It is not the value of making a choice *as such* but, rather, that of autonomously making choices to learn what our core preferences and values will become. For autonomously making transformative choices when facing them, deciding for ourselves to learn who we will become, gives us a degree of *self-authorship*. A degree of control, that is, over not necessarily who we will become. . . but over choosing ourselves to learn who we will become through a choice we make. (2023, 8 [emphasis in original])

I want to broadly take onboard this picture, and to suggest that the right of self-affirming autonomy too is grounded in some way in our self-authorship. If Akhlaghi's right of revelatory autonomy can be grounded this way, so too can the right of self-affirming autonomy. Self-authorship finds expression

they happen to have and act from will *also* be alien to them and not (yet) a matter of their own determination. So, such an interferer would not be subverting one's 'own,' autonomously determined, preferences. This engages with my acceptance of a historical requirement on autonomy discussed below.

in my choosing to discover how some experience will change me, but it can also find expression in my choosing to affirm who I already am. I am choosing to be steadfast, to stay the course, secure in how I have made myself, and perhaps even to celebrate my self-making. It would disrespect my previous autonomy to be *too ready* to transform myself at the drop of a hat.⁷

That said, whereas Akhlaghi emphasizes the *value* of self-authorship, which he takes to be promoted through the exercise of the right to revelatory autonomy, I think we should instead focus on how self-authorship is a necessary condition on our valuing and pursuing those values autonomously. Akhlaghi goes on to say, "... some degree of self-authorship in this sense is crucial for us and others to see ourselves as *ourselves* – selves we have become at least partly through transformative choices we have made" (2023, 8 [emphasis in original]). This is critical. I certainly have an interest in self-authorship; I find it valuable to me, and we may generally find it valuable. But this undersells its significance.

Self-authorship is necessary for being a kind of being that *has* or *identifies with* certain interests and values in the first place, as opposed to simply being moved by urges. At this point, many authors have endorsed a historical requirement on autonomy, where self-authorship over time may be critical for claiming autonomy with respect to one's desires (Christman 1991; Mele [1995] 2001; Valdman 2011; Weimer 2014). Others have considered a history of self-authorship as a necessary condition on morally responsible agency (e.g., McKenna 2016; Fischer 2021). Although we lack the space to substantively engage with these traditions here, we can see how they suggest that the standing to make *or not make* transformative choices may be critical for being a fully autonomous agent. This is not merely something that we would be interested in or value; exercising these rights is essential for our having interests and authentically willing in the first place.

Putting it like this perhaps ties the right of self-affirmative autonomy so close to the right of revelatory autonomy that we may wonder whether they truly are distinct rights. While I take it to be possible that the same basis could ground multiple distinct rights, these do appear to be opposite manifestations of the same point, or to involve a more general right regarding

⁷ This is again not to say that this is simply a right to see through our previous intentions. It could be that we have seen through all of our outstanding commitments. And yet, we are a certain kind of agent, with certain values, priorities, perhaps even an aesthetic identity (Walden 2023). Perhaps we can for good reason undergo a transformative experience; nevertheless, to do so *without reason* might amount to a kind of what Bratman calls 'brute shuffling' (2012, 82). As he characterizes it, "What is in tension with diachronic self-governance is lurching from one plan-like commitment to another incompatible commitment seen as equal or incomparable, in a way that involves abandoning one's prior intentions." This is not quite what I have in mind, since there may be no prior intentions in play. Still, to be so casual to a transformative experience seems to involve a certain indifference towards diachronic self-governance.

our having or not having transformative experiences. That sounds appropriate, though whether there is one right or two may come down to the best way to think about the individuation of rights generally. Regardless, a focus on this negative dimension of a right against transformative change in particular has interesting implications for debates around demandingness, as we will see below. Before turning to this, though, I want to take a moment to reflect on how a right of self-affirmative autonomy does justice to a certain kind of conservative value.

Above, I called the right involved ‘conservative,’ and we can see why. This right involves conserving who you are, not being subject to changes to your person on the basis of the mere whims of others. There is a value to conserving yourself as an autonomously made being of your past, just as we think about there being a value to conservation generally. G. A. Cohen (2012) draws out this conservative value.⁸ And some have discussed what it means for us personally (Golub 2019), as well as what it could mean for the topic of human enhancement (Pugh et al. 2013; Danaher 2016; Davies 2017). Bailey (2023) even discusses the personal cost of undergoing transformative experiences. So, while the right of self-affirmative autonomy is grounded in self-authorship,⁹ we can see how the value of one’s life as one has made it may indeed provide one a reason to exercise that right wholeheartedly.

4 Implications for Demandingness

Though we may have this right to self-affirmative autonomy, it may seem like one we should not frequently exercise. People often embrace change and should. But we can distinguish between being open to new experiences and being open to *transformative* experiences, experiences that by stipulation change your core values in ways that may be unpredictable to you. Even if it turns out that there are reasons to be open to transformative experiences, we seem to at least have a privilege right in the sense of not having a duty to change, even if it’d be a good thing to do.

Of course, this is not to say that we should never compel someone to undergo a transformative experience. Arguably, society can imprison criminals. Here, at least one public justification is to *reform* the criminal,

⁸ See Stanhope 2021, O’Brien 2022, and Quigley 2024 for further discussion of Cohen’s view.

⁹ I think it is worth alluding to and teasing out how a right of self-affirmative autonomy promotes this kind of conservative value, but I don’t think that this value itself provides the basis for the right. First, depending on how that life is lived, that autonomous agent may be more or less worth conserving as they are, and the right in question should not depend on this. Second, as we have seen, the right is already grounded in self-authorship. It is also worth acknowledging that while a right of self-affirmative autonomy can do justice to a conservative value in a way that a right of revelatory autonomy cannot, there may be a corresponding value that it promotes, of something that comes into existence with the transformative change. For a discussion of new value in the world and its relation to the value of conservation, see O’Brien 2022, §4.4.

changing their behavior for the better. And learning to respect the law may require a transformative change, a reorientation of their priorities to include regard for the law and civic concern. We may think that criminals generally *forfeit* certain rights when they violate the law (Wellman 2016). In this case, we may take this to include the right to self-affirmative autonomy. Similarly, when someone is routinely wronging others, say by being a bully, then one may forfeit the right of self-affirmative autonomy, because their current way of being violates others' rights. As we saw above, the right to self-affirmative autonomy is underwritten by the significance of self-authorship, not the value of the life being autonomously chosen by the individual.

We can now say that although Sarah Connor may indeed have a right to choose not to have the child, it might be that she should waive this right and have the child, all things considered. However, even if we are confident in thinking this, I am less confident in claiming that it would be permissible to make this kind of demand of her.

Within normative ethics, there is an ongoing discussion of what kinds of things it is appropriate to demand of agents morally, and what would constitute a theory's being *too* demanding.¹⁰ For example, many take act consequentialism to be severely demanding, requiring the donation of vast sums, far beyond current practices and beyond what many intuitively take to be required.¹¹

In the face of demandingness, there are many responses. We could take demandingness to be a strike against these theories (or certain versions of them). We could argue that these theories are not genuinely this demanding. Or we could accept that morality indeed demands this much. What we have said here will not settle this debate, but I do believe that it reveals a relevant factor to see how certain (especially demanding) moral duties may contravene our right to self-affirmative autonomy.

First, recognize how often the demands made involve undergoing transformative experiences. Proponents of effective altruism sometimes suggest that ethical concern should motivate our choice of future *career* (e.g., MacAskill 2014). This is clearly a transformative choice.

Additionally, certain kinds of systemic sacrifices could be construed as transformative. Even when we are not talking about careers, ethicists may be *at least* demanding some kind of large and regular monetary sacrifice (e.g., donations). Such constraints could affect one systematically, morphing one's agency, perhaps shifting one's priorities and values in ways characteristic of transformative experiences. If I am to regularly give to charity to an extent that would dramatically alter my standard of living, I think this would not just be a cost to incur, but it would involve a transformative change.¹²

¹⁰ See, *inter alia*, Berkey 2016; Wollard 2016; McElwee 2017.

¹¹ Concerns about demandingness have been discussed for other theories as well (e.g., van Ackeren and Sticker 2015).

¹² Koltonski (2022) draws out how the demands of morality might go beyond these costs to require us to sacrifice core projects and personal pursuits. He discusses how agents who are

So, many of the demands that may be asking too much likely involve a transformative experience. This helps us to see that what is being demanded may not always be best understood in terms of the cost to one's well-being (*contra* van Ackeren 2018). Even if one will ultimately be *better off* after the transformation, it can nevertheless seem that a demand to undergo the transformation is too demanding. What is demanded is the further forfeiture of a right, and that seems harder to appropriately demand.

Of course, responses abound. Those pushing these demanding obligations are often consequentialists, and consequentialists may be less likely to reify rights generally. Alternatively, even if rights were accepted, they may argue that our rights in some of these contexts are again already forfeited if the way that we are autonomously living is unethical. It's not merely that we could add more positive value in the world by changing careers and donating large sums to charity, but that we are right now acting wrongly in failing to do this, complicit in and benefitting from harms done to the global poor.

If charges of mass complicity or wrongfully benefitting from structural injustice are borne out, then perhaps adverting to a right to not have transformative experiences will fall flat, already forfeited. Or perhaps this explains why some demands strike us as too demanding (and sometimes are). Nevertheless, this seems to be a new concern to negotiate.

Adverting to one's rights in this context may not seem novel. Whereas I am concerned about being asked to forfeit my right to self-affirmative autonomy, the standard demand for monetary contributions to charity itself already is asking me to forfeit my private property rights over part of my income. But there are differences in the case at hand.

I may formally have certain property rights. And the regime of legal rights may be justified as a whole, or else justified by being maintained by a legitimate government. Still, any moral claim to my property within an unjust system is arguably flimsier than my moral claim to affirming my own autonomy. Moreover, we may think that the right in question is not merely a privilege right that I have to affirm my autonomy, but a claim right I have *on myself*. Perhaps I owe it to myself to affirm my autonomy when given the chance, as a matter of self-respect.¹³ If that's the case, then the question of demandingness is not merely a question of to what degree I am justified in weighing my own interests against the interests of others; it's a question of when the interests of others may justify violating an obligation I have to myself.

I make no claim about morality's demandingness. But if those demands involve transformative experiences, then acceding to them may involve

demanded in this way are wronged in a sense. I conclude similarly below, though the source of the wrong is different.

¹³ This is not to say that I must always act to affirm my autonomy. Since we have a right to transformative change, it is surely often permissible to undergo these changes. What would be a failure of self-respect is changing capriciously.

violating a duty of self-respect. Perhaps it must be done, but the violation should be acknowledged.

Kenneth Silver
Trinity College Dublin
E-mail: silverk@tcd.ie

References:

- Akhlaghi, Farbod. 2023. "Transformative Experience and The Right to Revelatory Autonomy." *Analysis* 83 (1): 3–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/anac084>
- Bailey, Olivia. 2023. "What Must be Lost: On Retrospection, Authenticity, and Some Neglected Costs of Transformation." *Synthese* 201 (6): 1–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04179-2>
- Berkey, Brian. 2016. "The Demandingness of Morality: Toward a Reflective Equilibrium." *Philosophical Studies* 173 (11): 3015–3035.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0648-9>
- Bratman, Michael E. 2012. "Time, Rationality, and Self-Governance." *Philosophical Issues* 22: 73–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-6077.2012.00219.x>
- Christman, John. 1991. "Autonomy and Personal History." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21 (1): 1–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.1991.10717234>
- Cohen, G. A. 2012. "Rescuing Conservatism: A Defense of Existing Value." In *Finding Oneself in The Other*, edited by Michael Otsuka, 143–174. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Danaher, John. 2016. "An Evaluative Conservative Case for Biomedical Enhancement." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 42 (9): 611–618.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2015-103307>
- Davies, Ben. 2017. "Enhancement and The Conservative Bias." *Philosophy and Technology* 30 (3): 339–356.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0245-z>
- Edwards, James. 2019. "Standing to Hold Responsible." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 16: 437–462.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/17455243-20180010>
- Ferrero, Luca. 2010. "Decisions, Diachronic Autonomy, and The Division of Labor." *Philosophers' Imprint* 10: 1–23.
- Fischer, John Martin. 2021. "Initial Design, Manipulation, and Moral Responsibility." *Criminal Law and Philosophy* 15 (2): 255–270.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11572-021-09561-0>
- Fritz, Kyle G. and Daniel J. Miller. 2022. "A Standing Asymmetry between Blame and Forgiveness." *Ethics* 132 (4): 759–786.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/719511>
- Golub, Camil. 2019. "Personal Value, Biographical Identity, and Retrospective Attitudes." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 97 (1): 72–85.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2018.1431297>

Acknowledgments I would like to thank attendees at the 2023 ETH Zurich workshop "Climate Change and Group Agency," where some of the ideas for this paper were brought out. This project was funded by the European Union (ERC-2022-STG, CMP, 101077471). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

- Isaacs, Yoaav. 2020. "The Problems of Transformative Experience." *Philosophical Studies* 177: 1065–1084.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-018-01235-3>
- Koltonski, Daniel. 2022. "But I've Got My Own Life to Live: Personal Pursuits and The Demands of Morality." *Social Theory and Practice* 48 (2): 263–284.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/soctheorpract202228155>
- MacAskill, William. 2014. "Replaceability, Career Choice, and Making a Difference." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 17 (2): 269–283.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-013-9433-4>
- McElwee, Brian. 2017. "Demandingness Objections in Ethics." *Philosophical Quarterly* 67 (266): 84–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/pq/pqw020>
- McKenna, Michael. 2016. "A Modest Historical Theory of Moral Responsibility." *Journal of Ethics* 20 (1–3): 83–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-016-9227-8>
- Mele, Alfred R. [1995] 2001. *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy*. Revised edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O'Brien, David. 2022. "Conservatism Reconsidered." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 8 (1): 149–168.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2020.50>
- Paul, Laurie A. 2014. *Transformative Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pettigrew, Richard. 2015. "Transformative Experience and Decision Theory." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 91 (3): 766–774.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12240>
- Pugh, Jonathan, Guy Kahane, and Julian Savulescu. 2013. "Cohen's Conservatism and Human Enhancement." *Journal of Ethics* 17 (4): 331–354.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-013-9151-0>
- Quigley, Travis. 2024. "Conservatism and Justified Attachment." *European Journal of Philosophy* 32 (4): 1304–1316.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12966>
- Stanhope, Jonathan. 2021. "Warrants to Conserve." *Analysis* 81 (1): 62–71.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/anaa048>
- Valdman, Mikhail. 2011. "Autonomy, History, and the Origins of Our Desires." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 8: 416–434.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/174552411X589026>
- van Ackeren, Marcel. 2018. "How Morality Becomes Demanding: Cost vs. Difficulty and Restriction." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 26 (3): 315–334.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2018.1489641>
- van Ackeren, Marcel and Martin Sticker. 2015. "Kant and Moral Demandingness." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18 (1): 75–89.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-014-9510-3>
- Walden, Kenneth. 2023. "Agency and Aesthetic Identity." *Philosophical Studies* 180 (12): 3253–3277.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-023-02036-z>
- Weimer, Steven. 2014. "Autonomy and History: How Does a Desire Become One's Own." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 11 (3): 265–293.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/17455243-4681024>
- Wellman, Christopher H. 2016. *Rights Forfeiture and Punishment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wollard, Fiona. 2016. "Dimensions of Demandingness." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 116 (1): 89–106.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/arisoc/aow003>