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# Self-Employment and the Brute Force Concern



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**E**mployers give orders to their employees. There is an expectation that in doing what the employer asks, they will in turn secure their livelihood. Is this

relationship sound? It's hard to think so. Given that the company is a non-feeling entity, it won't, nay, can't care about the employees' situation, especially if it cuts into the profits of the company.

In the article "Self-Employment and Independence," by Inigo Gonzalez-Ricoy, they look at a couple of arguments for why self-employment is to be valued. One of those arguments they call the brute force concern. They say that:

*"...in general, employees act as they do because their bosses say so, backed by the threat of penalty, even when they would have acted similarly had they received no direction to act in that particular way. It is the alien source of the directive, not its content, or not just its content anyway, that arguably prompts the complaint, which self-employment addresses by removing managerial authority altogether.*

*The trouble with this view is that it is not discriminating enough. It yields false positives, for if dependence on others' authority is objectionable as such, in terms of undermining the freedom of the dependent party, then such dependence is also ex hypothesi objectionable in the state, in college, or in the family." (Gonzalez-Ricoy, "Self-Employment and Independence")*

Gonzalez-Ricoy starts by defining the brute force concern as the view that self-employment is to be valued because in employment, there is an outside authority that forces us to do things. A directive given to employees that they did not give themselves. They then argue that this happens all the time, with value attached to it. The law, for example, is an outside directive that can be valued; the law protects us and assures that if anything did happen to us, there will be justice. This counterexample suggests that self-employment isn't to be valued for the reason that it frees us from outside directives.

It is true that outside directives can be of value, such as in cases like the law. That can't be the whole story, however. There is a difference between the law and managerial directives. The law is intended, at least in the US, as a means of providing freedoms and fairness, which require some restrictions to ascertain. I will grant that this is not always achieved but seems to be the goal. This same claim can be made for the other counterexamples, *they are outside directives given for your benefit*. While a job, alternatively, the outside directives are not to the employees' benefit. The outside

directives from an employer are for *the employer's benefit*. Sure, it might be of benefit for an agent to listen to their employer, to keep their job and income, but the directive given to the employee is not for the benefit of the employee, but for the benefit of the employer.

If outside directives on employees are not for the employees' benefit, then they are at the employees' expense. They generate positives for the company, at the cost of the employees' despair and lack of autonomy. The employer sets a directive, a task for the employee to complete. The employee expends time, energy, and possibly, mental sanity, to complete the task for the company. While people running the company have feelings, the company itself is not a being, it is an entity without emotion or remorse. It doesn't care about the employees' state, the company's health is solely dictated by its finances. Yet, the employee with no great alternatives is coerced into feeding the company. In turn, the company supports the employees' ability to continue making the company profitable; the company supports the life of the employee, so long as it is profitable to do so.

The brute force concern is something that cannot be equated to those outside directives that are to our benefit. Employer-employee relationships are not to the employees' benefit. Self-employment allows the agent freedom from this outside directive, which would be to their detriment. If outside directives on employees are not for the employees' benefit, then they are at the employees' expense. This is due to outside directives from an employer being at the benefit to the company, and that benefit is derived at the cost, as everything has one, of the employee. Self-employment frees one from the cycle that keeps an employer profitable, at the cost of employees' autonomy, and sanity.

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