

Autonomy, Personhood, and Technology

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Increasing computer mediation of greater and greater portions of personal action may present a challenge to traditional notions of autonomy, particularly those that view autonomy as merely being a state of being essentially equivalent to free will and those that view the protection of autonomy as being primarily a protection from governmental power. If autonomy is more than merely having the government leave you alone, in other words, if autonomy includes the availability of adequate options for action as well as protection from non-governmental power, then increasing computer mediation may present challenges by splitting control over actions between entities and thereby reducing available options. The reduction in choices or available options also has implications for theories of self-constitutive personhood. Possible areas in which this phenomena can be seen are the areas of digital rights management, user-generated content, computer malware, and the increasing computer mediation of the physical world often described as ubiquitous computing.