

False Beliefs and the Epistemic Conditions for Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

What kind of epistemic conditions, if any, do autonomous actions satisfy? Can an action be claimed to be autonomous aside from an agent having a false belief about its nature or its effects? Is the doxastic quality of such a belief sufficient to make the action non-autonomous or perhaps it is of relevance how an agent came to have or act on that false belief. If the latter, does manipulating someone into believing something false, necessarily renders non-autonomous the action based on that belief? If not, under what conditions it doesn't.

In my lecture I will argue that autonomous actions do need to satisfy certain epistemic conditions and that being subject to manipulation need not always render actions non-autonomous. In the first part of the lecture, I will argue against the view that autonomous actions require no, or a very thin set, of epistemic conditions. In the second part, I will present my main argument according to which although having false beliefs is insufficient to make one's actions non-autonomous, acting on some type of false beliefs which are due to an intention of another to make one fall short of the ideal of instrumental rationality, does make actions non-autonomous. In the last part of the lecture, I will discuss the normative commitments of the epistemic requirements I propose.