Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology 1
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Valery I. Chirkov
Richard M. Ryan
Kennon M. Sheldon *Editors*

Human Autonomy in Cross-Cultural Context

Perspectives on the Psychology of Agency, Freedom, and Well-Being

Springer

Human Autonomy in Cross-Cultural Context

Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology

Volume 1

The aim of the *Cross Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology* book series is to spread a universal and culture-fair perspective on good life promotion. The series will advance a deeper understanding of the cross-cultural differences in well-being conceptualization. A deeper understanding can affect psychological theories, interventions and social policies in various domains, from health to education, from work to leisure. Books in the series will investigate such issues as enhanced mobility of people across nations, ethnic conflicts and the challenges faced by traditional communities due to the pervasive spreading of modernization trends. New instruments and models will be proposed to identify the crucial components of well-being in the process of acculturation. This series will also explore dimensions and components of happiness that are currently overlooked because happiness research is grounded in the Western tradition, and these dimensions do not belong to the Western cultural frame of mind and values.

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Chapter 1
Introduction: The Struggle for Happiness and Autonomy in Cultural and Personal Contexts: An Overview

Valery I. Chirkov, Kennon M. Sheldon, and Richard M. Ryan

Why Are We Writing This Book?

Despite the amazing advances in science, technology, and engineering to explain, conquer, and transform nature, human bodies, and their brains, life in the modern world has not become less challenging and problematic. Contrary to humanity's unending quest to lead happy and satisfying lives, only a proportion of people in the world can state that they have attained this goal.[1] People too often remain devastating and self-destructive, destroying not only the environment around them, but also themselves and fellow citizens. Terrorism, genocide, hate crimes, and irresponsible governmental and corporate actions have created disasters and problems for millions of people around the world. On the personal level people do not care enough about their own health and well-being, and scientists lack sufficient knowledge of why people still suffer from obesity, unhealthy lifestyles, family and child abuse, drug dependency, and criminal behavior. It is expected that modern social and human sciences can provide at least some insights about where to look for the causes of and remedies for these problems. In this work we examine what psychology can offer to clarify the quandary of the problems we see in people's lives around the globe.

The main thesis that we want to defend in this book is that people's happiness and well-being are inseparable from their experience of personal and motivational autonomy in pursuing freely chosen life-goals, actions, and behaviors. We consider this axiom to be universal and applicable to people from all cultural communities. As we will argue, the feeling of autonomy and self-determination is what makes us most fully human and thus most able to lead deeply satisfying lives – lives that are meaningful and constructive – perhaps the only lives that are worth living.

In this chapter we will first present the thoughts of such contributors to this topic as Socrates, Stoic philosophers, Spinoza, and Kant, and then try to reconcile their ancient admonitions with the recommendations derived from the empirical tradition

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[1] To observe the distribution of happiness around the world visit www.mapofhappiness.com and http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/world-happiness-map

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of modern psychology, represented mostly by self-determination theory (SDT). In addition to a brief history of Western thoughts concerning the relations between happiness and human autonomy, we will provide an account of how these relations are reflected in the Confucian teaching in Ancient China and how they are accounted for in modern South Asian societies. We will also take a look at the problems that the issue of autonomy has experienced in mainstream psychology, and consider the challenges to the notions of autonomy brought by the determinist and constructionist approaches in social and cultural psychology. This introduction will conclude with a summary of the subsequent chapters.

A Brief History of the Views Regarding the Importance of Autonomy for Human Happiness

Starting with the Ancient thinkers, followed by the Christian theologians and then by the Renaissance and later philosophers, scholars have responded differently to the problem of how people should live in a world full of choices, and how to guide them to experience the fullness of life, a life that could be recalled without shame on one's death bed. It is not a big stretch to say that for the majority of philosophical and religious doctrines that have emerged in different countries and at different times, the quest for happiness, in one form or another, is a dominant consideration. And at least one universal commonality can be discovered in these many theories: as soon as a discourse touches the topic of people's happiness and a good life, the topic of their autonomy and freedom inevitably emerges (McMahon, 2004). In this review, we will try to demonstrate that for many of the great thinkers on this topic, human happiness and personal autonomy are inseparable themes.

A historian, McMahon (2006), who provided an exhaustive account of the history of happiness in the Western world, stated that it was from Ancient Greece that the first explicit theories of happiness emerged. At the dawn of this civilization, people were mostly concerned with mere survival and, if the question of happiness had ever been raised, happiness was treated as something that happens to people, something over which they have no control. Happiness in early Greece was left to gods and fortune. Socrates was the first thinker who announced that happiness can be achievable, that it could be set up as a personal life goal. Even more, he stated that people can reach it through their own efforts. These two statements were revolutionary, bringing people's hope to become masters of their own lives and even of their happiness. "...It was Socrates who was the first to consider in detail what would draw the 'sleepless and laborious efforts' of all subsequent philosophers: the 'question of the necessary conditions for happiness," (2006, p. 24). Socrates was also the first to separate the desire for sensual pleasure, the mere enjoyment and satisfaction of the senses and biological drives, from a much larger and more fundamental desire of people for some higher ends of their lives, accompanied by a deep understanding of life and the place they occupy in it. This latter interpretation of happiness was later labeled *eudaimonia* and was contrasted with pure hedonic sensual and biological pleasures. Another word that Greeks used as a synonym of

eudaimonia was *makarios* (μακάριος), which means *blessed* or *happy* (de Heer, 1969). An important observation made by McMahon is that it was a democratic style of governance in Greece's city-states that made this discourse about the achievable happiness possible. "Although it would be reductive to say that Athenian democracy was the cause of the emergence of happiness as a new and apparently realizable human end, it was nevertheless in Athens, democratic Athens, that individuals first put forth that great, seductive goal, daring to dream that they might pursue – and capture – happiness for themselves (p. 23)." He elaborated further on the relations between the nature of Greek society and ideas that its members produced and the goals they exercised. "Surely we may admit some connection between context and concept, between a society in which free men had grown accustomed, through rational inquiry and open deliberation, to decide matters for themselves, and the efforts to extend the sway of self-rule ever further, even to the long-standing domain of the gods" (2006, p. 23). This conclusion is important for the point of view supported in this volume that autonomy is an essential condition for striving for individual happiness, but the emergence of autonomy depends on favorable and facilitating social and cultural conditions; in this case the democratic political organization. Social context is crucially important for people to discover, appreciate, and utilize their capacity for autonomous actions based on self-determined rational reasoning. This and related ideas about the facilitating or detrimental role the social-cultural milieu may play in people's personal and motivational autonomy are intensively elaborated in the following chapters.

Aristotle extended Socrates's teaching into a philosophical investigation of the nature of eudaimonia, and his views have captured the minds of thinkers for centuries (Engstrom & Whiting, 1996; May, 2010; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Waterman, Schwartz, & Conti, 2008). He connected happiness with living a life which is driven by reason, well-justified virtues, and moral values (McMahon, 2004). But it was Stoic philosophers, following the ideas of Socrates and starting with Zeno of Cytium, who actually paved the road for the practical implementations of virtuous living (Strange & Zupko, 2004). They developed further the ideas that happiness is an attainable life goal as well as the highest desire of any human being; that the achievement of eudaimonic happiness brings people satisfaction and contentment that are incomparable in their depth and pleasure with the mere sensual pleasures; that it is people's autonomy, meaning a self-governance by rational reasoning in choosing goals, making decisions, and setting moral values, that lies at the core of people's happy, virtuous, and tranquil lives; and that it is people's capability for rational thinking and reflective reasoning that makes both autonomy and happiness possible.

It is fair to say that the Ancient Greeks stated and elaborated in considerable detail several important theses that were picked up by the scholars of happiness and well-being that followed them: The theses that happiness is a highly desirable and achievable end of people's lives; that real human happiness – eudaimonia – is more than the sum of bodily and sensual pleasures, but rather it extends to moral virtues and the exercise of rational reasoning in one's life; that autonomy is a fundamental condition for happy living; and, finally, that social, political, economic, and

cultural contexts play important roles in eliciting and promoting, or hindering, the manifestation and functioning of autonomy and through it, happiness.

In the first millennium after the death of Christ, the Greek perspective on eudaimonic living was gradually replaced by early and then medieval Christianity, both of which offered very different perspectives on the nature of happiness. According to the orthodox Christian doctrine, people cannot find happiness in this world, it can be reached only in the afterworld and only if they devotedly served God during their lives. Happiness became an unreachable (at least in this life) dream-like passion for Christians (McMahon, 2006). As the idea of an achievable happy life disappeared from the scholars' and theologians' discourses, the idea of personal autonomy responsible for happiness's achievement vanished also. If happiness is not realistically achievable, then there is no necessity for personal autonomy or freedom.[2] The Christian's prescription for happiness was to some extent unique: this faith recommended embracing suffering, because those who suffer the most in this life will be fully rewarded in their afterlife. There is also another aspect of Christianity's rejection of the link between autonomy and happiness. Christian theologians professed that people fail to live happily by their own will and by their own light; that they are incapable of governing their own lust, greed, and hatred. People are incapable of being masters of their own selves. Thus, they are predestined to suffer on the Earth, and only after that, if they serve God, they will be rewarded with full happiness. Thus, human autonomy and freedom were sometimes considered enemies of people's salvation. Happiness was placed beyond people's personal control: "God alone, through his grace, could transform and heal us" (McMahon, 2006, p. 105). Thus, as was the case in Ancient Greece, happiness became receivable only as a gift from God.

It was the Renaissance that brought back the notion of happiness and, together with it, the idea of self-development through one's own will. In the early fifteenth century, an Italian philosopher, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, wrote his famous "On the Dignity of Man." This book is considered by many to be the manifesto of the Renaissance. According to his view, human beings were "brimming with possibility and potential, able to chart the course of their lives for themselves without stumbling under the accumulated weight of Christian superstition" (McMahon, 2006, p. 145). Thus, humankind started moving in its thinking and actions from misery and suffering to dignity and, from there, to happiness on earth.

It was Spinoza in the seventeenth century who returned to the idea that there were important connections between people's earthly happiness and autonomy. Thus, as

[2]It is fair to acknowledge that the doctrines of Christianity are, of course, more multiple and complex than this summary allows us to present it (Dumont, 1985; Hollis, 1985). For example, Lukes (1973) claimed that it was St. Thomas Aquinas and later Martin Luther, who emphasized humans' capability for personal autonomy. It was mediaeval Christianity with its *substantia individua rationalis* which was responsible for carving the fundamentals of the modern Western ideology of individualism (Lukes, 1973) without which personal autonomy could not flourish. But it must be noted: neither of these authors and doctrines linked human autonomy to happiness.

in post-Socratic Greece, these two concepts appeared together again. *Autonomy*, *reason*, *virtue*, and *power* are the main ingredients of Spinoza's prescription for happiness. Spinoza, actually, did not use the term "autonomy," but employed the concepts of "activity" and "human freedom" instead, which he contrasted with "passivity" and "servitude." "For Spinoza, to be active is to be the source of our own actions and not to be impelled by forces that are external to us" (Uyl, 2003, p. 38). Activity (=autonomy), according to Spinoza, is determined by "adequate causes," the causes that are clearly understood by an actor with regard to their origin and consequences. This understanding is reached through people's reason and rational thinking. Passivity (=being controlled) is determined by "inadequate causes," causes whose origin, mechanisms, and consequences are not fully understood and reflected upon by an actor. People are passive if, in their lives and actions, they are governed by forces that they do not fully understand and that predominantly come from "outside" of their selves. Reason has several meanings in Spinoza's writings: it is an ability to explain events by logical thinking, as well as the knowledge of the axioms that reflect the essence of things in the world, and lastly it is a cause of actions. Reason is a fundamental human capacity that brings people power. ". . .True virtue is nothing other than living solely in accordance with the guidance of reason" (Spinoza, 2000, p. 253). A virtuous life, according to Spinoza, is driven not by emotions that happen to people without their adequate understanding of them, and not by unreflected external demands, but by a reason which is supplied by knowledge about Nature and one's place in the world order. By being autonomous and through exercising their reason, people acquire power over their lives and this is a "true virtue" worth living. Therefore, for Spinoza, by perfecting their reasoning and rational thinking, people form adequate ideas about their lives that facilitate their ability to be active, autonomous agents. This autonomy gives people the power to live happy and virtuous lives.

Although Kant has rarely been considered a happiness theoretician, his philosophical investigations also tapped into the problem of human happiness (Engstrom & Whiting, 1996; Guyer, 2000). For Kant, as Guyer (2000) proposed, happiness, both for individuals and for communities, is available only when people's lives and actions are products of freedom and autonomy. Kant also believed that people achieve great pleasure in pursuing happiness through their own efforts. For Kant, "it is only through our own freedom, rather than nature, that we may systematize and maximize human happiness" (Guyer, 2000, p. 98). And it is the free use of reason that actually provides the conditions for happiness. In his essay "On Practical Philosophy," Kant said:

> . . .the human being. . . is determined by nature to be himself the author of his happiness and even of his own inclinations and skills, which make possible this happiness. From this he infers, that he has to order his actions not in accordance with instincts but in accordance with concepts of his happiness which he himself makes. . . . He will therefore have as his foremost object himself as a freely acting being in accordance with this independence and self-mastery, so that his desires will harmonize among themselves with the concept of happiness and not with instincts, and in this form consists the conduct that is appropriate to the freedom of a rational being. . . .In the same way he will become aware that his happiness depends on the freedom of other rational beings. . . (cf. Guyer, 2000, p. 102–103).

In this quotion Kant clearly articulated several points that are important for us. First, that human beings can be the authors of their own happiness and that happiness is achievable in people's lives. Second, that people have to autonomously create their own ideal of their happiness and to subordinate all their capacities, inclinations, and desires to reach this goal of personal happiness. Kant also expressed another fundamental idea: that people need to be aware that their happiness depends on the freedom of other rational human beings. Therefore, in order to achieve universal happiness, people have to behave in such a way that will allow other people to be the free creators of their own happiness too. This statement removes Kant's propositions from the conflict with egotistical individualism: Rational human beings need to understand that their individual happiness is achievable only as a part of the happiness of the larger collectivity of people. In conclusion, we may say that Kant helped revive the ancient ideas that personal earthly happiness is achievable through our own efforts as free and rational human beings. His most important new contribution to the teaching of happiness was the idea that a person cannot reach this happiness alone or at the expense of the happiness of other people. An individual can achieve his or her own happiness only by providing the conditions for other people's autonomous pursuits of their happiness.

Above we presented a brief history of Western ideas concerning the relation of autonomy and happy and good lives. But what about the Eastern world, which has its own noteworthy truths and prescriptions for people's lives and social actions? In the next section we will look at just a few relevant ideas from China, another great civilization of the Ancient times, as well as modern India.

Autonomy and the Good (Moral) Life in the Confucian Ethics

The role autonomy plays in the Confucian's understanding of a good and moral life has recently been a topic of considerable scholarly interest (Chan, 2002; Cheng, 2004; Elvin, 1985; Wong, 2008). Upon examining the discussions in the literature, a few summary points seem clear. First, as in the Greek philosophy, happiness and the nature of the good life were frequently considered and debated. In Confucianism, similar to Aristotle's notions, a good life (this mostly means a moral life, and not so much a happy one) is a virtuous one. The main virtues were "dao," "ren," and "lu." As Yu (2009) pointed out, *dao* plays a role in ancient Chinese ethics analogous to the role played by *eudaimonia* or "flourishing" in ancient Greek ethics. *Ren* is translated as "goodness" and "benevolence" with the meaning of "a sensitive concern for others" (Elvin, 1985, p. 165). This paramount moral virtue allows the establishment of relational harmony, which is considered by the Confucian ethics to be one of the most important aspects of the good/moral life. Second, the way of reaching this goodness is by following *lu*— rituals —which, according to Confucius, carve the moral goodness of a man, like a sculptor's knife carves an image of a stone. Placing *ren* and *lu* at the center of its ethics made the Confucian teaching a relational one where maintaining harmonious relationships stands at the center of the good life.

The question of autonomy in this ethical system is a complex one. "The crucial conflict that developed here [in Ancient China] was between those who emphasized the relative autonomy of man's inner being and those who thought that what was significant in a personality was the creation of social forces working on it from outside, especially education and/or rewards and punishments" (Elvin, 1985, p. 164). As Elvin stated, it was a philosopher Moh Dyi (fifth century BC) who was one of the first to articulate the ideas that will be later labeled "vertical collectivism" (see Chapter 4). The logic of his argument was the following: "Before the formation of government there had been chaos, each person having his own particular morals and his particular values for words" (Elvin, 1985, p. 165). In the context of our discourse, this means that ancient people failed to exercise their autonomy efficiently, as pursuing personal moral values and goals created nothing but chaos. The remedy for this problem was found in a centralized government: "It was the duty of the head of each family, each community, and each state to unify the values of those beneath him" (Elvin, 1985, p. 165). Thus, the vertical centralization of individuals' values-making became one of the central ideas of the later Confucian's teachings on morality. It is fair to say that, at those Ancient times in China, individualistic ideas also existed. According to Elvin, the philosophy of individualism was strongly elaborated by Yang Ju in the fourth century BC. "His doctrine was to act 'for himself'. Personal pleasure was real and fame inane. Social institutions were a form of torture" (Elvin, 1985, p. 165). Yang Ju compared people's inability to pursue their inclinations and to strive for true pleasure with being in a prison.

History shows that the vertical collectivistic ideas have won their primacy in Chinese moral and ethical philosophy. It is fair to say that Chinese philosophers and thinkers were well aware of the existence of human reflective consciousness and the inner world of self-directed thoughts and actions, the phenomenon, factors which belong to the domain of personal autonomy. The fact is that most of them believed that human autonomy could not bring an orderly and good life to people. So they created an ideological/moral system that de-emphasized the value of personal autonomy and discouraged its intensive practice. But even this powerful collectivistic ideology could not ignore people's capability and need for autonomy completely. Several modern interpreters of Confucianism (Chan, 2002; Cheng, 2004; Chong, 2003; Wong, 2008) accept the presence and the value of personal autonomy in this teaching. They refer to the concept *zhi* which means "the will of the self" or "a choice and decision the self makes in view or in recognition of an ideal value or a potential reality that can be achieved through one's efforts" (Cheng, 2004, p. 131). The *zhi*, or the free will of the self, is based on people's self-awareness and reflective reasoning. Following the argumentation of Chan (2002), we can provide the following examples, which could be interpreted as manifestations of autonomy or *zhi* within the Confucian ideological system.

Confucianism encourages its devotees to voluntarily endorse and willingly submit themselves to the matters of first importance, such as political authority, right moral values, and traditions and rituals (Chan, 2002, p. 286). In the language of psychology, this process of voluntarily endorsing external regulations is called *internalization* (Wallis & Poulton, 2001), the process that plays a central role

in the conceptual underpinning of many psychological theories including self-determination theory (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1997). Both Confucius and his famous follower Mencius (third century BC) distinguished people who endorsed morality for its own sake and took delight in acting morally – sages and gentlemen – and "honest village people" who "...follow no moral principle of their own, but only the popular trend. They appear to be virtuous, but they are not really acting for morality's sake" (Chan, 2002, p. 286–287). Confucius despised such people, calling them "the enemy of virtue." This indicates that Confucianism "...understands that a moral life has to be led from inside, by an agent who is voluntarily motivated by morality" (Chan, 2002, p. 287). The phenomenon described here is conceptualized in self-determination theory as the internalization of behavioral regulation and the distinction between its autonomous and controlled forms (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). When people are controlled by external social forces in their following of moral values and behaviors, they turn themselves into the puppets of these forces and do not represent genuine moral individuals. Only the autonomous acceptance of moral virtues and behavior through internalization makes people fully moral human. Thus, Confucianism accepts that the truly moral (good) life is possible only if people are autonomously motivated by their *zhi* to lead that kind of life, and this is an obvious argument for the thesis that, even in vertically collectivistic China, autonomy (in the above presented aspects) is a necessary condition for a good life (Chong, 2003).

Another example of an implicit endorsement of the importance of autonomy came from a Confucius suggestion to not follow various rites blindly just because they are followed by the majority. Rather, as this sage suggested, "one should adopt a reflective moral attitude to examine the ethical reason behind a rite and to determine whether that rite is appropriate" (Chan, 2002, p. 288). As Chan articulated, Confucius was fully aware that "[R]ites as norms of conduct are often too general to give precise guidance in the making of concrete moral decisions. There may be novel situations, borderline cases, and hard cases (where some rites are in conflict with others) that call for reflective judgment and moral discretion" (Chan, 2002, p. 288). Western philosophers consider this reflective judgment and moral discretion the core of human agentic autonomy. This example represents a fundamental attribute of human autonomy: its reflective nature, in which people can reflect on the conditions of their lives, their motivation behind their behaviors, and make choices of what to do and why to do it. In SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002), this highest form of autonomy is conceptualized as the integrated form of motivational regulation. Therefore, Confucianism does not deny the necessity and capacity of people to exercise their autonomy through reflective reasoning, while being fully emerged into the ideology of rituals and relational dependence.

The previous discussion is related to another example of the Confucianism endorsement of autonomy as a basis of a moral, virtuous, and good life in a group. This is how Chan presented it: "It is possible that what the agent regards as morally right may not be shared by others. It is also possible that the agent may find other people's ways of doing things wrong" (p. 289). In this case, Confucians tell agents to stand firm on the moral position that they reflectively endorse – to act on their

independent will. "Confucius says, 'The Three armies can be deprived of their commanding officers, but even a common man cannot be deprived of his will [*zhi*].'... The idea of a great man having an independent will and sticking to it against all odds presupposes the belief that one should act on one's own best understanding of morality. A great man is one who forms an independent moral will and takes control of his own moral life. In moral life he follows nothing but the moral principles that he reflectively endorses and the moral will that he develops" (Chan, 2002, pp. 289–290). The ancient Greeks would likely agree that this is a description of personal autonomy in its purest form. We may conclude that despite many controversies and complexities surrounding the issue of personal autonomy in Chinese philosophy, the ideas of personal autonomy and self-determination hold an important place in this system of thinking.

But what about the relational ethics of Confucianism that are based on *ren* and *li* and constitute the essence of the ideology of collectivism? The basic thesis of this system, as it is often presented in modern cross-cultural research, is a subordination of individual interests, goals, and even identity to the collective interests and goals. A more thorough analysis shows that there is a room for personal autonomy even within this thesis. As Wong (2008) suggested, this ideology in its essence does not require the complete subordination of individual interests to the collective ones and relations between them are more dialectical. It emphasizes "the mutual dependence between the individual and the group" and provides moral guidance for people regarding where to direct their will. Specifically, it recommends that a person "make the group's interests part of his or her own interests," but it also emphasizes that "the group depends on the individual and must make that individual's interests part of the group's interests" (Wong, 2008). Therefore, the complete implementation of this ideology is impossible without people's autonomous reflections and reasoning about their own interests, the interests of their group, and the decisions based on these reflections (see also Chong, 2003). Thus, as we may see, the idea of human autonomy can fairly comfortably coexist with Chinese collectivistic ideology, although not in such explicit and easily recognizable forms as within Western individualism. Autonomy in this ideology is also an inseparable part of a moral and virtuous life.

Autonomy, Agency, and Happiness in the South Asian Cultural Context

Mauss stated that in his opinion, India was the first civilization to recognize the self as an individual conscious entity (Sanderson, 1985). Later, as Sanderson (1985) suggested, this self was rejected as an undesirable worldly consciousness. Because of this it was not surprising to us to experience difficulties in discovering literary sources on the views of Hinduism (not to mention Shaivism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, and Sikhism) on self-determination and personal autonomy and their relations to happiness and the good life. In this section, we will reflect more on the discussions among cultural anthropologists, sociologists, practicing psychoanalysists, and

psychologists who have studied Indian and other South Asian cultural contexts regarding the role human autonomy plays in the lives of people in these countries (Ali & Haq, 2006; Devine, Camfield, & Gough, 2008; Ewing, 1991; Mines, 1988; Roland, 1988; Singer, 1972).

The starting point of these accounts is the conventionally accepted proposition that personal autonomy and individualism are devalued in India, that individual is subordinated to the caste and familial interests and guiding principles, and that individuals' motivation can only be explained in terms of external forces in the form of caste rules and kinship ideologies. The bottom line of the conventional understanding is that the hierarchical organization of Indian society proscribes psychological autonomy (see Mines, 1988). This thesis reflects the dominant and normative ideologies of Indian society, but somehow it has been unjustifiably extended to the understanding of motivation behind people's individual lives and actions, the domain where individual psychological autonomy actually exists and functions. Do Indians reflect on their lives and behaviors? Do they choose their actions based only on the ideological prescriptions, or can they exercise their own freedom of choice and action? Do they have the ability to critically evaluate the existing normative instructions and reason their own directions in life? Do they have the capacity to feel themselves masters of their actions, to enjoy the intrinsic values of their self-determination? These questions, because their explicit denial of the most essential features of human rational consciousness, may even look offensive to representatives of the Indian civilization, but the sad fact is that, based on the modern social science model, these questions are legitimate, and despite their counterintuitive nature they should be answered in a systematic fashion. These questions also imply that according to the above-mentioned collectivistic doctrine Indians' behavior and motivation should be explained exclusively in terms of the social and cultural systems of which the individual is a member, and this explanation is driven by the assumptions "that (1) all the social cultural systems of which an individual is a member, and all aspects of each system, are equally relevant for a particular individual, and (2) the specific behavior of individual members of a "system" replicates the generic characteristics of the system without significant variations or nonsystematic traits" (Singer, 1972, p. 285).

To answer the above questions, some social scientists have analyzed individual cases either in the context of Indians' individual life histories (Mines, 1988), individual psychotherapy (Roland, 1988), in the family context (Ewing, 1991, in Pakistan), or within the industrial entrepreneurial activity in India (Singer, 1972). The goal of these analyses was to provide empirical evidence that "when Indians [and the representatives of other familial and collectivistic societies] talk privately about their lives they frequently depict themselves as active agents, pursuing private goals and making personal decisions that affect the outcome of their lives" (Mines, 1988, p. 568). Anthropologist Mines strongly argued against what he labeled ethnosociological and the social psychological approaches to understanding the Indian notion of personhood, which de-emphasizes the role of individual autonomy and self-determination in Indians' highly hierarchical and collectivist culture. According to

Mines, ethnosociologists believe that the individual is submerged in the social whole and as a result of this "Individual happiness and the autonomy that produces it are irrelevant; the emphasis is on the collective whole, on a collective man" (p. 569). The socio-psychologists emphasize instead the consequences of "the psychological and behavioral adjustments Indians must make because their hierarchical social system rewards compliance and punishes autonomy" (p. 570). Indian social psychologists, according to Mines, argued that, on the one hand, all humans experience themselves as separate from others with their own unique needs, goals, and interests, but, on the other hand, the Indian culture demands the fusion of an individual with family, caste, and class. Because of this polarity, Indians face a dilemma of either "conforming and giving up the individuality or with rebellion and receiving condemnation" (p. 570). Both these approaches, in Mines's opinion, have inherent weaknesses with regard to understanding how Indians manage their personal responsibilities for their lives, how they make and reflect upon their self-determined life decisions and the actions that pursue their personal goals and interests. These weaknesses stems from the inclination of both approaches to provide "cultural explanations of motivation generated primarily by ideological interpretations" (p. 569) instead of idiosyncratic accounts of personal motivation and the role of self-determination in it.

Based on an analysis of 23 life histories of Indians ranging from 23 to 83 years in age, Mines concluded that the issue of personal autonomy is relevant and important to Indians. He discovered that Hindu individuals develop personal goals separate from the goals of their encompassing social groups. For some of his interviewees, these goals were opposed by their families, whereas for others they were congruent. They also reported acts of rebellion that went against the normative prescriptions of family, caste, and/or hierarchy. One of the fundamental reasons for this rebellion was "strongly felt dreams for autonomy" (Mines, p. 573). As Mines mentioned, many of these rebels were "vitalized by their actions" and reported a feeling of responsibility for their lives which was grounded "in a sense of being able to make decisions that determine one's life course in ways that the individual sees as important" (Mines, p. 574). Thus, "they have become their own decision makers" (Mine, p. 575), demonstrating one of the essential forms of personal autonomy. These interviewees reported their concerns with their own needs, their personal circumstances, and their personal goals, which, when reflected upon, all together provided them with the basis for their autonomous decisions. Mines reported an interesting observation that most of the acts of autonomous agency were performed by his interviewees at later stages of their lives, whereas young people were much more strongly restricted by the cultural norms of obedience to hierarchy. Mines rightfully concluded that "the hierarchical-collectivist view generated a distorted picture of the person and of motivation, because the person is depicted as passively trapped within the frame the model describes without any mechanism for generating change" (Mine, p. 576). Contrary to this view, he defends the position that Indians can clearly identify their self-interests and exercise control over life-important decisions, thus they fight for their autonomy and the feeling of responsibility for their lives.

Psychoanalyst Roland (1988) treated Indian patients and, based on this experience, reflected on the role personal autonomy plays in Indians' lives. He distinguished three aspects of the Indians' psychological self: familial, spiritual, and individualized, and stated that their selves consist of mostly familial and spiritual components with only a small portion of the individualized component. He agreed that the issue of autonomy was one of the most deeply rooted sources of problems and conflicts that urban middle-class men, whom he mostly treated, brought to his office. He observed that these patients were habitually socialized to make major life decisions only after consultations with extended family elders, and that this upbringing nearly paralyzed his patients' ability to make autonomous decisions which was needed to manage their lives in a self-determined fashion. Issues of personal autonomy vs. compliance with their father's expectations emerged saliently in the cases of his male patients. Roland's observations of and conversations with his clients revealed to him the two layers of their inner functioning: personal and socio-cultural levels. The personal level is the level where his clients' reflections, meaning making, and internal dialogs were happening. Some psychoanalysts label this level the domain of "intrapsychic autonomy" (Ewing, 1991). A high socio-cultural level of functioning required that individuals follow the rules of the familial-hierarchical etiquette of obedience. As Roland discovered, the major conflicts that his clients brought to his treatment room were based on a strong suppression of thoughts and feelings, and especially the feelings of individual identity, autonomous strivings, and unique creativity, at the personal level, and for the sake of the demands for submission and unquestionable respect for elders and superiors at the socio-cultural level. These facts indicated that Indians have internal, private lives filled with needs for individuation, autonomy, and personal identity that may come into a sharp conflict with hierarchical-collectivistic ideology of their culture.

But to fully understand the specific Indian utilization of the human need for autonomy, as Roland commented, one has to acknowledge the importance of nourishing their spiritual selves. He understood the spiritual self as an experiential striving to "be merged with the god, goddess, or incarnation . . . and in turn through the merger [one] expects the reciprocity of divine bliss" (Roland, 1988, p. 295). As he further mentioned, this "religious experience enables the person to become increasingly individuated, differentiated, and separated from the intensely emotional, familial involvements" (Roland, p. 296). In India, human autonomy is, first of all, spiritual autonomy, autonomy to worship gods, to reflect on their lives, and freedom to follow their divine teachings. Indian culture allows and facilitates individual's increasing involvement in the realization of the spiritual self, through which a person acquires relative independence of others in the fulfillment of their ideals, personal growth, esteem, and other essential autonomy-related capabilities (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 2003). Thus, we may say that, based on Roland's account, psychological autonomy is practiced in Indian society in two forms: through the individualized self, similar to the individualized self of Westerners, and through the spiritual self. Through the individualized self, which is mostly related to real life events and accomplishments, Indians acknowledge, reflect, and develop their personal proclivities, self-determination, emotional

autonomy, and inner world of personal experience, whereas through the spiritual self, which binds them with the divine world of the sacredness, they are able to deepen their independence from others in the gratification of their spiritual needs and the realization of their karma.

Psychological/cultural anthropologist Ewing (1991) extended the same line of arguments about the relevance of psychological autonomy to the study of Pakistani women within the context of their extended families. She started her investigation with the same thesis that Western social scientists routinely treat South Asian cultures as emphasizing "hierarchy and community" and valuing "interdependence" "rather than individuality and autonomy" (Ewing, 1991, p. 132). She also correctly admited that this denial of psychological autonomy is nothing but confusion, which is based on the failure to clearly differentiate among the cultural concepts of personality, "behavioral patterns that are shaped by social expectations", and the intrapsychic organization of a person's inner world of private thoughts, motivations, and feelings (Ewing, 1991, p. 132). With regard to autonomy she found it useful to differentiate *interpersonal autonomy* from *intrapsychic autonomy*. Summarizing her conceptualization of these concepts, they can be defined the following way. Intrapsychic autonomy is related to the existence of ego boundaries and the ability to separate the external and internal sources of need fulfillment and self-esteem. An intrapsychic autonomous person is less dependent on the environment in organizing and managing his or her behavior, and takes responsibility for his or her own actions and life. Interpersonal autonomy is definitionally, though not functionally, distinct from the intrapsychic one. This form of autonomy characterizes the mode of social relationships among members of a family or a community. The basic tenets of interpersonal autonomy include the cultivation of personal individuality, having a high demand for privacy, demonstrating relative independence from others in satisfying one's needs, and striving for self-sufficiency. Ewing's major point is that Pakistani women lack interpersonal autonomy, but their psychological health depends on the presence of intrapsychic autonomy, because it provides a healthy outlet for their psychological need for autonomy. Based on the analysis of several cases, she concluded that "there is considerable evidence to suggest that in many South Asian families, individual family members do in fact act in an autonomous fashion intrapsychically, though they operate within a highly 'engaged' interpersonal network of family relations and expectations. Despite a high degree of interpersonal engagement, South Asians often display a considerable ability to maintain their own perspective and remain attuned to their own needs and to the needs of others while accepting the demands for conformity within the family" (Ewing, p. 139).

These accounts of autonomy in the South Asian context convey several important ideas for this book's arguments. First, that it is crucially important to differentiate the socio-cultural ideologies of personhood and interpersonal relations that direct people's behavior on the social level from the persons' intrapsychological realm of their private reflections, personal needs, goals, and feelings. This internal world is the space for personal and motivational autonomy where people make decisions about their own actions and life course, where they contemplate the societal prescriptions for actions and decide whether to follow them or not. Second, there are

conceptual confusions regarding various levels of human autonomy manifestations and the theoretical differentiation of various forms of autonomy from related concepts, such as interdependence, independence and individualism, collectivism, and others. These confusions require more elaborated conceptual framing of the concept of psychological autonomy. But probably the most important conclusion is that the members of these restrictive and hierarchical cultures possess this undeniable capability and need for personal autonomy. Cultures, in our case the Indian one, may be less restrictive to the personal autonomy of its members during their more mature ages and may provide a special domain for its unrestricted exercise, such as private spirituality. The individual's psychological autonomy may be in conflict with the dominant social prescriptions in these Eastern cultures, just as they are often so within Western societies (see, e.g., Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, & Ryan, 2007). As a result of this conflict, if human autonomy is either undeveloped or strongly suppressed, then mental health problems could emerge. This conclusion means that psychological autonomy is universally essential for people's mental health and ultimately for their happiness and the good life.

Happiness, Human Autonomy, and Self-Determination in Modern Psychology

Modern psychology has always been split on the issues of human autonomy, freedom, and happiness, directly or indirectly. We identify three major trends of thoughts on this issue. One trend, which is comprised of Skinnerian (Skinner, 1971) as well as modern cognitive psychologists (Bargh, 2004; Wegner, 2002, 2008), has tried to follow the demand of scientific determinism to find the ultimate causes of human behavior by precluding consideration of subjective experience and the intentional nature of human reasoning as determinant of action. In other words, according to this position, real determining causes of human behavior should be independent of the consciousness of acting individuals and should explain both consciousness and behavior. The idea of human happiness and the directions for a good life have never been an issue within this trend of psychological thinking. The second trend is represented by a variety of theories that could be linked to a postmodernist, social constructionist movement wherein people's psychological processes and states have been presented as social constructions, as texts, or sets of discourses (Benson, 2001; Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1997; Harré, 1993). These socio-cultural constructions or scripts are always relative, fluid, and fundamentally not essentialistic and, as a result, they completely depend on their social cultural interpretation. And the third trend that has been strongly devoted to the investigation and understanding of the conditions for people's happy and harmonious lives, including people's autonomy, agency, and freedom, is represented by humanistic psychoanalysis (Fromm, 1947, 1976; Horney, 1950), humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961, 1977), existential psychology (Frankl, 1971, 1988; May, 1981, 1961), phenomenological and hermeneutic psychology (Pfänder, 1908; Ricoeur, 1950; Sugarman & Martin,

2004), and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2006; Ryan et al., 2008). The representatives of this trend, although very diverse and different in their philosophical and empirical backgrounds, find the determinants of good lives for humans and their well-being in autonomous human consciousness, as well as in people's ability to reflect on their life conditions, both internal and external, and, based on this ability, to be relatively independent builders of their own destiny, happiness, and harmonious lives.

A Deterministic Trend in Modern Psychology

We find it appropriate to start this short review with the Skinnerian account of people's freedom and autonomy (Skinner, 1971). In his book *Beyond Dignity and Freedom,* Skinner very explicitly expressed views that have shaped discussions of this issue for decades. In this book, Skinner fought against any conception of "an inner or autonomous man." To him this conception is similar to a medieval homunculus, which metaphorically represents a power of individual consciousness to reflect on and guide one's own behavior. This "autonomous man" was created, according to Skinner, as an explanatory metaphor because of scholars' ignorance about the real and objective causes of behavior. These real causes of human behavior can only be discovered by a scientific (meaning modeled from the natural sciences) analysis of behavior. Together with the "autonomous man," Skinner tried to refute people's attributes such as purposes, intentions, plans, and states of mind, portraying them as mentalistic constructions that should be scientifically explained instead of being used as explanatory categories *per se*. The main idea of the Skinnerian scientific analysis of behavior is to search for the real causes of both the human mental states and behavior, via contingencies of reinforcement. By replacing the "autonomous man" with a set of externally crafted contingencies of reinforcement (although he admitted that a man himself may be a creator of these contingencies), behavioral scientists were expected to be able to develop "a technology of behavior" that would change and control people's behavior for the better. So, the ultimate purpose of the Skinnerian scientific analysis of behavior is not people's good and moral lives, not their happiness, but the opportunity to control people and change their behavior in desired directions.

These very ideas are still pervasive and strong in modern cognitive psychology. Incredibly similar arguments against human self-determination and autonomy can be found in works of modern cognitive psychologists such as Bargh (1999, 2000) and Wegner (2002, 2008, 1999). Bargh, for instance, explicitly stated that "...the contemporary cognitive perspective, in spirit as well as in practice, seeks to account for psychological phenomena in terms of deterministic mechanisms" (1999, p. 463). And further he explained these "deterministic mechanisms" using a similar logic to Skinner. Bargh used the opinion of Neisser from his "Cognitive Psychology" book who called the explanation of the "problem of the executive" by referring to a "homunculus or 'little person in the head'" non-scientific. And further, Bargh