**Chapter Summary**

*Ethical Choices*, Third Edition

Richard Burnor and Yvonne Raley

Chapter 3: Autonomy, Moral Agency, and Self-Identity

Chapter 3 opens by describing a few situations in which personal autonomy has become an important moral issue. Autonomy is then defined—in largely negative terms—as requiring independence, competency, and authenticity. Adults are typically autonomous but may lose autonomy temporarily or even permanently. §III relates autonomy to moral responsibility and moral deference; it also introduces paternalism. Then, the following section shifts to the actual exercise of autonomy as a moral agent. Agency can take place at the level of independent choice (many everyday choices), competent choice (most deliberations), and authentic choice (major life choices). But is our negative concept of autonomy adequate? In fact, it is not and must be supplemented by positive components as well, leading to some type of more substantive autonomy. The (optional) final section traces the process of developing moral agency and more fully, self-identity. Part of this process is illustrated by a detailed description of how people may develop racial identity.