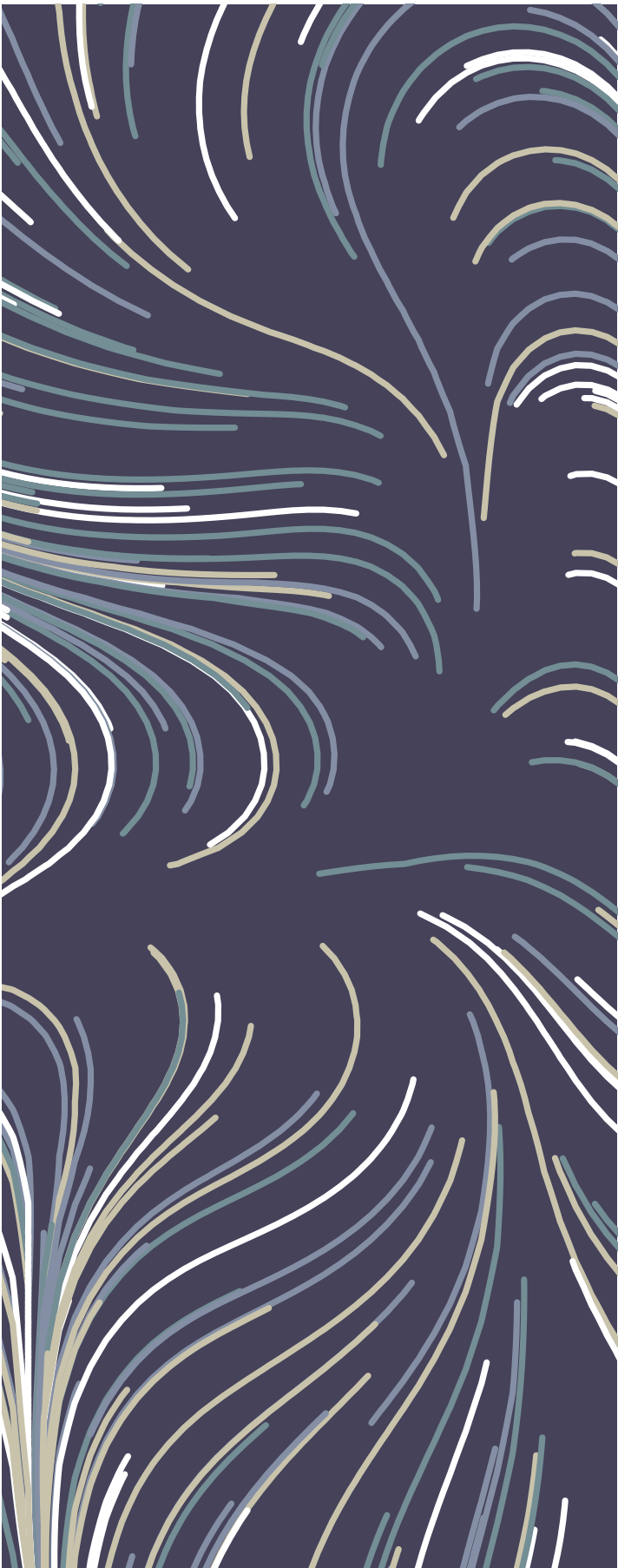THE BROWN UNIVERSITY

JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS & ECONOMICS

Special Feature:
PPE THEORY AS A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

with a contribution from Geoff Mulgan

Journal of Philosophy, Politics & Economics

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VISION STATEMENT

The Brown University Journal of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (JPPE) is a peer reviewed academic journal for undergraduate and graduate students that is sponsored by the Brown University Center for Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. The JPPE aims to promote intellectual rigor, free thinking, original scholarship, interdisciplinary understanding, and global leadership. By publishing student works of philosophy, politics, and economics, the JPPE attempts to unite academic fields that are too often partitioned into a single academic discourse. In doing so, the JPPE aims to produce a scholarly product greater than the sum of any of its individual parts. By adopting this model, the JPPE attempts to provide new answers to today's most pressing questions.

MASTHEAD

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FOREWORD

"And did we not agree that the excellence or virtue of soul is justice and its defect injustice?[1]

In this issue, we welcomed articles that centered around the theme of "political theory as a vehicle of social change." We'll first introduce the thematic logic and then proceed with a brief summary of articles.

Can PPE theories serve as a vehicle for social change? Since the Axial Age (8th - 3rd century BCE),[2] *Vergeistigung*, or spiritualization of the human mind, was complete among major world civilizations. Based on "rationality and rationally-clarified experiences,"[3] humans began to question the current state of affairs, and political theories thus became a preoccupation for the prolific minds, not only as a description of how societies and polities *are*, but as a prescription of what they *should* become. The Socratic inquiries and Plato's *Republic* were remarkable in defining, for the first time in the Western tradition, the role of a philosopher in society and polity–that is, to seek justice.[4] Economics as a scientific matter emerged as a normative subject on how society may improve by scientific means.[5]

Important studies of how PPE theories may serve as a vehicle of social change first emerged in the 1920s. In his book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, Edward Bernays proposed a theory that took the "public opinion" of political economic matters as the *problematik*. The study demonstrated the effect of news and factual information on society are a function of the channels through which they were transmitted. As Bernays himself put, "[the] public relations counsel must lift startling facts from his whole subject and present them as news. He must isolate ideas

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1 Plat. Rep. 1.353e, " μ ν ρα δικαία ψυχ κα   δίκαιος ν ρ ε βιώσεται, κακ ς δ   δικος".
2 Jaspers, K. (2017). *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (K. Salamun, Ed.). Schwabe Verlag. https://doi.org/10.24894/978-3-7965-4059-2.
Recommended translation is Jaspers, K. (2021). *The Origin and Goal of History* (C. Thornhill, Ed.; 1st ed.). Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/The-Origin-and-Goal-of-History/Jaspers/p/book/9780367679859
3 "[die] Rationalität und [die] rational [geklärte] Erfahrung (der Logos gegen den Mythos)".
4 Brown, E. (2017). Plato's Ethics and Politics in The Republic. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition). https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/#Rel.
5 Samuels, W. J., Biddle, Jeff., & Davis, J. Bryan. (Eds.). (2003). *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought* (1st ed.). Blackwell. https://www.wiley.com/en-us/A+Companion+to+the+History+of+Economic+Thought-p-9780631225737.

and develop them into events so that they can be more readily understood and so that they may claim attention as news."[6]

The tension caused by the question of how the logical and evidential basis of ideas may best correspond to their effects on society has haunted intellectuals ever since. The human rights theorists, Marxists, a number of political economists and the New Leftist intellectuals,[7] and many scholars who began such inquiries in the aftermath of the Vietnam War have proposed various theories.[8]

In our current issue, authors have discussed topics of vital import in a wide range of fields, from the study of the ethics of ignorance to gender and sexual consent, from political ideology and public discourse to the politics of secularization and religiosity, and from economic disruption to the meaning of work. We believe these issues are best examined through the lenses of philosophy, politics, and economics jointly. Through our pieces, we wish to illuminate both the diversity of thoughts and advise reflection on how readers might use this knowledge to improve the social conditions.

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6   Bernays, E. L. (1923). *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. Liveright Publishing.

7   I.e., Vilfredo Pareto and Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere.*
Serious scholars of Marxian thought and its history are referred to Kołakowski, Leszek. (1981). *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, The Golden Age, The Breakdown* (P. S. Falla, Ed.; Revised). W.W. Norton & Co. https://wwnorton.com/books/Main-Currents-of-Marxism/.
On human rights, see Jean Quataert, & Lora Wildenthal (Eds.). (2021). *Routledge History of Human Rights* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-History-of-Human-Rights/Quataert-Wildenthal/p/book/9781032089669.

8   On politics, see T. Ball & R. Bellamy (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521563543
On economic thought, see The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1945–2015. (2019). In K. Becker & I. D. Thomson (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy*, 1945-2015 (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316779651.

Special Feature

Geoff Mulgan

Geoff Mulgan is Professor of Collective Intelligence, Public Policy and Social Innovation at University College London (UCL). His background is in telecommunications, and has taught courses on public administration, and science and engineering policy. He has written a number of books, including Good and Bad Power: the Ideals and Betrayals of Government *(Penguin, 2006),* The Art of Public Strategy *(2009),* Big Mind: how collective intelligence can change our world *(Princeton, 2017),* Social innovation: how societies find the power to change *(Policy Press, 2019), and, most recently,* Another World is Possible: how to reignite social and political imagination *(Hurst/Oxford University Press, 2022).*

JPPE: Great. So, we'll start off speaking about your new book, Another World Is Possible: How to Reignite Social and Political Imagination. *Could you explain what political imagination and radical political imagination are before speaking about what the book is about, your argument, and your process researching and writing it?*

Mulgan: So I became more and more concerned in the last few years that we might have a worsening problem of political imagination. And there were various signs of this, there was a kind of obvious one which the many activists, the many people who are politically enthusiastic can very easily see into the future, how things could go horribly wrong, could see ecological disaster, climate catastrophe, and so on. Which in many ways is a good thing, but very much harder to imagine or describe almost any kind of social progress, what would be a significantly better way of organizing welfare, or democracy, or health, or education. I observed that we have a huge capacity now for technological imagination. Vast sums of money spent on think tanks and conferences, looking at smart homes or smart cities or AI and so on, but almost nothing comparable in terms of serious work thinking about how our future society or economy could be run, rather than just the hardware. Politics—it's very striking. On the one hand, how many leaders now talk about going back to make America great again, or France or Britain or China or India. The last US election was a contest between two old men who haven't really said very much about where they would want the world to be in a generation or two from now. I have increasingly felt that this sort of failure of imagination was fueling in a very subtle way a sort of fatalism—a sense that actually the world won't get better. Just as in our own individual lives, if we can't see something good on the horizon, something which might be better for us a year, five years

down the line, it's quite hard to be happy and thriving. I think there's something equivalent for societies and the whole world. What I did in the book is partly researching the past of social and political imagination. And there'll be many ways in which people tried to look ahead; they did it through writing utopias, and there are hundreds, if not 1000s, of utopian writings from feminist utopias of the 15th century through to the great 19th century ones, like Bella, which was, I think, at the time the second best selling author ever in the US. There were attempts to create model communities, model towns, model organizations. There's the role of generative ideas. And one of the things I point out in the book is that often quite generic ideas like human rights or a circular economy may be a bit vague at first, but they then spawn lots of other ideas which become useful and change the world. And a large part of the book is about methods: what are the methods we could be using now to get better at thoughtful, rigorous imagination of the future a generation or two from now? How do you use methods, often from creativity and design, to expand your menu of options, you can then interrogate each of those, many of them might not be attractive, but at least to cultivate the habit towards the muscle of thinking creatively ahead. I look at the role of universities in that, I look at the role of political parties, which at times in history have played a big role in imagination, but have largely vacated it in much of the world. And also the role of places—how to create museums, galleries, physical places where people can come together to imagine into the future. And if nothing else, I hope the book will spark at least a bit of a debate on the question: Do we have a problem? Maybe some people will say we don't have a problem. Some people may say, well, actually, imagination is always bad, it leads to terrible results, and many of the blueprints in the last century, and many of the utopias did have horrible results. And one of the arguments I make is that now, we need to combine imagination with experiments. So you don't impose a fully formed blueprint on a city or a society; you try it out in a much more organic, experimental way. And others may say actually, technology is the answer to everything and we don't have social imagination because we don't need it. We can fix everything with a new anti-aging drug or some fantastic ecology, which will sequester carbon and so on. As I say, I think all of those will be wrong, but at least hopefully that will get a debate going.

JPPE: Do you look at a sort of comparative analysis of case studies from different countries? Or is the structure of the book more idea based?

Mulgan: It's ideas. Basically, there were lots of references to real examples, either from history or from the present. And one of the parts of the book which is a bit more like comparative political analysis is trying to compare the dominant political imaginaries of the next 20 or 30 years globally. What are they? And I

argue probably the most powerful ones or the strongest ones are nationalist techno authoritarian ones, particularly China, Xi Jinping thought, but in a different way the BJP's to visions of the future in India. Putin doesn't really have one in Russia. But he and Erdoğan are other examples. And I argue that this is a very powerful semi-imaginary which actually is rather vague about the future but tries to tie together, in some ways, quite traditional authoritarian nationalism with high technologies. It's very 19th century Prussian militarism. I look at different imaginaries of the Green Movement and some of the frictions and issues in deep and less deep ecological thought. I look at what might happen to liberalism, a revived neoliberalism, and different strands of conservatism. But essentially, that is an attempt at a comparative analysis of both current and future imaginaries.

JPPE: Do you think digital technologies detract from or contribute to radical political imaginations? What are the different ways that they could contribute or detract? And in what way should they be conceptualized and used to the benefit of imagination?

Mulgan: So I've got quite a background in digital technology—my PhD is in telecoms and I've probably been immersed in all these things. And my answer is essentially "both and." So sometimes thinking about things digitally can be very useful because as happened to retailing, or banking, or relationships, all sorts of things, if you look at it through a digital lens, you often deconstruct what's going on. And then you can remake it in a completely different way. So you end up with Amazon, not with, you know, high street shops or with match.com rather than people meeting in bars. And in that sense, actually, digital technology is quite useful for social imagination. And any imagination of where democracy might be in 50 years time has to have a substantial digital element. And those places like Taiwan and Iceland are reinventing democracy. The US still seems to be stuck in an 18th century model of democracy. We don't quite understand why, but that's another story. Digital is part of that, but if you only think in a digital way, as so much of the movement around smart cities, smart data, and smart homes did, you usually end up with results which are not very pleasant for humans to live in or which lose all sorts of dimensions of the present. And I think this was a big failure of the internet, where there was some incredibly naive techno optimism about how on its own the internet would spread democracy, equality, removal, corporations, etc. And often the exact opposite happened. And that tells us there was a major intellectual failure amongst the sort of Silicon Valley thinkers who simply didn't understand what they were part of. And that's why thinking simultaneously with a social lens and a technological lens is vital for the next 50 or 100 years.

JPPE: What's the difference between social and political imagination? How do they coincide and interact?

Mulgan: I think they overlap with each other. There isn't a straightforward boundary line. By politics we tend to mean the things which politicians end up talking about put into their programs, maybe pass laws about in Congress or Parliament or the Bundestag. And that is the world of politics, which often does include or has at times included powerful visions of where society might head. There are many examples of where that happens outside politics much more through social movements and daily life. And people are getting on with social innovation and were ignoring the political realm. And often things start off social and then become political, so many ecological ideas, like the idea of a circular economy and radical recycling or veganism, you know, these tended to begin very much with social movements, and much, much later, became politicized, became an issue for laws and elections and programs and carbon taxes and so on. So one of the things I try to look at in the book is this dynamic between the social and the political, and then back into the social. For example, when you pass new laws on equality they in turn then affect the norms within every organization, ultimately, maybe back to the household and the family too.

JPPE: You speak about the tapering off of visions of the future. There seems to be a desire for change within the social world but very few productive outlets to channel this desire. How do you foresee this changing over time and how would you wish it to change to spark future action?

Mulgan: I think one answer to that lies with institutions and what role they play, especially powerful institutions can either encourage this sort of work or discourage it. So take universities. I've been doing a parallel strand of work, looking at why it is that in universities, and particularly in social science, the sort of exploratory design work, thinking ahead work, has largely disappeared from most universities all over the world. It's disappeared partly for good reasons, as people have become more data driven and more empirical, and partly because a lot of the radicals moved into a safe space of critique, rather than proposal. That was one of the weird things which happened to Marxism in universities in the last 20 or 40 years. It moved out of real active politics into academic critique. And founders haven't rewarded it because they've tended to reward deepening work within disciplines, whereas exploratory creative work has spread across multiple disciplines. And in a paper I published last year in Germany, I tried to set out in more detail what a probe of exploratory social sciences would be; what it would look like for the universities to have significant interdisciplinary teams working on the design options of a zero

carbon economy or a radically transformed mental health system. And that's what I hope universities could do. At the moment they have almost no role in this and it's incredible in a way. There's so much brain power in universities, and they don't play an active role.

JPPE: What would it take for them to do that?

Mulgan: Leadership. Money. You have to have a debate, you have to believe there's a problem. People at universities acknowledge there is a problem needing to be solved. So one of my purposes is at least a debate about that. And then political parties. I mean, the political parties in much the world have rather atrophied, hollowed out, hardened. And often it's the new political parties who are more creative than the old ones, which dominate your country and my country and some others. But if you were inventing a political party now, it would probably have much more of its core purpose being to organize a dialogue with the public about options for the future, about ideas. Instead, they tend to be captured by interest groups. They just work on winning elections or their money goes into election fighting rather than thinking. They've lost the capability of having broad open dialogues as opposed to campaigning, and so on. And it's interesting. Some of the newer parties have experimented with much more interesting methods of social dialogue like the Five Star Movement in Italy, Podemos in Spain, and there are quite a few others. I wouldn't say they've got there. But a political party which aspires to run a country should be owning part of this conversation about the options for the future. I think cities can do it. Good mayors often do have the resources to bring the whole of a city into a discussion about its physical future. So for example, just now we've just finished a really interesting session with a group of cities. A project I coordinate looks at what can be done over the next five or 10 years for cities to really prioritize population level mental health. And that's something which, you know, much of the public thinks is kind of obvious, that they should be doing that. And yet, politics lags far behind and nearly all the money is still in physical health, and hospitals and things like that. And very few political parties would feel comfortable actually even talking about mental health as a priority. They're stuck in an anachronistic way of seeing the world.

JPPE: When did you first become invested in the power of political imagination and creative imagination? And how did you first identify the lack of the imagination that you see now?

Mulgan: I don't know, I suppose in different ways I'd probably be part of this. I've had a career which has partly been working in governments top-down, and I was part of some quite good exercises of political leaders trying to spark this. So

Tony Blair, who has both strengths and weaknesses, but did at various times try to encourage big public conversations about the future and future priorities. I worked for an Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, who did a huge exercise, getting the whole country thinking 15, 20 years ahead on climate change and pensions and water, and then bringing 1000 people into parliament to talk about the results. So I have seen how good leaders can do this from the top down. And from the bottom up, lots of grassroots organizations, social innovation projects, I've automatically tried to think radically about the future. But I guess since the financial crisis in particular, I think horizons have shrunk right in amongst leaders, but also amongst NGOs, social movement organizations, they'd be more in case of trying to survive. And that's happened alongside this growing sense of imminent ecological catastrophe. And these have all contributed to squeezing out the capacity to imagine radically.

JPPE: So does it require different methods of funding so they can move past survival mode?

Mulgan: I think there's certainly a big role for philanthropy. Your country has enormous amounts of spare money in philanthropy, but almost none of it goes into this. There are some good reasons for that, obviously, philanthropy tends to come from the beneficiaries of the old system, so they're never likely to be very radical in challenging it. I still think a little bit more effort on the part of the Fords and Rockefellers and Hewletts would have paid off because this isn't very expensive. But who else is going to create the space for people to think, to look ahead, to range a bit more widely? And I've spent most of my life on much more short term practical, pragmatic problem solving. But we all need some sense of the bigger picture, what that's leading towards, to help make sense of the actions in the present. And that's what's missing. And I would say in the US, politics, philanthropy, and higher education have all essentially failed their societal role in that respect.

JPPE: So as you said, it requires opening the debate so that people know that there's a problem. What are the steps after that?

Mulgan: Well then I think it's about organizing and funding and orchestrating the more detailed work, which needs to be done. And I do use the analogy with art or film or writing. Everyone can take part in it a little bit. We can all make our movies on Tiktok and so on. But actually, if you want really good films, it's actually quite hard, it's quite skilled, it's quite professional. It requires quite a lot of people. Or for a good Netflix TV series. And it's the same for social imagination. You can start off with sparks and some of it can be very open and participatory. But

if you are going to do a detailed thinking through how to regulate or organize a netzero economy that requires a highly specialized knowledge, interrogation, and argument, and so on. That's what universities should be doing. I work with a lot of governments around the world, you know, 10 to 15 at any one point. And if they're looking at a new policy area, you sort of assume there must be off the shelf, lots of lots of options, which they could consider. Let's say a new kind of universal basic income is one, which I've been a bit involved in, and is much talked about in much of the world. And there are quite a lot of pilots now of UBIs, but the quality of the work of it is still very thin. And if you are a government wanting to introduce one, actually, you will have to do most of the work designing it, thinking through its impact. There is not a menu of options you can draw down. And the same is true with almost any field. Let's say bringing the circular economy principles to fashion or whatever, the legwork and hard labor has not been done to prepare the options for others to draw on. And this is also true at a global level. The UN was set up in the 1940s, benefitting from lots of hard work, which had been done imagining what a UN could be in the dark years of the 30s. I've been doing work recently on what could be new global governance arrangements, if conditions became more favorable. There's nothing out there in terms of well thought through options. There's lots of good description, lots of good analysis, lots of good critique of all that's wrong with the UN. But it's as if the people who are the experts feel too nervous to ever put their names to a proposal, which someone else might shoot down. So we have this sort of bizarre deficit of looking ahead, whereas in other fields, like in sciences, or the life sciences or AI, lots of people are paid to think speculatively to design possible new genomic treatments or new algorithms. And the imbalance between a world of science and tech, which was too good looking ahead, and the world of the social and the political, which has given up on it, I think it's really become a serious problem.

From Sex to Science:
The Challenges and Complexities of Consent

Matthew Grady

Since the beginning of biomedical research on human subjects, the notion of consent has been widely debated and highly contentious. With philosophers and bioethicists focusing on the issue of what constitutes truly informed consent and the proper ethical guidelines for retrieving it, the existing notion of consent in biomedical research fails to fully consider the potentially coercive forces on participants. Consent has also been an issue of import amongst philosophers of sex and feminist scholars. Rallying behind the contemporary idea of a robust version of consent–one that fully encompasses the ways in which agents may be coerced into consenting to a sexual act–these philosophers have argued that societal norms, external pressures, and the nature of consent itself often render consent insufficient to guarantee the moral permissibility of sex. I will argue that these two seemingly distinct concepts of consent in sexual and biomedical spheres face many of the same ethical issues. Borrowing from recent discussions around coercive factors influencing consent in sexual interactions and my own experiences in biomedical research settings, I will draw parallels between these two notions of consent in order to illuminate a more accurate and robust philosophical framework for setting ethical guidelines around obtaining consent in biomedical research settings.[1]

I. Introduction

As biomedical research has increased exponentially with regard to both enhanced funding for the practice of human-subject experimentation and new research methodologies for promising medical interventions, there is an urgent need for robust ethical guidelines around utilizing human subjects in biomedical re-

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search contexts. This paper will focus on the use of human subjects in average biomedical research experiments, which typically recruit and pay individuals to undergo a certain medical procedure, take a specific drug, etc. before approval of the medical intervention for the general population. Across all of the varying perspectives regarding how to best recruit, treat, and compensate human subjects, consent has remained an absolute standard and necessity for conducting ethical biomedical research.[2] While philosophers and bioethicists have contentiously debated over the necessary conditions for obtaining consent, most have widely (if not completely) neglected factors that may wrongfully induce human subjects to consent to biomedical research.

Consent has also been a central topic of importance within the philosophy of sex and feminist philosophy, yet its development has remained quite distinct from the understanding of consent in the field of biomedical research and subject recruitment. Philosopher and bioethicist Alan Wertheimer has made a connection between the notion of consent in sexual interactions and biomedical research, but my parallels and conclusions will clearly be distinct from his and will primarily focus on developing thoughts inspired by the initial connection made by Quill Kukla in "A Nonideal Theory of Sexual Consent."[3][4] In sexual interactions, most philosophers agree that consent is a necessary, but insufficient, element for ensuring the permissibility of sex between partners. Consent is something to be given freely, and many forces may serve to coerce or influence an individual into granting their consent, thus potentially curtailing the normative goal of "ideal" consent.[5] Traditional discussions of consent are structured around fulfilling the normative goal of obtaining consent that is free from undue influence on one's agency, autonomy, ability to make rational decisions, etc. Consent, under this view, is either valid or not—anything constraining an agent's ability to consent automatically invalidates its moral force.

Quill Kukla has introduced a "nonideal theory of sexual consent," which classifies consent as degreed and emphasizes that genuine consent can still be achieved in the presence of potentially coercive factors.[6] Under this conception, agency and

2   Fida K. Dankar, et. al. "Informed Consent in Biomedical Research." *Computational and Structural Biotechnology Journal* vol. 17 463-474 (25 March, 2019): https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6458444/.

3   Alan Wertheimer. *Rethinking the Ethics of Clinical Research: Widening the Lens.* (Oxford University Press, 2010): https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199743513.001.0001/acprof-9780199743513.

4   Quill R. Kukla. "A Nonideal Theory of Sexual Consent." *The University of Chicago Press Journals.* (2021): https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/711209.

5   Adriel M. Trott and Ellie Anderson. "Women in Philosophy: The Limits of Consent in Sexual Ethics." (Blog of the APA, 2019): https://blog.apaonline.org/2019/04/24/women-in-philosophy-the-limits-of-consent-in-sexual-ethics/.

6   Quill R. Kukla. "A Nonideal Theory of Sexual Consent." *The University of Chicago Press Journals.* (2021): https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/711209.

autonomy are present in lesser and greater degrees within different sexual interactions, and agents are continually pressured by coercive forces. Thus, consent is not valid or invalid; instead, genuine consent (or robust consent as I will often refer to it) is built when coercive factors are controlled to such a degree that all sexual partners possess sufficient agency to make a fully rational decision to consent. This does not deny our ability to determine whether a sexual act is morally permissible and establish a standard for morally permissible ways to obtain consent. Rather, it allows us to adopt a nuanced view of consent as a nonideal concept, wherein agents can consent under our oft-constrained and coerced statuses. Philosophical inquiries into coercive factors impacting one's ability to obtain genuine, robust consent in sexual interactions have focused on external pressures, societal norms, and the implications of consent as the dominant framework itself. Yet, bioethicists have neglected this crucial area in their understanding of consent.

Much can be gained for our existing notion of consent in biomedical research settings by embracing the approach taken by philosophers of sex. Consent operates in many different facets of life—agreeing to consent forms, consenting to a sexual interaction, consenting to someone entering your home, and many other forms of implicit and explicit acts of consent.[7] However, the nature of consent within sexual interactions and biomedical research settings is distinct from other forms, making them especially morally-laden. Given violations of these kinds of consent are particularly harmful to one's bodily autonomy, sexual interactions and biomedical research settings are especially deserving of rigid consent guidelines. The genuine robustness of these two forms of consent is also dependent upon the satisfaction of external conditions not always under the control of the agent granting consent (ex. a non-coercive partner in sexual interactions or a biomedical institutional review board that grants approval for a biomedical experiment), opening up the potential for coercive factors to render a certain act morally impermissible. These two distinct forms of consent face many of the same ethical issues and should be engaged in a conversation with one another—a conversation that has been neglected thus far. I hope to build a more accurate, encompassing framework in the biomedical sphere by which we can set ethical guidelines for engaging human research subjects in a truly consensual manner based on the progress made by philosophers of sex, like Kukla and others.[8] [9]

To conduct this comparative analysis, I will begin by discussing the existing notion of consent within the biomedical research field and detailing the major

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7   Herman Cappelen and Josh Dever. *Bad Language*. (Oxford University Press, 2019): Chapter 11.

8   Nicola Gavey. "Technologies and Effects of Heterosexual Coercion." *Feminism & Psychology* 2 (1992): pp. 325-51.

9   Robin West. "Consent, Legitimation, and Dysphoria." *Georgetown Law Faculty Publications and Other Works*. (2020): https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/facpub/2290

issues of importance currently debated. I will then proceed to review the ways in which many philosophers of sex have taken a broader approach to defining consent—one that takes into account the coercive factors that may inhibit an agent's ability to grant consent with full autonomy and agency. I will then draw comparisons between these two distinct notions of consent to reveal several coercive factors in biomedical research settings that may render "informed" consent coerced. Finally, I will suggest how we may build a broader philosophical framework to scaffold the agency of human subjects when consenting to potentially dangerous biomedical research experiments.

II. The Existing Notion of Consent in Biomedical Research

After many instances of harmful treatments being given to vulnerable, often marginalized populations, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis study, bioethicists began to question what truly constitutes informed consent in biomedical research settings.[10] This question has included exploration into both the best ways to obtain consent, as well as the proper way to interpret the term, "informed."[11] The predominant conclusion on how to best define informed consent has overwhelmingly neglected consideration of coercive factors that impact the ability for human subjects to rationally consent to biomedical trials. As will become clear, there are an abundance of underexplored factors that may constrain one's ability to rationally consent to participate in a biomedical research trial. This paper aims to fill this lacuna in the current understanding of biomedical research consent.

There are many interesting debates around the understanding of biomedical consent that will become relevant to my argument later, the first being the therapeutic misconception. This phenomenon occurs quite often in biomedical research settings, where human subjects possess the incorrect belief that they are receiving life-changing or potentially beneficial treatments, despite being told about the potential of receiving a placebo treatment, or the chance that the experimental drug may be ineffective.[12] The implications of the therapeutic misconception for ensuring the genuine nature of a human subject's consent are vast. Consent hinges upon an agent's uncoerced ability to make an *informed* decision, and philosophers of biology have rightfully debated what constitutes truly meeting the informed standard of consent.[13] Can one really be said to have full decision-making agen-

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10   Allan M. Brand. "Racism and Research: The case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study." *The Hastings Center Report* 8(6). (1978): pp. 21-29.

11   Adil E. Shamoo and David B. Resnik. *Responsible Conduct of Research* Third edition. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

12   Philip J. Candilis and Charles W. Lidz,, "Advances in Informed Consent Research" in *The Ethics of Consent: Theory and Practice.* Franklin Miller and Alan Wertheimer (eds.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

13   Stephen A. Booth. "A Philosophical Analysis of Informed Consent." *National Center for Biotechnology* Information. (12 June, 2002): https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12212395/.

cy and possess the needed information to genuinely consent if they wrongly believe, as subjects with the therapeutic misconception do, that they are guaranteed life-saving treatment? This is not to say that consent is in some way unobtainable in biomedical research settings; however, we ought to properly understand the implications of the therapeutic misconception on a subject's ability to grant their consent in a knowing, informed fashion.

In addition to the therapeutic misconception, there is another important debate around whether informed consent requires comprehension in any way.[14] Some argue that full comprehension of what the study entails is the only way to ensure the participant is aware of all of the risks and does not possess the therapeutic misconception. Participants have also been shown to severely misunderstand the actual procedures, treatments, etc. they are consenting to, whether that be due to not reading the consent form or not fully understanding the researcher's explanation of what will occur during the study.[15] By not comprehending both the purpose of the study and the exact particulars involved in it, research subjects may fail to meet the "informed" requirement of informed consent.

Regardless of the exact answers to these concerns, it is clear that the current discourse surrounding biomedical consent has yet to satisfactorily explore the intricacies of the coercive factors impacting consent in medical experiments. Participants may be hindered in their ability to grant genuine, uncoerced consent when, as research shows is often the case, they do not understand the purpose or specifics of the research study to which they are consenting. In a way, participants in many biomedical studies consent to a version of the study that does not carry the significant risks of harm they take on when consenting—is this morally permissible? How can we ensure coercive factors, like the therapeutic misconception, do not wrongly influence a human subject to consent to a potentially dangerous experiment? These ethical issues debated within the philosophy of biology can be better answered with a revised, robust version of consent—one which thoroughly examines and addresses the coercive factors that unduly encourage someone to grant consent without being truly informed and open to participating.

III. Moving Beyond Mere Consent: Philosophy of Sex

While consent works to preserve the agency of a sexual partner, the vast majority of philosophers agree that consent is necessary for sex to be morally permis-

14   Gopal Sreenivasan. "Does informed consent to research require comprehension?" *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. (13 December, 2003): https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14683665/.
15   "Informed Consent (Stanford Encyclopedia)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011): https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/informed-consent/#UndInd.

sible, not *sufficient*.[16] [17] When consenting to a sexual act, a person is utilizing their agency and autonomy—their capacity to make free and independent decisions to meet their own ends—to make a rational choice, so consent both contributes to and draws from one's agency. We now recognize the ability of rational agents to utilize their agency to consent to sexual acts that may still be morally problematic, whether that consists of morally dubious sexual actions or acts obtained with a coerced notion of consent. Given the importance of sexual consent, we need an understanding of it that can account for any and all factors that may coerce a sexual partner into granting consent when they otherwise would not have.

Philosophers have addressed the issue of consensual sex that may be coerced in a variety of fashions. Some feminist scholars, like Catharine MacKinnon, have taken a radical approach, claiming that no consent is truly valid under heteronormative structures.[18] Their understandings of consent highlight the ways in which external societal conditions may render consent insufficient if they constrain one's options to the point where consent becomes obligatory, rather than freely given. Nicola Gavey provides a compelling account of how heteronormative, oppressive structures may render one's consent involuntary or obligatory in sexual situations because of societal conditions pressuring women.[19] Women sometimes feel obligated to consent to unwanted sexual advances because of the heteronormative forces that pressure them to enter a subservient, diminutive role within sexual interactions.

Other philosophers take a different approach to consent by illuminating varying ways in which traditional consent is not sufficient to guarantee a good moral standard for sex. Power dynamics, a misunderstanding of what will actually take place during sex, the offer of money, socialized behaviors, and societal pressures are all examples of coercive factors that may encourage one to say yes, even when one did not originally intend to.[20] A person may not be able to fully, rationally consent to a sexual act if pressured by these sorts of coercive factors.[21] Philosophers

16   Robin West. "The Harms of Consensual Sex." *The American Philosophical Association Newsletters* 94(2). (1995): pp. 52–55.
17   Seiriol Morgan. "Dark Desires." Ethical Theory and Moral Practice 6(4): 377–410. Reprinted in *PoS7.* (2003): pp. 349–370.
18   Catharine A. MacKinnon. "Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: 'Pleasure under Patriarchy.'" *Ethics* 99. (1989): pp. 314-46.
19   Nicola Gavey. "Technologies and Effects of Heterosexual Coercion." *Feminism & Psychology* 2 (1992): pp. 325-51.
20   Melanie A. Beres. "'Spontaneous' Sexual Consent: An Analysis of Sexual Consent Literature." *Feminism & Psychology* 17. (2007): pp. 93-108. Emily C. R Tilton and Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa. "Not What I Agreed To: Content and Consent." *Ethics* 132(1). (2021): pp. 127–154. Raja Halwani. "Sex and Sexuality." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Spring 2020 Edition. Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
21   Adriel M. Trott and Ellie Anderson. "Women in Philosophy: The Limits of Consent in Sexual Ethics." (Blog of the APA, 2019): https://blog.apaonline.org/2019/04/24/women-in-philosophy-the-limits-of-consent-in-sexual-ethics/.

operating with this lens focus less on making a valid versus invalid distinction of consent and instead emphasize the way consent can be constrained or limited by oppressive structures and other coercive forces. The moral permissibility of a sexual act depends on the agency and autonomy possessed by all of the sexual partners consenting, which may be constrained by coercive factors. By emphasizing the coercive factors outside of direct threats from a partner that may constrain one's genuine consent, feminist philosophers have been able to build a more robust understanding of consent—one that accounts for the coercive factors that may wrongfully influence one to consent to a sexual act.

To summarize all of this into a more digestible framework, I find Quill Kukla's non-ideal theory of consent to be particularly illuminating. Essentially, under Kukla's perspective, consent is a "nonideal concept," where virtually no sex will turn out to be consensual if consent requires the full autonomy of its participants.[22] Their framework allows for the permissibility of sex and obtaining consent even when coercive forces are present; all agents are constrained in different ways, by different power relations, as a result of different identities, and that does not fully invalidate our ability to consent. Instead, to ensure one's consent is genuine in the presence of common coercive factors, Kukla argues we must "scaffold" consent by "[being] sensitive to the limits of and possibilities for agency and consent in a given context and [adjusting] accordingly," to ensure a partner possesses agency and autonomy.[23] Scaffolding can be accomplished socially or interpersonally, where practices, environments, and relationships can help to enable a sexual partner's agency. Kukla uses the example of a retirement facility embracing guidelines, policies, and management that allow its patients to have sex in such a way that does not threaten their ability to participate safely or diminish their own agency in pursuing sexual relationships. On the interpersonal level, agents can also aid in scaffolding their sexual partner's (or partners') agency and autonomy by ensuring their partner feels the, "ability to exit a situation, trust, [and] safety," among other crucial practices that build and protect one's ability to genuinely consent. Policies here scaffold consent by examining potential coercive factors and building social practices which are inclusive and protective of sexual agency.

Again, philosophers of sex, like Kukla, have explicated external factors, such as power dynamics, money, the traditional, overriding depiction of a woman "giving" consent to a man's request, and heteronormative structures, that may coerce someone to consent to a sexual act. In identifying these, philosophers can strategically recommend scaffolding structures to ensure the moral permissibility of sexual

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22   Ibid; Kukla.
23   Ibid.

interactions and to enhance the agency and autonomy of sexual partners. I argue that the bioethicist ought to take on a similar project of identifying coercive factors and scaffolding their designs to preserve agency, autonomy, and genuine consent in biomedical research experiments. This challenge has been neglected thus far, and the current understanding of informed consent fails to fully account for coercive factors; thus, the biomedical research community is in need of a scaffolding strategy to preserve genuine, robust consent. The following section attempts to embrace the approach taken by Kukla and others in developing a more robust theory of consent within biomedical research settings.

IV. Can Biomedical Research Achieve Genuine, Robust Consent?

To curb coercive factors from playing a role in one's decision to have sex, Kukla proposes a more robust, nonideal theory of consent, which works to scaffold protections for an individual's autonomy in the process of granting consent. Kukla's framework understands that agents are constantly influenced by external, coercive factors. I argue that we should embrace this approach in the biomedical research field, which requires a thorough understanding of the implicit and explicit factors that encourage participants to grant consent to medical experiments and treatments. I will now begin to detail four primary coercive factors that have been underexplored by philosophers of biology, highlighting the direct parallels that can be found with the coercive factors that impact sexual consent. In drawing these parallels and embracing a more robust understanding of consent, this paper will aim to demonstrate the need for greater encompassing ethical guidelines around biomedical research experiments.

A. Compensation: Fair or Coercive?

The standard practice for most biomedical research trials is to compensate their human subjects for their participation and time spent completing the study (and any additional costs incurred, medical expenses, inter alia). To recruit enough human subjects for a statistically valid biomedical study, researchers must offer compensation as an inducement to participate. Many ethical questions have been explored by philosophers and bioethicists, including how much to pay human subjects, whether payment for certain kinds of research is morally acceptable, and if payment can truly compensate for the serious risks involved in participating in experimental research.[24] However, most have neglected to explore the role money plays as a coercive factor to participate in potentially dangerous research and its

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24   Neal Dickert and Christine Grady. "What's the Price of a Research Subject? Approaches to Payment for Research Participation." *New England Journal of Medicine* 341(3). (15 July, 1999): pp. 198-203. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10403861/.

impact from a scaffolding perspective.

Participating in biomedical research can be a valuable way to earn both active and passive income, yet money is known to influence the rational decision-making of moral agents.[25] Might someone "consent" to engaging in a biomedical research study that crosses their ethical and/or physical level of comfort in desperation for money? Philosophers of sex have rightly acknowledged that money can serve as an influential and potentially coercive force for consenting to certain actions because an agent may, in an attempt to earn crucial income for themselves, consent to sex in which they would not normally be comfortable engaging.

A very similar ethical dilemma arises in the case of biomedical research. Consider this fictional example: an extremely poor woman who struggles to pay for her basic necessities agrees to take a highly experimental drug that could have damaging, long-term side effects. She would not normally endanger her own health in this way, but she is so desperate for passive income that this compensation is too important to pass up. Under the existing notion of informed consent in biomedical research, this kind of participation would still be considered fully consensual when, clearly, money played a coercive role in her decision. This is not to say that all sexual interactions and all biomedical research settings involving the exchange of cash are coercive (e.g. sex work depends on the presence of money, but is not necessarily coerced), but we ought to pay crucial attention to these areas because of the morally problematic force money can have on obtaining consent. Money has the potential of encouraging and even forcing one into doing things they would not normally be comfortable with, so compensation is especially deserving of ethical guidelines. See Largent, et. al. for a further discussion of the concerns here.[26]

Imagine a case where someone decides to consent to a risky biomedical research trial with full comprehension of the risks and particulars involved with the medical study. They choose to accept all of the accompanying risks with participation because the potential compensation is worth their involvement according to a rational assessment by the agent in question. I concede here that this person may not be making a coerced decision to consent—this person, depending on the background circumstances and personal costs, may be choosing to utilize their agency to make a rational decision to pursue compensation. But, it is equally important for research designers to ask, 'If this subject were in a greater position of agency and authority, would they still be comfortable with making the same decision?' This question concerning the potential for coercive influence is neglected

25   Hannah Carnegy-Arbuthnott. "On a Promise or on the Game: What's Wrong with Selling Consent?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 37(3). (2020): pp. 408-427. https://philpapers.org/rec/CAROAP-4.
26   Emily Largent, et. al.. "Money, Coercion, and Undue Inducement: Attitudes About Payments to Research Participants." *IRB*, 34(1). (2012): pp. 1–8. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4214066/.

and unaddressed in the vast majority of biomedical research settings. Not all cases will reveal coercive factors influencing a subject's decision, but bioethicists have neglected to fully accept the incredibly powerful and sometimes coercive influence compensation can have on a person's ability to rationally consent.

Furthermore, many research studies design their compensation schedule in a way to coerce participants into completing the entirety of a biomedical experiment by offering a significant "bonus" at the end of the study. Given that consent hinges on the ability for an agent to say "no" at any time to any part of an experiment, compensation can wrongfully be utilized as a tool of coercion, in that a research subject may feel unduly compelled to complete a study in hopes of receiving the bulk of their compensation at the end of the research. Compensation, in this role, can coerce consent and thus render the consent given as less robust, less agential, and likely to be less morally permissible than a more scaffolded version of biomedical consent.

B. Underexplored Power Dynamics

Furthermore, there exist underexplored power dynamics that may induce individuals to consent to biomedical research that they might not otherwise. It is not uncommon for physicians to offer (or even suggest) participating in an experimental research trial to their ailing patients. The physician here possesses a status of authority and level of power that may wrongfully induce their patient to agree to participate, despite the overwhelming risks, in benefits to their own research or that of their colleagues. This is not to say that all actions by a doctor wrongfully operate on a power dynamic, but recommending someone to consent to a trial with *clear and substantial potential for harm* rightfully deserves a more critical lens for moral judgments. Another example worth noting is when professors recruit their students to participate in their own biomedical research.[27] Might a student consent to participate merely because their professor, who is in a position of power, asked them to do so?

I argue that both of these cases illuminate a power dynamic that may render the given consent here as below the standard for moral permissibility and fully robust consent. Just as a boss requesting to have sex with their employee possesses an imbalanced power dynamic, so do certain recommendations of research studies by people of authority. By understanding the coercive influence of underexplored power dynamics in biomedical research recruitment, we can begin to build a more robust theory of consent that accounts for this coercive factor.

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27   Gyan Moorthy. "Recruiting Psychology Students to Participate in Faculty/Department Research: Ethical Considerations and Best Practices." *Voices in Bioethics* 6. (29 November, 2020): https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/bioethics/article/view/7289.

C. The Misunderstanding of Particulars By Research Participants

As previously discussed, it has been well documented that human subjects often misunderstand the particular actions and risks involved with their participation in biomedical research trials.[28] While comprehension is difficult to fully impart on human subjects, might some of these knowledge gaps wrongfully encourage one to consent to a research study? As mentioned earlier, if one is under the guise of the therapeutic misconception, they may be more willing to consent to potentially dangerous research in the hope of receiving free treatment; however, there is no guarantee they will receive any sort of efficacious medical intervention. Research participants are also often unaware of the particular procedures, treatments, etc. they will have to undergo, meaning they cannot grant fully informed consent to them. A similar ethical dilemma arises in the case of sexual consent: one may consent to a sexual interaction without knowing the full breadth of what will occur. Biomedical researchers ought to work (or alternatively, "scaffold") toward ensuring their research participants have full knowledge and comprehension of any factor of the research that might change their decision to consent. Only a more robust consent framework within biomedical research settings can properly protect the autonomy of human subjects to provide truly informed consent.

D. Lack of Knowledge Regarding Research Intentions

The final factor that I argue merits greater consideration in our ethical guidelines around biomedical consent concerns the ability of the patient to understand the intentions of the research. Due to the nature of biomedical research, human subjects are often not informed of every detail of the study in order to maintain scientific objectivity and integrity. So, a human subject may be told what the study consists of, while not fully understanding the intentions of the research. What if a human subject consents to participating in a Phase I biomedical trial without knowing that the intention of the research is to produce a drug that only the extremely wealthy will be able to afford (an unfortunately common occurrence in the US)? Or, what if the aim of the research is to reach a conclusion that goes against one's own morals, like that racial differences are essential rather than constructed? Just as one possesses a right to know the intentions behind their partner asking for consent to have sex, human subjects have a right here as well because the information presented may actively encourage one to not offer consent in the first place.

Our existing definition of consent for human subjects in biomedical research experiments does not properly account for preserving, or scaffolding, the full ra-

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28   "Informed Consent (Stanford Encyclopedia)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (2011): https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/informed-consent/#UndInd.

tional decision-making of human subjects. While understanding the need for a certain level of confidentiality, the intentions behind the research itself may serve as a deterrent for someone to grant consent. So, in order to have genuine, robust consent, we must be able to set ethical guidelines that actively inform the participant of any detail that may render their consent below the bar for moral permissibility if unknown.

V. An Argument for a More Robust Consent in Biomedical Experiments

I present these four coercive factors not in an attempt to develop a fully-fledged account of proper consent in biomedical research, but rather to demonstrate that our existing notion does not go far enough to protect the autonomy of human subjects. All four of these concerns do not apply equally in every context, but they do merit a greater, more nuanced understanding of consent and how to ethically scaffold against coercive factors. Philosophers of sex, like Kukla, have begun to popularize the idea of a robust, nonideal theory of consent as a way to scaffold ethical precautions to engaging in sexual acts with a partner. The field of biomedical research ought to embrace a similar strategy and approach, and these four factors can begin to identify the key elements influencing the autonomy and agency of sexual partners.

To scaffold a human subject's ability to grant their uncoerced consent, we need to maximize their knowledge of anything essential to their rational decision-making. This would involve instituting clear and expansive policies to combat the therapeutic misconception and ensure participants understand the potential harms they may undergo. Researchers should also develop pay schedules and formats that work to ensure that the benefit incurred from compensation does not wrongly coerce one into participating or lacking the ability to revoke their participation at any time. Crucially, though, we ought to concurrently reform the issues of capitalism and systemic wealth inequality that force many people in the US to sell their own bodies for lifesaving income. Finally, we should adopt stricter guidelines for participating in biomedical research experiments to both restrict coercive power dynamics and pursue further scaffolding of subjects' agency and autonomy. It is important to note, though, that this paper is primarily concerned with the philosophical issues that might constrain one's genuine consent, and I invite bioethicists to create a more concrete and thorough list of ethical guidelines to scaffold agency in experiments.

By conducting a rigorous philosophical analysis of coercive factors that influence human subjects, philosophers of biology will be better equipped to develop their own version of robust consent that can account for coercive factors. This new, reinspired lens from a philosopher of sex into scaffolding consent should help

to control the damaging effects of coercive factors and grant the human subject greater autonomy in making rational decisions regarding whether and when to participate in biomedical research. Research study designers can utilize the recognition of these coercive forces, scaffold ethical practices to combat their influence on diminishing an agent's authority and embrace a more robust understanding of consent in biomedical research experiments.

VII. Conclusion

My aim in this paper has been to draw parallels between the currently distinct notions of consent within sexual interactions and biomedical research to illuminate the similar ethical issues facing both. Many feminist scholars and philosophers of sex have taken an approach of examining the societal conditions, other external pressures, and nature of consent itself to illuminate the ways consent may be unduly coerced in rational agents. In doing so, they have been able to develop a more robust framework around a nonideal theory of consent that socially and interpersonally scaffolds (but not completely) a person's agency in order to minimize coercive factors in one's decision to consent to sex. By detailing parallel coercive factors present in the biomedical research field, I hope further philosophical inquiries will be able to develop a similar robust consent framework for biomedical research involving human subjects.

On a more practically conclusive note, biomedical research experiments are luring; research designers purposefully advertise their studies to sound like easy, safe ways to make money, despite their risks. As shown by decades of research studies with devastating effects on communities of color, biomedical research experiments target specific populations…populations that are often BIPOC, low-income, young, and most vulnerable to being coerced into consenting in a biomedical research setting (see NIH for more on the crucially important element of structural medical racism).[29] I've seen firsthand the consequences of a biomedical research industry that has consistently used advertising to tempt many young people, like myself, to participate in potentially harmful studies—experiments where we may not be in a fully agential capacity due to coercive factors. Money, power relations, a lack of understanding regarding the experiment, and other coercive factors constantly influence the ability for people, especially those of marginalized or fiscally disadvantaged backgrounds, to make a fully rational choice in consenting to biomedical research. This should not detract from the important results found in biomedical research and the necessity for it; instead, I am hoping to emphasize the stakes of and potential harms from coerced consent. We need to scaffold the

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29   Darcell P. Scharff, et. al. "More than Tuskegee: understanding mistrust about research participation." *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* vol. 21,3 (2010): 879-97. doi:10.1353/hpu.0.0323

ability for everyone of every identity to make a fully rational, uncoerced decision on whether and when to consent to a biomedical research experiment.

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Shoring Against Our Ruin:
An Investigation of Profound Boredom in Our Return to Normal Life

Virginia Moscetti

Returning to campus after what felt like a lifetime of virtual schooling, quarantining, and all the other cheerful aspects of living and studying during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was thrilled to finally return to a normal college experience. And yet, it has been anything but normal. Besides the fact that the pandemic continues to drag on indefinitely, bringing with it certain indispensable COVID prevention strategies, like mask-wearing and bi-weekly testing, there is something more obstructing my return to the normal, pre-pandemic college experience I had so eagerly anticipated. My old routines now feel empty, and my previous passions and interests have fallen flat. I trudge about daily life listlessly, keeping up with my academic and extracurricular commitments simply because I don't want to royally screw up the rest of my life. In short, I am bored, and I'm not the only person to feel this way.

According to a recent article by Times Magazine[1], approximately 12 million Ame icans quit their jobs last summer. For Americans between the ages of 20-34, 14 million have either resigned or neglected to join the traditional workforce. While some resigned in pursuit of higher wages and better working conditions, a significant portion of Americans sought non-traditional jobs or simply reveled in "funemployment". This phenomenon, informally termed "The Great Resignation,"[2] is deeply connected to the pandemic and our recent quasi-return to normal. During the initial stages of the pandemic, everything came to a standstill. Going to work, walking to class, living in a dorm, and frequenting friends and family was no longer possible. Daily routines, as a result, altered substantially. We became accustomed to working, studying, and interacting through screens from the relative comfort of our homes. We developed hobbies to pass the time. Our relationships changed, for the better and also for the worse. Ultimately, everyone desperately looked toward a final return to normal, but with the semi-normal re-

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1   Bruner, Raisa. "Why Young People Are Quitting Jobs-and Not Going Back." Time, Time, 29 Oct. 2021
2   Fontinelle, Amy. "The Great Resignation."

turn that came, we were strikingly confronted with how much had changed within the world and within ourselves. With so much change, a return to pre-pandemic existence seems impossible. What one did then is not the same as what one does now, and, by extension, our possibilities for individual meaning-making in the world are not the same as our previous ones.

Unable to authentically recreate past forms of meaningful *doing* and *acting* in the world as they used to exist, the attempt to do so in our quasi-post-COVID life becomes pervaded with a sense of meaninglessness. Going to work a specific job because that is what one used to do is no longer a sufficient justification for working it now, especially since, with so many people quitting their jobs or taking untraditional work trajectories, the structure of a working life has substantially, perhaps even normatively, changed. Unless that work continues to generate meaningful fulfillment, reenacting old ways of performing one's daily life can produce a diffuse sense of indifference or boredom.

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 20th century philosopher Martin Heidegger describes the boredom resulting from a confrontation with a sense of meaninglessness in our actions and routines as the phenomenon of "profound boredom." Heidegger argues that in profound boredom, we are exposed to the structures of our existence and, through that exposure, can newly discover meaningful ways to project ourselves into the world.

In this paper, I will investigate the extent to which Heidegger's profound boredom is reflective of the form of boredom playing out in contemporary society and how his solution might offer a productive remedy. In order to do this, I will reference T.S Eliot's "The Waste Land," a poem which copes with widespread disillusionment in modern society following the devastation of World War I and the increased technological advancement in the Second Industrial Revolution. Examining both Eliot's and Heidegger's representations of boredom, I will demonstrate (1) how boredom can take on existential proportions, (2) how globally disruptive experiences can instantiate this boredom, and (3) how this boredom may be resolved by acknowledging our own facticity and our own freedom to choose how we want to act within our world by meaningfully repeating past possibilities of doing and acting.

I. Comportment, Dasein, and The One

According to Heidegger, all individuals have a particular style or way of interacting with the features of the world. This style, which Heidegger terms comportment, is structured by an individual's goals and projects. In short, what they find meaningful. For instance, entertaining the ultimate goal of becoming a philosopher, I am oriented and disposed towards the world accordingly: I choose to undertake an undergraduate major in philosophy, I dedicate myself to my philosophy

courses, and I choose to attend graduate school all for the sake of this goal. As I do so, I develop a particular manner of comporting myself toward (i.e., a particular way of acting in) the world.

This comportment, while it pertains uniquely to each individual, is superimposed upon the individual's "Dasein". According to Heidegger, human beings are a particular type of entity which he terms "Dasein" – it can be loosely translated from German to mean "being-there". Dasein interacts with the features of the world to advance its own particular goals and projects which illuminate a certain "style" or way in which Dasein approaches the world. As Heidegger describes, Dasein performs its actions and activities (i.e., its being) according to this particular style or comportment. Reciprocally, Dasein's actions and activities reflect the comportment through which it approaches them. For example, if I entertain the ultimate goal of becoming a philosopher, I comport myself and am disposed toward the world accordingly: I choose to major in philosophy, I dedicate myself to my philosophy courses, and I choose to attend graduate school all for the sake of this goal. In pursuing certain projects and goals, I develop a particular manner of comporting myself toward (i.e., a particular way of acting in) the world. Additionally, the way that I act and do things (my comportment) both reflects and constitutes my understanding of myself. As I perform the actions that reflect the goal of becoming a philosopher, they also inform and constitute how I understand myself to "be" or act within the world as this particular individual which finds such and such projects meaningful. Thus, by attending my philosophy classes, I reinforce my understanding of myself as someone who loves philosophy and aims to become a philosopher. Of course, I can do things that would seemingly be "out of character" or at odds with my regular comportment, but in designating such an instance as "out of character," I directly make reference to a contradiction between how I understand myself to act and a particular action or instance. Thus, to use Heideggerian terminology, as Dasein performs its being according to a particular comportment, it relates that comportment to the understanding of itself as itself, so that the mode in which it enacts its being is synchronized with how it understands itself to be.

While, being in the world according to a particular comportment, I do, act, and choose things that reflect a particular understanding of myself, what I do, how I act, and what I choose is invariably subject to what is available to me within my world. Just as I could not build a house without the tools to do so, I could not pursue a career in philosophy if philosophy were not an established (or at least an existent) field of study. Accordingly, Dasein's involvement in the world is structured by the features and beings present and accessible to it within that world.

Dasein's being in the world is also a 'being-with' others.[3] Being-with becomes especially apparent in the manners in which Dasein interacts with objects and other features of the world through historical and culturally contingent social norms. For Heidegger, these conventions are exemplified through "what one does." For example, one shakes hands when meeting a new person, one places one's napkin on one's lap at the table prior to beginning a meal, one drinks with a glass and eats with forks, knives, and spoons. While "one" does not designate any one particular individual, it designates an abstract collection of us (in which we are all included) that Heidegger terms the "They". Insofar as I do as "one" does, I participate in the "They", so that my actions reflect the larger social conventions of my community rather than what is meaningful and particular to me. By adopting these social conventions and rooting the "meaningfulness" of my actions within a contingent social order, I simultaneously flee the responsibility and accountability for my actions (as things which "I" rather than "They" elect to pursue) and relinquish my inherent freedom to pursue actions that are meaningful to me. Still, doing and knowing what one does fundamentally configures my "everyday" being-in-the-world (i.e., the way I act and relate to the world). As Mark Wrathall writes in *How To Read Heidegger*, "in the first instance and most of the time, we relate to others in the mode of 'the one,' which means that we understand ourselves in terms of what one says about the way one should live, that is, in terms of what one ordinarily does in situations that confront us".[4] Therefore, Dasein's everyday existence (i.e., the typical or common way in which it is, both in terms of what activities it enacts and how) is, to some extent, immediately structured by what one does. For example, I go to the grocery store or the farmers market because that is what one does to purchase food in my community. At the grocery store, I acquire ham and other meats at the deli because that is what one does. My decision to go to the grocery store and my entire experience within that grocery store is organized by what one does. And this same structure applies to most of Dasein's other everyday activities. Because Dasein's "everydayness" is, to some extent, fundamentally structured by what one does, Dasein is never entirely inextricable from the "They." Still, it is important to reiterate that "what one does" is not intrinsically meaningful in and of itself but a way of acting that reflects our socio-historically contingent norms and conventions.

During our pre-pandemic existence, departing to work or school, completing errands outside of the home, and visiting and engaging with others in physically close proximity was simply what one did and, as such, characterized our

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3   "Being-with is an existential constituent of being-in-the-world . . . So far as Dasein is at all, it has being-with-one-another as its kind of being" (Being and Time, pg. 163)

4   Wrathall, *How to Read Heidegger*, pg. 52.

"everyday" existence. In enacting these doings and activities of "what one did," we became oriented toward and learned to relate to the world in terms of the pre-pandemic "one." Consequently, the pre-pandemic understanding of what one did formed part of our self-understanding, or understanding of our everyday they-selves which, in turn, undergirded those particular selves we claimed to be or exist as. For example, a college student understands his everyday they-"self" as a college student (at least partially) in terms of what one does in college. In the pre-pandemic world, this meant attending classes within a classroom, studying in a library alone or amongst friends, securing internships, discovering a potential career path, perhaps occasionally partying. As he performs these things, he relates them back to his self-understanding as a "college student."

During the seemingly interminable months of quarantine, daily life underwent a fundamental transformation. Everyone, to some extent, conducted their social, academic, and work lives on various virtual platforms. Thus, what one did and how one worked altered drastically during quarantine. For our anonymous college student, virtual schooling and socializing became integrated into his everyday existence, and thus formed part of his everyday "self," or how he acted and understood himself to be as a college student. Now, emerging out of quarantine with our quarantine beards and unshaven legs, we are tasked with what feels like the Herculean feat of "returning-to-normal" pre-pandemic life and what one did in that life. And yet, because we established a new normal and thus a new definition of what one does during quarantine, that "return" implies reproducing a performance or rehearsal of oneness that is, after such significant change since the onset of the pandemic, no longer applicable or even existent. As a result, the prevailing expectation of a return to normalcy confronts us with a conflict of "oneness" in which what one did and how one understood oneself to be as a college student, as a software engineer, doctor, or librarian is no longer what one does or how one understands oneself to be as such in our current world. In other words, the pre-pandemic "one" no longer determines our performance of "oneness." However, here we are confronted with another problem: what does one do now? And by extension, how does one even understand oneself to be in the world? Is our college student still a college student within the pre-pandemic social definition and understanding of the term after spending close to a year in a virtual social and academic environment? Does he even understand himself to be the same college student that he once was before the pandemic? If not, is he left without anything to refer to in order to devise meaning and intelligibility from the strange, anomalous current life-experiences he must undergo? And, what if his goals and projects changed during quarantine? Must he now rehearse, along with all of us, what one did in the pre-pandemic life with those same goals and projects despite their inability to cohere with his current way of relating to the world? What are the implications

of this rehearsal of pre-pandemic one-ness for Dasein who, after so much time understanding itself, relating to the world, and, as it were, devising meaning of its existence through the social conventions and modes of being associated with quarantine, must now adopt a performance of one-ness that is no longer meaningful to it; that no longer reflects how it understands itself to "be?"

Published in 1922, six years after World War I and approximately fifty years after the onset of the Second Industrial Revolution, T.S Eliot's modernist poem "The Waste Land" appears to cope directly with the implications of meaninglessly rehearsing "what one did." In Part II of the poem, *A Game of Chess*, a man and woman are having a disjointed conversation. The woman anxiously exclaims "What shall we do? What shall we ever do?" to which the man responds cryptically: "The hot water at ten. And if it rains, a closed car at four. And we shall play a game of chess, Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door."[5] In asking what they will do, the woman expresses an existential concern for meaningful, fulfilling "doing" or action. The man, however, suggests that no such doing is possible and that they are instead condemned to a life of listlessly repeating old routines until death or some other existential "knock upon the door" delivers them from it. The poem famously purports to diagnose the catastrophic ills and pains of modern society in the post-war period. With the unprecedented violence of World War I and the increased mechanization of modern society following the Second Industrial Revolution, the profound and diffuse listlessness that Eliot describes appears to be symptomatic of the failure of traditional values and certainties such as religion, family life, and canonical forms of art and literature to infuse human life with meaning in this new context. As the poem describes, religion, challenged by the immense loss of human life and the increase of sexual promiscuity in the war, could not save, family and domestic life could offer no sanctuary, and traditional art forms could no longer accurately depict or reflect human life. While their failure to create meaning implies a kind of fracturing between a pre-war and post-war society in which the modern individual now found itself situated, this failure also discloses the fundamental contingency of socio-cultural norms, values, and traditions. If these values and certainties were inherently meaningful in and of themselves, they would continue to be meaningful irrespective of the contexts and conditions in which they were applied. However, because these values and certainties somehow seemed to lose their meaning for those subjects in the poem and the larger modern society confronted with a sense of meaninglessness and boredom in daily life, they were forced to recognize that their presumed meaningfulness was a self-contrived illusion, or, perhaps, ask themselves "what is wrong with me that these things have lost their meaning?". Since these traditional values and certain-

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5   Eliot, *The Waste Land.*

ties structured how one (to an extent) related to the world, and by extension, what one did, their failure to create meaning likely produced a sense of boredom in those daily routines which revolved around "oneness" (which might have included, going to church, honoring traditional marriage, relationship, family, or other such dynamics in the domestic sphere, reading Shakespeare, etc.) and configured the "everyday" self.

Because what became boring and meaningless was what one did, life was not boring to Dasein as this or that particular individual, but to Dasein as "one-self," or the everyday self that acts, understands itself, and relates itself to the world in terms of the "One" and what one does. While the "one-self" may not be the particular, subjective self, because it informs, at least in part, how that particular self acts, the boredom encountered through the meaninglessness of Dasein's everydayness problematizes how Dasein projects both its particular "self" and its they-"self" (as two, essential prongs of one and the same self) into the world. This is distinct from other forms of boredom (such as boredom with a specific object, social setting, event, etc.) in that it overwhelms Dasein's every action in the world. As such, it can be understood within Heidegger's notion of "attunement." Attunement describes a state of mind that disposes us toward the world in a particular way. In order to explain this notion, consider the following hypothetical situation: while sitting in my room, I suddenly hear sirens blaring, people shouting and running, and see smoke leaking out from under my door. I become wholly overwhelmed with fear and alertness, leading me to scour the room for the closest exit or something with which to extinguish the imminent flames. My fear has completely altered the landscape of my environment so that certain objects become alternatively relevant and irrelevant to me depending on how they could be used. The pencil, for example, becomes irrelevant to me while a blanket by my bedside and an open window are relevant insofar as they might serve me in extinguishing the fire or escaping the room. As a result, my fear, as well as any other type of attunement, discloses that I must accept the circumstances of my world as they are revealed to me and what actions may be possible within those circumstances. While I submit myself to these circumstances, they also disclose opportunities for action or ways of utilizing certain objects that "matter" to me, or are significant to me to the extent that they help me extinguish the fire or escape the room. As a result, attunement[6] constitutes how I am disposed toward the world and reveals my disclosive submission to that world.

Like fear, profound boredom is a type of attunement in that it reveals our

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6   "Dasein's openness to the world is constituted existentially by the attunement of a state-of-mind . . . Existentially, a state-of-mind implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us." (*Being and Time* pg. 175-7)

"disclosive submission [to the world], out of which we can encounter something that matters to us."[7] According to Heidegger, the confrontation with meaning-lessness in Dasein's everyday self can instantiate profound boredom (in which it is "boring for one"). In and through this confrontation Dasein is left "pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door"[8] and is attuned to the world through profound boredom.

Let us explore what this means through Jonathan Caballero, a 27 year old software developer who decided to join millions of Americans in quitting their traditional, pre-pandemic jobs.[9] As a software developer, we can assume that in his pre-pandemic office space, Caballero may have perceived chairs, computers, conference rooms, telephones, among other things. He also had access to the different meanings implicit in these objects and the setting as a whole; the chairs, in the context of the office, may be for clients or co-workers to sit in, the computers to conduct programming with, respond to emails, type, etc, the telephone to communicate with, the conference rooms to host important office or client meetings, etc. In addition, we can assume, insofar as Caballero worked in this office in the pre-pandemic era, he comported himself in a particular way toward this office; a comportment that was structured by and made manifest a certain self which he (1) understood himself to be and, thus, (2) projected into the world. Thus, he was *invested* in the office space and its equipmental totality (i.e., the telephone, the computer, the conference room) as this particular self and for the sake of the projects, interests, and passions that are, to some extent, prescribed by the "one" but also reflect his own particularity as an individual. Each object, then, is meaningful to him through what they make possible toward advancing his multiple projects as his understood self which he understands himself to be. The telephone may be meaningful as a vehicle through which Caballero secures clients who may then elect to employ his services and, in doing so, secure the promise of a paycheck, and thus, fulfill his project of acquiring financial stability, the computer may be meaningful as the site of his work-activity in which he practices and improves his craft toward fulfilling his additional project of being an exceptional software programmer, and so forth. Additionally, the way in which Caballero came into contact with these objects, and by extension, the meaningful possibilities they imply, was in a nine-to-five, traditional working time-frame and environment. In other words, Caballero's work, for which he was paid, did not simply consist of interacting with a certain kind of equipmental totality toward doing the work (in this case, software programming), but, because that work existed in a larger socio-cultural

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7   Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pg. 175-7.
8   T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*.
9   Hsu, Andrea. "As the Pandemic Recedes, Millions of Workers Are Saying 'I Quit'." *NPR*, NPR, 24 June 2021.

working structure, consisted of physically going to an office and being in that office space for a set period of time. Why? Because that is what one did as a member of certain sectors of the American labor force. One went to work, one spent time at a specified working location, and one returned home after the work day. Therefore, while his multiple projects (such as securing financial stability and being an exceptional software programmer) were made possible by the fact that those objects in his setting were used, and thus, could be used by one toward advancing these projects, these projects were also made possible by what one did, or more specifically, how one (within this particular sector of the American labor force) worked. Consequently, while they were made possible by how one worked, insofar as Caballero continued to work in terms of this oneness, his projects were also constrained to it. Caballero, then, projected himself meaningfully (to the extent that these projects are meaningful to him as that particular self which he understands himself to be) into the office space in terms of how one worked. This was his "everyday self."

Inevitably, during quarantine, Caballero began working virtually along with most other Americans. For him, this may have meant working from home, zooming into meetings fresh out of bed and still in his pajama pants, and spending what would have been his daily forty-five minute commute to and from the office by instead jumping in his pool and discovering new hobbies and interests. Assuming that the majority of his social community underwent a similar, if not identical, experience, not only did what he did change, but also what one did changed. Thus, one began to act in and relate to the world in a new way, ultimately leading each of us to understand ourselves in terms of this new, quarantine-generated way of being and relating to the world. Being a software engineer, or a college student, no longer implied physically occupying a particular location in physical proximity with others, but implied instead working, communicating, and socializing remotely.

Returning to the pre-pandemic work life in this context, Caballero is tossed suddenly back into performing certain features of what one did, such as commuting to work, leaving the comfort of the home, and engaging with people face to face. His routine is now at odds with what he did and, by extension, what one did during the quarantine months. Because quarantine introduced a new performance of oneness and, thus, a new way of relating to the world, how Caballero presently understands himself to be, not simply as a software engineer but as a member of the socio-cultural world in which he exists, conflicts with the daily routines, or performance of everydayness, imposed upon him through the collective return to regular, pre-pandemic work life. Thus, these new routines, because they do not reflect how he understands himself (both as that particular self and as the one-self- which undergirds and gives rise to his particular self) are no longer meaningful to him. In addition, while this collective return strives toward pre-pandemic normalcy, this return breaks down as remnants of the pandemic continue to struc-

ture everyday existence. His current routines, while similar to pre-pandemic work life, ultimately fail to mean to him as such because they are, in a literal sense, not the exact same. In sum, then, Caballero cannot fully relate to the re-introduction of old, pre-pandemic routines into his daily life, and the performance of oneness they imply, because (1) what one does currently in these same routines is still somewhat different from what one once did, (2) quarantine changed his community's performance of oneness, and thus, how he relates to the world in general, and (3) he understands himself, both as a particular self and as member of socio-cultural world in which he exists, differently than he did before the pandemic. Unable to relate to his routines as he once did, they fail to create meaning for him in the way that they had in the past, and he finds himself rehearsing a set of routines and performances that are meaningless to him (i.e. do not mean to him as in the way that they once did).

Thus, he may exclaim to himself, staring at his computer in his old office space with his mask slipping beneath his nose, "What shall I do? What shall I ever do?" To which the One replies, "a lunch break at 12:00, a commute home at 4:00, and we shall try to know each other through our masks, pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door." Like Eliot's speakers, a profound boredom may pervade his entire approach to his office setting, his social life, and his entire rehearsal of a one-ness that no longer corresponds to his particular interests, goals, and passions as a particular self or his self-understanding within the socio-cultural framework in which he exists.

Answering the phone, commuting to work, sitting in an office, these actions no longer mean to him as they once did. He feels profoundly bored. And, in feeling profoundly bored, he is attuned to his equipmental totality (i.e., the objects that are contained within his environment) and the settings in which they occur in terms of this boredom.

However, because Caballero is bored with the rehearsal of a past one-ness and a past version of himself implicit in and made possible by this one-ness, his boredom extends beyond the confines of the office. Going to lunch with friends, returning home, cooking his dinner, he is progressing listlessly through the motions of old routines. While working from home may have been a situation particular to Caballero and his social community, most Americans, to some extent, experienced fundamental changes in their routines and daily life during the quarantine periods in the peak of the pandemic. Thus, the phenomenon of profound boredom that I address in this paper, while it varies widely in its causes for each individual, remains a seemingly wide-spread experience in our "return-to-normal" life.

As Heidegger writes, in profound boredom "we are not merely relieved of our everyday personality, but elevated beyond the particular situation in each case and beyond the specific beings surrounding us there. The whole situation and we

ourselves as this particular subject are thereby indifferent... Indeed this boredom does not even let it get to the point where such things are of any particular worth to us. Instead it makes everything equally great and equally little worth."[10] "Being relieved of our everyday personality" here means no longer going about our lives as either one does, or as the particular self (which is inevitably, to some extent, structured by "oneness") that, through its comportment, Dasein understands. For example, instead of attentively picking up phone calls, quickly responding to emails, and meticulously conducting his work (and thus meaningfully re-enacting "how one worked" toward the realization of some particular project as that particular self), Caballero, in this boredom, is detached from and indifferent to the office environment, what one would do, and what he once did (as his past, pre-pandemic self) in that particular environment. In other words, he is indifferent to how objects in that environment may serve the realization of the projects that are meaningful to him. However, he is not only indifferent to what one does, but what one does becomes indifferent to him. The equipmental totality of his world and the beings included in that world (that designate, through "how one worked," how that totality might or should be utilized) no longer offer him any possibility of acting out his project, which has become meaningless; they "refuse" him meaning. As Heidegger writes:

> There is a telling refusal on the part of beings for a Dasein that… in the midst of these beings as a whole comports itself toward them (toward them, toward those beings as a whole and their now telling refusal) and must comport itself toward them, if it is indeed to be what it is. Dasein thus finds itself delivered over to the being's telling refusal of themselves as a whole.[11]

As Dasein, Caballero inevitably comports himself toward the world as the particular self which he understands himself to be. However, because this "self" has fallen flat, or is no longer meaningful to him, he comports toward a world without meaning or possibilities in that comportment. Therefore, beings as a whole which once created and gave rise to new meaningful possibilities for him as that self, now "refuse" him those meaningful possibilities. This "telling refusal" by beings as a whole constitutes the first essential, structural moment of profound boredom: being-left-empty, being without meaning to be discovered in beings as whole.

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10   Heidegger, *The Fundamentals of Metaphysics*, pg. 137.
11   Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, pg. 139.

However, in telling refusingly,[12] beings as a whole also highlight the possibilities for meaning-making that Dasein has exploited and are no longer meaningful to it. Sitting in his office or his home, his computer, his clients, his pens, his telephone, his friends, and his dinner table all refuse Caballero meaning as objects and beings through which he can act out his "self-hood." In his profound boredom, the interaction with these beings and objects signals to him that they cannot be employed toward meaningful action because they imply a commingled performance of oneness and a particular "self-hood" that are not meaningful to him. For example, his dinner table is no longer meaningful for him as something which one now, in our quasi-post-pandemic world, uses again (and thus makes possible) to dine amongst friends, but an object, which, in his profound boredom, points to his incapacity for meaning-making by continuing to exploit the possibility of "how one now uses" a dining table. Because using the dining table as such involves rehearsing a performance of pre-pandemic oneness that no longer corresponds with how Caballero understands himself (perhaps because he has since become uncomfortable with hosting dinner parties or having people over in general), his interactions with the dining table disclose (or "point to") his inability to find meaning by continuing to exploit the possibilities involved in what one did before the pandemic. In revealing his exploited possibilities (i.e. the doing as both one and he once did) "... there occurs the dawning of the possibilities that Dasein could have, but which are left unexploited precisely in this "it is boring for one," and as unexploited, leaves us in the "lurch".[13] In other words, confronted with the meaninglessness of his own rehearsal of what one used to do before the pandemic (and consequently, the rehearsal of his particular, pre-pandemic self which understood itself in terms of a pre-pandemic oneness) and the possibilities for acting within that oneness, he becomes aware of other unexploited possibilities for acting. As a result, the telling refusal of possibilities carries, by association, a telling announcement of the possibilities he has not yet exploited. This telling announcement does not point to any one unexploited possibility for meaning-making, but rather points (arbitrarily) to the fact that there are possibilities that he has not yet explored. However, because these possibilities are left unexplored in Caballero's total and complete boredom with the world in general, he does not take up meaningful action and is thus, as Heidegger writes, "left in the lurch" or entrapped in a kind of limbo of inaction. This "being-left-in-lurch" or "being-in-limbo" in which Caballero is confronted with but does not act upon unexplored possibilities comprises the second structural moment of profound boredom: because "being-left-in-limbo" precludes a kind

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12   "[In telling refusingly], the telling refusal tells of these possibilities of Dasein… it ….does not lead directly to dealings with them, but in its telling, points to them and makes them known in refusing them" (The Fundamentals of Metaphysics, pg. 140)

13   Heidegger, *The Fundamentals of Metaphysics*, pg. 141.

of meaningful moving forwards, it has a certain temporal feeling.

When beings and the possibilities they create for meaning-making (i.e., a doctor makes possible the use of a scalpel as a medical tool, and thus, a meaningful tool for particular purposes) refuse themselves to Caballero, they refuse themselves as a whole: they refuse themselves in every respect, or in every respect, retrospect, and prospect, such that every past possibility that he exploited becomes meaningless to him as the version of his "self" he enacts has fallen flat. Likewise, any future, to-be-exploited possibility toward projecting that version of himself is also meaningless to him. But to whom do these possibilities refuse themselves? Not to Caballero as Caballero the particular, subjective individual, but to Cabellero as that self which acted in and related to the world in terms of a pre-pandemic one. As such, it is not boring for Caballero as the individual person, but boring for him as "One" or insofar as he continues to rehearse a kind of oneness that is no longer meaningful to him.

But in the context of his own boredom with that pre-pandemic self that causes his possibilities as that self to recede, that pre-pandemic-self does not lose its determinacy, "but rather the reverse, for this peculiar impoverishment which sets in with respect to ourselves in this 'it is boring for one' first brings the self in all its to nakedness to itself as the self that is there and has taken over the being-there of Dasein. For what purpose? To be that Dasein".[14] In other words, in his profound boredom, as the meaningful possibilities for acting are refused to him as a pre-pandemic-self, he becomes aware of this refusal of the pre-pandemic self, and consequently, becomes aware of the self *itself*, or the self which he has chosen to project over his existence (i.e., "being-there" or Dasein) in the world. In becoming aware of that pre-pandemic self, he becomes aware of (1) the fact that he has chosen to be or act as that self, (2) rehearsing what one does or what one did is not inherently meaningful, and (3) that, as a result, in his existence as Dasein he has the possibility to choose other selves that do not adhere to the "one." For example, it is possible for him to take advantage of new socio-cultural possibilities that are becoming available such as: the emergence of partially or fully virtual employment, the shift toward smaller in-person social circles, and the new, national emphasis on self-care and mental wellbeing.

Thus, his boredom discloses to him that he must accept the circumstances of his world as they are revealed to him and what actions may be possible within those circumstances. The circumstances, and by extension, the world itself, thereby determines how he can act. Since he must accept the world's determinations as to how he can act, he necessarily submits himself to the world. Still, this submission is not entirely passive. Instead, because his boredom reveals that he is capable

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14   Heidegger, *The Fundamentals of Metaphysics*, pg. 143.

of enacting a self (in this case, his pre-pandemic self), he becomes consequently aware of the possibility of enacting other selves and other ways of performing "oneness" that are gradually being made possible to him and to all of us in general. As a result, his boredom reveals the originary capacity of Dasein to make-possible other selves and the fact that he can choose to make-possible other selves that are meaningful to him. Confronted with the immensity of Dasein's capacity to make-possible, without any definite direction as to what self or possibility he should enact, he is "held-in-limbo."

The phenomenon of "being-held-in-limbo" also involves a unique form of temporality. Refused any meaning by rehearsing the pre-pandemic one-self by beings as a whole, Caballero is refused meaning in every respect, retrospect, and prospect, or in the past, present, and future. In this way, beings-as-a-whole are no longer open to him along a temporal horizon, and the possibilities that they present along this horizon are closed off to him as himself because he is no longer interested in them as future possibilities for meaning-making nor finds his past actions and exploited possibilities meaningful. But, if beings as a whole refuse themselves in terms of a temporal horizon, such that Caballero cannot move forward meaningfully in time alongside them (or, in recollecting, conceive of past instances of action as meaningful to him), then they also make manifest those possibilities which he has not yet exploited in terms of a temporal horizon. The unexploited possibilities are things which he may have done in the past (retrospect) or can do in the future (prospect). Confronted with Dasein's capacity for making-possible in the past and future, he is not only held-in-limbo at the immensity of the unexploited possibilities available to him, but entranced in time insofar as these possibilities remain unexploited. For example, thinking back to his past experiences in the office or in his training to become a software developer, he may discern other opportunities that he did not take up such as, perhaps, working in a satellite location in New York City or South America, working at a different corporation, or becoming a doctor, engineer, or astronaut,. Conversely, thinking toward his future, he may discern possibilities that are available to him in the here and now. And yet, insofar as he does not take up these possibilities, he remains entranced in time such that he remains indifferent to his past, present, and future and cannot move meaningfully forwards or backwards in time.

He breaks this entrancement and transcends his boredom by experiencing "the moment of vision." As Heidegger writes in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, "the moment of vision is neither chosen as such nor reflected upon and known. It manifests itself to us as that which properly makes possible, that which is thereby intimated as such only in being entranced in the direction of the temporal horizon and from there, intimated as what could and ought to be given to be free in Dasein's proper essence as that which makes it most intrinsically possible, yet

now in the entrancement of Dasein is not thus given."[15] The moment of vision is not experienced as a dramatic, transcendental instance, but as a kind of realization of the fundamental, originary properties of Dasein (i.e., "what properly makes Dasein possible"). As a being-there which comports itself understandingly toward that being, Dasein's capability to enact a self and comport itself as that self in the actions and choices it undertakes is fundamental to its existence as Dasein. Thus, the moment of vision involves a "resolute disclosure of Dasein to itself," or an awareness of Dasein's own freedom to choose which self it wants to enact and then enacting that self that it chooses. Because Dasein's self-enactment occurs along a temporal horizon (i.e., Dasein understands itself to be its "self" through past actions and choices taken as that self, enacts that self in the present, and projects that self in the future), its entrancement in time during profound boredom intimates, in its being refused meaningful action and doing in every retrospect, respect, and prospect, Dasein's capacity to engage in meaningful action and doing within a temporal horizon.

Thus, the instance in which Caballero resolutely discloses his own freedom to choose a self he wants to enact to himself, he experiences a kind of "moment of vision." Soon after returning to his regular pre-pandemic job, Caballero quit and started looking for jobs with better remote work options. Now, we can assume that Caballero has time to jump in his pool in-between meetings and pursue those hobbies and interests that were otherwise impossible with his daily, pre-pandemic commute. By quitting his job and choosing to explore an alternate possibility of post-pandemic one-ness that is meaningful to him (in that this possibility enables him to engage with aspects of his life that became important to him during the pandemic), Caballero has exercised his essential freedom as Dasein and altered his comportment toward the world in a way that enables him to engage in meaningful doing and action in every retrospect (i.e., his past experiences have given way to his new self-enactment and are thus meaningful to him) respect (i.e., his current choices and actions now harmonize with what is meaningful to him), and prospect (i.e., his future choices will be meaningful to him insofar as he continues to enact that self which enables him to realize those projects which are meaningful to him).

In sum, by altering his comportment toward the world, Caballero enacts a new self within that world, one that authentically (insofar as this new comportment reflects what is meaningful to him) incorporates and utilizes "oneness" toward realizing and fulfilling himself meaningfully.

Importantly, this transformation in how he comports himself toward the world involves a meaningful repetition of "what one did." While Caballero, as a member of a particular socio-cultural framework which requires some degree of

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15   Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 152.

financial stability in order to continue participating within that same socio-cultural framework, continues to work, he does so in a way that enables him to pursue his other interests and passions. Thus, he repeats or rehearses oneness (i.e., the socio-cultural emphasis on financial stability) in a way that is meaningful to him as a particular self. Reciprocally, how he comports himself toward the world (i.e., rehearses oneness) as that particular self manifests that which is meaningful to him (i.e., those projects, interests, and passions that comprise his "for-the-sake-of-which") as that self.

While T.S. Eliot and Heidegger were distinct writers and thinkers, they both seem to proffer the meaningful repetition of one-ness as a solution to profound boredom. In Eliot's work, his meaningful repetition of "oneness" is exemplified by the structural fragmentation within his poem "The Waste Land." Throughout the poem, Eliot includes miscellaneous fragments of Dante, Shakespeare, Greek myths, as well as ancient languages such as Sanskirt. On a superficial level, these fragments produce a sense of disorientation and confusion within the reader who must now assemble these fragments toward a cohesive interpretation of the poem. While the reader's sense of disorientation parallels modern society's confrontation with meaninglessness and subsequent inability to ground existence in meaningful forms of doing and action in post World War I society, the fragments also illustrate how aspects of past, traditional pieces of literature can be assembled or "repeated" in a way that allows them to meaningfully reflect the modern experience.

In the final section of the poem "What The Thunder Said," Eliot begins by describing an apocalyptic scene in which "there is no water but only rock" and Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London, all descend into "unreality."[16] Here, Eliot describes the literal and spiritual devastation of Western civilization. The downfall of Jerusalem, Athens, and Alexandria all represent the inability of Ancient Western religion, art, literature, and history to salvage modern society from its ruinous apocalypse of meaningful action and doing by grounding that doing and action in the traditional values and certainties that characterize them. Instead, the downfall of London and Vienna, describes the devastation of a modern society unable to meaningfully ground itself in its Western socio-historical traditions and values. Thus, London, Vienna, Alexandria, Athens, and Alexandria, become "unreal;" they no longer possess or provide a meaningful reference point for real modern life to guide itself.

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16   Eliot, *The Waste Land*.

Following this apocalyptic scene, Eliot writes at the end of the poem:

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon–O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih.

Sitting upon the cusp of the poem's conclusion and fishing for meaning within the "arid plains" of the apocalypse looming behind him and before him, Eliot attempts to reinvigorate fragments of canonical pieces of literature by "organizing his lands" or assembling them together in new ways.

The line "*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*" is an allusion to Canto 26 of Dante's "Purgatorio", meaning "then he hid in the fire that refines them." According to Sussex University Professor Cedric Watt's explication of these last ten lines, "the 'he' is Arnaut Daniel, the medieval Provençal poet. He has just told Dante that he repents the sins of his past and looks forward to the heaven that he will eventually reach after suffering the purgatorial flames."[17] The following line "*Quando fiam uti chelidon*" from the anonymous Latin poem ''Pervigilium Veneris" means "when shall I be like the swallow." In this poem, "the raped Philomela[18] has undergone a healing metamorphosis into a songbird, making her complaints sound as joyous as a song.[19] The next line, "O swallow swallow," refers to Alfred Tennyson's lyric in "The Princess" in which "a swallow is flying south to warm lands, away from the earthbound poet."[20] Finally, "*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie,*" a line from Nerval's 'El Desdichado', meaning "The Unfortunate or Disinherited Man," a French poem with a Spanish title, means "The Prince of Aquitaine at the ruined tower." According to Watts, "the gist of the poem is: 'I've been through hell, but I've survived to tell the tale, I've known loss and grief, but I've had my dreams and

17   Watts, "The Last Ten and A Half Lines of The Waste Land".
18   Philomela is a minor female figure in Greek mythology who was raped by Tereus, her sister's husband. After defying Tereus and threatening to tell others of his crime, he cuts off her tongue. Eventually, Philomela weaves a tale of the crime onto a tapestry and tells her sister.
19   Watts, "The Last Ten and A Half Lines of The Waste Land".
20   Ibid.

can make songs of my experiences."[21]

Independently, each of these lines refer back to larger poetic works, and thus refer back to the traditional literary structures, styles, and modes of human experience embedded in and advanced by these works. However, by separating these fragments from their larger poetic totality and compiling them together in a new structure, Eliot alienates them from the poetic works and traditional literary structures and meanings to which they pertain. By alienating them from their original works and compiling them together, Eliot also re-appropriates them in a creative way. Through this creative re-appropriation or repetition of these fragments, they ultimately produce a new narrative, one that neither of them originally pertained to or advanced.

Essentially, this new narrative suggests that repentance or self-forgiveness will enable the grieving post-war civilization to transcend its own purgatorial limbo toward a kind of recuperation of meaningful doing and action in modern life. Because this narrative reflects and diagnoses the post-war human experience, Eliot's creative repetition of past literary fragments enables him to meaningfully describe and reflect human life as it is, thus re-invigorating literature's capacity to invoke human experience overall.

As a result, the fragments "shore against his ruins," or act as a buffer against his destruction as a poet in a dying artistic field and as a modern individual confronted with the meaninglessness of the traditional values and certainties implicit in socio-cultural norms.

Eliot concludes the section ironically with "Why then Ile fit you, Hieronymo's mad againe," the subtitle of Thomas Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy* meaning "why then I'll fix it for you, Hieronymo's mad again." While the line acknowledges that his atypical poetic structure may induce readers to think him insane, Eliot's "I'll fix it for you" reaffirms us of his craftsmanship and ability to "fix" literature's inability to capture and resolve modern society's post-war sense of meaninglessness. The poem ends with the repetition of "shantih, shantih, shantih", a Sanskrit word meaning peace or inner peace prayed at the end of the Upanishad[22] in the Hindu religion. Pointing ambiguously toward Eastern modes of spirituality, Eliot leaves us to "fish" our own individual meaning out of his fragments.

Because the poem incorporates a creative repetition of past canonical forms of literature toward developing a form that can meaningfully reflect the modern human experience, it attempts to restructure how "one" relates to and understands these canonical forms of literature. Instead of writings that can no longer invoke

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21   Watts, "The Last Ten and A Half Lines of The Waste Land".
22   The Upanishad is a series of Hindu sacred treatises written in Sanskrit c. 800–200 BC, expounding the Vedas in predominantly mystical and monistic terms. (Definitions from Oxford Languages)

what it means to be human, Eliot's fragmentation gives them a new applicability to the modern experience. Thus, Eliot's creative repetition of how one related to canonical works makes those works newly meaningful to the post-war reader as a compilation of fragments, both within the poem (i.e., as resolving the poem's central conflict) and as suggesting ways to transcend their own confrontation with meaningless and profound boredom in post-war society.

Similarly, by creatively repeating and reassembling aspects of what one did in the pre-pandemic world with what one did during quarantine, we compile together a structure akin to Eliot's fragmentation. Assembling these fragments of "oneness" in a new montage that authentically expresses how one, and how we each individually, relate to the world in the context of enormous crises, anxiety, and change, we can enact new possibilities of being and acting that are meaningful to us and, thus, shore against our own ruinous experiences with profound boredom and meaninglessness. While Heidegger's "moment of vision" describes the instance we are disclosed to our own freedom to choose which selves we want to enact, Eliot's fragmentation demonstrates how we can enact that self through meaningful repetitions of our oneness.

While Caballero experienced a meaninglessness rehearsal of oneness in his return to the pre-pandemic work-life structure because it invoked a self that he no longer felt or understood himself to be, by quitting his job to pursue remote working options, he creatively assembles a performance of pre-pandemic one-ness (in that he continues to work) with a performance of quarantine one-ness (in that he begins to work virtually and make time for his other interests and passions) that reflects how he understands himself to "be" in the world.

As such, the creative repetition of past possibilities seems to offer a productive solution to the post-pandemic phenomenon of profound boredom. As we each reevaluate our current rehearsal of oneness, quit our jobs, change our career or academic tracks, tighten our in-person social circles, restructure our relationships, and travel the world in pursuit of new possibilities for meaningful doing and action, we create new ways of understanding ourselves and relating to the world in general. Perhaps, a new performance of one-ness may be gradually unfolding before us.

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Unwitting Wrongdoing:
The Case of Moral Ignorance

Madeline Monge

Should we blame and praise people for actions which they are ignorant of performing or which they take to be morally neutral? There are two competing theories for the moral assessment of ignorant agents. Capacitarianism focuses on whether an agent could have to have done something to not be ignorant but instead acquire moral knowledge. Valuationism determines an ignorant agent's blameworthiness by looking at their values. Someone is blameworthy if they act within their values and still commit the harmful act. My paper makes three points. First, I examine how thought experiments revolving around moral issues are either written in support of, or as counterexamples to, the two theories of moral responsibilities. The description of these thought experiments causes the reader to lean in favor of what the theorist is trying to argue. In other words, these thought experiments function as intuition pumps. Then, reflection on the thought experiments used in support of the two theories of moral responsibility reveals that these theories, rather than being rivals, are two sides of the same coin.

In this paper, I presuppose ignorance is a lack of knowledge. Knowledge I take to be a composite state that consists at the very least of three necessary conditions: truth, belief, and justification. This view, which can be traced back to Plato's *Theaetetus*, claims that what distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief and lucky guessing is that it is based on some form of justification, evidence, or supporting reasons. The truth condition of the justified-true-belief analysis of knowledge states that if you know that p, the p is true. The truth condition need not be known; it merely must be obtained. The belief condition claims that knowing that p implies believing that p. Finally, the justification condition demands that a known proposition is evidentially supported. The justification condition prevents lucky guesses from counting as knowledge when the guesser is sufficiently confident to believe

their own guess.

Given that ignorance is the lack of knowledge and given that knowledge has at least three necessary conditions, there are many different sources of ignorance: lack of belief, lack of truth, and lack of justification. There are numerous psychological factors that can give rise to each of these three conditions. Among these psychological factors are forgetting, cognitive biases, miseducation, or lack of exposure.

I presuppose this ignorance to be lacking knowledge. There is not only one type of ignorance, rather, there are two main classes of such: factual ignorance, and moral ignorance (Rosen, 64).

There are various sources of ignorance from where factual and moral ignorance arise. When someone does not know, forgets, is lacking exposure to, is miseducated, does not retain, or misunderstands a given fact that cannot be disputed under any circumstance, they can become either factually or morally ignorant. These sources can be relieved with conscious effort, or by external involvement (Rosen, 302). Ultimately it is up to the agent to recognize errors that result from their ignorance. A debate surrounding the exculpating factors of moral or factual ignorance is important to understand. It is generally thought that immoral actions can only be exculpated by factual ignorance, but not moral ignorance.

Factual ignorance hinges around objects of descriptive facts. I will be using an example of slavery in ancient slave-times to illustrate this concept. Let's suppose someone lives next door to someone who has slaves but also does not know they are living next door to slaves. This would be a situation of factual ignorance because the neighbor does not know the fact that there are slaves living next door (Rosen, 72). It could be because they are unobservant, or because the slaveholder does a good job of keeping the slaves quiet; there is also the chance that the neighbor doesn't care, is distracted by their own life, or denies their worry of believing that there are slaves. The slaveholder hiding slaves is an objective/descriptive fact that cannot be disputed. Even if they deny it, the slaveholder would still have slaves, and the descriptive fact would not change.

On the other hand, moral ignorance arises when someone is ignorant of a moral fact. Moral facts are normative, and they prescribe courses of actions that are true simpliciter (Rosen, 64). If the neighbor to the slaveholder knows that they are living next door to slaves, but does not know the slaveholder is harming them, this would be moral ignorance. It is morally impermissible for the slaveholder to have and harm slaves. The neighbor should know the slaveholder is acting immorally by keeping and harming the slaves. Moral ignorance does not stop at the fact that the neighbor does not know it is morally wrong to harm people, but they may also not know they should do something about the harm. This ignorance of harm can be defined as, not knowing that an action may cause pain (harm) when

one should know it does so. They also ought to know that, without good reason, harming people should be avoided at all costs because it is morally impermissible (Biebel, 302).

Should the neighbor be exculpated because of factual or moral ignorance? If the neighbor does not know that having and harming slaves is morally imper-missible, this could not be factually exculpated. This is a case of moral ignorance. The neighbor would be morally exculpated for their ignorance in this scenario be-cause they are unaware that having and harming slaves is impermissible by moral standards (Rosen, 66). There is no opportunity for the neighbor to be factually ignorant.

What prompts this type of ignorance? Perhaps the neighbor does not care that the slaves are being harmed, is distracted by other events, or is afraid of the re-percussions that will incur because of speaking out against the moral injustice. The most important aspect of moral ignorance is to remember that it is prescriptive, and not descriptive. The argument of moral ignorance and blame revolves around what *should* or *should not* be done because of lacking knowledge. This is largely in part to the distinction between factual and moral ignorance. Factual ignorance may sometimes exculpate an immoral action, but it is ultimately moral ignorance that will exculpate an individual (Sliwa, 6).

I. Capacitarian and Valuationist Assessments of Moral Responsibility

There are now several theories that concern moral ignorance: volitionist, at-tributivist, capacitarian, valuational, parity, and pragmatic. While all differ from one another in how they attribute blame to cases of moral ignorance, capacita-rian, parity/pragmatic, and volitionism share a disposition of blame that focuses on someone's capacity of knowledge (Biebel). Valuationalism and attributivism respond to blameworthy actions as being dependent on the personal volition of the agent. I'd like to classify these two categories as capacitarian and valuational. I will occasionally refer to specific points that individual theories make, but with the example of the slaveholder, I will continue the conversation with the two main theories.

The capacitarian theories revolve around the counterfactual capacity that an individual has when deciding which action to take in a morally relevant situation that could've been prevented. They look at situations where someone is blamewor-thy. They want to know if it was in the agent's capacity to correct or avoid being ignorant, and if this would have prevented them from performing the immoral action. Capacitarians consider people responsible for their actions if they are re-sponsible for their capacity of behavior. People who lack the capacity for knowing what is morally permissible, say children, or people who are mentally incapable of retaining information relevant to moral standards, are not culpable for their im-

moral actions. They can be corrected, and may learn afterwards, but they are not blameworthy. They lack the ability to retain vital moral considerations.

Capacitarians do not skip over the fact that people's ignorance may be the reason they are acting immorally. If someone believes from their ignorance that what they did was the most rational and correct method of handling a situation of moral relevance, then they may be exculpated. However, this justification is only one part of the knowledge needed to have an accurate and knowledgeable conclusion. How a morally significant situation should be handled depends on someone's capacity to know whether they had the opportunity to do something differently. This difference in choice may have changed someone's ignorance into knowledge and prevented the immoral action. When someone is not aware why they are ignorant, they are also unaware of how they can resolve their lack of knowledge. This is the way capacitarian's view moral ignorance to be exculpable, and encapsulates much of capacitarians' concern. How can someone be blamed for not knowing a moral standard if they have never been socially conditioned or taught what the moral standard is? When I go over the varying vignettes that hone in on how the capacitarian theory can be utilized I will be able to further demonstrate the degrees of internal and external factors that influence moral ignorance, conveying how someone might come into the position to remedy their ignorance but lack the awareness or determination to do so.

Arguing against the capacitarian theory is the valuationist theory. Valuationism responds to capacitarianism with a specific criticism. Capacitariansim uses immoral ignoramus as a clear reason to excuse someone from an immoral action, but valuationists believe that the capacitarian theory is too easily applied to every case of immorality. They do not think it is wise to exculpate someone who has forgotten or is unknowledgeable about morality. Valuationism approaches the topic of blame and exculpation surrounding immoral actions by looking at omission and forgetfulness. The theory considers omission and forgetfulness to lead to potentially harmful instances of ignorance. Harmful ignorance is when someone consistently shows blameworthy immoral actions. Valuationists trace the value systems and the past actions of agents to see what led them astray towards immoral actions. They look at recidivism rates, as well as values and virtues.

Valuationalism investigates how people are held accountable for their actions and believe someone is only deserving of moral praise if they have reason to act morally. Moral responsibility is the condition of whether someone is praiseworthy, blameworthy, or excused from the former two because of their involvement in a moral act. Someone could also fail to act or omit an action. This is potentially why someone deserves a moral reward or punishment. Valuationists agree that psychological states may affect someone's behavior to act accordingly during a moral situation. They see this as one component in the person's link to act or neglect to

act. Therefore, valuationists think it can only serve as a partial excuse for someone and is not a strong enough argument to exculpate them from a morally relevant situation. Psychological states in a valuationist framework does not make someone incapable of moral knowledge, nor does someone's emotional attachment serve as a reason for someone to act immorally. Whether someone cares about an action does not render them more or less blameworthy. It may affect how much or little they will react, but it should not affect their moral assessment. Therefore, valuationalist's believe that most people are, more often than not, blameworthy for their moral ignorance. If they have not responded in a morally kind manner to a situation, it's because their values align with preconceived notions of their background. These preconceived notions are often the fundamental reasons for why someone acts immorally. Capacitarians avoid looking at an agent's value system because they want to know if the immoral act could have been avoided, and if the agent could have prevented themselves from being ignorant in the first place.

When we look at somebody's capacity to act, we are tracing their past actions and whether or not they had the ability to change their moral knowledge. Capacitarians rely on a history of someone's actions. The values that arise from somebody's capacity to act are decided through the person's past actions from the moment they are born. Capacitarians look at past actions carefully because the culmination of them sets up the targeted subject that a valuationist uses to counter their argument. Values are deeply seated through someone's past actions. The more they are reinforced through choice of action and external influences, the more established they become. The deeply seated beliefs that someone has grown into values are important for evaluating the response a person has to a morally loaded situation. We saw examples of this in the altered versions of the vignettes. Without the added context, a reader wouldn't have been able to tell what the characters valued, nor what their guiding principles were.

When we manifest actions as guiding principles, we are acting from a result of our values. These have been established by our capacities to act in the past. The values we are focusing on in this paper are intrinsic. For example, valuing education leads to being more productive in helping your children with their schoolwork and helping them improve when they need it. Valuing health means you likely eat a balanced diet and exercise regularly. These specific examples of intrinsic values provide a foundation for readers to rest on when making their own evaluative judgments. These intrinsic values lead to other good things, like, your children getting into a good school, and you living a life with bountiful opportunities because of your health. The Valuationist Theory focuses on such intrinsic values, and are meant for the valuationist to rationally conclude whether the characters in the vignettes are blameworthy or not. Values directly shape what people do and say. Their actions are subsets of behavior, and their behavior is a combination of

capacities for potential action and values. Action is intentional behavior. Guiding principles of values will manifest as actions. The way we act is a subset of our values and that action is intentional. Each subset, whether planned or an unconscious reaction, is a value in disguise. Our actions are mostly intentional and based on our values, but sometimes they can be accidents due to forgetting. They may also be from a lack of capacity to change behaviors in the past and potentially due to a lack of values.

II. Perspectives on the Assessment of Moral Responsibility with Respect to Capacitarian and Valuationist Approaches

In this next section, I will review various vignettes that scholars have introduced into the conversation of moral ignorance, discussing how our theory of moral responsibility will change depending on how the stories are described. I will be using a vignette from Alexander A. Guerrero's 2007 article, "Don't Know, Don't Kill: Moral Ignorance, Culpability, and Caution", which discusses the moral ramifications of poisoning someone with cyanide. I will also incorporate a recent, original vignette about the moral culpability of leaving a dog in a hot car. Both cases convey how the same set of events may be narrated in a way that supports the C or the V theory. The support from these different theories is not derived from the event themselves but in how their contexts are described. Omitting and highlighting certain features will change which theory best explains whether someone should be blamed or praised. It is impossible to give a complete account of these theories in these vignettes, but we will be careful in fully describing each theory and embellishing. This will show which theory best explains each vignette. Both what could have happened and what is described will show whether one is morally blameworthy in the capacitarian sense. If a vignette lends itself to the capacitarian theory, it will focus on possible actions that could have changed depending on the capacity of the protagonist's acknowledgement to do something differently. If the vignette falls towards the valuationist perspective, it is because of the protagonist's present character traits and values.

A. Case One: Guerrero's Poison

Let's consider the case of Anne, who poisons Bill by spooning cyanide into his coffee. Anne believes she is spooning sugar, and she is blameless for her false belief. Is Anne blamelesss for poisoning Bill? Rosen concludes that an action done from *ignorance* is not a locus of original responsibility. This means Anne is only responsible for poisoning Bill if she is responsible for her ignorance about the fact that she is poisoning Bill.

Guerrero has constructed a vignette that partially supports a theory where ig-

norance can be morally exculpated. What happens when details of the character's capacities and values are introduced? I'm going to reintroduce Guerrero's story with these details added to demonstrate the effectiveness of manipulating the story so the capacitarian or the valuationist theory provides a better explanation and justification of our natural inclination to blame the protagonist.

B. Case Two: Guerrero's Poison (modified)

Let's consider again the case of Anne, a single mother who is Bill's girl-friend. Bill regularly comes over in the morning to share a cup of coffee because he has been dating Anne for a few months. After a long night of helping her children prepare for an important exam, Anne believes she is spooning sugar into Bill's morning coffee and is unaware that she is poisoning him with cyanide. Anne does not know that last night after she went to bed exhausted from tutoring her children, she had a sleepwalk-ing incident where she mistakenly poured out the sugar in the sugar dish and replaced it with cyanide. Afterwards, Anne went back to bed and did not remember what she did in the middle of the night. That morning while Anne was spooning poison into Bill's coffee, he innocently read the morning news on his phone and did not give the sugar a second thought.

Was it in Anne's capacity to make sure she was spooning sugar and not cyanide into Bill's coffee? If Anne does not regularly sleepwalk then we cannot expect it to be within her capacity to know that she ought to check the sugar dish just in case she had tampered with it the previous night. What about Anne's values? We know that Anne values relationships and caring for others, as well as education. This is why she stayed up to help her children prepare for an exam, and also why she regularly invites her boyfriend over for coffee. Here Anne is not blameworthy for her ignorance, nor has she acted within a set of immoral values that would prompt her to poison Bill. This has never happened before to Anne. Anne has never sleepwalked a day in her life and has a consistent record of showing Bill hospitality and care. Under a valuationist's account of moral blame, Anne would not be considered blameworthy because her actions do not align with her values, and after the incident, she continued to grieve and disapprove of her ignorance. She did not intend to cause suffering, nor does she value suffering. Anne unfortunately is the cause of Bill's death because she had a momentary lapse in her sleep routine which caused her to act involuntarily on account of ignorance.

In this case, Anne would not be blameworthy by capacitarian standards, nor by valuationist standards. Anne is not originally responsible for poisoning Bill, and she would be considered morally exculpated. Based on what the story tells us about Anne's character traits and values, one can see that she did not act with

malicious intent. It was an honest mistake, and a serious accident. Even though Anne has never sleepwalked before, would it be reasonable to expect her to check her sugar before she gives it to Bill? I think it would be considered unreasonable for anyone to expect Anne to check her sugar because Anne does not have a past history of swapping out her sugar with other substances. If it were the case that Anne has sleepwalked before, and she has a past history of replacing her sugar with other substances, like salt, powder bleach, or baby powder, then it would be reasonable to expect her to check. If Anne had a history of swapping substances, then her negligence to check on the sugar dish would be an involuntary act of ignorance. In this vignette, how a capacitarian and a valuationist consider someone to be morally blameworthy or exculpated is revealed through the protagonist's capacity and character traits. This example shows us that the capacity of memory to prevent a potentially harmfully ignorant situation is a mitigating factor in someone's judgment of immoral behavior. Anne did not willfully act immorally and is not blameworthy for her involuntary action done out of ignorance (Alvarez & Littlejohn, 8). Both theories attribute a small degree of responsibility to the harm Anne has done, but not enough to judge her as being willfully ignorant nor morally culpable. Capacitarian and valuationist theories agree with each other in how they assess this vignette due to Anne's isolated incident.

Let us take another vignette to compare capacitarian and valuationist theories. In this next scenario we have the unfortunate event of a dog dying after being left in a hot car unattended for some time.

C. Case Three: Hot Dog
Imagine Mrs. Crawford is out running errands with her medium sized cocker-spaniel in the back seat. The dog is in good health, well-groomed and fed, and Mrs. Crawford sees to it that he is well taken care of. Today of all days Mrs. Crawford pulls into a parking lot with no shade to block out the sun from her car. There is no breeze, and it is ridiculously hot outside. Instead of bringing her dog into the store with her, Mrs. Crawford decides to leave her dog in the car with the windows rolled up. She reasons that the air-conditioner was on during the drive to the store, so the car is not muggy or hot. She also reasons that she will not be in the store for a long time because she has a list of things she wants to purchase. At this point in her decision, Mrs. Crawford locks the car and leaves for the store.

Suppose Mrs. Crawford is making good time in the store. She is almost done picking out everything on her list and is careful not to get sidetracked. However, Mrs. Bailey sees Mrs. Crawford in the aisle over and

makes her way to talk to her about some important matters. Mrs. Crawford is delighted to see and talk to Mrs. Bailey, and easily becomes swept up in her conversation. She remembers her dog is in the car but does not remember how hot it is outside because the store is well air-conditioned, aiding to Mrs. Crawford's choice to talk to Mrs. Bailey for longer than expected.

Now the dog is still outside in the hot car, and because it is not properly ventilated or shaded, the car quickly becomes extremely hot inside. The dog is soon unable to withstand the heat and becomes sick and passes out in the back seat before Mrs. Crawford returns from the store. Mrs. Crawford is mortified. She had no idea that leaving her dog unattended for as long as she did would result in its sickness. She quickly takes her dog to the vet.

Here we have a vignette that sets up Mrs. Crawford to be morally exculpated by her ignorance if we are not considering her values or capacity to have made changes in favor of the dog's life. We are now going to see another representation of this vignette with both capacity and values of Mrs. Crawford included. Within this next vignette, I will provide more background information that will show how someone's capacity can prevent ignorance from occurring or may cause someone's ignorance to flourish. I will also be including Mrs. Crawford's values, which will show whether-or-not by the valuation as to perspective that Mrs. Crawford is in fact acting in line with her values.

D. Case Four: Hot Dog (modified)
Imagine Mrs. Crawford is a steady workaholic. Mrs. Crawford decides to skip her dog's walk and bring them to the store with her. She is alert, and well aware that bringing her dog with her might be a hinderance, but she does it anyway. Today of all days Mrs. Crawford pulls into a parking lot with no shade to block out the sun from her car. There is no breeze, and it is ridiculously hot outside.

Instead of bringing her dog into the store with her, Mrs. Crawford decides to leave her dog in the car with the windows rolled up. She thinks she is doing the right thing by leaving her dog behind in the car and reasons that the air-conditioner was on during the drive to the store, so the car is not muggy or hot. At this point in her decision Mrs. Crawford locks the car and leaves for the store, confident that her decision was the right one.

Suppose Mrs. Crawford is making good time in the store. She is almost done picking out everything on her list and is careful not to get side-tracked.

However, Mrs. Bailey sees Mrs. Crawford in the aisle over and makes her way to talk to her about some important matters. Mrs. Crawford suddenly forgets about her need to complete her shopping trip in a timely manner. She forgets her dog is in the car, nor does she remember how hot it is outside because the store is well air-conditioned.

Now Mrs. Crawford's dog is still outside in the hot car, and because it is not properly ventilated or shaded the car quickly becomes extremely hot inside. The dog is soon unable to withstand the heat and becomes sick and passes out in the back seat before Mrs. Crawford returns from the store. When she returns, Mrs. Crawford is mortified. She had no idea that she had been talking to Mrs. Bailey for so long. She did not even think about her dog, or the possibility that leaving her dog unattended for as long as she did would result in its death. She quickly takes her dog to the vet.

What can we understand about this scenario that is different from the original? With this new perspective, we can see that Mrs. Crawford was completely forgetful in the care of her dog. While she is a workaholic with a one-track mindset, her decision to bring her dog along seems out of the ordinary and not in line with her normal character traits. We can tell by this story that Mrs. Crawford values social relationships, which is why she stopped to talk to Mrs. Bailey, independence, which is why she went out to the store in the first place, and the well-being of others, hence her decision to leave her dog in the car. Did Mrs. Crawford have the capacity to change her course and make sure she took measures that would secure the safety of her dog? I believe so. She was not tired; she was not overcome with thoughts of work that would normally cause her to forget other obligations. She was distracted, but by something that she had the capacity to say no to.

Here I would like to point out that Mrs. Crawford was in her right mind and within the right capacity to know that talking to Mrs. Bailey would disrupt her schedule of running errands. This change of schedule had the potential to possibly upset or cause extreme distress to her dog that she left in her car. Mrs. Crawford ought to have known that the dog in the car was the most precedent of her concerns. She knows that by moral standards her dog has moral worth and is a moral responsibility that she has tasked herself with. Mrs. Crawford is someone that knows the difference between morality and immorality, and she is fully aware

that her dog has a right to life.

By placing her own dog within harm's way, Mrs. Crawford showed not only ignorance of fact but moral ignorance as well. Since she did not know that she was possibly harming her dog by talking to Mrs. Bailey and staying within the store for an extra length of time. Mrs. Crawford would be considered morally blameworthy. She knew that her dog was in the car. Even though she may not have known that by leaving them in the car she was potentially endangering her animal, this shows moral ignorance because she did not consider her dog's life to be worthy enough to take extended measures that would have ensured survival. From the capacitarian theory she is considered blameworthy, but considered innocentfrom the valuationist perspective.

III. Capacitarianism and Valuationism are Two-Sides of the Same Coin

Before we start to cut deeper into each of the theories independently, I would like to point out that these vignettes show us how different theories about moral ignorance are more accurate attributions of blame, depending on how the story is told. The way an author prescribes a vignette will directly affect the way a reader chooses to apply a theory. The author's choice to write objectively or subjectively will also affect whether a reader will approach the ignorant action with a mind of blame or exculpation. This mode of thinking is something we see in moral realism. There are two positions in moral realism that we might be able to categorize the capacitarian and valuationsist theories under. First, normative realism posits that ethical sentences describe positions that are grounded in objective features. Some of the objective features may only be true in that they report the descriptions accurately, such as "killing someone is bad". These descriptions do not contain subjective opinions, which aids in their accuracy and helps to establish moral truths. Second, the version of metaethical realism that can be used to look at these theories states that, in principle, it is possible to know about the facts of actions that are right and wrong, and about which things are good and bad (Copp, 2007). This position depends on the subjective opinions of others to determine these aforementioned facts. Metaethical realism takes a more common-sense approach to ask questions like "should we reasonably expect someone to check the sugar dish before serving sugar?"

The reason why we need to keep moral realism in mind while assessing capacitarianism and valuationism is because it directly affects our assessment of them. We can see that assessments about moral responsibility are sensitive to additions and omissions of information regarding capacities and values of the agents. With the incorporation of certain details about an agent's past actions and value systems, a reader can be swayed to agree or disagree with certain theories of moral

assessment. Certain details require someone to be objective or subjective in their interpretation of the events (Baumann, 2019). This can greatly affect how a story is understood by various readers. However the story is told, whether narrow or elaborate, the rationale behind omitting and adding detail will always have a direct effect on the reader's intuition of the story. Depending on how the vignette is written, the reader can be manipulated to believe that certain events will result in one theory being more conclusive than another. What this shows us is that the philosophers who wrote the vignettes wrote them in a way to prove the point of their own theories. These vignettes function as intuition pumps. Anything the philosopher wants to say activates a reader's intuitive approach to assessing a situation.

While the capacitarian and valuationist theorists may focus on different characteristics of someone's motivation, their approaches to assessments of moral responsibility are similar. Both look at the contexts in which the act was performed; however, they differ in which part of the context they think to be relevant in their assessments. Capacitarians consider the most relevant point of context of behavior and compare it to be the behavior leading up to the harmful act. The capacity of the agent is also dependent on their knowledge of their wrongdoing. Capacitarians ask whether or not agents could've done something differently in the past to prevent their immoral act from taking place. If they engage in a harmful immoral act, then it is a result of their ignorance. Whether to attribute blame to the agent who acted out of ignorance would depend on their capacity to know that there was some way they could have prevented themselves from doing so. If they did not have the capacity to know they were acting immorally, or that they could've prevented themselves from acting as such, then they would not be considered blameworthy. Thus, an agent acting out of ignorance without the capacity to know they are doing so would be morally exculpated.

Valuationists choose not to look at the behaviors preceding the events and instead examine the value system of the agent. They do this because they think the value system of a person should be considered the relevant context of the moral assessment of an act (Arpaly, 2004). The community of moral theorists has situated these two theories in contexts of past actions or value systems. Up until this point, we have discussed these two theories independently, however, I would like to show how they are closely related.

If a vignette focuses on the capacity or the value system of a person, then readers will be persuaded to agree with the theory that provides a better explanation of moral judgements concerning actions. For instance, the more detailed the information regarding the context of the agent, the easier it will be for us to apply a theory that best suits the framework. The information needs to highlight either the agent's value system or the agent's past actions. If the information in the vignette does not include any context for the reader, then it is natural for them to assume

and fill it in themselves.

The various assumptions that arise from different readers' perspectives have the ability to lead to a deep disagreement about the moral assessments of actions. An under-described thought experiment gives you inconclusive information to fill in gaps that a narrow story leaves out. Without enough information, a reader must add their own information. When a reader substitutes the information missing in the vignette, it can pull people into a deep disagreement about the moral assessment of the agent. This makes it easy for a reader to feed into their own thoughts. A reader is then foolish for reading into the story what they hope to get out of it. This creates circular reasoning on the reader's part. In all cases, different people will have different assumptions while reading the under-described thought experiment, which will inevitably lead to problems applying certain theories to each one. Unfortunately, there is no way to halt varying interpretations because it is unreasonable to expect anyone to be able to provide every possible angle that a situation can have. In other words, there is no way for the author to close the room for interpretation entirely.

If a deep disagreement arises, then this must be a result of an author's manipulation of the vignette. For a deep disagreement to form, the vignettes would need to have an unclear description of an agent's past actions and capacity or an unclear description of their value system because this would pin the capacitarian and the valuationist standpoints against each other. When the contexts of the past actions and value systems are clear and detailed in a vignette, it is unlikely that a deep disagreement will occur. Rather than finding a clash of theories, the verdicts would be expected to converge due to their connection.

Throughout this paper I have been providing a route to view the literature of moral assessment to show how the valuationist and the capacitarian approaches are in competition with each other. However, I think this view wrongly pins the two theories against each other. The values that a person has will manifest itself in their actions, likewise, their actions are guided by their values, whether consciously or unconsciously. When we lay out this connection, we can see how someone's past actions and value system are actually connected. With that said, I think it would be in our best interest not to play the two against each other, and instead show they are dependent on one another. This holistic/detached perspective demonstrates how these two theories are two sides of the same coin.

IV. Conclusion

The more a vignette spells out a history, the more we get a sense of the value system of the person involved. Any value system shapes how people perceive information and influences their decisions. This means it also influences their intuitions and builds peoples' overall foundations for actions. How a person has acted up

to the point of the scenario usually tells us the story of the person's value system. Here we get a better sense of how they would act in future situations based on how they have acted prior. If a vignette is written in detail, spelling out a person's capacities, values, or both, then the competing theories proposed by valuationists and capacitarians will likely converge. However, if it's sparse with little to no information, then the two rival theories may clash. They will seemingly work against each other because the readers are left to fill in the details. Without an established history or value system described, readers do not have anything prescribing their thoughts. Clashing is due to the under-description of the vignette and not used to interpret theories. I think this is where a lot of the deep disagreement stems. In this conversation about the moral assessment of blame, we have two theories that are seemingly different but work in tandem. They have a great opportunity to change the way that we, as philosophers, attribute blame, especially since wishful thinking does not give moral valence. If readers can speculate the history and the potential for a person based on their capacity to potentially act out their value systems, then they will not need to speculate on what the author meant. After all, it is not the job of a reader to fill in the blanks, it is up to the author/philosopher to explain a thought experiment in full to establish their theory (Baumann, 2019).

Any description that influences a perspective is an important factor, but we need to decide whether someone is or is not morally culpable in a particular situation. To do this, it is necessary to know all the past relevant information. Swapping things around, omitting necessary information, and changing the context to fit someone else's narrative of events is not an effective way to correctively assess the morality of an agent, nor is it conducive to figuring out whether they are morally exculpable. Withholding information is one way to prevent knowledge,[1] and if we are concerned with knowing whether someone has performed an immoral action, then the truth is of utmost importance (Baumann, 2019). This is the way things become known.

When looking back at the argument between the valuationist and capacitarian, knowledge of the subject's past is necessary for determining if someone should be considered morally blameworthy. For determining both a person's capacities and values in the present, it is vital to investigate their past. A person's past determines their values just as much as it determines their capacities. A person's past values can be written off due to their present capacities; likewise, a person's past

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1   There are instances where withholding information can shield you from a bias that can be a condition for acquiring knowledge. An example of this can be found in double-blind reviews. When both researcher and patient are unaware of distribution within a study, this can increase fairness. The ignorance of not knowing our place in society, our natural abilities, and our circumstances make our perceptions of society more objective. An example would be the Privacy of Information acts, purposefully abstaining from reading the news so as not to be misled by fake news, or a randomized control trial. This is not withholding knowledge, rather it is a way to control knowledge. (Bernecker, S. *The Epistemology of Fake News*. Pg. 299.)

capacities can be written off because of their present values. The present moment is a culmination of all the previous values an agent has upheld. Valuationists point out how a person's values are a result of what they did or didn't do in the past. These values are determined on the agent's capacity to understand and act on those values. Similarly, capacitarians see capacities as manifestations of value systems. The key to finding out someone's capacities and values is buried in their past.

What is the difference between these two theories if they both require knowledge of the person's past behavior? Are they distinct theories that have similar foundations, or are they two sides to the same theoretical coin? Since both theories require the past to determine their present conditions, it's possible that proposing these two ideas as distinctly different theories does not hold up to scrutiny. This is because values are conditions that people think should be upheld and reinforced, while capacities are behaviors of what people are capable of doing. Values are conditions that people strive for,[2] give people numerous filters for actions, and are considered valuable in the social world. Once someone has a set of values, their subsequent actions are determined. When capacitarians look at capacities of individuals, they are looking at what actions would have been expected to perform given their capabilities. These actions are expected to be performed because of individual values.

This is where we see the two theories speaking a similar language. If we need to know as much information about an individual's past to form a coherent judgment of blame, then it's possible these two theories are derived from the same theoretical foundation grounded in the past. The past is important to these two theories as a person's past actions are suggestive of their values, and the person's past values are suggestive of what actions someone can do based on their capacities. At this point, to look further into this topic I think it is indispensable to ask, how do we know what someone's past values or capacities are, and how can we tell if they have led to present conditions?

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2   Some values, like valuing health, ought to produce actions such as drinking enough water, and eating appropriate portions at meals and are often personal. Other values can be cultural, like valuing religion in certain communities.

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Refuting the Myth of Progressive Secularism: An Analysis of the Legal Frameworks Surrounding Religious Practice in France and Bahrain

Bridget McDonald

This paper explores the idea that a secular state is inherently more progressive than a religious nation (a country with a designated state religion). Looking through the lens of freedom of religious expression, I argue that having a secular clause in a country's constitution does not necessitate a higher degree of religious freedom. Decades of Western discourse linking secularism to modernization has created the notion that religious countries cannot foster free and prosperous societies to the level of secular nations. To refute this view, this paper builds on Talal Asad's critiques of the contemporary secular model as Eurocentric. Additionally, I expand on the policy overlap discussed in John Bowen's article comparing the French and Indonesian judicial systems. I employ a comparative case study model to evaluate the legal frameworks surrounding religious practice in France (a secular state) and Bahrain (a Muslim state). Findings indicate that although the two countries differ in terms of religion's place in government, significant overlap exists between their laws impacting religious practice. I argue that in certain cases, Bahrain exhibits a higher degree of tolerance for religious expression than France. I conclude that religious states can value religious identity more than a secular country, therefore enabling select religious nations to foster religious freedom to equal or higher levels than their secular counterparts. However, more comparative research needs to be done to fully evaluate the dimensions of religious freedom in secular and religious countries.

I. Introduction

In the 2022 French presidential elections, news coverage of far-right candidate Marine Le Pen's outlined platform – titled *22 Measures for 2022* – highlighted the second goal on her list: "Eradicate Islamist ideologies and all of their nation-

al territory networks." Le Pen closely tied this sentiment to *laïcité* (secularism), a French value developed during the Revolution that established the foundation for a formal separation of church and state. Le Pen's rhetoric has brought forth discussion on the role of secularism in the government and the impact of secular policies on the French Muslim community (Ataman, 2022). Though initially a primarily Western ideology, a clause pertaining to secularism now appears in 71 countries' constitutions (World Population Review, 2022). These nations, referred to as constitutionally secular countries, are typically associated with higher GDP (Ruck, Bentley & Lawson, 2018), more socially progressive policies, and increased freedom. However, the recent ban on burqas and niqabs in secular countries has brought into question the progressive nature of secularism. France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Bulgaria have fully banned burqas, while various other European countries have banned the burqa to differing degrees. This trend, which has been criticized for discriminating against Muslims, demonstrates the complicated relationship between secularism and minority religious groups.

France, the first European country to ban the burqa via a law prohibiting facial coverings (Erlanger, 2011), has taken further steps to target the Muslim community, including fining women for wearing a "burkini"– a full body swimsuit for Muslim women, that, unlike a burqa, does not have a facial covering (The Guardian, 2016). Labeled as a tactic to fight extremism, the burqa ban is one of many laws regulating Muslim practices and expressions of Muslim identity, such as pressuring imams to sign a charter of republican values (Williamson, 2020). The targeting of the Muslim community in France challenges the idea that secularism entails socially progressive policies. If secularism suppresses religious freedom, then perhaps it is not as progressive as many Westerners believe.

This paper seeks to refute the idea that a secular country is inherently more progressive than a religious nation. I will evaluate the legal frameworks of a secular state and a religious state, focusing specifically on areas of law that impact religious expression. This study will center on France, a vocal supporter of secular values, and Bahrain, a Muslim state that has placed emphasis on improving religious freedom over the past decade. Ultimately, this paper argues that the inclusion of a secular clause in a nation's constitution does not necessitate a higher degree of religious freedom.

II. Theoretical Framework
In 1870, the term "secularism" was coined by British writer George Holyoake to describe a moral code that exists independently from religious doctrine. Today, secularism is defined as "the principle of separation of the state from religious institutions" (Oxford Languages), though the degree to which secular countries separate church and state varies widely. For example, while In-

donesia is constitutionally secular, the Aceh region of the country is under Sharia law. The discrepancies in how secularism manifests in countries' legal structures necessitates further exploration on how secularism has historically been conceptualized and defined.

Though many scholars have addressed secularism, much of the discourse has been from a Western perspective, which led to significant bias in early secular theory. Max Weber and Emile Durkheim's work hypothesized that secularism and modernity were tied (Cannell, 2010); the authors identified the decline of traditional religious belief in Europe as the result of technological advancements and economic growth. One notable criticism of this theory came from Talcott Parsons, who claimed that the patterns of religious participation in Europe should not serve as an indicator for global secular trends (Cannell, 2010). Parsons further argued that Weber's essay, *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, exhibited a Eurocentric perspective (Cannell, 2010). Additionally, *Protestant Ethic* displayed sentiments of Western supremacy and presented capitalism as the ultimate economic system (Weber, 1905). Peter Berger is another critic of the theory that secularism is connected to modernization. He argued that traditional religious beliefs were not being abandoned and were instead evolving, and cited the development and upsurge of evangelism in the United States as evidence (Berger, 1999). Despite criticism, however, Weber and Durkheim's theory remained prevalent for several decades (Cannell, 2010). This skewed academic perceptions of secularism and linked the concept to a Western and capitalist definition of progress.

The absence of an internationally accepted definition of secularism, and varying religious, social, and governmental structures across the world further complicate how secularism is defined. However, newer discourse on secularism has reflected a more comprehensive view of the concept. In his 2003 book, *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad posited that the Western perception of secularism as progressive is inaccurate and underscored the Western European origins of contemporary secularism. Asad emphasized that liberal secularism should not apply to all societies and that it allows for the prohibition of certain religious practices; this paper adopts Asad's stance and argues that the prohibition of religious practices legitimizes discriminatory policies. Further, Asad states that "the ideology of political representation in liberal democracies makes it difficult if not impossible to represent Muslims as Muslims … Because in theory the citizens who constitute a democratic state belong to a class that is defined only by what is common to all its members and its members only." Using this lens, this paper asserts that French laws limiting religious practice in the public sphere further isolate religious minority groups. Asad's contributions to secular discourse and his discussion on belonging and identity in a liberal democratic state lead to the

question of whether constitutional secularism offers a higher degree of religious tolerance within a country when compared to a nation that has an established state religion. Through the collection and analysis of laws impacting religious practice in France and Bahrain, this paper seeks to support Asad's conclusions and determine the degree to which constitutionally secular nations are able to promote religious freedom.

Although previous comparative case studies on secular and Muslim countries are extremely limited, John Bowen's article, *Religious Discrimination and Religious Governance Across Secular and Islamic Countries: France and Indonesia as Limiting Cases* (2010) offers a selection of preliminary findings and sheds light on areas in need of additional study. In the article, Bowen concluded that there is notable overlap in policy between France and Indonesia. Bowen argued that despite having different governmental structures and views on religion's place in the public sphere, similar policies appeared in both countries. Additionally, Bowen called for further comparative study on the scope of this phenomenon to expand upon his research into other aspects and applications of secular policy. Building on observations on policy overlap between France and Indonesia, this paper explores the similarities and differences between France's religious policies and those of Bahrain – a Muslim state. This comparison provides further insight into the legitimacy of the theory that secularism fosters higher levels of religious freedom.

A. Measuring Religious Freedom

The United Nations guarantees religious freedom in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. The UDHR and ICCPR incorporate a number of components into their definition of religious freedom: the freedom to adopt, change, or renounce a religion, freedom from coercion, the right to manifest one's religion, the freedom to worship, the ability to establish and maintain places of worship, the right to display religious symbols, the ability to observe holidays, and protection from discrimination on the basis of religion. While there is no single, defined approach to measuring religious freedom, the definition provided by the UDHR and ICCPR allows for guidance in evaluation. Additionally, multiple non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have used different metrics to measure religious freedom, which, when combined with international standards for defining religious freedom, aid in understanding how to accurately assess the subject. For example, the Pew Research Center (PRC) measures religious freedom by analyzing both social and governmental restrictions on religious action (2016). Since constitutional secularism exists

within the confines of state law, this paper focuses solely on governmental policies surrounding religious expression. The social perception of other religions and religious freedom, while important, does not relate directly to the argument and would be best analyzed in further studies. A second way of measuring religious freedom is through the framework used in Freedom House's annual freedom reports, which ranks countries on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being the lowest possible score) in a number of categories, including freedom of religious expression. In its 2020 reports, Freedom House asks, "Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?" to determine the level of religious freedom in a country. This paper uses this question, the presence of governmental restriction on religious action (as outlined by the PRC), and the components of religious freedom listed by the UDHR and the ICCPR as a definition of what religious freedom looks like in practice and utilizes the definition for legal analysis.

Though there are many laws governing religion in France and Bahrain, this paper focuses on laws that directly impact religious practice. The paper highlights seven categories of law as markers of religious freedom. The groups of law reflect a combination of the approaches used by the Pew Research Center and Freedom House, as well as relevant components of the UDHR and ICCPR's definition of religious freedom; each section examines an aspect of government restriction imposed on free religious practice (apart from Constitutional Status, which offers critical context on the legal setting in the countries), and categories selected answer whether individuals are free to practice in public and private. The areas of policy are listed in Table I, with brief explanations of what each section entails.

Constitutional Status	Establishes the religious alignment (or nonalignment) of the country.
Anti-Discrimination Laws	Laws pertaining to religious discrimination in the hiring process and workplace.
Registration with the Government	Laws surrounding the process of registering a religious organization with the government.
Funding of Religion	Laws surrounding government subsidization of religious groups and the regulation of money collection.
Religion in the Public Sphere	Laws surrounding the practice of religion and wearing of religious garb in public spaces.

Religion in Education	Policies surrounding the placement of religious discourse in the national education system (public and private).
Anti-Extremist Policies	Policies pertaining to efforts to combat domestic religious extremism.

Table I

III. Background

France's deeply entrenched notion of laïcité, which allows for extreme criticism of religion in the public sphere, is contrasted by Bahrain's stringent anti-blasphemy policies that protect all registered religions from criticism. Each of these ideologies is rooted in the history and culture of the two nations. This difference in approaching public discourse is one of various examples where France and Bahrain diverge in their policies surrounding religion. To understand policy-making relating to religious practice in France and Bahrain, it is necessary to establish baseline knowledge on the histories of the nations.

A. France

Religious History and Laïcité — Before the French Revolution, Catholicism was the official religion of France. The conversion of Clovis I in the late 400s tied France to the papacy, and later monarchs enjoyed close relations with the Church. Hundreds of years of Catholic influence on the French monarchy and corruption within both institutions contributed to growing resentment towards the Church, which peaked during the early stages of the French Revolution and subsequent Reign of Terror. Demands for a secular government were followed by the persecution and murder of Catholic clergy members in the late 1700s. Though Napoleon Bonaparte reconciled with the Catholic Church in 1801, France did not reinstate Catholicism as the national religion. Over the next century, France continued to dechristianize the public sphere, culminating in the Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État (1905 law on the separation of churches and state).

Since the Revolution, France has developed a unique brand of secularism, laïcité, that goes beyond the separation of church and state, arguing that religious expression should remain outside the view of the public eye. This ideology has manifested itself in laws that prohibit the wearing of religious symbols in public schools and ban face coverings. The concept of laïcité has changed, however, since its original conception. As discussed by Eoin Daly (2012), secularism has moved beyond separating church and state and now acts as a justification to move differing religious identities into a private sphere and promote a French

identity embedded in shared national values. A 2020 report by the French government offered clarification on the country's reasoning surrounding laïcité:

> The freedom to express one's religious convictions can be limited for the sake of public order, under conditions defined by the law. Freedom must, however, always be the rule, and the limitations the exception, in view of the constitutional principles enshrined in our Republic and France's international commitments, with which such legal restrictions must be compatible.

An additional outcome of laïcité is the prohibition of data collection pertaining to religious affiliation; this policy makes it somewhat difficult to gain a holistic picture of France's religious landscape. The Religious Futures Project at the Pew Research Center (2016) estimates that 58.1% of the population is Christian, 8.3% is Muslim, and 31.9% is unaffiliated as of 2020. Notable trends include growth in France's Muslim population (due to increased immigration from former French colonies in Africa), a consistent decrease in people identifying as Catholic, and increased growth in those identifying as unaffiliated. Of the 12 national holidays in France, 7 celebrate Catholic events, which seemingly contradicts France's strict separation of national and religious affairs. France is currently scored as 3 out of 4 on freedom of religious expression by Freedom House (2020).

Recent Events and Political Climate — Law surrounding religious practice in France has been heavily influenced by numerous terrorist attacks over the past decades. During the 1980s and 90s, France saw various attacks by numerous groups: Hezbollah, an integrist Catholic group, the Armed Islamist Group, and other non-religious groups like Action Directe (Shapiro & Suzan, 2003). The 2000s brought more deadly attacks, the majority of which had connections to Islamist groups. Following a series of bombings, shootings, and stabbings by various Islamist groups in 2014 and 2015, France enacted laws increasing government surveillance (Law Nº 2669, 2015) and anti-terrorism efforts (Law Nº 1353, 2014). Terrorist attacks led to a renewed emphasis on laïcité in the political sphere. Far-right isolationist parties led by politicians like Marine Le Pen incorporated anti-Muslim messaging in their campaigns, promising French voters safety from radical Islam (Fieschi, 2020). In this climate of frequent terror attacks and the rise of far-right parties, France created and amended legislation surrounding religious practice.

B. Bahrain
History — Bahrain, located off the coast of Saudi Arabia, fell under the con-

trol of various empires before declaring independence from the British in 1971 (Gardner, 2017). Known for its pearl beds and freshwater springs, the island was seen as highly desirable by political entities. This caused numerous changes in leadership. From the 1400-1800s, the territory of Bahrain was controlled by the Omanis, Portugal, Persia, the 'Utub (a Sunni tribal confederation), and the United Kingdom (Gardner, 2017). Throughout the centuries of changing leadership, Bahrain developed a diverse population. The pearl trade brought merchants from all over the world, and the territory was exposed to many ideologies, religions, and cultures as a result of the various empires that had taken control of the island. Though small populations of Jewish, Hindu, and Christian people have lived in Bahrain over past centuries, Islam has been the predominant religion since its introduction to the indigenous population in the 640s (Gardner, 2017). The majority of Muslim Bahraini people identify as Shi'a. However, a smaller Sunni elite has ruled the country since the arrival of the Sunni al-Khalifa family, who came with the 'Utub. Bahrain was declared a monarchy in 2002, headed by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, who remains in power today. According to the Religious Futures Project at the Pew Research Center (2016), 69.7% of the population is Muslim, and within that group, roughly 60% is Shi'a and 35-40% is Sunni; 14.1% of the population is Christian, 10.2% is Hindu, and 2% is unaffiliated as of 2020. Bahrain is currently scored as 1 out of 4 on freedom of religious expression by Freedom House (2020).

Recent Events and Political Climate — In 2011, Bahrain served as a starting point for the Arab Spring in the Gulf countries. The country saw massive protests from the Shi'a community, who decried unfair treatment by the Sunni government. The government reacted by killing and arresting protestors, destroying Shi'a mosques, and dismantling the traffic circle that had served as the uprising's epicenter. Following condemnation by the international community and human rights organizations, King Hamad launched an investigation and resolved to enforce policies to improve tensions between the Shi'a and Sunni groups (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Report on Bahrain, 2020). While the initial success of these policies was contested, the government has taken significant steps in the past decade to ameliorate the state of religious freedom in Bahrain (USCIRF, 2020). The government, which had rescinded the citizenships of 1000 Bahrainis (most of whom were Shi'a) due to alleged security threats, reinstated over half of their citizenships in 2020 (USCIRF, 2020). While typically met with government hostility, the Shi'a holiday Ashura remained largely peaceful in 2020 and 2021; discourse concerning Ashura between the Sunni government and Shi'a clerics has eased tensions between the parties to allow for the celebration of the holiday. However, despite improvement, tensions

remain between the Sunni and Shi'a communities. In terms of relations with non-Muslim groups, the Bahraini government is notably tolerant of other religions. There are 19 recognized religions in the country, all of which are able to practice their respective beliefs freely.

IV. Methodology
A. Overview

This study aimed to determine whether the legal framework of a secular state fosters higher degrees of religious freedom than that of a religious state. This paper uses a comparative case study approach to ensure a balanced review of France's domestic policy concerning religious practice. Further, the comparative case study model offers critical insight into the caveats of secular policy when implemented on a national scale. Bahrain was chosen as a comparative subject because it is a Muslim state in which members of various other religious groups reside. The primary goal of data collection was to gain a deeper understanding of the laws impacting religious practice in both countries. To effectively compare the two countries, specific areas of policy were chosen (listed in Table I) following the combined framework of Freedom House and the Pew Research Center described in the *Theoretical Framework* section. Primary qualitative data concerning policy was taken from law databases published by the French government. Secondary qualitative data was extracted from reports on Bahrain and France by the United States Commission for Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the United States embassy, and Freedom House country reports. The search process yielded a number of pertinent laws surrounding religious practices in France and Bahrain.

B. Comparing Policy on Domestic Religious Practice

Information on France's laws was sourced from the government. Translations were provided by the author unless indicated otherwise. The United States State Department reports informed general knowledge on the legal framework surrounding religious practice. Due to the general inaccessibility of translated laws from a Bahraini government source, information about religious laws in Bahrain was obtained from United States government reports. Recognizing the potential bias of the United States government, only objective data (such as the description of laws) was used in this paper. Areas of crucial law were chosen after general study on legal frameworks surrounding religious practice; the categories of policy listed in Table I were selected because they represent the most direct interaction between the government and religious groups and reflect international standards for religious freedom as expressed by UDHR and ICCPR documents.

It was imperative that both countries had laws falling under each assigned

category, otherwise, policies could not be compared. Laws were evaluated based on the level to which they promoted or inhibited freedom of religious expression, and a compare and contrast approach was used, reflecting the style of Bowen. Larger implications and enforcement of the laws were not considered, as the repercussions of policy were too far-reaching to effectively encompass in this comparative case study. Instead, analysis of laws consisted of identifying common themes and key similarities and differences between the legal frameworks of France and Bahrain. Other peripheral areas of law could be colored by religious or secular ideologies, such as marriage laws. However, to keep the scope of this study appropriately narrow, peripheral policies were not considered.

V. Results: Analysis of Legal Frameworks of France and Bahrain
A. Constitutional Status

The constitutional statutes of France and Bahrain are, as discussed earlier, on opposite sides of the ideological spectrum. These religious designations are detailed below for context.

(i) France
Article 1 of the French constitution states "France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic."

(ii) Bahrain
Article 2 of the Bahraini constitution states "The religion of the State is Islam. The Islamic Shari'a is a principal source for legislation."

B. Anti-Discrimination Laws (In Reference to Religion)

Both France and Bahrain have clauses in their constitutions prohibiting discrimination against others on the basis of faith. Beyond their respective constitutions, both countries have enacted laws forbidding hiring and workplace discrimination in relation to religious affiliations, as listed below.

(i) France
[The internal regulation] may not contain provisions which would prejudice the employees because of their sex, morals, sexual orientation, age, family situation, origins, opinions, religious beliefs, physical appearance, name, or disability, when they have equal professional capacity capability (L. 122-35, 2008).

(ii) Bahrain
The labor law prohibits discrimination in the public sector on grounds of religion or faith. The law also stipulates recourse through a complaint process to the

Ministry of Labor and Social Development to legal bodies in the event of discrimination or dismissal in the work place on the basis of religion (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Bahrain, 2019).

Analysis — The anti-discrimination clauses in both the countries' constitutions have been further developed into active laws. The overlap of anti-discrimination policy in France and Bahrain shows that, in this case, a secular country and a religious state are able to promote religious freedom in the same capacity.

C. Registration with the Government and Government Funding

Both the French and Bahraini governments have registration processes in place for religious organizations. Recognition of a religious group by the respective governments allows for financial support, whether that comes in the form of subsidization or tax-exempt status. As government registration is tied to financial support in each country, the process allows the state to maintain relative control over the religious makeup of the nation; this is achieved to varying degrees in accordance with the requirements of the law.

(i) France
According to the 2019 USCIRF report on France:

> In France, religions are not required to register with the government. However, in order to receive official recognition, tax-exempt status or financial aid, religious groups must go through a number of processes. To receive tax-exempt status and official recognition as a religion, groups must apply as associations of worship, and to receive government funding, groups can apply as cultural associations. Religious organizations are able to qualify as both an association of worship and a cultural association, thus receiving tax-exempt status and government funding. It should be noted, however, that government funding is permitted only to go towards non-religious activities hosted by a religious group, such as educational programming.

> Despite Article 2 of the Law of 1905 Concerning the Separation of Church and State stating "The Republic does not recognize, pay or subsidize any religion", the French government owns and operates religious buildings built before 1905. Approximately 90% of Catholic buildings in France are subsidized by the government, while 12% of Protestant churches and 3% of Jewish temples are subsidized as a result of the law. There are no Buddhist or Muslim centers of worship subsidized by the government (French Senate report, 2015).

(ii) Bahrain

According to the 2019 USCIRF report on Bahrain:

> Bahrain's government requires that religions register in accordance with their faith. Sunni and Shi'a organizations register with the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs and Endowments and register further with the Sunni and Shi'a Waqfs to receive funding. Non-Muslim groups must register with the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, during which they must provide a number of details (including minutes from meetings, personal information on founders and the group's bylaws). Religious groups (Muslim and non-Muslim) are not allowed to receive funding from foreign donors, and money collection is monitored by the government.

Analysis — Bahrain's laws surrounding the funding of religious groups and registration with the government are more stringent than France's. However, while France does not require registration, restrictions from funding and tax-exempt status for non-registered groups act as significant incentives in pushing organizations to submit an application to the government. In both cases, the government seeks access to information on religious groups, though Bahrain attempts to monitor activities to a more extreme extent than France. While this does not necessarily infringe on the status of religious freedom, the laws in both countries allow significant room for discriminatory funding. An example of this was displayed in a 2015 French Senate report that noted the vast majority of France's 2,500 mosques receive little to no public funding while Catholic institutions are almost entirely subsidized, but pointed to Muslims' inability to organize and register with the government as the reason for funding inequality (2015 French Senate report, 23). As this claim is difficult to quantifiably prove, it allowed the government plausible deniability on the lack of funding for Muslim organizations. In Bahrain, disproportionate funding for Muslim organizations is enshrined in the country's laws. While France's legal framework surrounding registration is not as strict as Bahrain's in this case, policies in both countries enable an unequal distribution of funding.

D. Religion in the Public Sphere: Freedom of Speech and Religious Symbols

The French and Bahraini approaches to religion in the public sphere offer vastly different interpretations of the promotion of religious freedom. Nevertheless, both countries are stringent in their application of the law.

(i) France

France has various laws protecting freedom of speech. In reference to religion, Article 10 of the 1789 Declaration of Human and Civic Rights states that "no

one may be disturbed on account of his opinions, even religious ones, as long as the manifestation of such opinions does not interfere with the established Law and Order."

According to the 2019 USCIRF France report:
> In accordance with secular law, people employed by the government are not allowed to wear signs of religious affiliation in the workplace or in public spaces. A 2010 law prohibits face coverings in public places, including the wearing of a niqab or burqa; refusing to remove the face covering can result in a 150 euro fine.

(ii) Bahrain
Bahrain has anti-blasphemy laws that apply to all religions.
> The penal code calls for punishment of up to one year's imprisonment or a fine of up to 100 dinars ($270) for offending one of the recognized religious groups or their practices, or for openly defaming a religious figure considered sacred to members of a particular group. The law stipulates fines or imprisonment for insulting an institution, announcing false or malicious news, spreading rumors, encouraging others to show contempt for a different religious denomination or sect, illegally gathering, and advocating for a change of government, among other offenses. The law prohibits anti-Islamic publications and broadcast media programs and mandates imprisonment of no less than six months for 'exposing the state's official religion to offense and criticism (USCIRF, Bahrain, 2019).

Non-Muslims are not required to wear traditional Muslim clothing. The law allows non-Muslim places of worship to display religious symbols.

Analysis — In summary, French law allows for extensive freedom of speech in reference to religion while Bahrain maintains strict laws on speech in reference to religion. Both of these policies purport to uphold religious equality; in France, one may critique any religion, while in Bahrain there is no tolerance for criticism of any religion. These laws are a clear example of where France and Bahrain diverge ideologically, but the difference in approach does not mean one policy is more effective than the other in promoting equal access to religious expression. In France, varying definitions of hate speech and the government's high tolerance for criticism of religion can be exploited to target minority religions. In Bahrain, anti-blasphemy laws protect all religious groups from hate speech, but policy blatantly favors the interests of Muslim groups. While the laws in France and Bahrain are opposites in intention, they both result in bias towards the dominant religious group.

When comparing the two countries, Bahrain allows for more freedom in expressing religious affiliation in public spaces. French laws prohibiting face coverings directly infringe on Muslim women's abilities to fulfill religious duties, and the ban of ostentatious religious symbols in public settings does not allow citizens to express their religion freely. Religious dress is a significant aspect of many traditions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The prohibition of wearing religious garments violates an adherent's beliefs and negates religious freedom. Bahrain does not have specific laws regarding religious dress, though it should be noted that societal norms dictate a culture of modesty. That being said, as this paper is reviewing formal law, Bahrain is significantly less stringent in the ruling of religious dress from a policy perspective.

E. Religion in Education
(i) France
France's attempts to keep religion out of the public sphere are clearly reflected in policies surrounding religion in the public school system.

> Public schools are secular. The law prohibits public school employees from wearing visible signs of religious affiliation and students from wearing "conspicuous religious symbols," including the Muslim headscarf, Jewish skullcap, Sikh turban, and large Christian crosses (USCIRF, France, 2019).

In terms of private education:
> By law, the government subsidizes private schools, including those affiliated with religious organizations. In 98 percent of private schools, in accordance with the law, the government pays the teachers' salaries, provided the school accepts all children regardless of their religious affiliation. The law does not address the issue of religious instruction in government-subsidized private schools or whether students must be allowed to opt out of such instruction (USCIRF, France, 2019).

(ii) Bahrain
Because Bahrain is a Muslim state, religious instruction is heavily incorporated in the school system.
> The law regulates Islamic religious instruction at all levels of the education system. The government funds public schools for grades 1-12; Islamic studies are mandatory for all Muslim students and are optional for non-Muslims. Private schools must register with the government and, with a few exceptions (for example, a foreign funded and foreign operated school), are also required to provide Islamic religious education for Muslim

students. Private schools wishing to provide non-Islamic religious education to non-Muslims must receive permission from the Ministry of Education. (USCIRF, Bahrain, 2019)

In terms of private education:

The government also permits non-Muslim groups to offer religious instruction to their adherents in private schools. (USCIRF, Bahrain, 2019)

Analysis — While France maintains secularism within the educational system, the banning of religious symbols in schools infringes on religious freedom. As addressed earlier, the prohibition of religious garb violates the ability of an individual to freely practice their belief. Although Bahrain emphasizes Islam in education, the ability for non-Muslim students to opt out maintains religious freedom. Therefore, Bahrain allows for a higher degree of religious expression within the education system.

F. Anti-Terrorism Policy

The other sections of law described above have direct influence on the ability of religious adherents to practice their belief in the public and private spheres. Though anti-terrorism policy may not initially appear as an area of law that has an impact on religious freedom, both France and Bahrain have employed discriminatory practices labeled as tactics to fight extremism.

(i)) France

The French perception of religion's ties to terrorism is demonstrated by legislation that specifically targets religious institutions.

Counterterrorism legislation grants prefects in each department the authority to close a place of worship for a maximum of six months if they find comments, writings, or activities in the place of worship "provoke violence, hatred or discrimination or the commission of acts of terrorism or praise such acts of terrorism." The management of the place of worship has 48 hours to appeal the closure decision to an administrative court. Noncompliance with a closure decision carries a six-month prison sentence and a fine of 7,500 euros ($8,400) (USCIRF, France, 2019).

In March 2021, a bill aimed at combating radicalism and separatism (titled Supporting Respect for the Principles of the Republic) was passed through the lower house of Parliament and went to the Senate. On April 13th, 2021, the Senate added stipulations to the bill that were viewed as harsher than the initial proposals (Woods, 2021). The original bill would, among other things, restrict people from home-schooling their children, crack down on polygamy and forced marriages, and make the sharing of someone's private life and location illegal (N°

3649 rectifié, 2021). Excerpts from the edited bill are detailed below:

> If passed, the bill would, among other things, prohibit the wearing of the veil and other ostentatious religious symbols to persons accompanying school trips, allow the internal regulations of swimming pools and public bathing areas to prohibit the wearing of the burkini, and prevent the issuance and renewal of residence permits for individuals who are found to have expressed a rejection of the principles of the Republic (Loi confortant le respect des principes de la République, 2021).

> (ii) Bahrain
> There are penalties of up to five years in prison for encouraging or possessing materials that support "terrorist activities." Bahrain imposed one round of sanctions against individuals and entities affiliated with the Iranian regime's terror-support networks in the region. The government is also able to expel individuals who are suspected of terrorist activity (U.S. State Department, Report on Terrorism, Bahrain, 2019).

In terms of reconciliation efforts between the Sunni and Shi'a communities:

> In coordination with the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, a team of Ministry of Education-appointed experts routinely reviews and develops the Islamic studies of the public school curriculum to emphasize shared Islamic values between different Sunni and Shi'a schools of thought, reject extremism, and promote tolerance and coexistence (USCIRF, Bahrain, 2019).

Analysis — In both countries, many of the laws surrounding anti-terrorism efforts can be easily exploited to target specific groups of people. In France, the closing of worship centers has solely impacted mosques, while Bahrain's expulsion policy has primarily impacted leaders of the Shi'a community. France's new bill comes on the heels of a speech by President Macron condemning separatism in the country. While the legislative language does not name any religion directly, the explanatory statement preceding the bill states the following:

> An insidious but powerful communitarian entryism is slowly destroying the foundations of our society in certain areas. This entryism is essentially of Islamist inspiration. It is the manifestation of a conscious, theorized, politico-religious political project, the ambition of which is to make religious norms prevail over the common law that we have freely given ourselves (Loi nº 3649, 2021).

Because the bill refers to Islamism as the reason for the legislation, much of the proposal is aimed directly at Muslim communities. The recently added

stipulations show a harsher, more direct targeting of the Muslim community in France. Anti-terrorism policy in Bahrain targets members of the Shi'a community who are seen as causing separatism. This was prevalently displayed when the kingdom expelled a number of Shi'a individuals, who were eventually granted re-entry when no evidence of terrorist activity was found. In this sense, Bahrain and France are notably similar in their reasoning and justification for anti-extremist laws.

VI. Discussion

The results support the argument that a constitutionally secular country does not necessarily foster a higher degree of religious freedom than a religious state. Despite being ideologically opposed in reference to religion in government, France and Bahrain share overlaps in policy, as seen in the *Anti-Discrimination Laws, Registration with Government and Government Funding, and Anti-Terrorism Policy* sections of the analysis. Beyond policies that target or disproportionately impact a specific religious group, France and Bahrain employ inclusive anti-discrimination laws in their labor codes. In this case, both countries pledge to condemn religious discrimination in the hiring process or workplace. The countries employ similar registration policies for religious groups, directly tying legal access to practice and tax incentives to cooperation with state entities. A third overlap is in anti-terrorism efforts, often labeled as anti-extremist policies. France and Bahrain have enacted a number of alarming anti-extremism laws, often using vague wording (such as "terrorist activities" or "rejection to the principles of the Republic") that hand significant power to the government's interpretations of actions or words; the wording of laws allows for exploitation of the policies to fulfill specific agendas, as seen by Bahrain's expulsion of Shi'a individuals and French policymakers' justification for the "Supporting Respect for the Principles of the Republic" bill. While not all of the measures taken to combat extremism negatively impact specific religious communities, both countries have used anti-terrorism policies to target religious groups perceived as threatening to the state. A clear demonstration of the negative impacts of legislative rhetoric is reflected in the interchangeability of anti-terrorist and anti-extremist policies; in both countries, the targeted religious groups have become synonymous with terrorism. The similarities in the justifications and immediate outcomes of laws surrounding religious practice in France and Bahrain aid in showing that the label of "constitutionally secular" does not equate to increased levels of religious freedom, as both states are equally capable of implementing policies that positively and negatively impact religious expression.

In the sections *Religion in Education* and *Religion in the Public Sphere*, France and Bahrain display significant differences in approach. In both cases, Bahrain

exhibited higher degrees of tolerance for religious practice in public and for minority religious groups in general. France's policies on wearing ostentatious religious symbols in public spaces disproportionately impact the Muslim and Jewish communities, all of whom have integrated religious garb into their belief systems. Further, while Bahrain emphasizes Islam in education, the country allows for non-Muslim students to opt out of those classes and does not prohibit students from wearing alternative religious symbols. France has yet to create laws around the ability of students to opt out of religious instruction at private schools, despite most private schools being funded by the government. France's integration of discriminatory secular policy into the public sphere and the education system strengthens the argument that states with official religions, like Bahrain, can allow for higher levels of religious freedom in some areas of society. A potential explanation for this is how France and Bahrain approach religious identity. At its core, France's secular ideology attempts to ignore religious identity altogether. Nonetheless, the rise of radical Islam in the country, a Christian-majority population, and the dynamics between France and Muslim-majority former colonial countries led to the French Muslim community becoming an easily-targeted scapegoat. In Bahrain, however, the historical presence of non-Muslim religions and a national understanding of the importance of spiritual affiliation have allowed for a legal framework cognizant of religious identity. This is not to say that Bahrain has created the ideal legal structure, but instead that the recognition of religious affiliation's significance allows for development in the realm of religious freedom. France has shown regression in freedom of religious expression where Bahrain has displayed consistent progress; this trend further supports the theory that some religious states are appropriately situated to cultivate a society that offers higher degrees of religious freedom.

The findings of this paper are consistent with Asad's theory on secularism's potential to be discriminatory and builds on Bowen's observations of the French and Indonesian judicial systems. As showcased by secular laws in France disproportionately targeting and impacting Muslim individuals, the label of laïcité creates a wall of Western liberal ideology for policymakers to hide behind. Bowen argues that France and Indonesia, despite opposing views on the role of religion in the judicial system, adopt very similar policy positions. Bowen's focus on how each of the countries deals with religious discrimination in the courts yields primarily positive observations, and he notes that the foundations of both systems attempt to promote fairness and equality. Bowen's findings differ from the analysis of laws in this paper, which is likely because this paper focused on policy reaching beyond anti-discrimination laws and did not note the outcomes in judicial proceedings concerning religious discrimination. Even with the differences in tone between Bowen's findings and the analyses in this paper, the outcomes of

the study are in alignment with Bowen's conclusion; despite being on different ends of the ideological spectrum, a secular state and a religious state bear significant resemblance to each other in terms of the legal framework.

A. Addressing Inconsistencies with Freedom House

The laws explored in this study paint a picture of France and Bahrain as both employing policies that negatively impact a specific religious group. In some instances, Bahrain displayed higher degrees of religious tolerance, despite the West's view of secularism as more progressive. However, the findings of this paper are not reflected in Freedom House's scoring of France and Bahrain on religious freedom in their respective 2020 reports. As discussed earlier, the NGO ranked France a 3 out of 4 and Bahrain a 1 out of 4 in response to the following question: "Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?" The laws discussed in the analysis portion of this paper display France's various policies against public displays of religious affiliation; these laws blatantly interfere with expression of religious faith in public, implying that France should be scored lower than a 3 within the Freedom House framework. In the case of Bahrain, while there have been numerous infringements on religious freedom (specifically to target the Shi'a community), the report did not provide sufficient evidence to rank the country significantly below France. The report even notes that "non-Muslim minorities are generally free to practice their faiths." Freedom House then discusses government discrimination against the Shi'a population by citing the events of the Arab Spring in 2011 (a reference that does not reflect the contemporary political atmosphere in Bahrain) and the arrest of Shi'a clerics accused of spreading messages of separatism. However, the report also states that "Shiite communities are free to carry out religious observances, such as the annual Ashura processions," which exhibits a governmental commitment to religious freedom. Conversely, the 2020 French report describes current tensions saying, "Islamophobic rhetoric from prominent politicians and public figures on both the left and right is not uncommon. Multiple attacks at mosques throughout the country occurred in 2019." After a review of the 2020 Freedom Reports for France and Bahrain, it appears that there is inconsistency in the way Freedom House scores religious freedom. While there are numerous valid criticisms of the state of religious freedom in both countries, Freedom House ignored many laws in both France and Bahrain when scoring, resulting in a potentially skewed and inaccurate representation of the legal frameworks that unjustifiably favors France.

B. Limitations of Study

This was a limited case study, so these findings are merely a reflection of the

laws and policies addressing religious practice in France and Bahrain. While the framework used in this study could be applied to comparing religious freedom in other nations, other cases were not considered in this paper. Further limitations include the scope of the study, which consisted of governmental restrictions and focused on legal frameworks but did not address political rhetoric involvement in international treaties or agreements, or relations with secular and religious states. Further, this paper did not consider societal restrictions, which include the presence of anti-religious attacks, non-governmental groups that target religious communities, online rhetoric, and general hostility towards certain religious groups. Studies that explore these factors are necessary to gain a holistic understanding of the differing degrees of religious freedom in secular and religious countries.

VII. Conclusion

Comparing seven key areas of law within the French and Bahraini legal frameworks shows that there is significant overlap in legislation, intention, and policy outcomes. But how does this comparison link to the larger discussion around religious freedom and the validity of secularism? France, a country that prides itself on the value of laïcité, implements a number of discriminatory policies that predominantly impact Muslim citizens. In the public sphere, individuals who belong to faiths that utilize clothing as an expression of affiliation cannot practice their religions to the full extent. The idea of separating the religious self from the public self displays an understanding of religious belief as a secondary identity. For many, spiritual affiliation is a primary identity. Therefore, French laws surrounding religious practice are not applicable in a universal sense, nor do they foster a wide breadth of religious freedom for all faiths. Religious states, who are typically viewed as unable to foster high degrees of religious freedom, have equal opportunity to promote a religiously pluralistic society through legislation. While not all religious states choose to foster a space for minority religious groups, nations like Bahrain have made significant efforts to advance religious freedom. Though this study was limited to France and Bahrain, the countries are not outliers. While Bahrain deviates somewhat from other Gulf nations, Qatar, and to a lesser extent Oman, have legal frameworks in place to support spiritual pluralism and religious freedom. Other countries, such as Bhutan, Liechtenstein, Thailand, Andorra, and Brunei, are religious states viewed as fostering religious freedom. While there are religious states that suppress religious freedom, the analysis suggests that religious countries may be uniquely positioned to create legal frameworks inclusive of a population that views religious affiliation as a primary identity. Although Bahrain has not yet reached the point of fostering equal religious freedom for all groups, national policies show an understanding of the importance of ritual practice and religious identity.

Beyond supporting the hypothesis, the findings of this paper suggest the need for a shift in thinking when evaluating secular and religious states. As displayed by the inconsistencies in scoring throughout the Freedom House annual reports on France and Bahrain, the West remains biased in favor of secular European systems of government. Moving forward, Western NGOs and government agencies should consider viewing religious affiliation as a primary identity when assessing legal frameworks and government policies instead of using a secular lens as the default perspective. Further research on the capacities of religious states to promote religious freedom is necessary to coherently refute the notion of inherently progressive secularism and change the Western interpretation of which ideologies possess the ability to foster a free and prosperous society.

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Ronald Reagan and the Role of Humor in American Movement Conservatism

Abie Rohrig

In this paper, I argue that analysis of Reagan's rhetoric, and particularly his humor, illuminates many of the attitudes and tendencies of both conservative fusionism—the combination of traditionalist conservatism with libertarianism—and movement conservatism. Drawing on Ted Cohen's writings on the conditionality of humor, I assert that Reagan's use of humor reflected two guiding principles of movement conservatism that distinguish it from other iterations of conservatism: its accessibility and its empowering message. First, Reagan's jokes were accessible in that they are funny even to those who disagree with him politically; in Cohen's terms, his jokes were hermetic (requiring a certain knowledge to be funny), and not effective (requiring a certain feeling or disposition to be funny). The broad accessibility of Reagan's humor reflected the need of movement conservatism to unify constituencies with varying political feelings and interests. Second, Reagan's jokes were empowering—they presume and therefore posit the competence of their audience. Many of his jokes implied that if an average citizen were in charge of the government they could do a far better job than status quo bureaucrats. This tone demonstrated the tendency of movement conservatism to emphasize individual freedom and self-governance as a through line of its constituent ideologies.

In the first part of this paper, I offer some historical and political context for movement conservatism, emphasizing the ideological influences of Frank Meyer and William F. Buckley as well as the political influence of Barry Goldwater. I then discuss how Reagan infused many of Meyer, Buckley, and Goldwater's talking points with a humor that is both accessible and empowering. I will conclude by analyzing how Reagan's humor was a concrete manifestation of certain principles of fusionism.

Post-war conservatives found themselves in a peculiar situation: their school of thought had varying constituencies, each with different political priorities and

anxieties. George Nash writes in *The Conservative Intellectual Movement Since 1945*:[1]

> "The Right consisted of three loosely related groups: traditionalists or new conservatives, appalled by the erosion of values and the emergence of a secular, rootless, mass society; libertarians, apprehensive about the threat of the State to private enterprise and individualism; and disillusioned ex-radicals and their allies, alarmed by international Communism" (p. 118).

Conservative intellectuals like Frank Meyer and William F. Buckley attempted to synthesize conservative schools of thought into a coherent modern Right. In 1964, Meyer published *What is Conservatism?*, an anthology of conservative essays that highlight the similarities between different conservative schools of thought. Buckley founded the *National Review*, a conservative magazine that published conservatives of all three persuasions. Its *Mission Statement* simultaneously appeals to the abandonment of "organic moral order," the indispensability of a "competitive price system," and the "satanic utopianism" of communism.[2]

Both Meyer and Buckley thought that the primacy of the individual was an ideological belief through the line of traditionalism and libertarianism. Meyer wrote in *What is Conservatism?* that "the freedom of the person" should be "decisive concern of political action and political theory."[3] Russell Kirk, a traditionalist-leaning conservative, similarly argued that the libertarian imperative of individual freedom is compatible with the "Christian conception of the individual as flawed in mind and will" because religious virtue "cannot be legislated," meaning that freedom and virtue can be practiced and developed together.[4] The cultivation of the maximum amount of freedom that is compatible with traditional order thus became central to fusionist thought.

Barry Goldwater, a senator from Arizona and the 1964 Republican nominee for president, championed the hybrid conservatism of Buckley and Meyer. Like Buckley in his *Mission Statement*, Goldwater's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention included a compound message in support of "a free and competitive economy," "moral leadership" that "looks beyond material success for the inner meaning of [our] lives," and the fight against communism as the "principal disturber of peace in the world."[5] Goldwater also emphasized the fusionist freedom-order balance, contending that while the "single resolve" of the

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1   George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Open Road Media, 2014), 118-119.

2   William F. Buckley Jr, "Our mission statement." *National Review* 19 (1955).

3   Frank S. Meyer, ed., *What is Conservatism?* (Open Road Media, 2015).

4   Ted Cohen, *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3-4.

5   "Goldwater's 1964 Acceptance Speech," *Washington Post*, last modified 1998, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/daily/may98/goldwaterspeech.htm.

Republican party is freedom, "liberty lacking order" would become "the license of the mob and of the jungle."[6]

Having discussed the ideological underpinnings of conservative fusionism, I turn now to an analysis of how Reagan used humor as a tool for political framing.

First, Reagan's humor is distinctive for its accessibility: by this I mean that there are few barriers one must overcome to laugh at Reagan's jokes. In his book *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters*, philosopher Ted Cohen calls jokes "conditional" if they presume that "their audiences [are] able to supply a requisite background, and exploit this background."[7] The conditionality of a joke varies according to how much background it requires to be funny. In Cohen's terms, Reagan's jokes are not very conditional since many different audiences can appreciate their content. Cohen presents another distinction that is useful for analyzing Reagan's humor: a joke is hermetic if the audience's "background condition involves knowledge," and it is affective if it "depends upon feelings … likes, dislikes and preferences" of the audience).Reagan's jokes are not very conditional because they are at most hermetic, merely requiring some background knowledge to be appreciated— not a certain feeling or disposition— and that this makes his jokes funny even to people who disagree with him.

There are two ways in which Reagan's humor is accessible. The first is that many of his jokes have apolitical premises. By apolitical, I mean that the requisite knowledge required to make a joke funny does not directly relate to government or public affairs. For instance, Reagan said at the 1988 Republican National Convention, "I can still remember my first Republican Convention. Abraham Lincoln giving a speech that sent tingles down my spine."[8] To appreciate this joke, one only needs to know that Reagan is the oldest president to even hold office. This piece of knowledge does not pertain to the government in any direct way— in fact, this joke would remain funny even if it were told by a different person at a nonpolitical conference with a reference to a nonpolitical historical figure. Another example of Reagan's apolitical humor is a joke he made in the summer of 1981: "I have left orders to be awakened at any time in case of national emergency, even if I'm in a cabinet meeting."[9] All one needs to understand here is that long meetings are often boring and sleep-inducing. One can even love long meetings and still find this joke funny because they understand

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6   "Goldwater's 1964 Acceptance Speech."

7   Ted Cohen, *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3-4.

8   Ronald Reagan, "`George - Make It One More for the Gipper," *The Independent*, August 16, 1998, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/george-make-it-one-more-for-the-gipper-1172284.html.

9   John Wilson, *Talking with the President: The Pragmatics of Presidential Language* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 14-15.

the phenomenon of a boring, sleep-inducing meeting. Reagan made hundreds of these jokes during his time in office, all of which were, with few exceptions, funny to just about any listener. Their apolitical content ensured that no one political constituency would be unable to "get" Reagan's jokes.

The second way in which Reagan's humor is hermetic is that his political jokes were playful and had relatively innocuous premises, meaning that one did not have to agree with their sentiment to laugh. Reagan's political jokes can be differentiated from his apolitical jokes because they *do* require knowledge about government or public affairs in order to be funny. One such piece of knowledge is the inefficiency of government bureaucracy. For example, in his speech, "A Time for Choosing," Reagan says that "the nearest thing to eternal life we will ever see on this Earth is a government program."[10] In another speech, Reagan quips, "I have wondered at times about what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress."[11] The premises of these jokes, though political, are not very contentious. To find them funny one simply needs to know that bureaucracy can be inefficient, or even that there exists a sort of joke in which bureaucracies are teased for being inefficient; one does not need to hate bureaucracy or even want to reduce bureaucracy. Cohen might offer the following analogy to explain the conditionality of Reagan's bureaucracy jokes: one does not need to think that Polish people are actually stupid to laugh at a Polish joke, one simply needs to understand that there exists a sort of joke in which Polish people are held to be stupid. Reagan's inoffensive political jokes are playful, lighthearted, and careful not to alienate or antagonize the opposition by presuming a controversial belief.

The accessibility of Reagan's humor reflects the overall need for fusionism to appeal to a wide variety of conservative groups— traditionalists, libertarians and anti-communists. Instead of converting libertarians to traditionalism or vice versa, Nash writes that fusionists looked to foster agreement on "several fundamentals" of conservative thought.[12] Reagan's broadly accessible humor is both a concretization and a strategy for fusionism's broadly accessible ideology. The strategic potency of Reagan's humor lies in its ability to bond people together. Cohen writes that the "deep satisfaction in successful joke transactions is the sense held mutually by teller and hearer that they are joined in feeling."[13] Friedrich Nietzsche expresses a similar sentiment when he writes that "rejoicing in

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10   Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing Speech, October 27, 1964," 2022, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/reagans/ronald-reagan/time-choosing-speech-october-27-1964#:~:text=%22The%20Speech%22%20is%20what%20Ronald,his%20acting%20career%20closed%20out.

11   Ned Sherrin, *Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 278.

12   Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 270.

13   Cohen, *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts*, 25.

our joy, not suffering over our suffering, makes someone a friend."[14] This joint feeling brings people together even more than a shared belief since the moment of connection is more visceral and immediate.

One might ask, however; is it not the case that all politicians value humor as a means to connect with their audience and unify their constituencies? Why is Reagan's humor any different? While humor can be used for a broader range of political goals, politicians often connect with one group at the expense of another. For example, when asked what she would tell a male supporter who believed marriage was between one man and one woman, Senator Elizabeth Warren responded, "just marry one woman. I'm cool with that— assuming you can find one."[15] Some democrats praised this joke for its dismissal of homophobic beliefs, but others felt that the joke was condescending and antagonistic. This is the sort of divisive joke that Reagan was uninterested in— one that pleases one of his constituencies at the expense of another. Reagan would also avoid much of Donald Trump's humor. For instance, Trump wrote in 2016, "I refuse to call Megyn Kelly a bimbo, because that would not be politically correct. Instead I will only call her a lightweight reporter!"[16] Trump's dismissal of "political correctness" is liberating to some but offensive to others. By contrast, Reagan's exoteric style of humor welcomes all the constituencies of conservative fusion. Nash writes that fusionists were "tired of factional feuding," and thus Reagan had no motivation to drive a larger wedge between traditionalists and libertarians.[17]

The second thing to note about Reagan's humor is its empowering tone. This takes two forms. First, Reagan elevates his audience by implying that if they controlled the government, they could do a far better job, a message which presumes and therefore posits their competence. For instance, in "A Time For Choosing," Reagan argues that one complicated anti-poverty program could be made more effective by simply sending cash directly to families.[18] In doing so, Reagan suggests that if any given audience member were in charge of the program, they could do a better job than the bureaucrats. Second, Reagan's insistence on limited government affirms the average citizen's capacity for self-government. Reagan famously states that "the nine most terrifying words in the

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14   Daniel I. Harris, "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche," *Symposium*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2015): 199-221.

15   Grace Panetta, "Elizabeth Warren Brings Down the House at CNN LGBT Town Hall With a Fiery Answer on Same-Sex Marriage," *Business Insider*, October 11, 2019. https://www.businessinsider.com/elizabeth-warren-brings-down-house-cnn-lgbt-town-hall-video-2019-10.

16   Colin Campbell, "Donald Trump: I 'Refuse' to Call Megyn Kelly a 'Bimbo.'" *Business Insider*, January 27, 2016.

17   Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 118-119.

18   Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing Speech, October 27, 1964," 2022, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/reagans/ronald-reagan/time-choosing-speech-october-27-1964#:~:text=%22The%20Speech%22%20is%20what%20Ronald,his%20acting%20career%20closed%20out.

English language are, 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'"[19] Since this implies that government aid will leave you worse off, it also posits the average citizen's capacity for autonomy and therefore their maturity, level-headedness, and overall competence.

The empowering tone of Reagan's humor reflects fusionism's emphasis on individual freedom and independence. Meyer writes that "the desecration of the image of man, the attack alike upon his freedom and his transcendent dignity, provide common cause" for both traditionalists and libertarians against liberals.[20] Yet, a presupposition of a belief in freedom is a belief in people's faculty to be free, to not squander their freedom on pointless endeavors or let their freedom collapse into chaos. This freedom-order balance is fundamental to fusionism as an ideology that straddles support from libertarians who want as little government intervention as possible with traditionalists who want the state to maintain certain societal values. By positing the competence of the free individual in his jokes, Reagan affirms Russell Kirk's idea that moral order will arise organically from individual freedom, not government coercion.

In this paper, I argue that one of Reagan's marks on the development of conservative thought was his careful use of humor to reflect certain ideological and practical commitments of post-war fusionism. By making his jokes accessible to the varying schools of conservatism and propounding the capacity of the individual for self-government, Reagan's humor functioned as both a manifestation and a strategy for fusionism's post-war triumph.

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19   "News Conference." Reaganfoundation.org. 2012. https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/reagan-quotes-speeches/news-conference-1/.

20   Meyer, *What is conservatism?*, 63.

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Against the Mainstream:
How Modern Monetary Theory and the
Myth of Millionaire Tax Flight Challenge
Conventional Wisdom

Justin Lee

I. Introduction

Changing entrenched beliefs about economics is a difficult task, for it is challenging to distill fragmented facts into prudent judgements. As economic theories rely heavily on assumptions and macroeconomic statistics, a critical divergence exists between ideas most persuasive to the mainstream and those best supported by logic and empirical evidence.

In this paper, I will analyze the central tenets of the modern monetary theory (MMT), a recent proposal that governments with sovereign currencies, rather than domestic taxpayers, solely finance all public spending.[1] Furthermore, I will relate the misconceptions about public spending, which MMT rebuts, to the idea of millionaire tax flight, a novel refutation against claims of the severity of debt crises.[2] I will demonstrate parallels in the history of reception and ideological grounds of these two concepts where epistemic and social structures preclude the acceptance of such arguments among "mainstream" economic ideas. Lastly, I will provide an overview of the possible groups that not only have vested interests in blocking these ideas but have also created certain inhibitive barriers to them. This report will use evidence to advocate on the two arguments' behalf and will identify their shared characteristics that make them distinct from other contemporary policy issues.

II. Background

President Ronald Reagan once proclaimed: "We don't have a trillion-dollar debt because we haven't taxed enough; we have a trillion-dollar debt because we

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1   Kelton, Stephanie. *The Deficit Myth: Modern Monetary Theory and How to Build a Better Economy.* John Murray, 2020. 3.

2   Reinhart, Carmen M., and Kenneth S. Rogoff. 2011. "From Financial Crash to Debt Crisis." *American Economic Review*, 101 (5): 1676-1706.

spend too much."[3] Such conventional wisdom forms when the vast majority of people come to accept a group of ideas as fact. The misconception that the federal government cannot "spend beyond its means" and that millionaires flee high-tax areas by any means necessary has been propagated through numerous channels - most notably, media outlets such as Fox News[4] - over the years by combining both personal experience and "common sense." What happens, however, when there is new data presented that goes against the stream of ideas already established? What if these novel ideas rely upon an entirely different logical foundation for their support? What if the "common sense" originally used as the basis for prior justifications was incomplete or even flawed?

An idea does not become "conventional wisdom" and gain "acceptance into the mainstream" for its proven veracity; rather, it becomes accepted as an absolute truth through its promotion by influential media outlets and politicians. Recent history has taught us that some "plausible ideas" should not deserve their wide acceptance as scientific inquiry demands. Since the 1980s, for example, the concept of a non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU) has been prominently accepted as an influential theory among most economists.

A NAIRU is the unemployment rate of an economy associated with a constant rate of inflation; a rise in unemployment is associated with a decrease in inflation, whereas a decline in unemployment causes an increase.[5] Despite the success of Milton Friedman's explanation for the "natural" rate of unemployment throughout most of the 1970s and 1980s, economic data in the years since the mid-1990s have weakened Friedman's case. The US economy has seen low unemployment and low changes in inflation as well as high unemployment and high changes in inflation.[6] In fact, Robert Gordon pointed out the external supply shocks caused during the early 1970s in an effort to display "inflation initiated not by excess demand but by commodity shortages,"[7] circumstances that are quite noticeable in the fluctuating consumption patterns and supply chain issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.[8] In spite of these recent developments and their implications on Friedman's original hypothesis, the NAIRU remains "an important

3   Reagan, Ronald. "Remarks at the National Legislative Conference of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL - CIO." Ronald Reagan | Presidential Library & Museum. National Archives, April 5, 1982.
4   "Rep. Nancy Mace: Let's Talk about US Government Debt – and How to Fix This Mess." Fox News. FOX News Network, October 20, 2021. https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/government-debt-how-fix-mess-rep-nancy-mace.
5   Friedman, Milton. "The Role of Monetary Policy." *American Economic Review* 58, no. 01, p.8, March 1968.
6   Del Negro, Marco, Michele Lenza, Giorgio E. Primiceri, and Andrea Tambalotti. 2020. "What's up with the Phillips Curve?" *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, Spring, 301-373.
7   Gordon, Robert J. 1975. "Alternative Responses of Policy to External Supply Shocks," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*. Economic Studies Program, The Brookings Institution. Vol. 6(1). 183-206.
8   The steep changes seen at the end of the graph shown below reflect the changes in the unemployment rate and the Consumer Price Index since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 through December 2021.

building block of business cycle theory."[9]
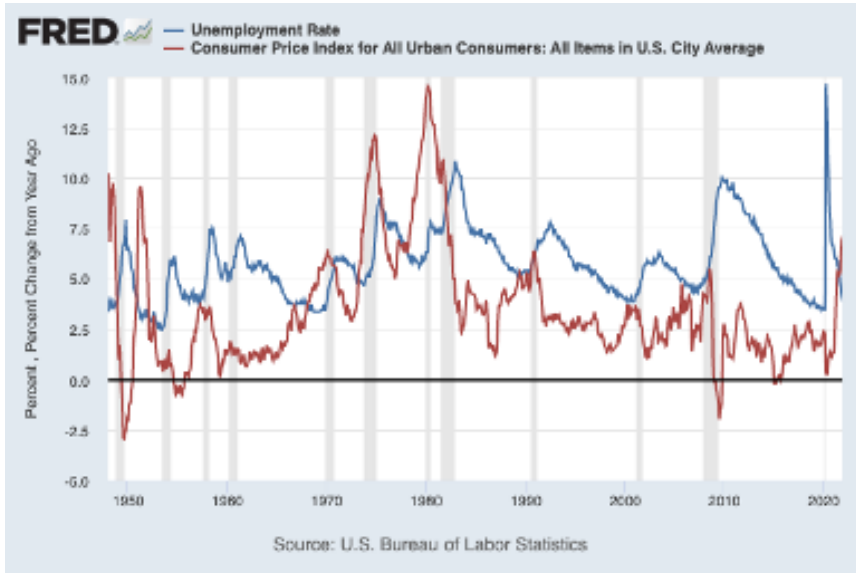
Figure 1: Unemployment Rate and the Percent Change in the CPI since 1950

Routinely, little efforts have been made to temper an "inflation equals bad" mentality that plagues the public in the United States[10] every few years.[11] Similar futile simplifications are made about raising taxes for the rich as politicians claim that the wealthy will flee in droves,[12] causing large drops in tax revenue – a claim that relies largely on hypothetical posturing rather than definitive evidence in its favor.

The resolution of these two policy problems requires the reversal of hardened opinions among the general public and hard-nosed experts alike. Rising prices can be inconvenient for many – businesses may need to change their "sticker" prices while workers may not be able to renegotiate with their employers for higher wages until the end of their current contracts. Likewise, most Americans are neither millionaires nor billionaires and may often have an incomplete perception of what their life decisions would be like if they were not burdened by personal financial

9   Ball, Laurence, and N. Gregory Mankiw. "The NAIRU in Theory and Practice." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 16, no. 04, p.134. Fall 2002.

10   Interestingly, this phenomenon is not unique solely to the United States. Scheve shows that the public aversion to inflation occurs quite uniformly around the world.

11   Scheve, Kenneth. "Public Inflation Aversion and the Political Economy of Macroeconomic Policymaking." *International Organization* 58, no. 01 (2004). https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818304581018.

12   Young, Cristobal. "Chris Christie Says High State Taxes Drive Millionaires Away. Here's Why He's Mistaken." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, June 9, 2016.

pressures. Such misunderstandings include failing to account for one's close network of friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers that shapes one's decisions to move. These circumstances are what make it so difficult to propose ideas that run counter to what many have grown to accept as convention.

III. Analysis
A. Perception Versus Reality

Misconceptions about both MMT and millionaire tax flight stem from fundamental differences between public perceptions of the two phenomena and their true implications. The media is partly to blame for this misalignment. From deficit hawks in Congress to political pundits on talk shows, the term "government deficit" is commonly used as a pejorative to counter any argument in favor of increased public spending. While prominent public figures, including billionaire Elon Musk,[13] may perceive the government budget as identical to the personal spending habits of everyday Americans or even small, local businesses, the reality is that the United States federal government – specifically the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve – is the only entity that retains the right to issue dollars.[14] As a nation with a sovereign currency, the United States has complete discretion over its money supply and interest rates; it can also issue intergenerational debt. This could not be further from the truth for a household, which relies upon income to buy goods and services, or a business, which uses profits to fund production, investment in inventories, and innovation. As I will examine in further detail in a later section, the fallacies underlying perceptions of the federal budget reverberate across the political spectrum, ranging from cries for a smaller government during the Reagan/Thatcher era to proclamations of "tightening belts"[15] by President Obama in his 2010 State of the Union Address.[16]

"Crowding out," the idea that economic activity contracts with deficit-financed expenditures, is one of the most common rebuttals to increased public spending.[17] The neoliberal view of the crowding out effect entails the government competing with private entrepreneurs for capital to finance public spending. However, proponents of the idea that private investment will be "crowded out" if a government spends "beyond its means" fail to consider that the United States is

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13   Zakaria, Fareed. "Elon Musk's Diatribe against Subsidies Ignores the History of the Tech Industry." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, December 9, 2021.

14   Mitchell, William, L. Randall Wray, and Martin Watts. 2019. *Macroeconomics*. London: Red Globe Press.

15   In reference to stabilizing the federal budget through restrictive fiscal policy, perhaps lowering public spending and raising taxing, hence "tightening" the budget.

16   Obama, Barack. "The 2010 State of the Union Address." Speech, Washington, DC, January 27, 2010. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address.

17   Mitchell, Matthew D., and Jakina R. Debnam. "In the Long Run, We're All Crowded Out." Mercatus Center. Mercatus Center at George Mason University, September 15, 2019. https://www.mercatus.org/publications/regulation/long-run-we%E2%80%99re-all-crowded-out.

an issuer of its own sovereign currency. Any amount of public spending that exceeds tax revenue is merely printed and issued by the US Treasury. The purpose of selling bonds after an increase in government expenditures is not necessarily to finance these payments but rather to "prevent a large infusion of reserves from pushing the overnight interest rate below the Fed's target level."[18] When the federal government chooses to increase deficit spending, US Treasuries take the place of the reserve balances and maintain the aggregate quantity of reserves in the financial system. In other words, "Uncle Sam [does not] enter the market in competition with other borrowers,"[19] such as Citigroup or Morgan Stanley.

　　We see a similar divide between perception and reality for the myth of the millionaire tax flight. According to the Global Wealth Report of 2021, only eight percent of Americans are considered millionaires, those presumably most knowledgeable about millionaire migration.[20] However, the perception that millionaires will definitely flee their well-nested homes for lower tax regions lingers in a large segment of the non-millionaire population. In reality, while 47% of millionaire migrations in the United States from 1999 to 2011 were from high-tax to low-tax states, roughly 32% of such migrations occurred in the opposite direction.[21] While this result is not insignificant, there is no discernible causal relationship in which a tax hike will dramatically force millionaires to states that have lower taxes - a prospect state governments may fear will drive down local tax revenues.
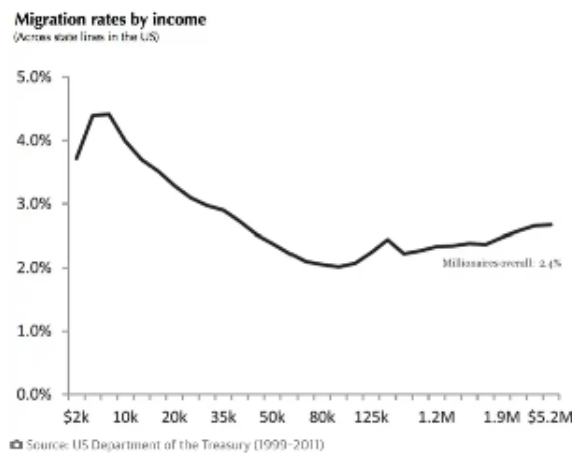
Figure 2: Percent of US population migrating[22]

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18   Kelton, *The Deficit Myth*, 117.
19   Ibid., 120.
20   Research Institute. *Global wealth report 2021*. Credit Suisse. June 2021.
21   Young, Cristobal. *The Myth of Millionaire Tax Flight: How Place Still Matters for the Rich*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018. 24.
22   Young, Cristobal. "If You Tax the Rich, They Won't Leave: US Data Contradicts Millionaires' Threats." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, November 20, 2017.

An interesting case study is seen in the counties that border the states of Oregon and Washington, all of which are located in a region with the highest relative difference in income taxes between bordering states. Logically, one would expect more millionaires to live in the state with relatively low income taxes – Washington – rather than the state with relatively high income taxes – Oregon. However, the data shows that millionaires tend to cluster in Oregon rather than Washington even after considering tax codes that have been in place for many years.[23]

While the story of the Oregon-Washington border is unusual – most data indicates that in other border regions, millionaires "tend to cluster on the low-tax side overall"[24] – there is no evidence that outlines a significant causal relationship between areas of greater taxation and areas with higher rates of millionaire migration.
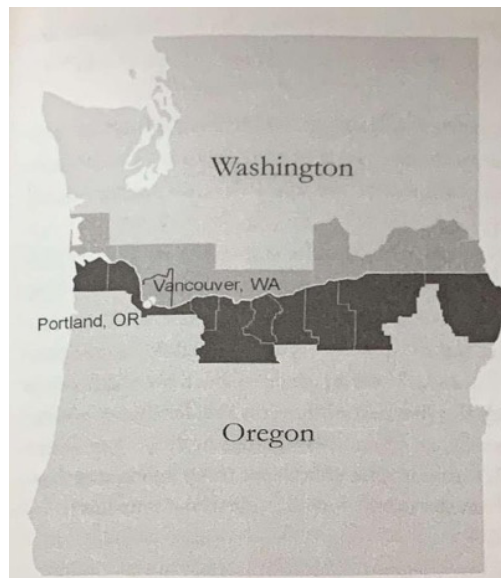
Figure 3: Counties bordering Washington and Oregon[25]

B. Doomsday is coming!

When new public spending measures are proposed to combat a recession, cries about the "debt ceiling" from fear-mongering politicians usually arise.[26] Other figures, such as former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, flirt with the falla-

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23   Young, *The Myth of Millionaire Tax Flight*, 31.
24   Ibid.
25   Young, Cristobal, Charles Varner, Ithai Z. Lurie, and Richard Prisinzano. "Millionaire Migration and Taxation of the Elite: Evidence from Administrative Data." *American Sociological Review* 81, no. 3 (June 2016): 421–46.
26   Krugman, Paul. "Wonking Out: Very Serious Folk Economics." *The New York Times.* The New York Times, February 11, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/11/opinion/folk-economics-monetary-policy.html.

cy of cratering tax revenues caused by millionaire migration.[27] If the rift between perception and reality presented earlier can be attributed to a lack of detailed economic expertise among the general public, then the parallels between MMT and the myth of millionaire tax flight presented here demonstrate how reality has been warped into shaping false narratives about the potential for drastic economic reform.

Recent data indicating that unemployment and inflation do not perfectly align with the NAIRU theory presented in the background section may signal the dogmatic nature of academics within the field of economics. To illustrate this point, it is worth scrutinizing academic discourse relating to the 2008 financial crisis. For instance, "too big to fail" was a common platitude offered by economic "experts" in the early 2000s as a way to divert public scrutiny from concerning behavior among Wall Street banks, such as the rising number of mergers and increasingly predatory loans.[28] However, once an impending economic disaster loomed and the federal government stepped in to rescue Wall Street, these same experts responded with confusion over where their models had gone severely wrong. As Nobel laureate Paul Krugman writes, "more important [than economists' predictive failure] was the profession's blindness to the very possibility of catastrophic failures in a market economy."[29]

Meanwhile, the Troubled Asset Relief Program was welcomed with open arms by financial institutions seeking to rid their balance sheets of illiquid assets.[30] Yet when it came to increasing public expenditure to support low- and middle-income Americans affected by the subprime mortgage crisis, academics such as then Treasury Secretary Larry Summers deemed public spending to be excessive and costly.[31] This 180-degree shift in tone lies at the core of the MMT argument; the federal government had the ability to both provide greater fiscal stimulus and purchase Wall Street's toxic assets because the United States is an issuer of its own sovereign currency.[32]

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27   Young, Cristobal. "Chris Christie Says High State Taxes Drive Millionaires Away. Here's Why He's Mistaken."

28   Gorton, Gary, and Ellis W. Tallman. "Too Big to Fail Before the Fed." *The American Economic Review* 106, no. 5 (2016): 528–32. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43861076.

29   Krugman, Paul. "How Did Economists Get It so Wrong?" *The New York Times*. The New York Times, September 2, 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/06/magazine/06Economic-t.html.

30   Herd-Clark, Dawn, and Komanduri S. Murty. "The Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP): What Has It Accomplished in the Obama Era?" *Race, Gender & Class* 20, no. 3/4 (2013): 130–46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43496937.

31   Hirsh, Michael, and National Journal. "The Comprehensive Case against Larry Summers." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, September 13, 2013.

32   I will not belabor this point too much here, but perceptions of public spending can vary according to who benefits. The Occupy Wall Street Movement is a great example of the ire of many towards the federal government during the financial crisis.
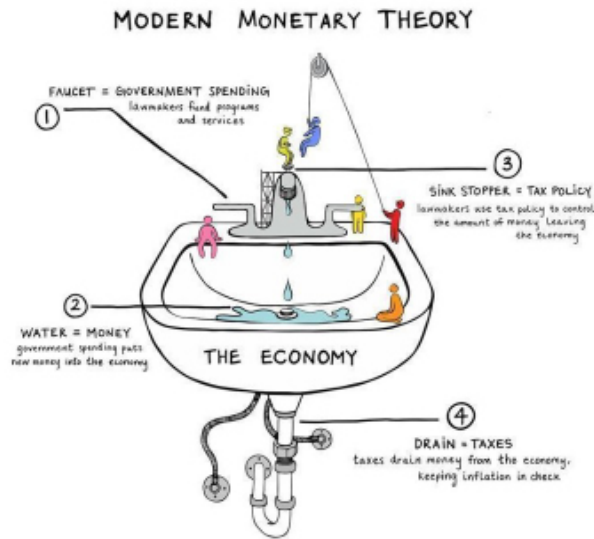
Figure 4: How MMT accounts for market/government interactions on taxation and public spending[33] [34]

Likewise, politicians have boldly proclaimed that tax hikes on millionaires will lead to their disastrous departure.[35] Using data from the same study presented earlier on millionaire migrations between 1999 and 2011, we see that overall migration patterns among millionaires tend to be very subtle with only 2.4% of them choosing to migrate. Only a small portion – just 0.3% – of the total millionaire population chose to migrate from a high-tax state to a low-tax state.[36] Beyond ignoring the clear evidence that makes the millionaire tax flight argument dubious, politicians also downplay the importance of location as a crucial form of social capital.

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33   Ryssdal, Kai, Maria Hollenhorst, and Rose Conlon. "Ever Heard of Modern Monetary Theory?" Marketplace. Minnesota Public Radio, January 24, 2019.

34   This diagram may seem quite simplistic, but it depicts the key concepts upon which MMT is built. MMT does not introduce any new theories; rather, it points out the basic aspects of modern finance from a different perspective.

35   Young, "Chris Christie Says High."

36   Young, *The Myth of Millionaire Tax Flight*, 25.

Percentage of individuals migrating
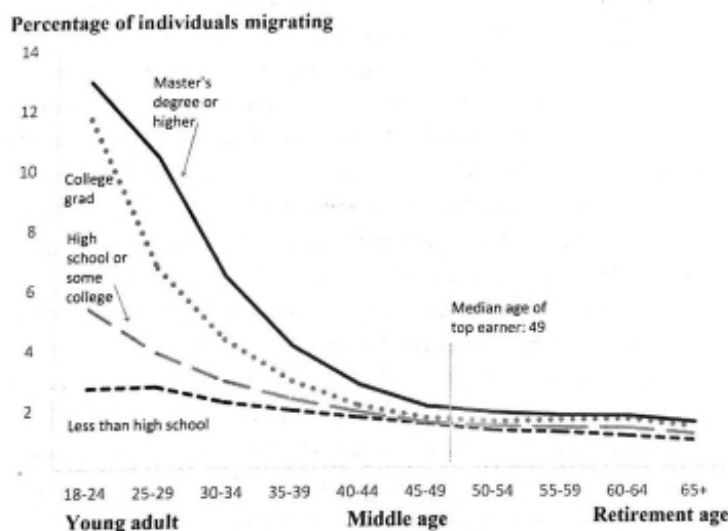
Figure 5: Migration Rates by Age, for Different Levels of Education[37][38]

While there are numerous interpersonal factors that contribute to a person's decision to move, the strongest drivers of migration include the prospect of greater economic opportunity or an immediate danger that threatens personal safety, neither of which are of particular concern for the average superstar athlete or hedge fund manager.[39] For a person who has attained a certain level of "elite income," interpersonal relationships and connections are "immobile" factors that influence this person's wellbeing far beyond their marginal tax bracket.[40] Such considerations, which are undoubtedly important to the social interactions of any group of people, are conveniently left out in the propagation of the myth of millionaire tax flight. Like the challenges that proponents of MMT face, these obstacles prevent substantial reforms towards more equitable taxation laws.

37   U.S. Census Bureau. *American Community Survey*, 2005-2014. United States Department of Commerce.
38   While the data on the causality between income level and migration is not concrete, there is, however, a sharp difference in the rates of migration across education levels. This could be for a wide array of reasons, but what is clear is that this gap virtually disappears by the time these individuals reach middle age. Perhaps social factors and a desire to leave one's hometown are strong motivations to migrate in young adulthood, but middle age tends to force these individuals to settle down – which may, yet again, signal the value of one's social networks.
39   Kleven, Henrik, Camille Landais, Mathilde Muñoz, and Stefanie Stantcheva. "Taxation and Migration: Evidence and Policy Implications." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 34, no. 2 (2020): 119–42. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26913187.
40   Young, *The Myth of Millionaire Tax Flight*, 73.

C. The Bulwarks Against Change

Contemporary discourse on public spending conveniently fails to acknowledge the ability for the Federal Reserve to curb massive inflation through their control of interest rates and untapped potential revenues from higher taxes on the ultra-wealthy. As discussed, deficit-averse politicians use fear-mongering and scare tactics to deter support for these ideas. Their adamance reveals a similarity between those who stand to lose if such policies are enacted.

MMT economists view public spending as a way to stimulate a lagging economy and use their novel theory as a means to justify higher expenditures in areas such as social welfare, healthcare benefits, and infrastructure investments. The beneficiaries of such programs include the elderly, the poor, and the sick – more generally the non-millionaire/billionaire class. Since the start of neoliberalism's grip on Washington in the 1980s, deficit hawks have decried the prospect of increased government spending on social programs. Yet, these same government officials openly endorsed the $8 trillion "War on Terror"[41] as well as the allocation of billions of dollars in discretionary spending to the Pentagon every year. On the flip side of the deficit debate, tax reform has been on the legislative agenda for years, but in recent decades, such reforms have been more regressive than ones made in the past.[42]

Any effort to stymie raising taxes on millionaires has brought about a constant propagation of the myth of the millionaire tax flight by politicians and academics alike. Harvard economist Martin Feldstein claims that higher state taxes on the wealthy have little effect on redistributing income and merely lead to greater migration by the wealthy.[43] Such misrepresentations of government finance and migration trends may originate from the entrenched view of such matters within economics. However, it is certain that political lobbying, particularly in the years after the Supreme Court's *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision,[44] has allowed the interests of the wealthy to be overrepresented in legislative decisions on public spending and tax reform.

We often see that these obstacles prevent substantive action for other policy problems as well, such as combating climate change, dismantling the prison industrial complex, or engaging in international trade wars. In all of these instances, the vested interests of the donor class take charge. MMT and the myth of millionaire tax flight occupy unique positions among these challenging policy problems due to

41   Aftergood, Steven, and Neta C. Crawford. "Economic Costs." *The Costs of War*. Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, September 2021.

42   Gale, William G. "A Fixable Mistake: The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act." *Brookings*. The Brookings Institution, September 25, 2019.

43   Feldstein, Martin and Marian Vaillant. 1994. Can state taxes redistribute income? *Journal of Public Economics* 68(3): 369-396.

44   "Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission." Oyez. Accessed December 10, 2021.

their potential for dramatic economic change among the benefiting stakeholders. It is even possible to create a parallel between the two ideas, as MMT views progressive taxation as a means to promote a more equitable society rather than as a hindrance for public programs. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that America's millionaires use arguments such as the myth of millionaire tax flight to prevent higher taxation on the wealthy and the alarmism over deficits in order to curtail social spending.

D. The Rhetoric of Politics

Appealing to conventional wisdom is often a politically convenient argument to employ. Explaining every minute aspect of government finance takes time and effort and is – more importantly – unrelatable for most voters. The stagnation of real wages since the 1970s has forced middle- and lower-income households to grow accustomed to restricting their spending habits.[45] Listening to rhetoric of their elected officials "wasting away" their hard-earned tax dollars can incite ire among constituents, making ideas such as modern monetary theory appear far-fetched. One study conducted by Kendall, Nannicini, and Trebbi indicates that such rhetoric has a meaningful impact on politicians' public perceptions.[46]

This is perhaps the reason why the politicians mentioned in (Section A)[47] were unanimous in agreement over concerns about the fiscal deficit. While the degree of this agreement varies between politicians,[48] there appears to be a reluctance to take the MMT perspective on this issue. Perhaps the word "deficit" being written in big, red letters on the minds of voters on Election Day is political suicide for anyone who dares to be portrayed as a proponent of reckless spending. The convenience of political arguments against higher taxes on the rich is similar to that of arguments echoed in the debate against higher corporate taxes – that the wealthy and resourceful create jobs for others and therefore require lower tax rates to create opportunities for wealth that "trickle down"[49] to the rest of the population. These long-established views have become entrenched in the common sense of the public and have rendered idiosyncratic ideas incapable of breaking into the

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45   Congressional Research Service. *CRS Report: Real Wage Trends*, 1979 to 2019. United States Congress.
46   Kendall, Chad, Tommaso Nannicini, and Francesco Trebbi. 2015. "How Do Voters Respond to Information? Evidence from a Randomized Campaign." *American Economic Review*, 105 (1): 322-53.
47   The rhetoric of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Barack Obama were discussed in Section i: Perception versus reality.
48   President Reagan famously said in his 1981 inaugural address, "Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem." Meanwhile, President Obama, while still recognizing its prevalence, did not use the traditional talking points about the fiscal deficit to rebuke greater public spending during his presidency.
49   While "trickle down" economics is a blanket term largely attributed to more conservative politicians and economists, I do not draw a clear distinction here conservative and liberal fiscal policies, for both sides largely misunderstand the tenets of modern monetary theory.

mainstream.

IV. Conclusions and a Way Forward

Both ideas examined in this paper rely upon very basic truths – (1) no one outside of the US Treasury and the Federal Reserve can issue US dollars, and (2) millionaires, no matter how much wealthier they may be than the average American, rely upon and seek to maintain their established social networks. Accepting these two statements as facts can drastically alter policy discussions on both public spending and taxation on a federal level.

Time is arguably the most critical component to changing public perceptions of social spending and equitable tax reform. Even Stephanie Kelton, one of the leading experts on MMT, admits that she herself was skeptical upon her first encounter with the theory.[50] The benefit of hindsight has revealed the shortcomings of the global economic order, especially in the aftermath of the Great Recession. The crisis presented itself as an opportunity for decisive action in a new direction, but instead, haste and imprudence allowed fiscal austerity to captivate the minds of leaders and economists around the world.[51] While MMT is far from a panacea for all economic uncertainties, even economists who are more supportive of the traditional view on fiscal deficits, such as N. Gregory Mankiw, have recognized that MMT provides some useful insights that the traditional view may have historically overlooked.[52]

The COVID-19 pandemic may serve as an inflection point for a more active role of governments in markets as countries around the world have increased their public spending to avoid recessions.[53] It is here, however, that an important limiting rule of MMT must be mentioned - inflation. In the event of large spikes in prices - as is the case at the time of this writing in Spring 2022 - using MMT as a blank check to drive up public spending would not be prudent and would likely make the inflationary crisis worse. During such times, coordination between fiscal and monetary authorities to adjust interest rates and temper expectations of future inflation is vital.[54]

Despite these limitations, circumstantial anomalies should not render the entire idea invalid. To truly tackle challenging policy problems, we must look to audacious economic ideas such as Modern Monetary Theory and refute arcane,

50   Kelton, *The Deficit Myth*, 3.
51   Blyth, Mark. *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
52   Mankiw, N. Gregory. "A Skeptic's Guide to Modern Monetary Theory." Prepared for January 2020 AEA Meeting. Harvard University, December 12, 2019.
53   International Monetary Fund. "Policy Responses to COVID-19," July 2, 2021. International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#U.
54   Krugman, Paul. "How High Inflation Will Come Down." *The New York Times.* The New York Times, March 24, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/24/opinion/inflation-united-states-economy.html.

baseless ones such as the myth of millionaire tax flight. If governments can admit wrongdoing on policy decisions and millionaires can recognize the value of their social circles, conventional economic wisdom too has the potential to adopt bold, new ideas.

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The Relationship Between Education and Welfare Dependency

Aiden Cliff

Several studies have described the correlation between welfare dependency and factors such as welfare conditionality, gender, and high school or college graduation rates. Using Annual Social and Economics Supplement Data (ASEC) from 2009 through 2019, downloaded from sources such as IPUMS CPS, this paper crafts an OLS regression model to find the relationship that years of completed education have on welfare dependency status. This paper concludes that there is a negative correlation between higher education levels and lower participation in the welfare system, with the completion of one additional year of schooling suggesting a decrease in the probability of needing welfare by 0.1%. While this correlation is small, it is still statistically significant in the linear probability model due to a large sample size (n = 145,431). After adding other explanatory variables, such as measures for race, biological sex, and employment status to control for endogeneity, further regressions confirm that there is still a statistically significant negative relationship between education and welfare dependency. These results suggest that policymakers should focus on educational subsidies over welfare subsidies to increase social mobility.

I. Introduction

Education is often referred to as an essential mechanism in promoting social mobility (Haveman, 2006). However, the rising costs of education in America have forced many individuals to require more income to pay off student loans. As a result, families who are enrolled in welfare programs are spending a larger portion of their income on student debt, correlated with an increased reliance on such welfare programs and a positive feedback loop that makes it more difficult to climb out of welfare dependency (Johnson, 2019). In addition, most welfare programs have substantial requirements that, rather than helping recipients to

get out of poverty, restrain recipients from escaping the welfare system (Rupp et al, 2020). This, and other societal pressures, have forced lots of students to put a pause on their education and work at low-skilled jobs with minimal pay, keeping them reliant on welfare programs (Johnson, 2019). This vicious cycle will only cause more people to remain trapped within welfare programs, preventing them from escaping poverty and improving their livelihoods.

Previous studies have shown that education levels are correlated with the probability of a welfare recipient returning to welfare in the future (London, 2008). Other studies have also shown how changes in the welfare system have improved welfare recipients' education qualifications and subsequently their employment opportunities (Hernaes, 2017). London's (2008) study focused on how attaining a higher educational degree allows welfare recipients to improve their employment opportunities, reduce their welfare dependency, and reduce their overall family poverty levels by 63%. Meanwhile, Hernaes et.al (2017) found that more conditionality in welfare programs helped Norwegian teenagers from welfare-recipient families reduce their reliance on welfare programs; and lower the country's high school dropout rate by 21%. In addition, Pacheo & Maloney (2003) found that intergenerational welfare participation differs between genders due to family characteristics such as household size and parents' welfare dependency. As a result, young females tend to have lower educational attainment and are nearly two times as probable of relying on welfare in the future when compared to their male counterparts (Pacheo et al, 2003).

Based on the insights offered by the studies above, this paper aims to contribute to this field by investigating the hypothesis that years of schooling completed reducing the probability of receiving welfare in the future. Factors of endogeneity will also be analyzed through the implementation of explanatory variables such as race (Courtney, 1996), sex (Bakas, 2014), number of children (Arulampalam, 2000), marital status (Hoffman, 1997), hours worked (Bick et al, 2018) and employment status (Arranz, 2004) into the regression model. These variables were chosen due to past publications finding possible links between this psychographics and demographics to welfare benefits. Preliminary hypotheses predict that there will be a negative relationship between the education level attained and the probability that an individual will receive future welfare. Using simple and multi-linear OLS regression analysis and the IPUMS-CPS annual data from 2009-2019, it has been observed that individuals with more years of schooling completed are less likely to be on welfare in the future. Data was chosen from this period because the American economy was beginning to recover from the 2008 Financial Crisis during this time. This allows us to observe correlations between education levels attained by individuals and whether they ended up in welfare programs more clearly.

This paper will be presented as follows: Section II will cover previous research on how welfare conditionality, gender, and education levels affect welfare dependency. Section III will present information on how this data was obtained and explain the data-cleaning process along with the types of variables used throughout this paper. This section ends with explanations of how the data is verified through the four OLS assumptions. Section IV will cover econometric methodology which includes alternate functional forms explored and additional X-Variables tested through multiple regression along with methodologies we've used to control the endogeneity of independent and explanatory variables to ensure the fairness of the regression model. Section V highlights the results, the sample regression line, and statistically significant information regarding the regression analysis. Section VI contains the paper's conclusions where the results are evaluated and put into context within the field. The paper concludes with section VII, the appendix, where all tables, figures, diagrams, and supporting calculations are represented for reference.

II. Literature Review

The literature works that are presented here serve as important foundations in the field and provide extensive insight into the relationship between welfare dependency and education levels, along with how other variables might affect this relationship. The study conducted by Hernaes et al. (2017) found that the strict welfare conditionality, linking welfare to certain characteristics or traits in Norwegian welfare programs, has reduced welfare dependency while increasing the high school graduation rate among Norwegian welfare recipients. In the process, they used a logarithmic regression model (LRM) and regressed a dependent dummy variable that identifies welfare recipients who are 21 years old onto an independent variable that consists of family characteristics such as parent's education background and cumulative income, to control for endogeneity. The study resembles this approach because the dependent variable that they've used is also a dummy variable that indicates welfare recipients. In addition, the study used other explanatory variables, in particular the recipient's parental background, to control for the endogeneity of those variables on the probability of returning to welfare. However, Hernaes et al. (2017) emphasizes how family background affects teens' probability of returning to welfare in the future through explanatory variables that focus on family characteristics. Whereas this study focuses more on how other individual characteristics such as education level, labor condition, and family status of the welfare recipient have affected the welfare recipient's probability of returning to welfare programs in the future.

Notably, a previous study indicated that there is a correlation between welfare recipients who have obtained a higher education degree with reducing

their reliance on welfare programs, but only if they receive additional financial aid to support their college expenses. London (2006) uses data such as college attendance, college graduation rate, and personal characteristics, such as extra-version and race demographics, to predict the welfare recipient's three outcomes: employment, return to aid, and poverty status. By controlling influencing factors that change over time – such as the rate of college enrollment – and making sure all omitted variables, – such as familial culture and personal motivation – are factored into the result, the study employs instrumental variable econometric models to calculate predictions. The study found that "college attendance, more than graduation, is an important predictor of future employment. At the same time, college graduation better predicts the probability of returning to aid or be-ing poor within five years of leaving welfare" (London, 2006, p. 491). Specifically, the study quoted "college graduation rather than enrollment without graduation has an effect on recidivism, and only in the five-year interval" (London, 2006, p. 489). Their findings support this hypothesis that the education level a welfare recipient attains is crucial to the probability of returning to welfare in the future. Despite the similarities in the use of variables to investigate the issue, predicting the probability of return to welfare using college graduation and attendance is only a part of this study's objectives. The study also conducts an investigation into how college graduation and attendance affect employment opportunities and family poverty levels.

Another earlier study showed that genders might have different levels of welfare participation and education attainment. Pacheco & Maloney (2003) learned that females "have an estimated intergenerational correlation coefficient that is more than double that for males." (Pacheco & Maloney, 2003, p. 371). The study uses simple regression models and inputs such as the number of years in formal education completed by age 21, family background characteristics (parent's education qualifications and the number of children in the household), and the proportion of years where parents obtain welfare benefits to produce their findings. In addition, Pacheco & Maloney (2003) found that female welfare recipients whose families have a history of welfare dependency tend to remain in welfare programs. The study uses the same regression model to offer insight into how familial and cultural forces affect male and female probabilities of returning to welfare in the future. Nevertheless, Pacheco & Maloney (2003) offered insight into how gender might have altered the relationship between education levels and probability in return to welfare.

III. Descriptive Statistics
All of the raw data was downloaded directly from the CPS portion of the IPUMS website, which is a reputable federal source for time series and cross-sec-

tional data. Annual Social and Economic Supplement Data (ASEC) from 2009 to 2019 was downloaded. These years were selected to obtain the most up-to-date data while also analyzing enough observations to create the best regression analysis possible. Twenty-one variables were analyzed within these years, the most important of which were EDUC and INCWELFR, the two variables that were altered and then used for the regression analysis. These variables were raw and included nearly 150,000 observations over the 11 years. The data was meticulously cleaned before running any regressions to test the hypothesis.

The first variable cleaned was EDUC. The raw EDUC variable could hold any coded value from 1 to 125. These coded values did not reflect the true years of schooling any individual had, so a new variable was created: EDUC_REV, to accurately reflect the true years of schooling each individual has completed. The values for this new variable were generated using the observations for the EDUC variable alongside the specific numeric code utilized by CPS. For example, an individual who has obtained a high school diploma through 12 years of completed education would receive a value of EDUC=73 within the CPS data set. The data was cleaned so this specific value would now be EDUC_REV=12. This cleaning procedure was used for all possible levels of education within the data set. Individuals who were too young to receive any education at all were also removed from the data set (they were identified through EDUC=1 in the original data set).

The focus then shifted toward the INCWELFR variable from CPS. This variable measures the dollar value of the income an individual receives from any source of government welfare benefits. In this study, the focus is on the effect that education has on the reception of welfare at all, not the amount of welfare that was received. This means the analysis is valid if an individual receives any form of welfare payments, and not focusing on the actual dollar value of said payments. So, for this reason, another new variable was created: WELFARE. This variable is a dummy variable that gets its values from the information in the INCWLFR variable. If the individual receives no form of welfare they will be assigned INCWLFR=0 in the data set. This same individual would be assigned a value of zero for the newly created variable (WELFARE=0 when INCWLFR=0). However, if an individual receives welfare in any form, regardless of the amount, they will be assigned a value of one for the new variable (WELFARE=1 when INCWLFR>0). Any individual who was not eligible to receive welfare in any form was denoted by INCWELFR=999999. These observations, many of which were individuals under 18, were removed from the data set to generate a less skewed, and more accurate, sample.

Additional variables were also analyzed for the multiple regression analysis. These variables tested the effects of not only education, but also employment status, income, hours worked, marital status, gender, and number of children on

the reception of welfare. These variables were used to try and control for endogeneity within the model and are further described in *Table 1* of the appendix.

Before the new variables could be put through a proper regression analysis, the four assumptions of an Ordinary Least Squares Regression Line had to be tested. If all of these assumptions hold true then the estimators of b1 and b2 would be BLUE (Best Linear Unbiased Estimators) and all of the calculations done through STATA would be completely accurate.

The first OLS assumption is that the expected error within a sample will be zero. This is noted as E[WELFARE_RES/EDUC_REV]=0 and this does hold true in this sample. The 95% confidence interval for WELFARE_RES does include zero so it is likely that the expected value of the error is zero and therefore the first OLS assumption is met.

The second OLS assumption is that the data is homoscedastic. This is noted as Var(WELFARE_RES/EDUC_REV)=Sigma^2. However, since the dependent variable is a dummy variable, this regression takes the form of a linear probability model (LPM). By definition, every linear probability model has heteroscedastic data. Therefore, the second OLS assumption is not met.

The third OLS assumption is that the data is free of clustering. This is noted as Cov(WELFARE_RES_i,WELFARE_RES_j)=0, meaning that the value of WELFARE for one value does not directly influence the value of any other observation within the data set. This influence usually occurs when two observations are within the same geographical unit. While there is no way to test if any observations are within the same geographical unit (such as the same household) due to confidentiality, the sample size is large enough and pulls from each region almost equally, so it would be extremely unlikely for any two observations to come from the same household. Therefore, for the sake of the regression, the third OLS assumption will be met.

The fourth and final OLS assumption is that Y is normally distributed. This was tested by creating a histogram for WELFARE and seeing if it roughly resembled a bell curve. When this was done, it was obvious that the data was not normal. This is apparent through a multitude of factors but is most clearly shown by the high skewness, a value of over 16. Therefore, it was concluded that welfare was not normally distributed. However, since the sample size consists of 145,431 observations, the central limit theorem (CLT) is met. So, while the fourth OLS assumption failed to be met for this particular regression, it will not have a significant impact on the regression since the sampling distribution for WELFARE will still be normally distributed. In conclusion, the regression met two of the four OLS assumptions. Therefore, while the regression analysis will not be BLUE, it will still be significant since it is free of serious sampling errors.

IV. Econometric Methodology

While this paper mainly focuses on the linear probability model and the effect that education has on welfare dependency, other functional forms that could better fit the regression analysis were also considered to develop a more thorough analysis. This was done through the experimentation of the functional forms that the independent variable took. While the previous section discussed the linear form of EDUC_REV, exponential and logarithmic forms of this variable were also considered. The independent variable was only altered since the dependent variable is a dummy variable. Altering the value of the variable will not generate any different results since its domain is limited to {0,1}. Other explanatory variables, and the results they produced, are summarized in *Table 5* of the appendix.

While all of the functional forms tested would have produced statistically significant interpretations that support the hypothesis, although their interpretations would have been different, the original regression was still the most accurate for this particular data set. Other functional forms included EDUC_REV in quadratic, cubic, and log forms. These functional forms are used to emphasize the effects of EDUC_REV in order to match the data points. The original is the most accurate because it has the highest R-Squared value, a measure of how well the data points fit the linear regression line. These R-Squared values can be found in *Table 5* but the linear model has the highest value of .0014. Since the linear regression between WELFARE and EDUC_REV has the most accurate regression line relative to the data set, this regression model was the basis from which all conclusions were drawn.

Interaction terms were also analyzed by creating the term EDUC_UNEMP which was EDUC_REV multiplied by UNEMPLOYED. By using this interaction term, the possible effect of EDUCATION on WELFARE varying with UNEMPLOYED can be studied. The regression showed that when UNEMPLOYED is 0, the likelihood of WELFARE is constant plus b2. When UNEMPLOYED is 1 then the likelihood of being on WELFARE increases. This means that individuals who are unemployed are more likely to be receiving benefits from welfare. The motive that drives this is individuals who are unemployed do not receive any form of compensation or income outside of their welfare payments.

Slope and Intercept dummy variables are additional variables added to this study. In this situation, the intercept dummy variable is UNEMPLOYED. The presence of UNEMPLOYED is represented with a 1 and causes an increase in the intercept, which translates to an increase in the probability of welfare. When describing this relationship on a graph there are two parallel lines and the difference between them is caused by the slope dummy variable. Both lines have the same slope and the probability gap of being on WELFARE remains the same

at all levels. This is not the main difference between someone who is unemployed and someone who is employed. This supports the claims made through interaction term analysis in the previous paragraph.

However, while the simple regression analysis supports the hypothesis, there could be other confounding variables that underlay such correlation seen between WELFARE and EDUC_REV. If these possible confounding variables are correlated with both WELFARE (controlling for EDUC_REV) and EDUC_REV, then it could make EDUC_REV an endogenous variable, indicating that EDUC_REV does not necessarily cause the decrease in the probability of an individual on welfare.

To test this claim, a multiple regression analysis was run, including both EDUC_REV and a variety of other possibly confounding variables, for their possible effects on WELFARE. The results showed that the three variables with the largest effect on WELFARE were BLACK, MALE, and UNEMPLOYED. These are variables created within the data set describing an individual's race, gender, and employment status, respectively. All of these are strong contenders for possible confounding variables and the true reason the regression effect on welfare was observed, and therefore put EDUC_REV at risk of being an endogenous variable (Courtney, 1996; Bakas, 2014; Arranz, 2004). A full list of the additional X-Variables tested along with the multiple regression output can be found in *Table 10*.

That being said, this is not enough evidence to conclude that education levels are definitely an endogenous variable when describing the probability of receiving welfare. These possible confounding variables could be further analyzed if a more in-depth regression analysis was performed in future studies.

V. Results

After the data had been completely cleaned and verified for OLS assumptions, the regression of EDUC_REV on WELFARE was run. This regression showed the noncausal effect that years of completed education have on the probability of receiving welfare. If the hypothesis holds true, the Least-Squares Regression Line should have a negative slope, denoting that the more years of education an individual completes, the less likely it is that the individual receives welfare.

The output for the regression analysis, as well as the full, scatter plot showing the Least Squares Regression Line for EDUC_REV against WELFARE, can be seen in *Table 8* and *Table 9* of the appendix. However, these figures can be summarized by the equation for the sample regression:

WELFARE_hat = b1 + b2 EDUC_REV   t-statistic = -14.27
WELFARE_hat = .015 - .001 EDUC_REV   n = 145,431
(SE)   (8.08e-4)   (5.68e-5)   p-value = 0 ***

```
. reg welfare educ_rev, level(99)
```

Source	SS	df	MS			
				Number of obs	=	145,431
				F(1, 145429)	=	203.76
Model	.742995648	1	.742995648	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	530.303576	145,429	.003646477	R-squared	=	0.0014
				Adj R-squared	=	0.0014
Total	531.046572	145,430	.003651561	Root MSE	=	.06039

welfare	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[99% Conf. Interval]	
educ_rev	-.0008102	.0000568	-14.27	0.000	-.0009564	-.000664
_cons	.014973	.0008079	18.53	0.000	.012892	.0170539

The most important value within the sample regression line for the hypothesis is -.001, or the slope of the regression line denoted as b2. Since b2 is a negative value, there is a negative correlation between the number of years of completed schooling (EDUC_REV) and the reception of welfare (WELFARE). While this value seems too small to have any real effect, it is still statistically significant. This is because the 99% confidence interval for b2 does not include zero because the standard deviation is extremely close to zero based on the large sample size. A hypothesis test at the critical level of .01 was also run to see if the value generated for b2 could be equal to zero. This test gave a critical value for b2 of -14.27 and a probability of B2 being equal to zero of zero. These results lead to the conclusion that it is statistically significant that as EDUC_REV increases, WELFARE decreases within the regression. In conclusion, while increases in education could have a small effect on the probability of relying on welfare, it is still a statistically significant effect. However, this does not prove that increases in education will decrease the probability of relying on welfare since ceteris-paribus does not hold true for this collected data set and a causal relationship is not established.

This regression analysis supports the hypothesis that as an individual's education increases, the probability that said individual will rely on welfare as a source of income decreases (since b2 is a statistically significant negative number). By applying these findings, it was determined that as an individual's years of completed schooling (EDUC_REV) increases by 1 year, the probability that the individual will receive welfare (WELFARE as a dummy variable) decreases by .001 or 0.1%. This is because the slope of the linear regression model, with a dependent dummy variable, is -.001 and the functional form analyzed is a

linear probability model. While this relation is not inherently strong, and years of completed schooling do not have a large impact on the probability of receiving welfare, it is still statistically significant.

Within the regression, b1 is also statistically significant. The value of b1 in this sample regression line is .015, or an applied .15%. By applying this value to the context of the study, it was found that the probability of an individual receiving welfare given that they have completed zero years of schooling is .15%. This number is positive so it is technically feasible and within the domain of the study. However, it is extremely unlikely that an individual has received zero years of schooling and is also eligible to receive welfare (Stephens, 2014). For this reason, the value of b1 was not a focus within these results.

VI. Conclusion

As stated above, this study shows a minor, yet the statistically significant, effect of EDUC_REV on WELFARE. These results indicate that there is evidence to support a possible relationship between higher levels of completed education and lower chances of an individual receiving welfare in the future. The thought process behind this regression is that individuals with higher education are more likely to land better jobs and therefore make more money, thus decreasing their need for welfare.

While focusing on the simple regression model for the majority of the paper, important results when controlling for endogeneity through a multiple regression model were also found. This multiple regression analysis was performed while controlling for multicollinearity. Since none of these variables share a strong correlation (r > .8) with each other, it is okay to run a regression model with all of these X-Variables. The full correlation results can be seen in *Table 11* of the appendix. AIC, BIC/SC, and R_Squared were also analyzed and are summarized in *Table 12*. Since the multiple regression model has more X-Variables, it has a larger potential to explain any variation in Y and is likely to be a better fit for the data.

Even with the introduction of these additional X-Variables, the initial variable tested in the multiple regression analysis, EDUC_REV, was still statistically significant, as seen in *Table 10*. Thus, even with controls for endogeneity, there is still a statistically significant negative correlation between the highest level of completed education and the probability of receiving welfare, only strengthening this paper's claims.

In relation to previous studies in part II, this study aligns with London's (2006) conclusion that welfare recipients who have received a higher education degree have a lower probability of receiving welfare in the future, with the assumption that both genders fit into the conclusion. However, to what extent

education attainment is beneficial to both genders and race remains questionable since the data lacked suitable information to investigate how omitted variables might have affected the relationship between the education level attained and the probability of receiving welfare. This paper has also failed to reproduce the findings that Pacheco & Maloney (2003) found. This paper did not control the age and time of welfare received by the recipient, whereas Pacheco & Maloney (2003) did. In addition, Pacheco & Maloney (2003) factors in the background of the welfare recipient's parents, such as their income received from welfare, educational background, and race.

This study, on the other hand, did not factor family characteristics into the regression model. This paper also failed to reproduce the results that Hernaes et. al (2017) produced because the nature of the data is different from Hernaes et. al (2017). First, Hernaes et. al's (2017) dataset had the location of each welfare recipient's municipality. The location variable allows Hernaes et. al (2017) to determine whether the welfare recipient was in a municipality that has stricter welfare policies or not. Second, Hernaes et. al (2017) was able to capture each municipality's level of conditionality through survey responses collected in a report by a research institute. These are some of the features that the data, unfortunately, do not possess.

This paper supports the theory that there is a correlation between the highest level of education completed and the probability of receiving welfare. Thus, more educated individuals are less likely to be dependent on welfare. In a broader context, policymakers could use this information to find more effective means for increasing social mobility, rather than investing heavily in welfare payments. Since there is possibly an inverse relationship between education and welfare, the federal government could create a new program to subsidize education rather than simply making payments to disadvantaged citizens. This would provide an economic incentive for individuals who were previously on welfare to attend school, making the entire nation more educated and more productively efficient as a result (Brown et al, 1991). However, while this paper could be used from a policy perspective, there are some drawbacks. The relationship between education and the probability of welfare is not proven to be causal after this analysis. This is because the ceteris-paribus condition does not hold true throughout the data and regression. In addition, this dataset has a limited scope regarding population characteristics. The dataset indicates the highest education level attained by the individual but does not indicate when they achieved that education. For example, some individuals might have dropped out of high school during their youth and returned to complete their high school degree after a long period of time. If that information is also provided in the dataset, that would open new frontiers on how education-level attainment influences the probability of receiv-

ing welfare. Before any change is enacted, especially on a governmental level, first proving a causal relationship would be recommended. This paper merely lays the framework for possible studies regarding welfare analysis in the future.

This paper did support the hypothesis that as education levels rise, the probability that an individual becomes dependent on welfare decreases. Through the regression analysis, it was determined that there is a small, yet statistically significant, difference that education has on the probability of receiving welfare in the future. This trend could be utilized by policymakers to stimulate education as a means of reducing welfare dependency, creating a population that is not only less dependent on welfare payments, but more educated, and more productive as a result.

VII. Appendix

Table 1

Description of all variables used for empirical analysis of education's effect on the reception of welfare. The most important variables are closer to the top of the table. All variables above the bolded line were used in the multiple regression analysis and are considered the most important to the study.

Variable Name	Variable Description
WELFARE *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which individuals who receive any form of welfare are assigned a value of 1 and those who are not dependent on welfare are assigned a value of 0
EDUC_REV *(Continuous)*	Years of completed education
UNEMPLOYED *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable where individuals who work less than twenty hour hours in a standard work week are assigned a value of 1 and are considered unemployed
EARNWEEK *(Continuous)*	The average amount of income an individual receives in a standard week from their job
MONTHLYHOURS *(Continuous)*	The total hours worked by an individual within a standard month
DIVORCED *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable where individuals are assigned a value of 1 if they have been divorced based on their marital status
BLACK *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable where individuals who are African American are assigned a value of 1
MALE *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable where individuals who were assigned the gender of male at birth are assigned a value of 1
CHILD *(Continuous)*	A continuous variable describing the number of children than an individual is responsible for

MARRIED *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which individuals who are currently married are assigned a value of 1
PARTTIME *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which any individual who is considered employed and works less than 40 hours within a standard workweek is assigned a value of 1
FULLTIME *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which any individual who is employed and works more than 40 hours within a standard workweek is assigned a value of 1
NOFULLTIME *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which any individual who is not a full time worker is assigned a value of 1. This includes both part time and unemployed works
WEEKLYHOURS *(Continuous)*	A continuous variable from CPS describing the average hours an individual works within a standard work week. Used to generate the UNEMPLOYED variable and the other variables regarding employment status
MARST *(Discrete)*	A CPS variable describing used to determine the values for the DIVORCED variable and other marital status variables
NCHILD *(Continuous)*	A CPS variable that is directly correlated with the CHILD variable used in our multiple regression analysis
SEX *(Discrete)*	A CPS variable used to generate the MALE dummy variable used in our multiple regression analysis
MARRIED *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which individuals who are currently married are assigned a value of 1
PARTTIME *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which any individual who is considered employed and works less than 40 hours within a standard workweek is assigned a value of 1
FULLTIME *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which any individual who is employed and works more than 40 hours within a standard workweek is assigned a value of 1
NOFULLTIME *(Discrete)*	A dummy variable in which any individual who is not a full time worker is assigned a value of 1. This includes both part time and unemployed works
WEEKLYHOURS *(Continuous)*	A continuous variable from CPS describing the average hours an individual works within a standard work week. Used to generate the UNEMPLOYED variable and the other variables regarding employment status
MARST *(Discrete)*	A CPS variable describing used to determine the values for the DIVORCED variable and other marital status variables
NCHILD *(Continuous)*	A CPS variable that is directly correlated with the CHILD variable used in our multiple regression analysis
SEX *(Discrete)*	A CPS variable used to generate the MALE dummy variable used in our multiple regression analysis

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of all variables used for the multiple regression analysis

```
. sum welfare educ_rev unemployed earnweek monthlyhours divorced black male child
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
welfare	136,548	.0035372	.0593694	0	1
educ_rev	136,548	13.9819	2.781015	0	21
unemployed	136,548	.0550576	.2280934	0	1
earnweek	136,548	889.1563	653.6586	1	2885
monthlyhours	136,548	169.1396	48.26986	0	728
divorced	136,548	.1073835	.3096013	0	1
black	136,548	.0940988	.2919672	0	1
male	136,548	.5011351	.5000005	0	1
child	136,548	.8260319	1.117204	0	9

Table 3

Descriptive statistics according to education level. These values were generated
EDUC_REV was assigned a value greater than or equal to twelve, or if the indi-
vidual has received at least at high school diploma. Should be directly compared
with *Table 4*.

```
. sum welfare unemployed earnweek monthlyhours divorced black male child if educ_rev<12
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
welfare	10,812	.0079541	.0888346	0	1
unemployed	10,812	.1697188	.375403	0	1
earnweek	10,812	425.0676	335.2062	1	2885
monthlyhours	10,812	144.3114	57.79518	0	455
divorced	10,812	.0781539	.268426	0	1
black	10,812	.0960969	.2947378	0	1
male	10,812	.5852756	.4926972	0	1
child	10,812	.926933	1.288123	0	9

Table 4

Descriptive statistics according to education level. These values were generated
EDUC_REV was assigned a value less than twelve, or if the individual has not
received a high school diploma. Should be directly compared with *Table 3*.

Variable	Construction	h2	95% CI	τ-Squared
EDUC_REV	EDUC_REV	-8.10e-4	(9.22e-4 , 6.99e-4)	.0014
EDUC_REV_2	EDUC_REV * EDUC_REV	-2.74e-5	(-3.13e-5 , -2.35e-5)	.0013
EDUC_REV_3	EDUC_REV * EDUC_REV * EDUC_REV	-1.12e-6	(-1.30e-6 , -9.53e-7)	.0011
LEDUC_REV	log(EDUC_REV)	-1.01e-2	(-1.16e-2 , -8.60e-3)	.0012

Table 5

Other Functional Forms. The following table is a shortened regression output used to determine which functional form would best fit the regression analysis on WELFARE.

Variable	Construction	b2	95% CI	r-Squared
EDUC_REV	EDUC_REV	-8.10e-4	(9.22e-4 , 6.99e-4)	.0014
EDUC_REV_2	EDUC_REV * EDUC_REV	-2.74e-5	(-3.13e-5 , -2.35e-5)	.0013
EDUC_REV_3	EDUC_REV * EDUC_REV * EDUC_REV	-1.12e-6	(-1.30e-6 , -9.53e-7)	.0011
LEDUC_REV	log(EDUC_REV)	-1.01e-2	(-1.16e-2 , -8.60e-3)	.0012

Table 6

Additional regression results. Regression effects on the introduction of interaction terms.

```
. reg welfare educ_rev unemployed educ_unemp

      Source |       SS           df       MS            Number of obs   =   136,548
-------------+----------------------------------        F(3, 136544)    =     81.43
       Model |  .859516844         3   .286505615        Prob > F        =    0.0000
    Residual |  480.432007    136,544   .003518514        R-squared       =    0.0018
-------------+----------------------------------        Adj R-squared   =    0.0018
       Total |  481.291524    136,547   .003524732        Root MSE        =    .05932

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
     welfare |      Coef.   Std. Err.      t    P>|t|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    educ_rev |  -.0007022   .0000594   -11.83   0.000    -.0008186   -.0005858
  unemployed |   .0137927   .0036126     3.82   0.000     .0067121    .0208733
  educ_unemp |  -.0006393   .0002721    -2.35   0.019    -.0011726   -.0001061
       _cons |   .0130524   .0008499    15.36   0.000     .0113867    .0147182
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Table 7

Hypothesis Tests to conclude if the test statistics generated for b are statistically significant.

Hypothesis Test $H_0: B_{Educ\_Rev} = 0$	Simple Regression Model	Multiple Regression Model
P-Values	Approx. 0.000	Approx. 0.000
T-Stat	-13.37	-7.43
F-Stat	178.79	55.18

Table 8
The regression output of EDUC_REV on WELFARE.

```
. reg welfare educ_rev, level(99)
```

Source	SS	df	MS			
				Number of obs	=	145,431
				F(1, 145429)	=	203.76
Model	.742995648	1	.742995648	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	530.303576	145,429	.003646477	R-squared	=	0.0014
				Adj R-squared	=	0.0014
Total	531.046572	145,430	.003651561	Root MSE	=	.06039

welfare	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[99% Conf. Interval]	
educ_rev	-.0008102	.0000568	-14.27	0.000	-.0009564	-.000664
_cons	.014973	.0008079	18.53	0.000	.012892	.0170539

Table 9
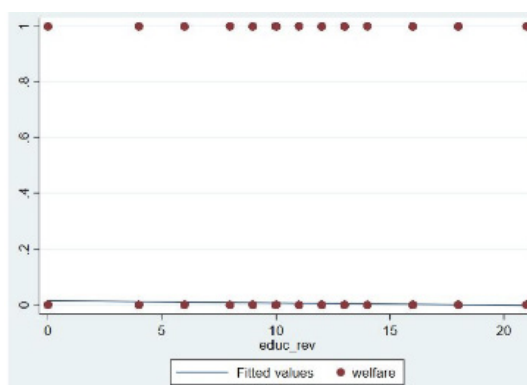Scatter plot of EDUC_REV on WELFARE with least squares regression line.

Table 10
Multiple regression output to test if EDUC_REV is an endogenous variable.

```
. reg welfare educ_rev unemployed earnweek monthlyhours divorced black male child
```

Source	SS	df	MS			
				Number of obs	=	136,548
				F(8, 136539)	=	114.80
Model	3.21570739	8	.401963424	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	478.075816	136,539	.003501387	R-squared	=	0.0067
				Adj R-squared	=	0.0066
Total	481.291524	136,547	.003524732	Root MSE	=	.05917

welfare	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
educ_rev	-.0004875	.0000656	-7.43	0.000	-.0006162	-.0003589
unemployed	.0018385	.0008778	2.09	0.036	.0001181	.0035589
earnweek	-1.94e-06	3.12e-07	-6.23	0.000	-2.55e-06	-1.33e-06
monthlyhours	-.0000229	4.53e-06	-5.04	0.000	-.0000317	-.000014
divorced	.0015933	.0005208	3.06	0.002	.0005725	.0026141
black	.0045046	.0005511	8.17	0.000	.0034245	.0055846
male	-.0036428	.0003348	-10.88	0.000	-.0042989	-.0029867
child	.0025522	.0001447	17.63	0.000	.0022685	.0028359
_cons	.0149691	.0011348	13.19	0.000	.012745	.0171933

Table 11

Correlation test with all X-Variables used in Multiple Regression Analysis to test for multicollinearity.

```
. corr welfare educ_rev unemployed earnweek monthlyhours divorced black male child
(obs=136,548)

             | welfare educ_rev unempl~d earnweek monthl~s divorced    black    male   child
-------------+------------------------------------------------------------------------------
     welfare |  1.0000
    educ_rev | -0.0362   1.0000
  unemployed |  0.0240  -0.0877   1.0000
    earnweek | -0.0454   0.4523  -0.2618   1.0000
monthlyhours | -0.0382   0.1690  -0.5980   0.4593   1.0000
    divorced |  0.0076  -0.0186  -0.0376   0.0024   0.0425   1.0000
       black |  0.0268  -0.0457  -0.0230  -0.0756  -0.0121   0.0199   1.0000
        male | -0.0397  -0.0533  -0.0795   0.1962   0.1861  -0.0716  -0.0452   1.0000
       child |  0.0443  -0.0074  -0.0705   0.0907   0.0811  -0.0550   0.0088  -0.0095   1.0000
```

Table 12

Specification tests to analyze the fit of the least squares regression line to the data. Note that the multiple regression model has seven more X-Variables than the simple regression model so it is expected to be a much better fit for the data.

	Simple Regression (1 X)	**Multiple Regression** (8 X)
AIC	-383,865.5	-384,608.4
SC/BIC	-383,866.0	-384,519.9
R_Squared Adjusted	.0013	.0066

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