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2. What does it mean to be an autonomous adult? How can autonomy "fit" with social responsibility? What does it mean to be in control of your own life?

Autonomy means to have the freedom to act independently or to govern ones self. This is a term that took me many years to fully understand, and it has become very obvious that many of my peers, along with many younger adults from the 'generation X', 'generation Y', and 'millnials' have yet to experience and incorporate into their lives. Even the term 'micromanaging' has become mainstream, giving today's workers the idea that anything they try will be scrutinized and changed before it will be implemented. A Prince of Jerusalem must be able to work by themselves, as our Temple is already perfected but our work is not yet finished.

An autonomous adult is one that can operate without oversight. I first learned about autonomy in high school without ever hearing the term. While in Agricultural Mechanics, we were left alone and had to figure out how to weld with no instruction. It didn't take long to figure out about arc flash and UltraViolet burns. As an auto mechanic, I was constantly challenged with diagnosing fuel injection problems. My lead mechanic made little money chasing wiring issues and component malfunctions, but as I was paid by the hour, I was placed on the time consuming jobs that took more brain power and less tools. This led me to emergency medicine. I first learned the term 'autonomy' as a paramedic. I was given a set of protocols and had to adapt them to the emergencies that I was to encounter throughout my career. My supervisor listed on my review that I was not 'autonomous' meaning that I could not work on my own. This review made me realize that I needed to strengthen my skill set so that he could never report that way again. After many classes, including Maxwell's 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, I finally convinced myself that I was fully autonomous. Having the power of autonomy and skill set of a paramedic, I was finally competent and had all the tools necessary to save lives. Then came nursing school.

As a nursing student, they made it very clear that I was not to give any medication without an order to do so, otherwise it would be a violation of my nursing license. It was quite difficult to accept that yesterday I could render someone unconscious and begin to ventilate them but today I had to ask for permission to give oxygen. It was as if my autonomy was stripped away and all of my education was rendered invalid. As I grow as a man, and a Mason, I am continually reminded of the reasons behind every law and every action. I am not actually limited. I am simply reminded of my job scope and my position in my chosen field. Just as the physician does not carry out my orders, I do not initiate his

orders. This mutual respect is necessary for any team. Each of us operate with autonomy. I know what tests he will order, just as they know that I will initiate care prior to being told to do so. Autonomy in my case is granted, or rather, earned. Some adults are not given this privilege. Many do not need to act autonomously. This is where protocols, or laws, are created and enforced. If adults cannot live harmoniously, the protocols of the land are initiated and that adult loses part of his autonomy.

Social responsibility is key with autonomy. We learned in the Entered Apprentice Degree about the Tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. We are to 'regard the whole human species as one family; the high and low, the rich and poor; who, as created by one Almighty Parent, and inhabitants of the same planet, are to aid, support and protect each other.' We are also to 'sooth the unhappy, to sympathize with their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to their troubled minds...' Truth teaches us that 'hypocrisy and deceit are unknown to us, sincerity and plain dealings distinguish us, and the heart and tongue join in promoting each other's welfare and rejoicing in each other's prosperity.' Each of these are charged to us as Masons, when dealing with our fellow man. We practice autonomy in our daily lives when we live by the Golden Rule, that law that is the foundation of almost every religion in the world. In Exodus 21, we are told that judgement is to follow according to the crime, such as 'eye for an eye.' We have a social responsibility to be accountable for our actions and to expect that there will be consequences to our actions. Thus is the cost of autonomy.

When we are acting autonomously, we must be in control of our own lives. We cannot expect to live without rule and later to have issues with the lack of oversight concerning our lives. Solomon was gifted with wisdom and judged autonomously, yet this wisdom did not blind him to where he received it. Nobody is without law. We are governed by the law of the land, by the laws of nature, and hopefully by the laws of our chosen Deity. Without these laws, we would have no guidance, and more importantly, no penalty to our obligations. Autonomy is hidden throughout the many Degrees of Masonry, more so in our obligations. We took the initiative to seek out Enlightenment for ourselves. We took our oaths individually. We pressed forward until we reached that level of Light to which we are currently at, still seeking further Light, never content with what we have, knowing that there is more to be revealed. This can readily be found through study, meditation, contemplation, prayer, and acts of charity and benevolence. We cannot expect, or even hope to guide someone else's life and path if we are not in control of our own life. Every adult, more especially every Mason, should be able to operate autonomously.

Truth is what leads us to autonomy. Let us look at the argument of what has the greatest influence on man, that of wine, women, or the king. If we were to follow the effects of wine, we are following our inhibitions. We forget our friends and places in society. We forget our celebrations and our sorrows. Wine causes us to err. Just as we are taught in the Order of the Temple, 'for all men err, and erring need forgiveness'. Proverbs 20:1 tells us that 'wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whosoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.' If we follow women, we are following our desires. Women can make us abandon our countries and our relationships, our professions and our livelihoods. We cannot live without women. If we follow the rule of the king, we are following our weaknesses and lack of autonomy, or rather the lack of motivation to make our own decisions, allowing another to dictate our lives. The king is the master of masters, for there is nothing with more power than the king. Truth is a

divine attribute, and the foundation of every virtue. Truth is unchanging and everlasting; there exists no unrighteousness, for it is the strength, wisdom, and power of all ages. These arguments take place in the York Rite's Order of the Red Cross.

Autonomy plays an important role in Masonry as well. As Entered Apprentices, we are simply bearers of burdens, waiting for our next instructions. We are taught to strive towards perfection, but we are simply given the 24 inch gauge and common gavel. These tools are only adequate as to form an ashlar, not to perfect it. We are given instruction on how to direct our lives, yet our working tools are only enough to measure ourselves against our Brethren that have achieved perfection. Our rule and guide at this stage is the Holy Bible. As a Fellowcraft, we were honing our skills in the mountains and quarries. Our working tools are such as are needed to perfect our ashlar. When combined with those of the Entered Apprentice, we are finally producing work that can pass the Overseer's squares and are then entitled to wages. When we received further Light as a Master Mason, our autonomy was finally revealed. Our skills were perfected to the point that we could work and travel as Master Masons, as well as to prove ourselves as Masters. Our perfect work would finally be displayed on the Temple, and the work of our Brethren and ourselves would be displayed when the nicety of our labors was cemented into the Temple. We were finally able to work autonomously, leaving our mark on society as well as in our great fraternity. This journey through Masonry, as well as our labors in life, do not go unnoticed. Our readiness to give instructions and our willingness to receive instruction is the key to our autonomy. It is our desire to seek out and to find truth that fully allows our autonomy to reveal our true potential to our service to God and to man.