NORTHERN PLAINS ETHICS JOURNAL

Mission

The mission of the *NPEJ* is to create a high-quality dedicated publication platform to promote democratic participation in social and ethical issues affecting the Northern Plains and beyond, including, of course, the entire state of North Dakota.

To succeed at this mission, the *NPEJ* hopes to become a marketplace for the accumulation, dissemination, discussion, and recognition of scholarly work, ideas, and other work related to ethics affecting communities in North Dakota.

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Scholar Section

Rotary & Ethics

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Abstract:
Describing and assessing the ethical system and culture of Rotary International, a not-for-profit service organization of business and professional clubs, can help address the need for additional case examples of practical ethics of organizations. Rotary's basic ethic is the Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct; its thematic motto is "service above self." The ethic is eclectic, an example of tripartite ethics, wherein the three basic theories (teleological, deontic, and virtue) are applied as complements rather than mutually exclusive or theoretically pure philosophical formulations. For Rotary membership, the separation thesis that business and moral decision making can be differentiated clearly and cleanly (i.e., amorally) is demonstrably incorrect.

This paper summarizes the history of the Rotary Movement, focusing on the development and application of its ethics approach. Additional empirical research is suggested to confirm and better quantify the actual impact club members have on ethical practice. Rotary's leaders should consider placing greater emphasis on developing and promoting its practical ethic, as a service enabling other organizations enhance their behavioral ethos.

Keywords: Four Way Test, practical ethics, organizational morality, Rotary International

Introduction

According to Socrates, a basic ethics question is: "How should one live?" Adapting this to business and professional ethics, Rotarians might ask: "How should I conduct myself in my occupational role and what sort of person should I be?" Since its founding, members of Rotary are encouraged to be more virtuous persons; character development is sought by and for each member (Harris, 1935). Club meetings recognize member service achievements as positive examples of what members should do and be as moral citizens. A central message is that an ethical person is not to be totally self-centered but is concerned about how he or she behaves in relationships with others, a servant rather than a self-promoter. An ethical

leader not only must set forth a clear vision and purpose for followers but also should honor the rights of others while fulfilling obligations in a principled manner (Whetstone, 1997, 82).

At the personal level, a business ethic (indeed, any occupational ethic) considers standards for good versus bad ends to pursue, right versus wrong means one applies, and the virtuous versus vicious character of the persons who make and implement decisions. At the institutional level, it is concerned with the institutional responsibilities and behaviors of organizations. More widely, business ethics addresses the role and responsibilities of business in global society, public policy relating to business, and society's long-term attitudes to and shifting expectations for business (Whetstone, 2013).

The basic object of Rotary (Exhibit 1) is to encourage and foster the ideal of service. Performance according to high ethical standards is a cultural expectation. The basic ethical yardstick in Rotary is The Four-Way Test. Before making a decision as to what he or she thinks, says, or does about something, a Rotarian is to ask:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

Rotary International has adopted The Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct (Exhibit 2) to provide Rotarians with "a roadmap for ethical behavior in the workplace and other areas of life" (*An Introduction to Vocational Service*, n. d., 3). Rotarians throughout the world repeat the Four-Way Test during the first part of each club meeting.

The ends sought by the four questions might be interpreted differently, depending on differing philosophical understandings. For example, is truth objective and universal or is it personally constructed and relative? And how are benefits measured and understood? Whereas the founders appear to have adhered most closely to presuppositions of a western Judeo-Christian worldview that support capitalist economics, the organizational ethic values diversity over homogeneity of belief. It deliberately is not tied to any one religion or culture; rather it allows for considerable diversity of views while serving as a practical guide for

encouraging personal and business ethical practices as the standard for measuring all behavior. Rotarians within the same local club, as well as those in differing countries, might include ethical relativists or postmodernists who socialize and serve alongside those committed to the objectivity of truth; they might be conservative Christians, Jews, Moslems, or atheists, while still subscribing to the admittedly imperfectly defined tests. This paper elaborates how this test originated and continues as a central part of the international Rotary Movement.

The Rotary Movement

Paul Harris (1935) founded the Rotary movement in 1905 in Chicago, a city then beset with crime, pollution, and social upheaval. His initial motivation was to organize a club that would provide fun and fellowship for its members, local businessmen who would benefit socially and in terms of their business contacts. The early meetings rotated among the offices of the members, resulting in the name "Rotary Club." But the club soon grew into an organization that its founder said has international vision and nobility of purpose (Harris, 1935, 26). As of 2017, Rotary has 1.2 million members and 35,000+ clubs worldwide.

Distinguishing Rotary from other service clubs, such as Lions and Kiwanis, is its classification plan which restricts membership in each club to one representative of each business and profession. What makes a member the representative of his craft within a community? The Rotary Club of Birmingham, Alabama, answered: "The member is not an ambassador from his craft organization to Rotary, but he is an ambassador from Rotary to his craft organization" (Harris, 1935, 46).

The initial internal focus was soon augmented through development of a club commitment to community service, starting in 1907 with a project to install public toilets in Chicago. Emphasis shifted from what business people could do for each other to what business people could do for their local communities. Arthur Sheldon, an early Rotarian and business evangelist, preached that the only dependable route to permanent success is that of service. Wanting to bring the maximum good to the largest possible number of businessmen, he developed the slogan, "he profits most who serves best." Combining idealism with a pragmatic utilitarianism, he did not try to demean the profit motive of businessmen, but sought "to sublimate it and regulate it so that it would be of benefit to society at large and also to

him who served" (Harris, 1935, 35). Rotarians in Minneapolis contributed a more altruistic expression, the current Rotary slogan of "service above self."

At its second convention, Rotary adopted a platform climaxed by Sheldon's slogan, "He profits most who serves best." Sioux City Rotarians contributed a code of ethics that was summarized by the Golden Rule. This platform provided the movement with a better sense of direction and emphasized the importance of fair dealing and high standards in business (Harris, 1935), including the need for courtesy and kindness toward employees. Thus, from its early origins, Rotary emphasized the vital importance of ethics in business practice and all spheres of life.

By the early twenties, clubs were distributing codes of ethics to various industries (Gundaker, 1922). Rotary's service aims pragmatically combined a deontological adherence to precepts such as the Golden Rule and a teleological purpose of improving the lives of others through service projects. The spirit of the service ideal is what Christians call The Golden Rule. C. S. Lewis in *The Abolition of Man* (1944, 2001) found similar expressions of it in many religions and cultures. Nevertheless, as Harris predicted, opposition to use of the Golden Rule caused it to be dropped from club literature (being too identified with religious movements). Instead, the term "service" prevailed, based on the expectation that international understanding and goodwill would be the natural consequence of working together at common tasks.

The increasingly diverse objects of various clubs were revised into four core values in 1935, organized into four areas of activity encouraged for Rotarians (1935, 41):

1st—Club Service (administration of club business)
2nd—Vocational Service (or ethical conduct of one's business or profession)
3rd—Community Service (welfare of one's community)
4th—International Service (promotion of international goodwill and understanding).

These values, the basis for the current Object of Rotary (Exhibit 1), all draw on the service concept as the most suitable motivating influence in life, consistent with the slogan, "service above self." Harris himself promoted a

secular, nonsectarian and nonpolitical culture for Rotary International, espousing his belief that the service doctrine affords a platform acceptable to all. "Rotary is neither a religion or a substitute for religion; it is the working out of an ancient ethical conception in modern life, and particularly in business" (Harris, 1935, 49). Harris (1935, 48) believed that "one of the outstanding reasons for the phenomenal growth and success of Rotary...seems to be the fact that there is in the hearts of nearly all men a desire for ethical fellowship."

Having expanded into a global organization of businessmen and professionals, tied together through fellowship and service projects, Rotary International has promoted peace through respect for human rights. It could not prevent World War II, but its call became a model for the UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* Furthermore, Rotary influenced the establishment of UNESCO and the UN Children's Fund (Nicholl, 1984). Rotary published *Service Is My Business* (1948) in many languages, and in 1949 started to circulate widely The Four-Way Test. Rotary's book, *Adventure in Service* (1954), lists four objectives, with occupational ethics being the theme of the second. The organization continues to provide its members with literature addressing ethical ways for businesses to improve profit performance and community service.

But is the Rotary approach to ethics solid and comprehensive? And does Rotary, known primarily as a service club, have a true commitment to promoting good ethics? Or is it like many organizations for which their public statements are basically window dressing? This paper describes Rotary's ethic as exemplary as a practical organizational example. Nevertheless, it finds insufficient research evidence to quantify the actual ethical impact on its members and their businesses.

Rotary's Ethical Culture

The ideals of The Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct offer ethical guidelines that each member is encouraged to follow. This involves practicing one's profession with integrity, inspiring others to behave ethically through personal example, one's words and actions (*An Introduction to Vocational Service*, 3). In its early years, Rotary also encouraged its members to develop their own personal code of ethics (Levermore, 1924).

The Four-Way Test has become a checklist of moral minimums (Werhane & Freeman, 1999) for organizing ethically oriented practice. According to

Tadajewski (2015), it can be interpreted as a tool for critically oriented reflection by which Rotarians can probe their personal value system. These guidelines, even if supplemented with a personalized code of ethics, cannot be expected to prevent a person from rationalizing to justify a decision. However, they do represent hurdles that render unethical choices more difficult, assuming a person sincerely adopts them.

The Rotary culture blends the practical and the ideal; it thus combines good fellowship and informality with respect and dignity. It shuns dogma, stressing the need to tolerate the different religious and political beliefs of members. The motto of Rotary, service over self, points to the need for every man to overcome his natural inclination to be self-interested, instead developing a character that puts greater priority on the interests of others. The first three questions of its ethics test primarily refer to duties for right behavior, and the fourth test question requires seeking beneficial ends. Moreover,

Exhibit 1

THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

FIRST
The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

SECOND
High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;

THIRD
The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;

FOURTH
The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.[1]

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[1] Source: Rotary International. (n.d.) *An Introduction to Vocational Service*. Evanston, IL: Rotary Service Department

Exhibit 2

ROTARY CODE OF CONDUCT

As a Rotarian, I will:

1. Exemplify the core value of integrity in all behaviors and activities,
2. Use my vocational experience and talents to serve in Rotary,
3. Conduct all of my personal, business, and professional affairs ethically, encouraging and fostering high ethical standards as an example to others,
4. Be fair in all dealings with others and treat them with the respect due to them as fellow human beings,
5. Promote recognition and respect for all occupations which are useful to society,
6. Offer my vocational talents: to provide opportunities for young people, to work for the relief of the special needs of others, and to improve the quality of life in my community,
7. Honor the trust that Rotary and fellow Rotarians provide and not do anything that will bring disfavor or reflect adversely on Rotary or fellow Rotarians, and
8. Not seek from a fellow Rotarian a privilege or advantage not normally accorded others in a business or professional relationship.[2]

Rotary's culture seeks to encourage those virtues needed for ethical improvement. This ethical approach comprehends a combination of theoretical perspectives: teleological (good ends), deontic (right means), and virtue (personal character development). This is rather eclectic, a practical example of what Whetstone (2001, 2003) calls "tripartite ethics," wherein the three basic theories are applied as complements rather than mutually exclusive or theoretically pure philosophical formulations.

Faced with an ethical issue, a person, even someone with limited philosophical education, can analyze it sequentially in terms of (1) the anticipated consequences of a decision for all stakeholders affected, then according to (2) the means of acting on the decision in terms of a deontic assessment of rights and justice, and finally considering (3) the moral character desired by the decision maker. If these checks agree, then there is a strong case for the decision. If there is disagreement, then the decision maker will have to choose by drawing on her experienced practical wisdom

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[2] Source: Rotary International. (n. d.) *An Introduction to Vocational Service*. Evanston, IL: Rotary Service Department, 3.

(phronesis) to reach a preferable solution.[3] The Rotary Code of Conduct incorporates the three decision aspects of such a "tripartite ethic."

Rotary's open and informal club fellowship promotes character development of the membership. Paul Harris (1935), the philosophic and persuasive founder of Rotary, identified and praised some especially strong virtues of the organization's early leaders. Club presidents and other officers are expected to serve as examples, thus stimulating the character development of club members. The Rotary ethic anticipates the psychological research findings of James Rest et al. (1986; 1988) that moral development continues throughout formal education, particularly among young adults. Continued character development is possible throughout a person's life (Josephson, 1988), rather than being set in stone in the child's early years as some twentieth century psychologists believed. This can be enhanced through mentoring, helping other members achieve their career aspirations or guiding and encouraging others in their career development (Whetstone, 1998).

Sir Henry Braddon, an Australian Rotarian, said that "one way in which Rotary develops the individual is in preserving the boy in him" (Harris, 1935, 21). As a boy ages, the boy's outlook on life tends to fade away; he can grow cynical as his ideals and enthusiasms wane. Rotary seeks to keep the mind of the boy alive in the man, retaining a boy's outlook as "rather wonderful, unspoiled, with no prejudice, no intolerance, with keen enthusiasm, ready friendliness, and all those qualities we love to see" (loc. cit.). As Plutarch commented (1992, 139), "sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of (men's) characters and inclinations" (than the most glorious exploits). This is why Rotary meetings stress friendliness and communion, occasions when only first names are used. Smiles and handshakes are part of the ethos. Members celebrate the birthdays and personal achievements of their fellows. Group singing was originally part of Rotary meetings; while singing has disappeared from many club gatherings, at least in the US, this practice can promote fellowship and prepare minds for the day's speaker, further building character, according to the philosophies of Plato and Harris.

To avoid disagreements at meetings, political and religious discussion are banned. Instead, Rotary International seeks to promote

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[3] See Sison, 2006; Whetstone, 2001, 2006, 2013. Also see Ciulla, 2005 for her "interlocking categories" involved in the ethical assessment of leadership.

respect of differing religious views and countries within a culture of tolerance among friends of goodwill. Harris (1935) believed that intercourse between different sorts of people, those of different religious sects and races, and citizens of different nations, should be promoted to overcome ignorance that leads to prejudice and hatred—and even war. The optimistic worldview of Paul Harris as a man of his age, a modernist believing in the ultimate goodness of man and in the inevitability of progress, remains as his legacy.

Rotary is also committed to corporate social responsibility, understood as a company's commitment toward the community and environment in which it operates. Rotary has been a positive influence on acceptance of a stakeholder view (Freeman, 2010) rather than the traditional stockholder view (Friedman, 1970) of corporate social responsibility. A business person has the obligation to serve appropriately the interests of his customers, his employees, his competitors, his suppliers, and the public— as well as his owners. In line with the trends in corporate social responsibility identified by Linda O'Keefe (2012), Rotary lists the following policies for a corporation: (1) giving aligned with core business expertise, (2) employee engagement through company-sponsored volunteer programs, and (3) the communication of a company's social values and commitments through social media or other methods.

Vocational Service Vs. Community Service?

Almost from Rotary's inception, there has been a tension between a focus on mutual helpfulness (vocational service) versus that of external, community service, with the latter coming to dominate. External service is more readily observable and easier to quantify. The good of the latter often can be counted in monetary funds raised and donated, facilities installed, or numbers of people given assistance. And recently, Rotary International President Ian H. S. Riseley asked each club to provide Rotary headquarters with two numbers for the 2017-2018 year: the amount of money spent on humanitarian service; and the number of hours of work performed in Rotary's name (2017, 1). Moreover, the organization's publications and website in recent years have featured activities and projects more clearly identified with the objectives of fellowship as an opportunity of service (Object One), community service (Object Three), and international service (Object Four) than those addressing personal ethics and corporate social

responsibility (Object Two). Such attention to external service, and relative silence on member ethical development and vocational service, indicates that ethical development may no longer be a primary cultural value driving the organization.

The 2017 website describes Rotary as a global network of 1.2 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem solvers who come together to make positive, lasting change in communities at home and abroad, and it identifies the following as the world's most persistent issues, ones for which Rotary believes it has a responsibility to take action: promote peace, fight disease, provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene, save mothers and children, support education, and grow local communities. These are very important issues, but, in a time when ethical practice in business, professions including journalism, and government seems increasingly challenged, should Rotary also consider how to place greater emphasis on its Object Two? Perhaps it should add business ethics issues, at both the personal, organizational, and global levels, to its list of critical issues to address. If not, then is the stated object of promoting high ethical standards and the value of productive occupations merely presumed, having become basically window dressing?

Such a view certainly was incorrect in the organization's early years when some leaders considered Rotary's greatest opportunity as being vocational service (mutual helpfulness). Because of their special capabilities and positions, Rotarians have long led in providing high standards and ideals in the business and professional world, and established trade associations and codes of ethics, assuming the role of business evangelists (Harris, 1935). Members serve community needs through work in other organizations since the membership classification plan is especially adapted to vocational service and promotion of ethics codes. Moreover, as leaders in their businesses and professions, Rotarians are in the positions to set a positive example to employees, associates, customers, vendors, and the community. They can discuss and praise honesty, accountability, fairness, integrity, and respect when hiring and training employees. Although the extent to which these services occur tends to be less visible and more difficult to measure than that of community service projects, they can be real and provide significant impact for good.

Rotary International as an umbrella organization does not discourage vocational service efforts; indeed, it deliberately refrains from

setting the agenda of any of its local clubs. Although perhaps not proportionately (as noted above), it also offers resources to facilitate success in each object, and its publications provide examples of successful initiatives and programs of its various clubs. For example, "An Introduction to Vocational Service" offers the following ways (abbreviated herein) a club can take action to support ethical practice and corporate social responsibility (associated with Object #2):

> * Have your club discuss the importance of the Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct and educate new and prospective members of their importance as guiding principles for Rotary's commitment to integrity.

> * Organize a workshop on ethics in the workplace and invite local non-Rotarian business leaders; include discussion exploring how to deal with problem-solving of various ethical dilemmas.

> * Give ethics awards to businesses or professionals who demonstrate high ethical standards in their workplaces.

> * Sponsor an essay or speech contest for young people as an effective way to get them engaged with the concepts of ethics and integrity.

Rotarians can practice and cultivate high ethical standards in the workplace as an integral aspect of their commitment to service over self. For this, Rotarians should seek to exemplify and encourage virtue in the workplace. Tadajewski (2015, 20) argues that his case study of Rotary demonstrates that "the membership of the Rotary Club were completely cognizant of the interpenetration of their business practices with ethical considerations." He concludes that these business people were not amoral, bracketing their business activities from their ethics. This supports the view that all business decisions have some element of ethical reflection (Black 1994; Sen, 1997; Werhane & Freeman, 1999), leading to the pragmatic blending of business and ethics (Freeman, 1994).

Importantly, Tadajewski (2015) found that this contradicts the academic theory known as the separation thesis as to the way businessmen think and act about ethics in business. At least for the Rotary membership, Alzola (2011) thus is incorrect that business and moral decision making can be differentiated clearly and cleanly from each other (i.e., amorally), and that the pursuit of profit maximization is in tension with and overrides any other motive, such as contributing to the social good (also see Sen, 1997, and Dienhart, 2008). Rotarians can balance both. And their local and international service projects can often ethically enhance the social good and render instrumental benefits to the stakeholders of members engaged in them. But to what extent and how can the ethical impact of Rotary be enhanced? Does the Rotary Movement have the cultural values needed or will its overwhelming commitment to measurable service projects ultimately undermine the distinctive moral strength of the organization?

Critics of Rotary

Rotary has its critics, as does any movement that substantially impacts its environment. Some have charged Rotary and its membership as being too shallow, boastful, opinionated, and too satisfied with the social status quo. On the other hand, others see Rotarians, especially regarding world peace, as being impracticable reformers, being dangerously dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. Prominent critics including Sinclair Lewis, (1932/2003), Clarence Darrow, and H. L. Mencken have wanted Rotary to focus more on improving society, placing business interests in the background (Tadajewski, 2015). English commentator G. K. Chesterton disparagingly referred to "this Rotarian age," implying that he regretted the resulting decline in civilization from Victorian times (Harris, 1935). Bernard Shaw remarked, "I know where Rotary's going; it's going to lunch" (Harris, 1935, 82).

The wiser members of Rotary need to listen to its critics, including those who denigrate traditional values and capitalism. And to the extent their objections are valid, Rotarians should seek to improve. A good ethic requires this. However, criticism is often only partially on the mark, especially when made by those who might not fully appreciate the objects and culture of the Rotary Movement. Rotarians deliberately seek fellowship and fun and, as humans, are not perfect. Rotary's club culture is egalitarian, suggesting why its members are not appreciated by intellectual elites. Harris

(1935, 46) acknowledges that business people and professionals are often motivated to join by the prospect of personal gain (wealth, leisure time, pleasure) which, as a rule, is expected through the increase of business. Whereas it is rather tragic if profit maximization is a person's only or primary aim, those that commit to "service above self" reveal joint motives, based on the personal contributions and voluntary services that they perform. In Rotary the separation thesis is disproved; profit maximization and moral responsibility are not inherently in tension (Dienhart, 2008), but are intertwined and pragmatically blended with attention to personal ethics and individual character development. Because Rotarians are most often small business owners, managers, and other professionals embedded in their local communities, they must be personally close to the marketplace and their customers and other stakeholders. They are not separated by hierarchies and distance from those their business decisions most affect. And whereas Rotarians tend to be idealists regarding human nature, they are rarely extremists, even in their efforts to promote world peace.

Academic research to date has offered little help for addressing Rotary's critics or for future planning. This reflects Laura Spence's (2014) observation that business scholars have tended to restrict their research to corporations. Moreover, Rotary International literature primarily is distributed to its membership—and thus not readily accessible to academics. Based on Bowen's (1953) assertion that scholars need to study a range of business groups, not just the larger corporations, Tadajewski (2015) contends that study of the Rotary Club requires much greater attention from business and society scholars. Academics should expand their universe to study small business enterprises, service clubs, and other community organizations to gain greater understanding of the dynamics between business practice and ethical responsibility. This could lead to a greater understanding of how Rotary and other service clubs, and even larger organizations, can promote in their members an ethical orientation both to business practice and to other, non-business, social relationships—if they commit to this aim. And more generally, this expansion of research interests might well enhance academic and business leader knowledge as to ways to develop virtuous organizations (Whetstone, 2017).

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

Rotarians are business and professional men and women who follow the motto of "service above self." Members ascribe to the profit motive of free enterprise but are also dedicated to contributing to the social good. At least for the Rotary membership, the separation thesis that business and moral decision making can be differentiated clearly and cleanly from each other (i.e., amorally) is demonstrably incorrect. Rotarians traditionally have sought to balance both. Their local and international service projects often enhance the social good and render instrumental benefits to their stakeholders. This is why Rotary International can be a helpful example for the study of ethical organizations.

The basic ethic of Rotary is The Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct. These serve to guide ethical behavior in the workplace and other areas of life. The commitment to service over self requires every member to overcome the natural inclination to be self-interested, instead developing a character that puts greater priority on the interests of others. Rotary's ethic thus is rather eclectic, a practical example of tripartite ethics, wherein the three basic ethics theories (teleological, deontic, and virtue) are applied as complements rather than mutually exclusive or theoretically pure philosophical formulations.

Rotary is widely recognized for its community and international service projects. It also has the potential to be a positive influence on personal ethics and organizational social responsibility, although its public focus and leadership no longer emphasize this (still stated) objective. Rotary should consider a strategic shift, one that adds increased emphasis to promoting ethics. This would enhance its image beyond that of a typical service organization. For this, Rotary members are often well positioned in their businesses and professions to promote ethical practice and development. Moreover, its sound ethical standards and developmental ideals can serve as a case example that reveals cultural value commitments and internal structures for managements of other organizations seeking to develop practical organizational ethics.

Future research can confirm and better quantify the impact Rotarians have on ethical practice within their business and professional organizations. As a first step, academics, whether Rotary members or not, can interview and survey the members of individual clubs. This grassroots effort can identify specific practices and the extent of their practical benefits

for developing an ethical organizational or industry culture. Initial questions could be:

1. "How have you applied the Four-Way Test and Rotary Code of Conduct in your business or professional workplace?"

2. "What positive changes resulted, either in the ethical decisions of you and others at work or in the improvement of your organization's ethical culture?"

Answers to these and follow-up questions could be used to sample and compare findings throughout the international organization. Researchers can use the Rotary ethics model when investigating other organizations. The potential research field and prospects are quite large for academics and for the greater good of humans at work. The findings might well be another important service instigated by the Rotary Movement.

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The Pandemic is Accelerating Digital Transformation: What Could be the Downside for Humanity? And What to Do?

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Abstract:

This essay calls attention to major socio-technical forces that are gathering momentum, accelerated by COVID-19, yet largely out of the public eye. Rapid digital technological change that concentrates power in the emerging realms of cyber space and robotics, is a transforming force that may damage human-centric systems and society. Paradoxically, currently conceived COVID mitigation policies when combined with power-concentrating digital technology may undermine social equality, labor markets, human community, health, and culture in the long term. Since technological systems create their own inertia and tend to 'lock in' early decisions, it is difficult to reverse mistakes. Leaders need to act early to reconsider the unintended second and third order effects of COVID responses that rely on digital technology. The essay lays out four policy recommendations, to include a new investment program for human-centric labor markets; investment in universities to help create humane digital society and to prepare the next generation to flourish in this transformed world; requests the newly elected American president to establish a national-level Task Force to develop new policies and ethics for the digital age; and lastly, a windfall profits tax on digital companies that benefited by the pandemic. The essay ends with a challenge to this generation of leaders to ensure the post COVID-era will privilege not the digital machines and the small group who own them, but promote a reinvigorated, natural, human society of all Americans.

Keywords: Digital transformation, humanity, intelligent machine, COVID-19

Human society faces disruption and tumultuous change far more unprecedented and historic than a pandemic[1]. Rapid, digital technological change is the big story, the paradigm transforming narrative, the potential birth-pangs for a Post-COVID world that if we allow it, may privilege digital machine systems over humans and human-centric systems. Paradoxically, COVID mitigation policies may promote human welfare in

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[1] McNeill, William H., *Plagues and People*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976

the short term, but may undermine human community, health, and culture in the long term. Furthermore, technological systems create their own inertia, and if not managed carefully, tend to 'lock in' early decisions and patterns of use, making it difficult to reverse mistakes. It is thus imperative that our leaders act now to reconsider the unintended second and third order effects of our COVID responses. Otherwise, harmful consequences for human-centric systems, humanity, and human values may occur and become 'locked in' and perhaps irreversible.

Do I exaggerate the portent of the challenge? Current events stand as a testament to massive scale and scope of the socio-technical forces in play, as well as the desperate, well meaning, but confused human reaction. Ponder with me the headlines. American cities burned, and a cacophony of voices called for radical action, some to remake our nation into a socialist state.[2] While warehouses, factories, and office spaces emptied of humans, computer servers and robots proliferated more widely. Internet traffic increased exponentially, pouring wealth into corporate digital data centers and cloud companies. COVID-stressed, human-centric companies face bankruptcy yet already massive digital companies hit record high capitalization. Congress considers bailing out some companies, but at the same time ponders the regulation or even break up of one or more digital giants.[3] Years before the pandemic, and worsening now, our nation witnessed a rising level of youth depression, suicide, and loneliness as the use of digital devices and social media sites increased.[4] Lastly, as digital systems grow, so does disinformation, fake-news, and cyber hacking, while

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[2] The candidacy of Bernie Sanders, an avowed socialist, both in 2016 and 2020 provide the most compelling evidence of the desperate social reactions. But there is indeed something wrong for many Americans, before COVID. See: Desilver, Drew, *For Most U.S. Workers, Wages have Barely Budged for Decades,* by Pew Research Trust, see link: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/07/for-most-us-workers-real-wages-have-barely-budged-for-decades/

[3] US Department of Justice, on 20 October 2020, filed suit charging GOOGLE with anti-trust violations. See, "Justice Department Files Google Anti Trust Lawsuit," by Jason Bellini, *Wall Street Journal*, 20 October 2020.

[4] Twenge, Jean M., *iGEN : why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy-- and completely unprepared for adulthood and (what this means for the rest of us)*, New York: Atria Books, 2017.

the truth becomes opaque. How can we frame these events in a way that allows us to look beyond the daily headlines? What risks do these forces pose to human society and our families? How has COVID energized digitization, and most importantly, what should we do?

A Framework to Display how Technology is Disrupting our Society

The most powerful force of change, and a threat to the well-being of much of human-centric society if left unmanaged, is the uncontrolled, accelerating invention, adoption, and concentration of power associated with digital technology. A multitude of increasingly intelligent digital inventions, robotic and in cyber space, pile one upon another, exerting social-economic change on a grand scale, at the *macro level* of how work and social interaction is carried out. Digital technology is changing the very structure of life and society and economy, and as recent evidence is showing, actually reducing human-centric wellbeing and even future business and commerce.

To be sure, changing technologies have reshaped society and economies in the past. At the small scale, or *micro level,* a person is compelled many times in their lifetime to adapt to one technology or another. One can think of the shift from manual to automatic transmission in the car; from train to airline travel; from handwriting to typewriters; from factory floors full of wrench-turning workers to factories where humans operated wrench-turning machines. All these cases, humans were present and still in control. But something began to change at the socio-economy's *macro-level* as technology began to digitize. Our socio-economy has been inundated with waves of digital innovations. Typed letters were replaced by email, and now intelligent email assistants draft letters. Factories and warehouses with intelligent robots hold few if any human workers, and therefore, they remain dark while the machines work. Offices were once full of humans thinking and working with desktop computers and spreadsheets, but now the data is analyzed in "the cloud" by increasingly intelligent 'self-learning' algorithms. Friends used to be those of our physical neighborhoods and schools, but now can be anywhere, or may not be human at all as in the case of "Alexa". Games used to be played on game boards in a basement, but now are massive multiple player games simultaneous across the globe,

where you can play against artificial algorithms without human competitors. With the explosion of advanced digital technology, literally trillions of chips, sensors, computers, autonomous machines, and what may be a Turing-like breakthrough in AI, we are witnessing *Macro* change, the emergence of new artificial worlds. Reduced to its simplest, a planet that was dominated by a realm of human-centric activity is now being joined by two other realms of activity. The other realms are that of the autonomous or near autonomous intelligent robotic and that of the entirely virtual, non-tactile, realm of cyberspace or internet, an interlocking triad I call the Human, Robotic, and Cyber "Realms."

Pictured in Figure 1 is a two-dimensional rendering of the three Realms: the Realm of Human-centric activity, the Realm of Robotic systems, and the Realm of Cyber Space.[5] Until the very recent past, human-centric social, economic, technological, and military systems dominated the world, and while natural systems of plant and animal life existed, they continued to exist at the will (or some would say, whim) of Human-centric systems. But Human-centric technology was generally limited to augmenting natural human capabilities to act with greater precision or at a distance (e.g., the typewriter enhanced human written communication on paper; the telephone carried the human voice at greater distances than one could yell; the ship and plane and train carried humans and cargo, but were piloted by humans). Humans provided the highest-level cognition of systems, even if machines did more of the heavy lifting, carrying, and transmitting of human processed information. But the invention of intelligent and speedy computer processors, combined with advanced engineering, have created the two digital Realms of activity. The socio-economic-military activity emerging between artificial actors in these two Realms *can now occur with little or no direct human control*. The emergence of the Realms of Robotic systems and Cyberspace are moreover
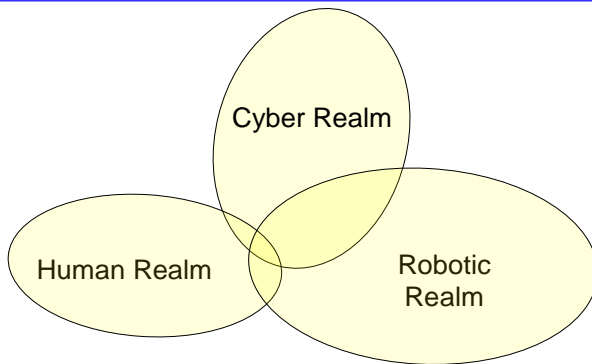
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[5] I will use the term Cyber instead of Virtual or Internet, but they could be used interchangeably.

near simultaneous and will both challenge the privileged place of Human-centric systems that has defined history to this point.[6]

The emergence of these two digital Realms was perhaps inevitable. And, the benefits of these two new Realms should be acknowledged. Much of the work done in these Realms by advanced robotics and AI infused cyberspace, no number of humans could have done by themselves or with human-directed machines. If that is as far as the implications went, humans would be fine... but... there is more.

Figure 1: Graphical Depiction of Three Realms: Human, Robotic, and Cyberspace

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[6] This framework has been presented in multiple venues the past 15 years, to include award winning articles on defense strategy (2006); Naval War College (2007); CNA Corporation (2007); presentations at universities in France (2011), Yale (2013), and Annapolis (2014); University of South Dakota (2019); the Geneva Convention CCW (2014); Pentagon (2012), Navy senior leaders (2015), Army senior engineers (2014), National Security Agency/US Cyber Command (2014); Naval Post Graduate School (2016); US TRANSCOM (2017); US Chambers of Commerce annual meeting (2015); TEDx (2016); and a variation of this framework published in American and European edited volumes. This framework was presented most recently at Northern Plains Ethics Institute in November 2019, on the eve of COVID pandemic. COVID adds new urgency to explain what is happening, hence, this essay.

Implications of the Two Digital Realms? ... is Society more Equitable? are Children Healthier? are Humans more valued or devalued?

Society is now experiencing the symptoms that accompany the emerging nexus where the Human Realm overlaps with two new Realms, Robotic and Cyber. Most humans are only now becoming dimly aware that many of the social distress symptoms afflicting our nation arise out of being human in proximity to emerging digital technology. What are some of the most visible symptoms of this emergence?

Record shattering socio-economic inequality is the most obvious indication. To those who control the rights and patents to digital machines and algorithms, the amount of wealth and power being created is eye popping. Financial benefits accrue to only a small portion of the population, with large swaths of the country left behind or left insecure. Imbalances in wealth are expanding such that eight men—just eight—own more wealth than the world's poorest three billion people combined, a trend to which the digital revolution is a major contributor. The per capita income of the tech hubs is swelling, and their associated universities' endowments bulging with record billions.

In contrast, where cyberspace and digital machines intersect with regions, cities, and households outside the tech hubs, signs of distress mount. Darkening clouds of hacking and privacy abuses, misinformation and disinformation and lack of equal access cast a shadow of social, employment, and political insecurity. The workers and wages outside of the tech hubs and digital professions are coming under increased pressure, and there is no certainty that an advanced digital economy can absorb the human work force, a possibility considered by Brynjolfsson and McAfee in "The Race Against the Machine."[7] Moreover, the rise of digital giants such as Google and FACEBOOK has not been healthy for start-up businesses, and

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[7] Brynjolfsson, Eric and Andrew McAfee, *Race Against The Machine: How the Digital Revolution is Accelerating Innovation, Driving Productivity, and Irreversibly Transforming Employment and the Economy*, Cambridge: Digital Press, 2011

entrepreneurship rates in the United States have been declining since the 1990s. Conditions are such that numerous forward-looking leaders, including some who spoke at the Davos World Economic Forum, have warned of the potential destabilization of society.

Also alarming, we are seeing a rapid increase in child depression and suicide, a major shift that scientists increasingly associate with the widespread penetration of society by the highly advanced communication and computational device, the smart phone, and the growth of social media sites.[8] A multitude of the digital creators, the insiders of these companies, have recently argued that we, our children, our families, our fellow Americans are NOT customers but are the product; that our information given freely away is being monetized for the benefit of the few at the cost of the many. This possibility has been documented recently in a Netflix special, "Social Dilemma."[9] The insiders confess that they and their digital social media companies took deliberate action that risked further digital addiction especially of teen users, purposely diverting a teen's time and energy to internet content and away from healthier physical or cognitive activities.[10]

Lastly, human-centric cultural values, the values attached to humans and human life, is being affected by the emergence of these two realms of intelligent machines. And, history shows, the cultural effects may be radical. Consider the changes to the once dominant natural-human economy before Industrialization. Humans, nature, and animals were closely connected by work, but also by culture. We all know the paradigm-shifting rise of mega cities and the decline of rural areas, and the associated changes to family bonds, marriage, size of families, and church. But also interesting is to reflect on human

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[8] Twenge, Jean M., *iGEN: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy-- and completely unprepared for adulthood and (what this means for the rest of us)*, New York: Atria Books, 2017. Again, the U.S. Department of Justice, in a Republican Administration no less, has filed an anti-trust lawsuit against GOOGLE of the Alphabet Corporation, in October 2020.

[9] Links to this report can be found here: https://www.netflix.com/title/81254224

[10] A former internet startup executive, Tristan Harris, has begun a movement in Silicon Valley, around the idea of reducing the exploitation of humans and especially teens. See his website, https://www.humanetech.com/

attachment to animals, in particular, the human-horse relationship that existed in our nation in the last century. The fact that horses were conscious beings, and as we see from so many movies and books, valued in our culture and deeply connected to humans, all meant very little when confronted with industrialization and resulting changes in work efficiency of tractors, and later, trucks and automobiles.[11] City and highway ordinances and norms changed radically to make horses unwelcome in proximity to most humans, no matter how attached the owners were to their favorite mount. Thus, when we consider whether conscious humans could ever be devalued by the efficient but nevertheless *unconscious* machines, we should remember the shift in values in the rural and human-animal centric culture. And, to be clear, I am not suggesting that government policy will overtly value machines over human laborers, but rather, cultural norms will be reshaped by those who control digital technology, and the longstanding value of many human beings may be devalued.

How has COVID changed or accelerated this trajectory?

As we assess the effects of technology in the time of COVID-19, it is important to acknowledge that technology has provided enormous medical benefits as the world fights the pandemic, especially for elderly persons or persons with comorbidities who may require hospitalization. And for those quarantined at home or dorm, digital technology has helped reduce isolation while providing social outlets, distance learning, and tele-health. But what of the other effects, first order and beyond?

With the pandemic, the shift in resources from direct contact, human-centric systems to those more technological has accelerated. COVID, as did pandemics in the past, attacks individual humans, and predictably, government mitigation strategies dramatically reduce Human-Human contact. Unlike 1918, digital technology today makes possible social distancing and depopulating workplaces on an epic scale, pushing

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[11] The plight of the horse in the Industrial Age is addressed by numerous books, but the connection to the devaluation of conscious beings in favor of efficient machines is made stark in recent work by Yuval Harari. See *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, London: Vintage Books, 2017.

humans apart more frequently and at greater distances. Let us explore this dynamic a bit more as it pertains to effects of wealth inequality; employment and workplace; community vitality and physical health; trends for addiction; and, the long-lasting impacts on cultural values:

Wealth and Income Inequality

While many of Big Tech's helping hands have been wonderful in the short term, our society has handed back enormous wealth into these hands, resulting in a massive shift in resources. By some reports, as tens of millions of people were losing their non-digital jobs due to COVID, the number of billionaires in the United States increased rapidly, the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the rapid shift of more resources to the digital economy.[12] As the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported, the capitalization of advanced tech companies now makes up more of all stock markets than at any time since the Dot Com mania.[13]

Employment and Workplace Effects

The workforce with limited digital skills is shouldering the main effects of COVID. These employees are on the proverbial front line, both of exposure to the disease, but also the disruption to employment caused by the drop in economic activity in the Human Realm. We all can see the FAANG[14] stocks grow at record pace, and while FAANG hires, millions of customers (people) retreat from human-centric industry such as hotels, restaurants, airlines, and tens of thousands of these frontline workers lose their jobs or fall

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[12] Izabela Cardoso & Fernando Teixeira, BBC Reel, "Should We Have Billionaires", 28 October 2020.

[13] Ramkumar, Ramith, "Tech's Influence on Market Eclipses Dot-Com Bubble Peak", *Wall Street Journal*, Oct 16, 2020.

[14] FAANG: FaceBook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google.

ill.[15] Shopping goes virtual at a record pace. Department stores and malls, also a physical meeting place for humans, empty out and record numbers file for bankruptcy. But on the flip side, Amazon and others like it, companies built around increasingly robotic warehouses and internet checkout counters, become among the most valuable companies in history.[16] Robots can do more of the work, not just in massive warehouses, but we are now seeing the rapid adoption of robotics in fast food and restaurant service, perhaps permanently displacing human connection and jobs.[17] Human-centric systems come under pressure and may fail and NEVER COME BACK, while digital tech companies grow stronger. This dichotomy holds portentous implications for the longer term.

Community and Health Effects

Given the option of digital technology, churches, hotels, in-person friend groups all come under pressure, or in the best case, migrate to cyberspace of "ZOOM" or social media companies. While many physical sports programs and physical campuses stand largely empty, distant education and E-sports flourish. The longer-term effects on health and young people's adoption of more sedentary patterns of activity may well increase obesity and other ailments. And, what about sleep? As corporate headquarters are shut down,[18] and digital workers can "work from anywhere," the

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[15] Reed, Dan, *As Layoffs of 30,000 Workers Begin, the Airlines will Never Be the Same*, Forbes, 1 October 2020: https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielreed/2020/10/01/airline-layoffs-american-united-southwest/

[16] Lord and Taylor, in business since the early 19th century, was just one of the victims of Covid. See, https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/27/business/lord-and-taylor-store-closures-bankruptcy/index.html

[17] There are almost too many articles to cite. To start with, see TIME Magazine report of August 2020, https://time.com/5876604/machines-jobs-coronavirus/

[18] REI is one of many companies closing or rethinking the need to concentrate workforce and executive teams in geographic headquarters. See Forbes report here:

effects on geographic Time Zones and sleep cycles of employees may further decouple from natural circadian rhythms. Will workers geographic time clock and sleep cycles be respected, or will they be expected to conform to the location of the disaggregated headquarters which may be the home of the CEO? Worse yet, will employees lose their refuge of home and the weekend, and be on call 24 hours a day, as long as they sleep with their smart phone?

Addiction, Depression, and Loneliness

The shift of time spent, energy, employment, and money from the Human Realm to the profiting Robotic and Cyberspace are clear, but we are only dimly aware of the second and third order effects of this shift on the human spirit, peace of mind, and thus depression and loneliness and addiction. There are early indications that the isolation caused by COVID has in fact increased such negative social outcomes.[19] As progressively more people spend more time physically isolated but "connected" online, it is almost a certainty that this trajectory will continue to more social media addiction.

Cultural Values

Changing cultural values, not unemployment or distorted financial markets, may be the most important *long-term* effects of accelerated digital transformation. We already discussed the changes to the once dominant rural and horse culture that existed in our nation before

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https://www.forbes.com/sites/retailwire/2020/08/18/rei-sells-its-headquarters-others-should-take-notice/?sh=355de7873166

[19] See Shockley, Ellie. Student Achievement from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020. Requestor: Supt. Kirsten Baesler, ND DPI, November 19, 2020. Also Michael S. Pollard, Joan S. Tucker, and Harold D. Green's "Changes in Adult Alcohol Use and Consequences During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the US". *JAMA Netw Open.* 2020;3(9):e2022942. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.22942.

industrialization. In the rush to battle COVID by allowing digital machines to mediate human community on a massive scale, it is possible our cultural defenses against future intrusive technology may be weakened.[20] Policy, law, ethics, and norms are the building blocks of culture, and may already be in transition by the rushed reaction to respond to the pandemic. In a reinforcing loop, policies and norms now being adopted may further replace human connection with technology, and perhaps even devalue human contact. The proliferation of more robots in restaurants, a place where humans "break bread", may be an early example of culture in flux. The massive expansion of distance learning at the expense of in-person human contact in the classroom, especially for K12 school children, may be a second early sign of cultural deformation. And, who can miss the empty sports stadiums and possible longer-term implications. Will fans prefer to skip the tailgaters and crowded stadiums, and instead enjoy the game experience mediated by a smart phone? But if this challenge isn't urgent enough, another factor need be considered: the likelihood that our rushed COVID reactions may effect irreversible change that is suboptimal for human-centric culture in the longer run.

The Danger of Inertia and Irreversibility of Socio-Technical Systems

Some readers and leaders, overwhelmed by the crush of immediate challenges, may not want to consider the longer term second and third order consequences of our COVID response. They may prefer to "let our children figure out the balance between good and bad." But to focus only on the short term is quite frankly an evasion of a most profound socio-technical responsibility. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, when

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[20] An early visionary on the potential threat to human culture by rapid technological change was Neil Postman, former Dean of Columbia's School of Journalism. See his book, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. See especially chapter 5, "Broken Defense".

technologies began to have societal-wide implications, the first generation of humans to use a new technology shouldered disproportionate responsibility for the 'good and bad' balance that ultimately locked in for the long term. Technological systems have a strong tendency to develop inertia, to 'lock in' during the early stages, a fact discovered some years ago in the study of information machines - the QWERTY keyboard of the 1860s typewriter still defines our smart phones today - and the placement of road and power systems.[21] Thus, the professoriate, political classes, clergy, business leaders, NGOs, and indeed every "customer" or human product, and especially parents, are now responsible to think for the long term, for generations to follow. Which brings us to our next question. What to do?

What to do and How to Create a More Human-Centric Future?

Before I discuss recommended actions, I need to address the digital advocates who believe no action is required to promote human-centric systems. Some Silicon Valley leaders believe that current market forces and unmanaged technological trends most certainly improve human welfare, and that recent COVID shocks to human-centric systems will produce universally positive and needed structural changes.[22] But they are wrong. The systems now coming to dominate our economy, accelerated by COVID, cannot *naturally reprioritize human welfare*. Why not? They are not human in their nature, but innately inhuman and unnatural. The existence of two artificial, unnatural Realms of digital machines that do work and come

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[21] For historical examples and theories of the strong tendency of technological systems to 'lock in' or gain 'technological momentum', see works by Paul David, "QWERTY", available on the internet here:
https://econ.ucsb.edu/~tedb/Courses/Ec100C/DavidQwerty.pdf See also Thomas Hughes, *Networks of Power*, on the momentum of technological systems. See Langdon Winner, *Autonomous Technology*, on the tendency of humans to reverse-adapt their value and culture to these systems once they gain momentum.

[22] At a recent Singularity University session on human workforce on October 21, 2020, Dr. Homi Kharas of Brookings suggested that COVID is accelerating humanity down the preferred path of development. I found such a comment alarming and value-laden, to say the least. Then another panelist, Dr. Wolfgang Fengler drew an analogy to how his mother was a typist, and how the word processor saved her so much time, therefore, technology will just keep making things better for humanity. These comments left me speechless in the chatroom...where to begin to engage such short-sighted thinking?

between humans and thereby displace natural human contact is absolutely unprecedented in history. In the last pandemic, human-centric systems maintained their centrality of social and economic life, because there was no alternative to intelligent humans. In 2020, trillions of intelligent machines, AI, machine learning algorithms, and robots are emerging. Stated another way: in the 1918 post pandemic recovery, humans had to come together, to communicate or work at a modest distance. Now, technology can take the place of human contact and displace vital human institutions, at a distance and in cyberspace. Thus, to improve human welfare, we need deliberate action by the leading organizations, federal, state, business, and philanthropy, to promote human reconnection. So, what should they do?

First, expand support to human-centric jobs and companies. The levers of government and business need to encourage the resumption of *natural, in-person human contact* and connection and direct investment in human centric companies (e.g., restaurants, theaters, retail stores with foot traffic, gyms, airlines, hotels, tourism, etc.). There is indeed a calculated risk to bring people back together earlier rather than later. Currently the risk-benefit calculation has been biased toward physical spread of the virus, aggregate economic metrics and, in some corners, political agendas. Models do not account for longer term effects. Without deliberate investment in human-centric jobs and companies, structural changes put in motion *by government policy* during the pandemic may gain unstoppable momentum, to the detriment of our society.

Second, support the human 'caring economy' and reconsider our models and metrics for a healthy society. Aggregate demand and GDP numbers are inadequate metrics for human wellbeing, a critique that has been gaining credibility well before COVID.[23] Our government's policy models are woefully inadequate to capture the second and third order societal effects, beginning with mental health but also community vitality. Our government and businesses must support the physical, natural human community interaction, perhaps to include direct payments or subsidies to

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[23] For a recent discussion of the inadequacy of reducing measures of wellbeing to GDP and employment calculations, see Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Ciroux, 2012

churches, community groups, and other civic organizations that promote human contact, once the short-term crisis is past.

Third, we need a major, new national investment program in both K-12 and higher education that focuses on the digital transformation of our society and economy. We need more people to understand the digitizing world, to be able to compete for good, digital jobs, but also to help "civilize"[24] these digital machines. There are currently federal legislative proposals to massively expand advanced technology R&D, but this concentrates control in Washington DC, and spending flows mainly to universities in large urban areas. Moreover, it neglects the Humanities and thus does little to help universities, students, and faculty to help think thru and to "civilize" the machines.[25] An alternative proposal that the next Administration in Washington may consider has been published nationally multiple times, my proposal for a state-centric, Digital-Cyber Land Grant system of colleges and universities.[26] This proposal would build out the

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[24] This was a challenge to our ancestors when the macro-changes engulfed society moving from agriculture to industrialization, a shift to many non-digital machines. See John Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900,* New York: Penguin, 1976

[25] It is especially important that rural and outlying states receive their share of the massive research monies now poised to flow to universities, that may amount to over $100 billion as the NSF is restructured (the *Endless Frontier Bill*, proposed by Senator Schumer, link here: https://www.schumer.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/with-the-support-of-new-yorks-leading-tech-innovators-schumer-announces-bipartisan-endless-frontier-act-bolstering-us-leadership-in-scientific-research-and-innovation-dramatically-increase-investment-in-building-new-tech-hubs-in-upstate-ny). It is heartening that the federal government and congressional leaders appreciate the magnitude of the challenge of AI/networks/robotics, but most of those resources are slated to be invested in already large urban areas, large universities. Furthermore, there is little money assigned to the humanities/liberal arts at universities, where the civilizing process happened when the Land Grant system of colleges and universities were established in response to the last great MACRO technological event, the Industrial Revolution.

[26] See the Winter edition of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, Issues.org, and proposal by Dr. Mark Hagerott, "Time for a Digital Cyber Land Grant System", link here: https://issues.org/time-for-a-digital-cyber-land-grant-system/ See also *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, by Mark Hagerott, "Time for Silicon Valley to Help Rural America: Here's How." See special edition of the *Chronicle*, published September 2018: https://www.chronicle.com/article/silicon-valley-must-help-rural-america-heres-how/

existing Land Grant universities and other campuses, with support for both digital MACHINE programs and the HUMANITIES. Additionally, each state should consider what we are doing in North Dakota, creation of a state digital academy like our own Dakota Digital Academy, a collaborative effort of all existing campuses to promote understanding of the digital world, to prepare for the changed work place, but also to help civilize the digital Realms as they emerge in their communities.

Fourth, we must resist the distortion of human-centric culture, a distortion arising from our urgent response to the first order effects of the COVID crisis. Our leading cultural institutions, government, business, academia, religious, labor groups, non-profits, must come together to develop the policy, law, ethics, and norms which will "civilize" the increasingly capable machines and intelligent algorithms that will populate the Realms of Robots and Cyberspace. But how to pull these disparate organizations together? The next administration in the White House (and perhaps the Governors in each state), should convene a task force on ***Human Vitality in the Age of Digital Machines***, to develop the needed policies and laws that will protect our human-centric culture. This effort must be deliberate and long-term, because COVID is just one shock to the system, the first of many to come. As the pace of technological change accelerates into the future, such a deliberative effort must be sustained so that humans consciously shape technology rather being shaped by short-term responses to episodic events.

Lastly, assuming the Federal Government cannot print money forever, there may be a need to identify new financial sources to support the human-centric economy and institutions in the medium to long-term. It may thus be time to consider a "wind fall profits tax" on digital and social media companies as a means to provide support to that part of the economy that is human-centric. If such a tax sounds radical, consider that Bill Gates, one of the most thoughtful and generous of our tech elites in the world and perhaps in history, suggested it may be time for a tax on robots to support human society. [27]

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[27] Waters, Richards, "Bill Gates Calls for an Income Tax on Robots", *Financial Times*, 19 February 2017: https://www.ft.com/content/d04a89c2-f6c8-11e6-9516-2d969e0d3b65

Conclusion

A pandemic is not unprecedented in and of itself. But paradigm-changing digital technology, combined with the shock to humanity brought on by COVID, carries almost unfathomable consequences for the longer term. Words struggle to convey the magnitude of the challenge. Technological breakthroughs of the past couple decades have created change at the MACRO level, the emergence of two, artificial realms of Cyberspace and the Robotic. In a desperate attempt to mitigate short term problems of COVID, more energy and money has shifted into the digital Realms, at the expense of natural, Human-centric systems. The challenge of civilizing the digital Realms for the benefit of nature and humans cannot be passed to our children, since technological systems have a proven habit of gaining inertia, 'locking in' the policy and investment mistakes of early decisions. The challenge is upon this generation of leaders to ensure the post COVID-era will privilege not the digital machines and the small group who own them, but promote a reinvigorated, natural, human society of all Americans.

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Prior to his transition to an academic career, Hagerott held multiple technical leadership positions. A certified naval nuclear engineer, he served as chief engineer for a major environmental project de-fueling of two atomic reactors. Hagerott also managed tactical data networks and the specialized artificial intelligence AEGIS system, ultimately rising to ship command. He also served as a White House Fellow, and in addition to his undergraduate degree from Annapolis, he holds a master's degree from Oxford University where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar, and a doctorate in history from the University of Maryland.
Chancellor Hagerott's research and writing focus on the evolution of technology and education. He served on the Defense Science Board summer study of robotic systems 2014-2015 and as a non-resident Cyber Fellow of the New America Foundation, 2015-2017. He was among the first military professors from the United States to brief the Geneva Convention in 2014 on the challenge of lethal robotic machines and argue the merits of early arms control measure. In addition, his proposals for national education reform in response to digitization and artificial intelligence, have been published in The

Chronicle of Higher Education, by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, and have been presented on Capitol Hill and the White House.

Praise be to Science! Scientism's New Divine Command Theory

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Abstract:
The current COVID-19 pandemic shows the human tendency to favor simplicity, brevity, and certainty, even if they come at the price of honesty, efficiency, and pragmatism. More worrisome than that, however, is the trend toward creating a scientism alternative to Divine Command Theory based on the zealous reliance/worship of science, in which science and scientific experts are deified and their claims taken as sacrosanct. To question them and their work becomes blasphemy, and to have a different belief is heresy. Let us call this new moral principle Science Command Theory (SCT), which ironically, violates quality science's foundational axioms. Used the way it was intended, science is a tool that provides evidence for good decision-making and dynamic marketplaces of ideas rather than being employed as an authoritarian weapon to enforce conformity to the simplistic thinking of a Hedgehog. If scientists and others would follow good professional conduct rules in science – especially being humble and nurturing a spirit of humility in themselves and others – then science could appropriately play its vital role in public health decisions and elsewhere.

Keywords: Divine Command Theory, science, Science Command Theory, scientism

[T]hose who are scientists, or who pretend to be scientists, cling to the mantle of a kind of religious authority. And as anyone who has tried to comment on religion has discovered, there is no such thing as criticism. There is only blasphemy (Gee, 2013)

But it comes down to what builds trust more: certainty or honesty? (Koerth 2020)

Introduction

Novel crises drive frightened, ignorant[1] people to embrace Hedgehog-ism (Archilochus 2016). A Hedgehog is a person who has only one idea, which he forcefully uses to solve all problems. His pronouncements are certain, absolute, and simple to understand. He seems to be a powerful individual who is in control of the situation. A Hedgehog is psychologically attractive: he provides a sense of security to those worried about their lives and whether they can be well-lived. Everything will work out nicely for them in the near future or end, they come to believe, because there is a simple, brief, certain solution to what only appeared to be a complex, confusing threat, as well as a powerful someone who can secure that solution for them on their own terms.

The problem, of course, is that Hedgehog thinking rarely succeeds in a complex crisis precisely because it is the wrong tool to perform a job requiring the skillful use of a better-suited, higher quality instrument, and possibly, a number of them. Fox thinking is superior in these challenges. It appreciates and understands the situation's complexities, intersectionalities, and relationships, and then tailors nuanced solutions to manage the situation, and hopefully resolve the crisis. Compared to Hedgehog cogitation, it is the difference between trying to pound a square peg through a round hole and carefully, paring down the square peg to fit the hole. Unfortunately, frightened people disfavor the Fox's way of doing things, since her thoughtful, multi-level approach erroneously feeds a perception of uncertainty, lack of control, and hesitation that the Hedgehog's simple message, personal power, and assurance do not encounter.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is a case study showing the human tendency to favor Hedgehogs over Foxes. In such chaotic times, simplicity, brevity, and certainty are the gold standard sought, even if they come at the price of honesty, efficiency, and pragmatism. More worrisome than that, however, is the trend toward creating a scientism[2] alternative to Divine Command Theory based on the zealous reliance/worship of science, in which science and scientific experts are deified and their claims taken as sacrosanct. To question them and their work becomes blasphemy, and to

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[1] Ignorant in the sense that they have inadequate evidence to know how to get the situation sufficiently under control so that they can feel less threatened.

[2] Karl Popper and Hilary Putnam's view of scientism is not positive (Hacohen 2002; Putnam 1992).

have a different belief is heresy. Either of the two transgressions indicate the non-believer's lack of purity, rightness, goodness, and bad character, and therefore, justify public shaming, being canceled, or divine retribution. Let us call this new moral principle Science Command Theory (SCT), which ironically, violates quality science's foundational axioms. Used the way it was intended, science is a tool that provides evidence for good decision-making and dynamic marketplaces of ideas rather than being employed as an authoritarian weapon to enforce conformity to Hedgehog thinking.

In what follows, scientism's Science Command Theory will be formalized using Divine Command Theory's foundations. Significant similarities establishing why we should treat them alike are identified using COVID-19 pandemic examples. Finally, a way to prevent SCT is proposed. If scientists and others would follow good professional conduct rules in science – especially being humble and nurturing a spirit of humility in themselves and others – then science could appropriately play its vital role in public health decisions and elsewhere.

Divine Command Theory and Science Command Theory

Divine Command Theory is a form of relativism, although that might appear counter-intuitive for those who think that anything dealing with God must be both universal and absolute. Relativism, however, merely states that morality is dependent on some individual, group, or society. That means that moral values and principles do not exist until those respective entities create them through one or more mechanisms, such as believing something is right or good (Individual Relativism), choosing that status for some action or thing (Existentialism), or generating the first social convention (Conventionalism). Morality can change over time, moreover, depending on whether its creator or sustainer resort to the modification mechanism, e.g., getting enough people to believe and follow a new, social conduct rule. Under Conventionalism, for example, once it was permissible to own human beings, but became immoral the moment that the social convention on that repulsive institution and practice changed in that society.[3]

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[3] Kantian Realists believe that an absolute, universal morality says that slavery is always wrong.

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Divine Command Theory is different from relativism's other forms. Once he[4] has them set in place, adherents believe that God would not change the moral code and axiology. Since God is absolute, then so too must his morality have the same feature - just as any work we do becomes an extension of us by our altering it with our creative labor. We imbue it with our essence, so to speak. It also might be that God would not unfairly change morality because that would mean that those who are righteous or wicked become wicked and righteous, respectively, after the alteration. For us to be moral entities, we have to expect consistency in the ethical system, otherwise morality becomes meaningless in a world where anything follows from a contradiction.

Of course, there really is no inconsistency between absolutism and DCT being a form of relativism. Since God is omnipotent, then he would be able to change morality in any way he deems appropriate. If God never wants to alter what is good and right, however, they become eternal and universal for all those entities God has bound to DCT. The essential condition relevant to relativism is that God *could* change morality if he so desired, not that he *would*.

Divine Command Theory contains a number of assumptions. The first one is how morality's creator functions in the system. Divine Command Theory's god is one who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, and omnipresent. Moreover, whatever God approves is right because his approval makes it right. Whatever God commands must not only be morally right to do, but also a duty to whoever falls within the group on which the moral obligation falls. Finally, whatever God permits or expressly allows is right. The final assumption is a reasonable form of Divine Permission Theory, which tries to reconcile the existence of an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God with the existence of evil. Since evil clearly exists and God has not stopped it, then some might say that God has given his permission by omission to whatever happened. The Expressly-Allows interpretation offers a way out of all that occurs being automatically permissible merely *because* it happened: God has to perform some act of commission - expressly allowing - in order for the state of affairs to be morally right or good. Perhaps God acquiesces to whatever is at question rather than anything stronger in the way of his agreement, but that

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[4] Since Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are Divine Command Theories and their god is male, I will use male pronouns for him.

acquiescence is sufficient to render that action morally right as God makes it his own. Put formally, DCT is:

1. **An action A is morally right if and only if A is approved, permitted, or commanded by God,**
2. **A is morally wrong if and only if A is prohibited by God, and**
3. **A is morally obligatory if and only if A is commanded by God.**

A significant benefit to DCT is its flexibility. God can direct his commands to one individual for one action at one time, such as telling Abraham to murder his only legitimate son, Isaac, as a blood sacrifice to God. DCT can also create eternal, absolute morality for all individuals for a particular type of action, such as disrespecting one's parents. Hence, we could say that DCT can strike a balance between one principle Hedgehog thinking and individual, situational Fox thinking.

There is also an ease in DCT's use. Once we think we know what God has said about an action or state of being's moral status, we then know with certainty what to do. That is, we will have total confidence about how to live our life as an ethical being, provided that we have a decent source of information about what God wants. Perhaps through revelation, God speaks directly to some people, and those recipients perfectly understand what is being communicated. It might be that there is a prophet through whom the divine entity reveals his moral edicts, and that mortal can convey the information adequately to other finite minds. Finally, the third communication source is religious texts that are often believed to be God's divine words written down by divinely inspired mortals stating God's exact, complete, and comprehensible edicts and nothing more. Anyone reading them with an open mind should be able to understand what they mean, and if that is not the case, then a competent cleric can help clarify matters.

In addition, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam's view of human nature plays into DCT's acceptability for their adherents. Unlike the Greeks who believed that people had the rational ability to critically reason their way to Truth and their own salvation, these religions contend that people inherently need divine assistance to achieve their ends:

1. All humans are essentially corrupted because of Original Sin; therefore, no human can be self-sufficient in achieving the best ends for himself.

2. Without some sort of divine revelation, no human can see what is best for him in the way of individual and social conduct. Each person needs God's commandments because he cannot know the right and good for himself nor can other defective, finite beings figure it out on their own.

3. Besides requiring divine assistance to know what to do and be, all humans are too weak willed to achieve by themselves what God demands of us. We need regeneration through divine grace to cause us to act rightly and be good people.

C: To be good people, to act rightly, and to be saved from our inherently bad, defective nature, therefore we need Divine Command Theory.

Given our inherently, flawed minds and abilities, and inherited, corrupt essence, we have to rely on an outside perfect expert-creator to give us what we require to flourish. Since it is provided by God, then to question its fairness or for any other perceived defect is the question God's goodness, power, or knowledge. To question or think about morality or the system in a way other than God's is to place oneself over that divine being. In other words, to commit heresy or blasphemy of the most vile sort.

Monotheism has its benefits. DCT's one, perfect God means one perfect, consistent set of rules to make better lives for ourselves and others within that religion. If there were more than one entity that could create morality, then moral dilemmas, such as that which confronted Agamemnon, would undermine ethics' function and value. Agamemnon was charged by one god with waging war to regain Helen of Troy and satisfy honor, but could not get his Greek fleet out of harbor because of another divine being's interference. A goddess required him to kill his daughter, Iphigenia, to lift the former's edict preventing favorable winds, although killing one's relatives was also banned by other divinities. In this situation, Agamemnon was unable to do anything fully morally permissible because the moral system's design allowed contradictions. Since morality is supposed to make the world a better place by bringing order and decency out of unfairness and chaos – not to create impossible dilemmas leaving normal people

wondering why they should bother doing anything when everything is morally forbidden - then this system and any like it that allow for inconsistencies has to be abandoned as impractical. Moreover, when people are searching for certainty, or good enough reason, to do right and be good, then any moral system ending in a demotivating "nothing you do can be ethically right or good" is going to be unacceptable.

There are practical problems, however. Since Divine Command Theory requires monotheism, it suffers from limited appeal as a tool for universal morality and practical use by generally applying only to the western world's three main religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. If morality does not include all people or people are less likely to employ it because it is more about religion than about real, objective ways we should live our lives, act rightly, and be a good person, then it is not a useful tool. That conclusion especially holds in global crisis requiring moral decision making across cultures and national boundaries, such as a pandemic.

Divine Command Theory encounters additional impracticalities that make it less useful than reasonable competitors in achieving morality's purpose. Among these practical issues are acts and states of affairs that seem wrong or bad to us, but are approved of in the religious texts, such a slavery, treating women as property, and sacrificing animals, as well as acts and states that seem right or good to us but are disapproved of in the religious texts, e.g. rejecting the former three practices and institutions. In addition, there is silence on science, technology, and other actions and things that appear right/good to us. Finally, other things that are wrong/bad to us, but are not addressed clearly, including child pornography and cyber-crimes, make us wonder at the text's silence on what is an important moral issue. What are we supposed to do with those who distribute images of children who are being sexually abused, for example, if the child's father approves of such actions or is doing it to what might be perceived to be his property? These flaws should dampen any ardor to adopt DCT when objective, universal moral theories are readily available.

Science Command Theory (SCT)

There are obvious dissimilarities between religion and science that should make Science Command Theory inconceivable. DCT's evidence is revelation, whereas quality science is founded on the scientific method, abductive and inductive reasoning, and empirical evidence. Equipoise is our

starting point for science. We always must follow the evidence wherever it may lead us, rather than starting with an *a priori* conclusion, and then finding evidence to rationalize it, as happens in religion. That latter pathway leads to confirmation bias and epistemic closure, which are anathema to quality science. The religious conclusion might be true, but there is no way to falsify it, which means it is not science (Popper 2005).

Science's abductive and inductive arguments rely on plausibility and probability. For inductive arguments, generalizations and predictions about a class or its member are based on observations of a sufficiently large, adequately representative subset of that group. In abductive reasoning, hypotheses explaining and predicting observations are selected by the Surprise Principle:

> **Surprise Principle** =df. An observation strongly supports a hypothesis over another hypothesis if both of the following conditions are met, but not otherwise:
> 1. If the first hypothesis is true, then the observation is expected, and
> 2. If the second hypothesis is true, then the observation would not have been expected.

We should note that neither hypothesis might be the correct one. Science is not about truth with a capital T or certainty with a capital C. Those are absolute concepts and possibly universal in all possible worlds, such as all triangles essentially requiring at least and no more than three angles. They are *a priori* analytic, whereas science is *a posteriori* synthetic.

DCT and religion are based on the notion that there is eternal, absolute Truth and that can be known with 100% certainty through revelation. Science, on the other hand, seeks truths and a degree of certainty that could be replaced by competing truths bearing greater probability and plausibility. In one instance, the Surprise Principle will favor one of two competing hypothesis. If a third is introduced that does a better job of predicting, then it becomes favored until that time when a fourth one is formulated that is superior to all three, and so on. Scientific certainty is merely that a conclusion is sufficiently plausible and has met some percentage standard of probability by the elimination of enough uncertainty, such as being reasonably scientifically certain as used in legal cases for

expert testimony. Although scientific findings are often good enough evidence to perform planning and make major decisions, it never means being 100% probable without the possibility of being mistaken, as it does in religion.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, scientism's SCT rejects what science actually is, and replaces it with something that looks much like Divine Command Theory, with science experts taking the place of a divine entity and those professing devotion to science being scientism's worshipers. It starts with the assumption that as laypersons, we are too ignorant of science or its quality to be able to understand the various fields of it and what they tell us. In SCT modification, the DCT argument from above becomes:

P1. All laypersons are inherently defective reasoners or unreliable sources of information because of their bias or ignorance of science or a scientific field and its developments.

P2. Without some sort of advanced science education, especially one conferring a graduate degree, no layperson can see what is best in the way of individual and social conduct because they are unable to know how the natural world functions. In addition, we may be less than honest brokers whose bias blinds us to the scientific truth. Laypersons need science experts telling us what to do and how to be.

P3. All laypersons are too weak willed or are too greatly biased to do what science commands of them. We need to listen to and follow the experts' recommendations without question because dire consequences will happen if we do not.

P4. No layperson can be self-sufficient in achieving their or others best ends when part of the problem requires an unbiased, adequate (complete) understanding of "the science."

Conclusion: Science Command Theory requires that scientific experts provide all laypersons - and possibly biased experts with warped scientific beliefs - with commands so that we know what to do and what to be.[5]

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[5] To eliminate false authority fallacies in which one discipline's expert makes claims and draws conclusions in another discipline in which she is not an expert, it is reasonable to

The pressure to obey experts gains strength in proportion to how many of them share that opinion, although at times, in extreme confirmation bias, some people justify their belief with any expert who confirms it. Not only should laypersons have humility when it comes to their understanding of science, to merely question a science expert or her opinion is to fall prey to hubris. Worse yet, the heretics and blasphemers will cause unnecessary injury, including vulnerable innocents' suffering and deaths.

Instead of Divine Command Theory's God, the science expert has the supernatural power of her or his scientific knowledge being absolutely certain in a world where that cannot possibly be the case:

> **Scientific expert** =df. A fully reliable individual who knows all relevant empirical evidence and how to apply it to a degree that leads to absolute, moral certainty, who serves as gatekeeper, judge, and monitor of what counts as good science and what does not, and whose commands, if not followed to the letter, will lead to unnecessary harm.

SCT has the benefit over DCT that the former's morality's creators are often willing to directly communicate in real time what their approval, permission, and commands – and for some of them, are especially willing if they will be given a national media platform.

Like DCT, Science Command Theory states an action's rightness or wrongness is created by at least one scientific expert's approval of it, etc.:

1. **An action A is morally right if and only if A is approved, permitted, or commanded by a scientific expert or body,**
2. **A is morally wrong if and only if A is prohibited by a scientific expert or body, and**
3. **A is morally obligatory if and only if A is commanded by a scientific expert or body.**

Notice that SCT does not require the expert be an authority in a relevant field. Although that would make the opinion or judgment more plausible and probable, in the real world, SCT and DCT's users are not that rigorous.

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add that the commands must come from a relevant expert. But that is not done often enough when using SCT.

They "expert hunt" to find one whom they like or is saying what the seekers want him to say. With modern technology and a decent WIFI connection, this task is child's play. A quick internet search is generally all that is needed to find what is conducive to one's existing beliefs.

The case that scientism's SCT is a form of DCT: Other similarities and shared problems

Eric Dietrich argues that science cannot be a religion because there are three essential features all religions have. They:

1. Are social systems,
2. Endorse or require something that is supernatural, and
3. Designate something as holy or sacred (Dietrich, 2015).

Deitrich claims that science essentially lacks the second condition, and he is right. But science is not scientism, which is SCT's foundation.

It is only when science becomes or is treated as a form of scientism that SCT becomes a form of DCT. Some well-intentioned but overly zealous individuals have made science a religion (Shermer 2002). Others have recognized the introduction of infallibility and absolute certainty in science that religion proclaims for itself:

> "I think very highly of science," [Paul Feyerabend] once wrote, "but I think very little of experts." In his view, scientists too often made of science a "tyranny," claiming rights over the direction of public policy shared by no other interest group in a democratic society. Through the education system, they impose assent to useful but fallible and limited theoretical abstractions as if they were obligatory dogmas (Feser 2020).

Austin Hughes writes that scientism is based on "the stubborn insistence that something ... has powers which no evidence supports" (Hughes 2012). In scientism, revelation replaces science's empirical evidence requirement.

Scientism lacks none of Deitrich's three conditions. It designates science as something sacred to be treated with reverence, as are the lives that many adherents claim they are saving when they try to cancel dissent. To question science, its findings, or it adherents is to callously endanger

those sacred lives, and thereby show one's ethical decrepitude if not outright moral monstrosity. Its adherents have elevated scientists and science into the supernatural realm by making them generators and conveyers of absolute epistemological and moral certainty that allows its adherents to castigate nonbelievers as heretics, blasphemers, and as "ascientists."[6]

Where do we find supporting evidence of Hughes claim that scientism is based on "the stubborn insistence that something ... has powers which no evidence supports" (Hughes 2012)? Partially from some scientists themselves. Stephen Hawking, for instance, claimed that philosophy is a waste of time and resources with its obsessions about truth, the problem of induction, and knowledge, among other issues he deemed as irrelevant to human progress (Hawking and Mlodinow 2012). Stephen Pinker tries to make the humanities into science's handmaiden, when both are equally important and essential in different areas of human life and ways we critically reason (Pinker 2013). PZ Meyers asserts that we find knowledge only through science (Meyers 2013). Science, therefore, becomes all conceivable, rational reasoning governed by supernatural experts who find truth, whilst all others thinkers using a different system to make decisions are sadly deluded, at best. Perhaps, they are to be pitied, although Meyers seems to think attacking them verbally and in writing is the appropriate response of those possessing the "Truth."

Secondly, science is made into a revelation-based enterprise rather than limiting it to the useful, quality empirical evidence tool it actually is. Too often those making scientific claims cross over into conclusions that are unable to be certain even with the best scientific evidence. That is, the problem happens when revelation or *a priori*, synthetic reasoning replaces the caution and accuracy quality scientists employ to say what the data supports rather than implying or stating much stronger claims than can be justified. In quality science, for example, if it is an open question as to an effect's causation or correlation to an intervention, then that reality should be stated and explained as such. In the current COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's *Standing Committee on Emerging Infectious Diseases and 21st Century Health Threats* found that the scientific evidence for cloth face masks' - especially the homemade variety - intervention and efficacy is mixed at best, and requires far more study than it has been given (*Standing*

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[6] An ascientist is scientism's equivalent to religion's atheist.

Committee on Emerging Infectious Diseases and 21ˢᵗ Century Health Threats 2020).

In scientism, correlation is sometimes treated as causation, even though they are vastly different things. Commanding cloth facemasks be used, however, is with simplicity, brevity, and certainty stated as reducing transmission from the infected to those who are susceptible, without the nuance required to understand what the evidence supports. In one often cited study to show the relationship, the authors, Lyu and Wehby (2020), failed to take into account contributory and possibly more important interventions such as increased distancing and hygiene and whether the infection rate was already falling. Without knowing these other variables, especially since improved hygiene and social distancing seems to have better evidence to show lower transmission rates, any claim made without explaining that complexity is more faith than science. To be so certain based on inadequate empirical evidence rather than being honest is to take on a supernatural rather than quality expert role. The study also has the very serious problem that some of these very same states with face mask mandates, e.g., California, are now going through a second wave of infections. If face masks are as efficacious as the authors contended, then this development would have been highly unlikely.

Another similarity is DCT and SCT devotees treat questioning as anathema violating a higher power and social norm. For DCT to question what God has determined to be ethical and unethical is to attack God's very nature. And making a claim of heresy against the heretical would be right if and only if God actually creates morality and has classified moral matters in the way being disputed. Generally, however, it is only a cleric or devotee interpreting the religious texts making the charge, and what is actually being questioned is whether the interpreter has understood what is meant. In a marketplace of ideas, there is no unjustified harm in raising that epistemological issue, but with Hedgehog thinking interpreters it is an attack on their religion and them. Questions or different interpretations are intended as charges of a moral or other personal or value defect, they seem to think, which might explain why they react with such emotional violence. After all, if they are correct, and God is on their side and they are saved, they should not care that foolish people raise questions that do not threaten that relationship or salvation. There must be something else causing the defensive response, therefore.

SCT's devotees have unfortunately taken the same path. There is an automatic dismissal of or attack on people who raise counter-arguments, present contrary evidence, or merely ask inconvenient questions, such as whether the data support the conclusion being made. To question the perceived scientific certainty becomes a moral and personal issue, and therefore, justifies devotees calling out the blasphemy/heresy. They also rationalize/justify their attempts to stop both on the grounds that innocent people should not be hurt because of it. Debora Cohen, a medically qualified, UK correspondent, for instance, had to shut down conversation on her twitter account thread about the WHO's decision on masks being more politically than scientifically motivated. The hostility toward discussion exhibited by posters including a person passive-aggressively questioning Cohen's integrity: "But in a debate where the outcome may be even one person's death, is it responsible to give us anything less than verified, checkable, factual information?" (Cohen 2020).

The heresy and blasphemy judgments takes different forms depending on who is challenging the commands or conclusions. For professionals raising issues with the SCT cleric's beliefs, the response is often that the person is ignorant or does not understand the data. At other times, there is an attempt to discredit the contrarian expert by claiming conspiracy or a conflict of interest, perhaps through a funding source for that person's research or linking them to a political party. For laypeople, it is to claim that they do not understand the way science works or what is being said, with a second attack line that they cannot understand what they are talking about, since they do not have the proper background or credentials. At times, the cleric/believer might also resort to exasperation, claiming victimization, or ridiculing, such as saying that those raising questions are usurping the roles of scientists or arrogantly believing that they are as qualified as a scientist in the area. The scientist clerics and devotees seem indignant that the *hoi polloi* would exceed their station.

If the automatic or emotional response is to try to cancel the person, thereby discrediting the evidence, then it is not something that critical reasoning – regardless if it is scientific - would permit. Michael T. Osterholm, for example, made the scientifically honest, responsible statement that cloth masks' effectiveness in reducing COVID-19's spread is still an open scientific question, whilst also strongly recommending public mask wearing, just in case those facial coverings do make a

significant, positive impact (Osterholm, 2020). Masks4All proponents Jeremy Howard and Vincent Rajkumar, however, have publicly mischaracterized what Osterholm has said, including taking his quotations out of context, and more egregiously, asserting that Osterholm made extreme claims that he never, in fact, did (Osterholm 2020). Since researching the actual data is a simple matter, quality, critical reasoners legitimately wonder why Howard and Rajkumar did not take due care and why they do not fix their publicly identified oversights and errors. Perhaps, certainty is more important than quality critical reasoning and honesty, or there might be a fallacy lying at the root.

Fallacies are defects in critical reasoning that occur when people incorporate irrelevant bias or other illicit influencing factors that leads the decision maker astray from the straight and narrow required by quality reasoning. For example, believing that someone is a competent speaker on a topic is often linked to their degrees and credentials. That works many times in practice, but sometimes fails. For critical reasoning, it is not the degree or credentials that matter, but the evidence's quality. To dismiss someone, who is legitimately engaged in questioning and trying to find an accurate answer, as a layperson or their claims as not coming from an expert is an Authority Fallacy. Since no one is perfect, and science is based, in part, on raising doubt about scientific conclusions, then it has to be the evidence quality that is the primary – possibly, only – information used in the process. But this is not what is being done here.

Another version of this reasoning mistake is when an authority in one area makes claims in another professional field, as happens in instances when epidemiologists enter into public health and planning decision-making discussions about what that community should do for the public good. Epidemiologists and virologists have vital information to share, but adequate political and social decision-making and planning requires far more diverse information than can be generated by their fields, such as social and racial disparities, the effects on child and spousal abuse and domestic violence, drug use, suicide rates, and vulnerable populations' education caused by shutdowns and other measures. Germany, for instance, recognized this fact when it put its COVID-19 response committee together, instead of relying solely on one discipline to make decisions outside of their personal fields of study (Matthers 2020).

A different fallacy is questioning information's origin rather than the evidence's quality. Alfred Wegener's continental drift theory, for example, was during Wegner's time rejected by most geologists, partly because he was not a geologist. The experts even held a conference to discredit him. Wegner was right, however. The continents move, albeit not at the rapid rate he thought.

The lesson is that regardless of whether the originator is a disagreeing, unlikeable expert, a layperson, or even someone with a conflict of interest, to deny counter-evidence on the grounds of its source rather than its own worth is an Origin Fallacy mistake. And it is bad science. For good science, it is the quality of the evidence that matters, which is why double-blind peer review of research is vital to science and all rigorous, legitimate areas of study. Research blind review, at its best, eliminates unnecessary bias that might interfere if the reviewer knew the author's name, affiliation, or any irrelevant origin fact other than the quality of evidence sitting before her to examine to the best of her ability.

Since the information's origin rather than its quality determines acceptability according to SCTers, attacking questioners on who they are does not uphold the very standards all quality scientists say must be taken as sacrosanct. That inconsistency indicates that SCT's need for absolute certainty is deciding whether people and their evidence is dismissed as heretical or blasphemous, and whether those contrary individuals are pure enough to be regarded as valued community members.

Selective, hypocritical use is another piece of evidence that someone is using DCT or scientism's SCT rather than following quality critical reasoning's requirements. There are religious adherents who cite religious texts to justify discrimination or other actions. If someone is against homosexuality or equality for women, there are passages that state that men should not lie down with men and women should submit to their husbands, respectively. If a racist is in favor of slavery, then justification for that can also be found by perhaps referring to Ham's punishment. At the same time, these some DCT followers do not adhere to all of the same text's rules of conduct, such as not wearing mixed source fiber clothing, abstaining from being tattooed, or eschewing shellfish and pork in their diet. Given that each of these ignored prohibitions are God's, thereby making them absolute, universal, and essential, then it seems as if adherents are selectively

justifying what they already believe to be the truth instead of acting in good faith to find the truth.

Many SCT adherents have the same problem, especially those who assert causation rather than correlation. They cite scientific studies that seem to support their position whilst dismissing as unimportant or not meeting scientific standards those which do not. Returning to cloth masks' efficacy, Centers for Disease Control Director Robert Redfield made the ungrounded, absolute claim that "If all of us would put on a face covering now for the next 4-6 weeks, we could drive this epidemic to the ground" (MSN 2020). The empirical claim made is at odds with both what the scientific research actually says – it is a mixed result requiring further study - and Redfield's insistence that we need to rely on the science.[7] Certainty, however, seemed far more important to the CDC director than honesty in reporting the science. If the scientific method and standards are required for those claims and conclusions we do not like, then it must be used for all scientific claims and conclusions, regardless of our personal feelings about them. Again, critical reasoning tells us that we need to go where the data takes us, however long it take, rather than forcing the data to take us where we want to go as soon as we want to get there.

As all religions do, science has its disciples, devotees, believers, and adherents. That membership is not generally a problem because both religion and science can make people better, although not for the same reasons or in the same ways. However, both SCT and DCT share the problem of zealots who turn the religion or science into a tribal litmus test between the pure (good) and the impure (evil). Anyone who disagrees with any belief deemed relevant by the zealot is rejected as impure. It does not matter if the heretic and zealot share many of the latter's most important beliefs and values. According to zealots, it is the unquestioning, public devotion to all of them that makes someone morally better than others who are too ignorant to see – or willfully engaged in trying to undermine and harm those who are pure in spirit and action.

We can see a move from reasonable balance toward extremism with how SCTers respond to non-believers or questioning believers in the COVID pandemic and cloth mask wearing. The latter groups are treated as

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[7] A quick internet search of "If all of us would put on a face covering now for the next 4-6 weeks, we could drive this epidemic to the ground" produced almost 1.7 million pages as of 8 September 2020.

if their actions are selfish murders or homicides, whereas wearing masks must certainly save lives. There is no understanding that the science on cloth mask wear is ongoing and the question remains open. Moreover, brevity, simplicity, and certainty replace nuance, truth, and honesty in the claims. Masks might work for only certain construction types – with 12-16 layers, for instance - and only then if those masks are correctly worn at all relevant times, e.g. correctly worn masks do not have gaps between face and mask that allows air to escape. Finally, the masks have to be uncontaminated by any of the myriad ways that can happen. Any of these facts should cause statements of scientific fact made to be far more nuanced and accurate to capture the situational complexity and state of the research. Certainty being the driving force is also seen in people who should know better casting a false binary choice between saving lives versus reopening the economy, when the real decision always has been between one set of health issues vying against another set of health issues.

Another Authority Fallacy shared by DCT and SCT are their believers justifying their certainty by citing their expert or supporting evidence out of context. This might take the form of selective citation of supporting studies and religious passages that ignore relevant information. For scientism and SCT, it is citing the CDC on cloth masks, without adding, or even knowing, that the CDC also states: "Wash your hands before putting on your mask" (CDC 2020), which is something that many did not realize they are supposed to do. Furthermore, when taking off a mask, one must: "Handle only by the ear loops or ties; Fold outside corners together; Place mask in the washing machine…Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing" (CDC 2020).

Leilani Fraley writing for *Healthline* recommends similar steps to putting on a face mask, with some notable variations that would seem to affect masks' efficacy in preventing disease spread:

1. Before putting on the mask, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or rub your hands together thoroughly with alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Check for defects in the face mask, such as tears or broken loops.
3. Don't touch the mask once in position.
4. If the mask gets soiled or damp, replace it with a new one. (Fraley 2020)

Many organizations, with a notable exception being the CDC, recommend not touching the mask once it is in position, and if one has to do so, then to wash one's hands before and after performing the task. Given how this additional information to make mask wearing effective is not presented in the news and elsewhere, there is legitimate concern whether those advocating cloth masks based on CDC instruction and what they believe the science indicates, in reality, understand and follow these additional expert recommended steps. If they do, then why are they not part and parcel of reporting and news conferences, instead of merely the Hedgehog-like certain, brief, simple command to wear masks?

The false authority fallacy can be also seen in something along the lines of "The Bible says…" or "Science or scientists have found that…" when the source documents or experts have said no such thing ***and*** the speaker's intention is to shut down questioning and debate. Shakespeare's, Aristotle's, Benjamin Franklin's and others thoughts, for example, have been widely mistaken for biblical passages. Consider the incorrectly citing of Shakespeare's "To thine own self be true" and Willian Cowper's "God works in mysterious ways" as religious text (Colbo 2020). For scientism's SCT, it can be seen in devoutly claiming face masks clearly or certainty reduce transmission. Consider Nina Bai's Hedgehog headline that "Still Confused About Masks? Here's the Science Behind How Face Masks Prevent Coronavirus" and:

> But health experts say the evidence is clear that masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and that the more people wearing masks, the better" (Bia 2020).

Bia's online article was updated after it was discovered that valve facemasks do not block exhaled droplets, and are therefore not recommended according to the science. The reasonable, critical question then is how could Bia's cause-effect evidence be clear and certain in its original version when it was wrong when it came to valve facemasks?

Other SCTers cite a flawed WHO sponsored meta-study published in *Lancet* claiming an extraordinary 80% reduction in transmission rates (Chu et al, 2020) even though its author states that certainty of the evidence regarding facemasks is not high possibly because of a number of limitations in the data and its reliability. Among others are:

The primary limitation of our study is that all studies were non-randomised, not always fully adjusted, and might suffer from recall and measurement bias (eg, direct contact in some studies might not be measuring near distance) … Few studies assessed the effect of interventions in non-health-care settings, and they primarily evaluated mask use in households or contacts of cases, although beneficial associations were seen across settings. (Chu et al. 2020, p. 1984)

The contention is that cloth masks work in non-healthcare settings, so asserting they have great positive effect in these conditions based on the available data might be premature, at best.

Another questionable study on the same topic – this one in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* by Zhang et al. (2020) - has a number of relevant experts calling for its retraction on scientific grounds:

While we agree that mask-wearing plays an important role in slowing the spread of COVID-19, the claims in this study were based on easily falsifiable claims and methodological design flaws… Given the scope and severity of the issues we present, and the paper's outsized and immediate public impact, we ask that the Editors of PNAS retract this paper immediately" (METRICS 2020).

Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health rated the study as possessing no strengths and stated:

While masks most likely prevent community spread of COVID-19, this highly flawed paper provides no evidence on mask effectiveness at the population level. The study also provides no information to demonstrate that airborne transmission — let alone "long-range airborne transmission" — is the dominant form of COVID-19 transmission. The claims made in this paper are not supported, and the journal editors should strongly consider retraction (JHBSPH 2020b).

Johns Hopkin's reviewers also stated that the authors made two false claims that undermined the authors' primary conclusions (Ibid.).

Despite these outside expert reviews, Texas A&M University stated and continues to maintain that this study "found that not wearing a face mask dramatically increases a person's chances of being infected by COVID-19." More egregiously, it makes an extraordinary, unsupported claim in its article's title: "Face masks critical in preventing spread of COVID-19: Study found that wearing a face mask stopped person-to-person spread of the virus." (Texas A&M University 2020), even though the research was of extremely low quality, to say the least.

SCT's paradigm case might be "The Contagion Externality of a Superspreading Event: The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and COVID-19" (Dave et al. 2020). The study's authors made the extraordinary claim that the Sturgis motorcycle rally caused 266,796 COVID-19 cases, and furthermore:

> If we conservatively assume that all of our estimated Sturgis-related cases were non-fatal, then these cases represent a cost of about $12.2 billion, based on the statistical cost of a COVID19 case of $46,000 estimated by Kniesner and Sullivan (2020). This is enough to have paid each of the estimated 462,182 rally attendees $26,553.64 not to attend. (Dave et all 2020, p. 33)

The study was widely cited in media outlets and social media in moral and public health condemnation of Sturgis attendees. *Time* magazine's NewsTicker, for example, misleadingly wrote:

> A San Diego State University study linked August's 10-day *Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota to more than a quarter-million COVID-19 cases* and about $12.2 billion in public-health costs. The event attracted nearly 500,000 people, many of whom packed into bars and restaurants without face coverings (Time 2020).

Time communicated like a Hedgehog rather than a Fox, when a Fox was needed. There is no context, study limitations, lack of peer review, mention of experts' objections, or explanation to help readers understand what this study means in the marketplace of ideas and their personal understanding of the situation. The latter is important because it is part of their now more inaccurate analysis and decision-making process.

As of 15 September 2020, there were almost 9 million websites citing the study, which is worrisome if we want our marketplace to function as it should.[8] Given quality science's requirement, it is surprising how influential this study's impact has been, unless SCT is in play. Firstly, the study is merely a preprint that has not undergone blinded, peer review of its quality. Secondly, Jennifer Beam Dowd, an epidemiologist, stated, "While this approach may sound sensible, it relies on strong assumptions that rarely hold in the real world," (Dowd 2020). Thirdly, the authors are health economics professors rather than epidemiologists or virologists, which shows in their work. Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health concluded in its review of the research:

> [T]here is considerable uncertainty surrounding the broader, national impact of the rally and its associated costs given limitations in the methodological approaches used. Results from this study should be interpreted cautiously (JHBSPH 2020a).

Given the extraordinary claims being made, it makes little sense to place much confidence in such a poorly supported article. Yet its findings are taken as certain by SCTers. Such blind faith indicates that a conclusion has already been made, and those using this study are finding evidence to justify that existing belief rather than examining the evidence for what it says and where it leads any reasonable person. If there are legitimate questions raised about the science's quality level, then citing that study as if it were divinely inspired and to stop good faith discussion in the marketplace of ideas is an appeal to false authority, much as saying it is in the Bible is intended to squash doubt and dissent.

Finally, not only do DCT and SCT provide adherent moral or other certainty, they tend to be used as a way to answer all questions, regardless

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[8] How many of these website destinations were critically examining the study is unclear.

of whether the query really is a religious or science one, respectively. Religion or certainty based on it, that is, is asserted in areas in which the texts are silent, such as 21st Century technology (Cline 2019). Scientism dismisses or claims incorporation of all other critical reasoning disciplines, even though they are a bad fit, at best. Mathematics, for example, is not a science because its methodology is vastly different, i.e., one is more *a priori* analytic whereas the other is *a priori* or more likely, *a posteriori* synthetic. But mathematics matter in critical reasoning.

Morality is also not science. Sam Harris, however, stated that science can answer moral questions (Harris 2010), even though they are vastly different types of human enterprise. Science, although an extremely valuable tool, cannot itself answer questions that matter greatly to human existence and our ability to thrive, such as what I ought to do in this particular situation or who should I be as a morally decent person. Science is more about how things work (The Is) rather than why things are what they are or what they ought to be (The Ought). Science describes the Is well, but cannot establish one simple Ought from its impressive batteries of information and method, as David Hume (1957) pointed out when talking about the Naturalistic Fallacy. Moreover, all attempts to reduce Humanities and other non-scientific areas to science fall to the fatal non-scientific question of what justifies such an effort? That is, what is the reasoning that establishes that these areas are in fact reducible or science's handmaidens, and more importantly, isn't that claim's support merely an example of non-scientific faith? Scientific reasoning is abductive or inductive. It is not belief in things unseen or without some empirical foundation. To argue that scientism ought to replace humanities and such with science using a faith based or humanities argument seems contradictory to the scientific enterprise.

Shared problems

Divine Command Theory and Science Command Theory share significant problems, thereby increasing their relevant similarity. For DCT, the people who wrote the religious text have long since died, so they cannot explain what they meant when they wrote the rules that we use to guide actions and thoughts. That leaves us with trying to figure out on our own what the writers meant us to understand. It is not an easy task, and might be impossible to accomplish fully. For religious texts, there are the well-known

troubles of translation, bias, ignorance, wishful thinking, being tired, and other factors which influence what is written, and eventually religious belief such as whether the early Christians were originally pacifists, angels could be female or have wings, what is the soul, if it exists. Many individuals read the passages, and then put their own interpretation on them, but that relativism does not entail reliability or credibility. Even among the scholarly community with access to existing documents from the religion's history, there are still disagreements. The question arises as to whose interpretation is correct and what evidence is there that justifies one over another? The best that can be done is to try to form a consensus of experts, with the understanding that the agreement might be in error and a readiness to hear new evidence and change to a new consensus.

Interpretations problems also apply to SCT. With access to scholarly articles, opinion pieces, news sites, and social media, any layperson can find large amounts of scientific information or information from scientists on just about any subject. How to understand this material can be a challenge, especially for those who have little knowledge of scientific methods in that subject area, ability to evaluate the quality of such evidence, or possess a confirmation or other reason warping bias. More precisely, as in religion, whose interpretation of scientific studies, writings, and data sets is correct and who gets to make that decision? There are translation issues of retaining the original meaning, translator or interpreter bias or ignorance, such as using one field's paradigm to think about something written with a different paradigm, and other factors irrationally influencing how a person understands what is being said. Bias, ignorance, wishful thinking, being tired, and other confounding factors can influence the translation, and eventually, the scientific belief. Who and what should one believe, therefore? The experts will say they are the ones to listen to, much as clerics do, but even they disagree with each other on important issues. Most of the time that disagreement is in good faith, although in others, it is the result of ideology, dogma, or sheer contrarian thinking.

The problem of which religious interpretation, text, or religion we should pick over another applies to science as well. In epidemiology, for instance, there are two different types – clinical and public health - that have inherently different values and approaches to how they do their work, with clinical being oriented to the individual and public health's focus being the public. In fact, it is unlikely that one can do both simultaneously and obtain

the same result. So which one is the right one, if there are only sufficient resources to pursue one approach? It matters a great deal to individual and the public on which one we pick if one does a far better job of handling their needs than does the other. But the experts do not seem to know, which to emphasize. If they did, then we would be using only that one as a settled matter. A layperson cannot make a reasonable decision as to which is which, when the experts cannot agree on it.

Given that cognitive prejudices, such as confirmation bias, are involved in decision-making, then we run the danger of being wrong solely because we made a bad choice about selecting the standard. If social media and the science community are the entities judging and meting out rewards and punishments for obeying or disobeying SCT commands, then quite a bit is at stake for us to get it right, especially in a society that practices social shaming, cancel culture and tribalism to a great degree.

Another important similarity is that SCT changes its simple, brief, and certain commands just the way that DCT does. The Old Testament rules, for instance, seem to be designed on contract law, property rights, and a materialistic metaphysics that focused on the body rather than a detachable soul. The New Testament moves from Hebrew materialism to Greek dualism with its mind/soul and body distinction. Change is also discovered between the moral rules in the Old and New Testaments. In one place, we are to forgive the people who harm us, and in another, we are to give them an "eye-for-an-eye" punishment. One could ask if that is fair to people attempting to do and be as they should, but if those are God's decisions then they have to be right and good by definition.

Science also changes its mind, so to speak. This is legitimate when the data indicates a different hypothesis is a better explanation, prediction, or generalization than the one the original data supported. It is illicit when the decision is based on factors and forces irrelevant to the scientific program, including politics. At one time, CDC's and WHO's leading science experts stated that wearing cloth masks were counter-indicated for the COVID-19 pandemic, but latter advocated they should be required if social distancing cannot be maintained or other factors are involved. In addition, it seems as if the rules changes across paradigm and time. For masks, one month saw the experts telling the public that masks are ineffective to prevent virus transmission – and a stern warning from the US Surgeon General to stop buying masks – to a later mandate to wear cloth

masks. There are also discrepancies as to what constitutes a safe distance, but it appears to be between one and two meters, depending on which national government is in charge. What changed? Certainly not the data. Possibly, it is merely politics at work (Koerth 2020). There has to be something other than quality science and rationality, therefore, causing these institutions to alter their guidelines and advice. Hence, there is at least an appearance that SCT is in use. Using SCT may stem from well-intentioned efforts to help people, but in reality, turns a valuable, useful method of inquiry into something that it cannot be.

Conclusion

Science Command Theory is a Hedgehog's approach to complex problems that actually demand nuanced, carefully designed solutions – i.e. a Fox's approach. In forcing science to provide certain, brief, and simple answers that science cannot is to pervert this tool's use in making our lives better. Reasonable laypersons, although they may be impugned as ignorant or worse, are discerning people. They know when they are not being told the whole truth, especially when the answers and story are too certain or good to be true or they already carry doubt in their hearts. The dissonance between experts and the community audience erodes trust in particular expert and the scientific enterprise, and smears all experts as less honest than they actually are in general, if a hasty generalization is made.

To rebuild and sustain trust and trustworthiness between community members after SCT's use – and more importantly, prevent it from being employed in the first place - requires the following:

1. **Use science as the tool it is and refrain from abusing it for work beyond that.**

Science done well is powerful in the information it can provide. It can be worse than useless when applied to non-scientific areas, as early 20th Century eugenics programs proved. Making pre-prints of studies available on the world-wide web is a terrible practice for science, especially in a crisis. Since they have not undergone review – much less rigorous evaluation – then they can be rushed, bad science and provide misleading information that causes bad decision making. Retracting them offers little value; once that information is available to the public, it cannot be fully

scrubbed from the internet or people's minds. In addition, SCT can lead to worse outcomes as relevant, quality information and factors are ignored because they do not fit with the adopted paradigm or lack SCT's certainty. Finally, the trust people put in science can be undermined when scientism and SCT become synonymous with science in the public's mind.

2. **When making public addresses and communicating with laypeople, use vernacular to explain science in terms and way they can comprehend, e.g. certainty.**

Although professional and discipline specific language is often helpful in conveying information within that sphere and to its members, it can be confusing to those less literate in it. Making matters more confusing is employing a vernacular term without the vernacular meaning to it. "Certainty" as used in science, for example, is different from what it is to laypeople. Since they did not know the specialized definition, then equivocations are formed and misunderstandings happen. At times, if the layperson is notified she is in error, then her response might be annoyance at making a mistake she attributes to the professionals' lack of clarity, which she could in turn, interpret as disrespect to her and all other laypeople. Her response may very well be to disregard them and their statements, or to start believing poorly sourced information.

3. **Call out your own herd or tribal members when they use SCT or try to misuse science as a tool.**

The most effective way to show sceptics that an expert or layperson is an honest broker is to correct or repudiate those in her own tribe who violate her community's fundamental values and principles. Addressing wrongdoing and bad character also internally reinforces the tribe's high standard of conduct. By making expectations clear and required in the discipline, everyone tries to be a herd member in good standing through maintaining those standards.

On the other hand, criticizing those in a different tribe does not build an honest broker reputation because that is often attributed to political tribalism or selfish ends rather than a good faith effort to improve understanding. Worse still is name calling or resorting to other forms of denigration that

loses both the attacked person's confidence and respect, as well as that of any decent individual who questions an expert resorting to such childish behavior, regardless if that expert is correct about the belief being false.

4. Always be humble in one's actions and acquire humility in one's character.

DCT and SCT's absolute certainty violates our general obligation to be appropriately humble as decent people trying to make the world better. To dismiss reasonable or good faith questions and concerns based on one's total certainty on something no one can be certain about is to demonstrate an insufficient humility of spirit required to respect other people and their struggle to find their way in life. Such an attitude is actually the antithesis of what science demands of those practicing and using it. Quality scientists expect to be critically questioned by colleagues, reviewers, and an informed public about their methods, data quality, and conclusions. That inquiry in a vibrant marketplace of ideas helps improve the science's quality as ideas are refined to move closer to greater accuracy and truth. In addition, submission to a dynamic, thoughtful discussion might lead to rethinking a scientific question or position, as was done when the heliocentric system was introduced.

Good scientists also know that their work should be designed for practical purposes, viz. to make improvements in society. In fact, it is often financially supported by the public. For those improvements to happen, the community needs to understand what is being done and why it is being done. Community members are not to be ordered about as one might small, obstinate children, but to be engaged as fully valued components of the enterprise. If community members are asking inappropriate questions or raising unsupportable doubts, then those scientists should be willing to help explain their conclusions and justification as part of their role as scientists and experts.

Finally, many quality scientists are teachers. Even if someone is saying something not quite right, or being outright contrarian or foolish, then it is an opportunity for learning engagement rather than one to destroy a heretic or blasphemer. The effort might not be successful, but at least one should try to save everyone who seems at least interested in that lifeline.

Instead of making it all about science when that tool does not work, or treating science as a sacred enterprise whose experts and claims cannot be questioned, we should acknowledge the fields' inherent differences and contributions. After that, our responsibility is to use them for the pragmatic devices they are in helping us to understand our world and helping ourselves and others to thrive more in our lives. Good scientists are Fox thinkers because they know that the world and its problems are complicated and require nuanced, thoughtfully designed solutions and approaches. They base those solutions on a scientific method that is more about finding reliable, quality data, performing practical, ethical research, and practicing honesty rather than being brief, simple, and certain. It is only when the power of science is perverted and subverted by scientism and SCT that it endangers our marketplaces of ideas.

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NORTHERN PLAINS ETHICS JOURNAL

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Community Section

Changing Key Words Changes Both the Problem Definition and Potential Solutions

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Abstract:
The words we use have the power to unlock potential solutions. Changing the words we use to frame a problem can open up new ways of the seeing the world that can transform both our perception and the potential solutions to problems we encounter.

Keywords: Frames, reframing, problem solving

How we frame a problem, frames the potential solution(s). Those who are photographers understand the concept of framing: Where a photographer places the focal point changes the story of the picture. It often doesn't take a huge shift to change the story: Often a slight shift brings a new perspective into view. We can use framing in a similar way for problem solving as well as what strengths we bring to a situation.

In the midst of this pandemic, we are surrounded by so many unknowns and ongoing questions. Often, we start our worrying with the worst-case scenarios that begin with "What if…?"

"What if social distancing lasts another month? Or two?"
"What if the students can't go back to school until January or longer?"
"What if no more tests become available?"
"What if there aren't enough ventilators for our local hospital?"
"What if this pandemic was all blown out of proportion?"

Awfulizing has its place. Being able to identify the worst-case scenarios helps us identify what actions we can take either to mitigate or avert the worst.

With each "What if", however, we feel our stress level rise and rise some more. These questions reveal how much is out of our control. The danger is that the more we feel out of control, the more at risk we feel and the less able we are to focus. Our brain goes to fight, flight, or freeze as our fears compound. Rarely are any of these three approaches helpful in the midst of a crisis, especially for leaders who have other people's livelihoods and, in some cases, their very lives depending on their decisions.

Nurse Tessa Hand, Moorhead, MN, suggested to her husband, Jason, that they stop talking about "What if". Instead, she suggested they start saying "Even if…" During a meeting about employee support and retention, Jason shared how changing just one word at the beginning of the sentence helped him reframe his perspective.

> Even if social distancing lasts another month… or two….
> Even if students can't go back to school until …
> Even if no more tests become available…
> Even if there aren't enough ventilators for our local hospital…
> Even if this pandemic was blown out of proportion…

The frame has changed from one of awfulizing to one of building from what we do have. The situation hasn't changed: We still don't have all the answers we want. We simply and powerfully have changed our focus from not knowing what is heading our way to what we do know and we do have.

The words "Even if" shifts our focus to our strengths as well as to what we can accomplish or do. Make no mistake, we need to anticipate and plan for the wide range of scenarios – from the best to the worst. Leadership is about recognizing our vulnerability as well as seeking strength in trying times through preparation and being flexible to respond to any situation "even if" it may be less than optimal.

"Even if" ensures that we focus on what we have in spite of and, occasionally, because of the worst case.

Leann Wolff *founded Great Outcomes Consulting with Mike Slette in 2010. She graduated from Concordia College, in Moorhead, Minn., and earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul, Minn. Wolff has spent more than 25 years working with some of today's best-known companies and gathering proven, best practices. Throughout her career, she has built many high-functioning teams and facilitated hundreds of training, brainstorming and decision-making sessions with teams*

ranging in size from three to 100. In her consulting practice, Wolff focuses on helping clients identify their mission, values, strategic potential and visions. With those key elements in place, she works with individuals and management teams to improve their leadership and business execution. In addition to her consulting work, Wolff teaches Ethics & Leadership at Concordia College

Immigration – A Personal Journey to Belonging

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Abstract:
A reflective, personal narrative exploring one American immigrant's journey to adapt, integrate, contribute, build meaningful relationships, transforming himself and others around him.

Keywords: immigrants, integration, personal narrative

Immigration is a subject of heightened attention these days and it has been a hot issue in recent national politics. It has indeed become personal when my own status in my adopted country is now a topic of intense interest.

I was born in Hong Kong and during the first few years of my early childhood, my family lived in Tokyo, Japan, where my father was an ex-patriot business executive. I received my primary and secondary education in Hong Kong, then a British Crown Colony.

In Tokyo, we were exotic foreigners, only a few years after WWII, on the winning side of the war. My brother and I were raised by our dearest Japanese nanny. We passed through Japan with lasting impact and fond memories. While we valued the experience and made great friends, our time there was not long enough to instill a sense of belonging.

My family returned to Hong Kong just as I entered kindergarten. Hong Kong was a mix of Chinese and British cultures. While the native population spoke Chinese at home, our lives were also filled with things English, like school curriculum, official dealings, legal and business affairs. With Hong Kong being such an international city, western influences from Europe and America were part our daily lives. Much of popular culture were imports in the English language. Many of the top local entertainers performed in English, especially those appealing to young people. Being an isolated city with a mixed national identity, Hong Kongers then were mostly apolitical, concentrating on daily livelihood and commercial success. The

Cultural Revolution of unrest and unspeakable brutality just across the border in China further alienated the majority of Hong Kongers from deep loyalty to the Chinese government to the north. Unlike their brethren in China, Hong Kongers continued to enjoy a high level of personal liberty and a booming economy. By the time of the handover of Hong Kong back to China in 1997, Hong Kong's per capital income was on par with its mother nation, the UK. I was one of those kids plugged into the bustling city life and the arts and culture offered by the metropolis.

I came to this country in 1972 as a foreign college student. Leaving Hong Kong was far more an adventure than anything approaching a heart wrenching separation. As a freshman in college I met the woman whom I would eventually marry. As our relationship flourished, I had a few years to process the idea this country could become my home. Being a person who valued a sense of belonging and had not yet solidly held onto one, I did not find the idea of settling down in the U.S. threatening or discomforting. I married soon after graduation so my residency status in the U.S. (commonly known as the "green card") was virtually immediate. A few years later, I became a U.S. citizen. While immigrants through the ages and from various parts of the world share many similarities in their experiences, each has a unique personal story. I offer no universal insights as my experience is also unique.

Language is an important aspect of how people bind and how group identity is often defined. It is also essential to practical aspects of life. Most students in Hong Kong attended English language schools where all subjects, except Chinese language and Chinese history, were delivered in English. Most living in Hong Kong have at least a functioning ability in English. That is especially true in my family as both my grandfathers and my parents, all being well-educated, were fluent in English. As an immigrant, with neither language nor the western way of life being new to me, I was in a unique subset of the immigration narrative.

In my early years in college, my foreignness was not at all a disadvantage. In fact, it was a license to be different, eclectic and may be even exotic. Being one of society's "other" did not bother me as that was truly who I was. Being different was often useful social capital. What outgoing 19-year old wouldn't enjoy such attention? As a visitor passing through, I didn't feel excluded. By the time of my first professional employment in my early 20s, married to a native-born American, I began to

feel less a foreigner as the days went by. The emotional investment in my new country began to build. With my mixed background and not having been in one place for more than a dozen years, my early cultural imprint was less than solid. My partially filled glass was available to be filled. Trying not to let my foreignness become a distraction also had the pragmatic purpose of garnering my rightful share of societal acceptance and inclusion. A sense of belonging also began to feel right.

Immigrants come to the U.S. for many reasons. Many have left their home countries due to political necessity to escape oppression, danger and impossible living conditions due to their status, heritage or beliefs. Many also come for economic reasons, a better life for themselves and their families. Some are here because they admire the vibrancy of this society. One thing in common with immigrants today and those who came generations ago is that they have made a significant life-changing choice. They have signed onto a long lasting and all-encompassing commitment. Until recently when international travels have become more affordable, many immigrants could never afford to return home. For some, political situations also make it impossible to return. These reasons and motivations are not different from 19th century and earlier immigration. Immigrants have always made a huge commitment and investment. We are not tourists. We are not passing through. For nearly all, there is no going back. Most have started with little to build a new life. No one immigrates for free social benefits or food stamps. The only way to sustain is to work, contribute and to become successful. Fitting in and succeeding are often connected. It is hard to succeed in a society unless you learn the way things work and participate in the workings of the society you have decided to join. Assimilation may seem like a word signifying intolerance and conformance. Using that word or not, immigrants have found various ways to fit in, to be part of a whole, if for no other reasons than a tactic to succeed in a new land. For many immigrants, this survival strategy becomes life itself and over time, it becomes who you are.

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do!" is a phrase loosely attributed to a conversation between St. Augustine and his mother, about the proper day to fast according to different customs. But what does it really mean to me as an immigrant, wishing to balance the need and desire to adapt and to remain connected to my heritage? A person's cultural influence and identity are not hard coded by birthplace. The Chinese diaspora takes on all

flavors and nuances in parts of Asia outside of China, the Americas, Europe, Africa, Australia and the Middle East. The immigration experience varies as do the cultural influences these immigrant families have taken on over the generations. I have an affinity for a sense of belonging and a sense of loyalty. Having lived in Tokyo and Hong Kong until I was 18, by the time I was 30 years old, I had already lived longer in the US than any place else. Now in my late 60s looking back, my claim to be an immigrant, although certainly legitimate by legal definition, seems more diluted daily. Being married to a native-born American and having raised two American children and speaking English daily for the last almost 50 years has made me feel quite local. Our family celebrates both American and Chinese holidays plus a few European ones and we enjoy the cuisines of the world.

I have been extremely fortunate that the changes in my life have been orderly and gentle. My childhood was uneventful and caring. If there was any hardship, it was the type that my parents were able to shield from us. Once in the US, in the course of four years in college, I went from being a foreign student to an immigrant. Students studying in a host country typically have one purpose, to get an education and acquire the experience that would be beneficial to take back to their homeland. The mindset of foreign students is one of taking, and I don't mean this in any selfish or exploitive sense. They come here with a narrow focus and they invest time and financial resources, hoping that the trade-off is worthwhile. There is a transactional aspect to the arrangement. Foreign students are observers. They may be highly participatory but they are not investors. The mindset of immigrants is quite different. They have made a decision that is most likely irreversible. They have given up all that is familiar in exchange for a new life. They are starting everything over. While they may still think of themselves as takers, they know they must also be contributors. Unless they contribute, they will not likely find a place in their newfound society and succeed. It is also more than just building a livelihood but an entire endeavor of connectivity to make life meaningful and fulfilling. They are not only observers, they are now involved, immersed and invested in life and livelihood with a long view in mind.

America is founded by immigration. Its culture is one of continuous infusion by its evolving citizenry, old and new. That is an undeniable fact. We are all part of this infusion and cultural evolution. Earlier arrivals do not confer a stronger or more rightful claim to what America is or should be.

This is not just an ideological statement but one that realistically describes how communities and societies actually work. Immigrants are transformed by the dominant culture but they also contribute to it. This dynamic plays out as the generations move forward. It is pointless to judge who is more American because the very concept is ever evolving. Immigrants want to be recognized for their place in this society. While they may enjoy interests and curiosity about their homeland and culture, they are also suspicious about any acute attention to their "otherness". An immigrant owns his "otherness". It is up to the individual how he wishes to be different but it is not up to society at large to set him aside. A sense of comfort and belonging is founded on inclusion but a misguided sense of national vanity and superiority veiled as patriotism is exclusionary. I have been asked "where are you from?" I often say Moorhead, Minnesota. Afterall, I have lived here for nearly half a century, longer than anyplace I have lived and longer than many who have been born here. At times, the next question is "where are you really from?" That is when the inquirer's intention is less clear. To many immigrants, sincere cultural curiosity and genuine personal interest are welcome but there is also only a thin line between that and racism, xenophobia and exclusion. Being viewed with an unsavory sense of "otherness" is especially unwelcome in a professional setting and a team work environment. Being treated as an outsider is a distraction of one's professional standing and more likely reflective of lurking dark impulses.

Following my own immigration, my parents upon retirement also moved to Moorhead. They lived across the street from a couple a decade their senior. They enjoyed being neighbors and did what neighbors typically do, including trading treats and goodies. They had the best time doing things together. As the Larsons advanced into their final years, they were no longer able to prepare the many Scandinavian specialties they so loved. Over the years, my parents had learned to make these recipes and began to bring them to the Larsons, culturally swapping places. I cannot think of a better example of how immigrants adapt, are integrated, contribute, build meaningful relationships, transforming themselves and others around them.

Sam Wai *was born in Hong Kong. He lived in Tokyo and Hong Kong until coming to the U.S. for college, studying finance, the humanities and philosophy at MSUM. Settling in Moorhead, he spent his entire career as a financial executive until retirement in 2015. Sam and his wife, Coralie, have two adult children who live in the region. In his spare time, Sam teaches wine appreciation courses with emphasis in history and culture. Sam and*

Coralie are part of a team who takes friends on annual wine and history tours to Greece. Sam is active in the community as a volunteer in the arts and a regular at cultural events in the area. Sam enjoys cooking and he is an avid cyclist, riding his vintage English bicycle he has owned since his college days.

Purpose and Profit: the Dichotomy of a Successful Business

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Abstract:
Milton Friedman claimed that the purpose of a corporation is to build shareholder value. Some capitalists have taken this premise to the extreme to build profitability to the detriment of consumers, employees and the broader society. In doing so, they ultimately invite government regulation to curb excesses. Smart capitalists know that recognizing multiple stakeholders, doing good for society and building shareholder value are not at odds but make for good business.

Keywords: profit, stakeholder, purpose, regulation, capitalism

Bad capitalism is a bad investment

Choose one: Market-driven economy or government regulated markets. It seems that too often when discussing economics and policy making, the only option is one or the other. Usually, in the real world, an either-or choice is a false dichotomy, and this one is no exception.

Let's consider an oft-touted claim: The purpose of a corporation is to build shareholder value. According to this premise, decisions executives make within a corporation have one fundamental purpose: to create shareholder value. Sometimes, these decisions include the executives' own compensation and, thus, setting in place an interesting but infrequently discussed potential conflict of interest.

Allowing the market to drive pricing and supply does not work for every industry or product or service. Automobile manufacturers have gotten "black eyes" over the years because of choices they made to maximize shareholder value over their consumers' safety: The Ford Pinto design that increased the probability of an explosion in rear-end collisions; Toyota's unexplained acceleration; GM's ignition that turned off and failed to deploy airbags; Honda's airbags that threw shards. Some, such as the Ford Pinto, had relatively inexpensive per-unit fixes that the companies chose to ignore, and then paid a price from lawsuits from resulting injuries and deaths. The

executives made what they thought was a good bet based on their actuarial and Friedman-aligned calculation: Their earnings from the defective products were likely to be greater than they paid to attorneys, victims and survivors. A certain number of deaths from automobiles are to be expected. All contingencies cannot be addressed. Caveat emptor. Right? The shareholders would get their value.

Except they didn't. Ford anticipated selling 11 million Pintos – they sold only 3 million. Ford wanted to capture the compact car market – they drove consumers to the foreign automakers.

Ford lobbied against increased regulation that would have helped address the problem. Eventually, the courts handled the mismanagement. Regulation followed once the number of dead and injured were high enough and public outcry became loud enough to garner the attention of politicians and regulators. Until then people could buy other automobiles from other manufacturers…if they found out about the risks.[1]

Regulation is required when people repeatedly do stupid things that jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of others. Excessive regulation is an inhibitor to business. And crony capitalism – professional lobbyists advocating for regulations that primarily benefit their employers to the detriment of competition and consumers – are as much responsible for excessive regulations as trial attorneys out to make bucks for themselves and their occasionally irresponsible clients (i.e., those who attempt to use a lawn mower as a hedge trimmer).

Let's compare insulin to automobiles as consumer products. Insulin manufacturers, using Friedman's "shareholder value" premise, dramatically increased the life-sustaining drug's price in the last 10 years. The manufacturing process didn't change. In fact, the process has become more efficient and streamlined, because that is what manufacturers do well: improve efficiency to lower costs and improve profitability. However, the marketplace has been changing: More and more Americans need insulin because we have poor diets and poor exercise habits from younger ages, especially among those living in poverty. If the primary directive is to focus on a market-driven economy based on Friedman's theories, the pharmaceutical manufacturers' purpose is not to make sure people with diabetes have insulin to live. Their goal is to build shareholder value – to

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[1] Except for the impoverished who bought the dangerous, used vehicles because now they were cheap enough to be affordable. But I digress.

garner the return on investment and the higher the return, the better for the shareholder. Higher inelastic demand, greater efficiency, higher profitability. Mission accomplished - A market-economy dream come true.

Some poorer people have to ration their insulin at their risk of their lives. Others will die because they have to choose whether to buy gas to get to work to keep their insurance, buy groceries, buy insulin, pay rent, etc. Insurance companies will step in to limit some of the potential damage. In turn, they may very well raise premiums to bolster their earnings for negotiating with the pharmaceutical companies. Some people will die because they don't have insurance.

Consider how those insulin manufacturers now are under greater scrutiny. Regulations are sure to come. Whose decisions brought about this regulatory environment? The people who have lost loved ones? No. The executives of the pharmaceutical companies who put *short-term* shareholder value (and executive compensation) ahead of the stakeholders who depend on their product to live.

Is it more complicated than this? Yes. And no. Martin Shkreli could be the poster child for Friedman's market and its problems. The former hedge-fund manager, who used his fortune to found Turing Pharmaceuticals, acquired the antiparasitic drug Daraprim's licensing. His business model was brilliant in Friedman's marketplace: Buy the licensing for out-of-patent drugs that didn't have a high enough market demand for a competing generic version but a core group who needed the medicine to live. Increase the price to dramatically increase company profit without incurring expenditures for research into new drugs to bring to market. The cost of each pill before acquisition was $13, with an estimated manufacturing cost of $1 per pill. The day after Shkreli's acquisition, Turing raised the price to $750 per pill. Turing and Shkreli were more obvious than the rest, but they symbolize the rot at the root of the shareholder-value myopia.

Crony capitalism of the Friedman type hoards wealth for those who have it. Northwest Airlines, based in Minneapolis, asked for concessions from the various unions during the recession of 1987. The executives promised that when the recession ended, they would make it up to the employees – but they didn't. The good relationship between the unions and the airline disappeared and relations became contentious to the point of strikes shutting down the airline. When a small airline started serving the

larger (but still small) towns of the upper Midwest, Northwest undercut the small airline fares until it drove the little competitor out of business. Then Northwest canceled those flights. Why? Because it didn't want the small airline – if it got bigger down the road - to compete with it. Fewer competitors, higher prices, higher profits and bigger bonuses for the executives. Who did they hurt? Small communities and the businesses in those communities. With better transportation, they could have reached other markets and brought more investors and businesses to their communities and their economies. Shortsighted and damaging to multiple stakeholders but, in the short run, benefitted Northwest's largest shareholders and the option-holding executives.

Actions like these have repeated themselves in other industries because we seem to have come to an acceptance that screwing over the competition for a market you don't even want is okay in this so-called free market. The argument is that over time the market will straighten "it" out…but the market doesn't. Over time, those with the most capital get to reinvest their growing capital with others like them to build more capital.

The cycle becomes vicious and incestuous. You need capital to start a business. Who has access to the capital? People who have capital. Who do the people with capital give capital to? Friends and family members of those with capital. These folks also tend to be the same ones who want reduced taxation, limited regulation and unfettered markets. Their drive to build their own private wealth – at the expense of their workers and partners – give the impression that capitalism is the problem rather than unflinching short-term self-interest.

Good capitalism is a good investment

Good business and good markets, however, recognize that it is not an either-or-choice. It is not a binary selection between a market driven for shareholder value or regulation that drives up costs and drives out competitors. This overly simplistic choice is false, and unfortunately too common and short sighted. A wise accountant and small-town mayor once pointed out that regulation is to ensure a level playing field. Balanced regulation guarantees that those with the most capital or cronies in political positions cannot take over markets and drive out smaller competitors. Balanced regulation also protects consumers when the marketplace isn't open and based on supply and demand – when consumers can't simply

choose a different supplier, such as utilities. In other words, it is not either market-driven or government-regulated but both. Rather like choosing pumpkin or pecan pie at Thanksgiving; the answer is not one or the other but a smaller portion of both.

If you believe in a market-driven economy, then start broadening the population of who is important. Look beyond shareholder to stakeholders – those who are affected by the decisions, short and long-term, from customers and employees to vendors and communities as well as the environment. Short-term decisions to pump-up profitability that ultimately lead to regulation don't help create long-term value, sustainability or even ultimately benefit the consumer or shareholder in the end. Decisions that balance the needs of multiple stakeholders create solutions that are sustainable and build long-term value.

Capitalism at its best creates opportunities for people to improve their lives, those of their workers, the community and the world. Businesses that focus on their multiple stakeholders are the real job creators and community builders. These are the businesses that tend to have greater transparency and engagement with their workers – they teach their workers about corporate finance and, as a result, these workers make better day-to-day decisions. These companies also tend to reward their workers for the business success they achieve across the board. As a result, the wage differential between the senior executives and the lowest paid employees also tend to be smaller. Further, they are more focused on doing what is necessary to achieve success than on eliminating competition: They are the ones who believe that strong competitors push them to be better. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of these companies are or have become ESOPs (employee stock ownership plans).

Consider two different approaches to the COVID-19 pandemic:

Company 1 explicitly identified that its first priority was the safety of its people. They reviewed safety protocols, discussed needed changes throughout the plant and put in place additional protective gear as well as distance changes to keep its essential employees safe from the virus while they worked. Zero cases reported among 1,800 employees. Their second priority was to look at the impact on cash flow and

begin forecasting to determine how to best manage through the crisis. They remain open.

Company 2 made minimal changes to safety protocols and focused entirely on continuing to produce at pre-pandemic levels for consumers. Its plant closed due to the outbreak among its workers and resulting in a number of deaths among workers.

Stakeholder, purpose-driven capitalism recognizes that doing our part to make the world a better place increases efficiency, employee engagement and long-term value for the shareholders and consumers.

The better model of capitalism doesn't put the profit above people's lives. The better model of capitalism doesn't pit the shareholder against the consumer. The better model of capitalism considers all the stakeholders. The better model of capitalism considers the overall purpose that is focused on making the world a better place and a reasonable profit. The better model of capitalism considers all the stakeholders and, by doing so, reduces the need for heightened regulation while aligning business owners and workers as advocates for reasonable regulation to keep in check the bad players.

A wise person once said, "We all do better when we all do better." Seek to do and be better. Or at least seek to do no harm to those you purport to serve.

Leann Wolff *founded Great Outcomes Consulting with Mike Slette in 2010. She graduated from Concordia College, in Moorhead, Minn., and earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul, Minn. Wolff has spent more than 25 years working with some of today's best-known companies and gathering proven, best practices. Throughout her career, she has built many high-functioning teams and facilitated hundreds of training, brainstorming and decision-making sessions with teams ranging in size from three to 100. In her consulting practice, Wolff focuses on helping clients identify their mission, values, strategic potential and visions. With those key elements in place, she works with individuals and management teams to improve their leadership and business execution. In addition to her consulting work, Wolff teaches Ethics & Leadership at Concordia College.*

NORTHERN PLAINS ETHICS JOURNAL

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Student Section

Conscience Rights and Patient Trust in Pharmacy Practice

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Abstract:
In analyzing the ethics of conscience rights in the practice of pharmacy, it is instructive to compare the differing professional roles of the community pharmacist with those of the small business owner. In particular, the covenantal relationship of pharmacists to their patients is a higher duty than the "satisfaction guaranteed" model of a business owner with his or her customers. This paper utilizes this distinction to consider a recent controversy from a community pharmacy in Arizona, where poor communication and prior assumptions about a misoprostol prescription led to a dysfunctional, unethical, and possibly illegal outcome. No matter the practice setting, pharmacists have an ethical and legal right to practice within the limits of personal conscience, but sometimes individual practitioners have erred in the way they have articulated and carried out this right. We examine the major flaws in the pharmacist's conduct in the Arizona case, then review the ethical and legal principles that should guide such possible conflicts. We then propose three concrete suggestions that could have resulted in a more favorable outcome for all parties concerned. Reciprocal, morally-founded trust distinguishes a pharmacist from a small business owner. Legal prohibitions or the restructuring of corporate policy against the exercise of conscience will never resolve the issue of conscience for pharmacists. The true resolution of this matter must begin with a renewed emphasis on clinical professionalism.

Keywords: conscience rights, pharmacy Code of Ethics, confidentiality, autonomy, clinical professionalism

In an era of moral and ethical controversy, it is crucial to recognize the differences in foundational principles that guide individuals of various professions. Consider the community pharmacist and the small business owner. Although their roles are superficially similar, the distinction of their titles beckons us to examine the foundational principles that guide each professional. In approaching this question, we must consider the dynamic relationships each share with the recipients of their services. While both the

pharmacist and the small business owner are ethically obligated to optimize the consumer's experience, their relationships are different. Unlike a small business owner, a pharmacist's responsibilities go beyond mere consumer satisfaction. Their decisions carry more weight since the recipients are patients rather than merely customers. In this paper, we will utilize this crucial distinction to analyze and defend a pharmacist's right of moral conscience.

Indeed, the small business owner must take responsibility when products are faulty or when service falls short of the company's standards. He or she must seek to recover and sustain the confidence of the customer to maximize profits for the business. For a pharmacist, however, such problems are more consequential. When a patient receives the wrong medication or is misinformed about a product, it can become a matter of life and death. For this reason, pharmacists have a guiding oath, which states, in part, "I will apply my knowledge, experience, and skills to the best of my ability to assure optimal outcomes for my patients" (APhA 2019). The pharmacist's professional competence as a drug expert ensures patient safety and optimizes outcomes. Furthermore, when patients have suboptimal encounters or are the victims of drug errors, this impacts the profession as a whole. Thus, pharmacists are dependent on patients for the continuance of their practice, but patients must also trust that pharmacists will act in their best interests.

The interaction between pharmacists and patients is reciprocal, established in a fundamental morality that transcends the "satisfaction guaranteed" model applicable to small business owners. Furthermore, the trust that patients place in their pharmacists results in a sacred covenantal relationship that has endured for centuries. As inscribed in the Code of Ethics, "Considering the patient-pharmacist relationship as a covenant means that a pharmacist has moral obligations in response to the gift of trust received from society" (APhA 2019). This "gift of trust" exceeds the impersonal confines of a mere contract and is the basis of clinical professionalism. Because such a covenantal relationship is a deeply-embedded aspect of pharmacy practice, it calls forth the highest level of other-oriented duty. For many pharmacists, such a high standard arises from personal moral or religious principles.

For all of these reasons, it makes no sense to disallow or dismiss personal values as part of the professionalism of pharmacy practice. Such a

rejection would lower clinical care by pharmacists to the "satisfaction guaranteed" model, significantly devaluing every patient. Choosing to treat a patient with respect and dignity would be of less consequence. Suppressing the influence of core personal values on clinical practice would undermine the very factor that sets the pharmacist apart from the business owner: relational trust.

A recent episode at a Walgreens pharmacy in Arizona is a prime example of the importance of these ideas. In the summer of 2018, Nicole Arteaga visited her obstetrician to evaluate her early pregnancy. To her dismay, the doctor informed her that there was no fetal heartbeat; she had suffered a miscarriage. To avoid the necessity of a surgical procedure, the physician gave her a prescription for the prostaglandin misoprostol. This drug would induce labor to evacuate the uterus.

After receiving an email notification that her prescription was ready for pick up, Arteaga drove to the Walgreens pharmacy. When she arrived, the pharmacist on duty inquired if she was pregnant. After confirming that she was, he refused to fill the prescription, citing ethical objections to abortion. With her seven-year-old son present and several patients in line behind her, the patient tried to explain that the medication was for a miscarriage. The pharmacist still refused to fill the misoprostol, though eventually he offered to transfer the prescription to another pharmacy, where the patient was able to pick it up the next day (Chuck 2018; Lucero 2018).

This widely-publicized encounter raises significant ethical concerns about the pharmacist's conduct. The initial conversation was audible to other patients standing in line, violating the patient's confidentiality, especially in this sensitive situation. A more secluded setting was needed when speaking with the pharmacist. A more serious ethical lapse was the failure of the pharmacist to fill the prescription based on inadequate information. He wrongly assumed that the agent was part of a two-drug protocol for elective abortion. In fact, the most common method used currently for medical abortion utilizes mifepristone, a progesterone-receptor antagonist that induces fetal demise. Misoprostol is then given within 24-48 hours to cause the uterus to expel the fetus (Chen and Creinin 2015, p. 12). As stated earlier, however, this was not the actual intent of the prescription, which was given to complete uterine evacuation after a first-trimester miscarriage (Coughlin et al. 2004, p. 67).

Legally, it was permissible for the pharmacist to refuse to dispense an abortifacient drug. Title 36-2154 of the Arizona Revised Statutes states that "any employee of a pharmacy, hospital, or health professional … is not required to facilitate or participate in the provision of an abortion [or] abortion medication" (Arizona Revised Statutes 2016). So, the pharmacist had no legal obligation to dispense the drug if it was to be used for that purpose. But he neglected to verify that indication, which makes the legal point moot. Ethically, his hasty assumption contravened his obligation to prioritize the well-being of his patient.

In this case, perhaps the most crucial shortcoming was the pharmacist's dismissive conduct. The patient attempted to explain her situation to the pharmacist, but he continued to refuse to fill the prescription. He initially offered no other help to the patient, becoming an obstruction rather than a facilitator of healthcare. While his motives are not completely clear, his actions violated the "gift of trust" that remains a cornerstone of the profession. He also lost the opportunity to demonstrate compassion and empathy.

Examples such as this are not uncommon, particularly in this era of increasing emphasis on patient autonomy. Nonetheless, clinicians should also have professional autonomy. State legislatures across the country have attempted to navigate this balancing act by creating legal provisions for conscience. For example, according to the Guttmacher Institute, twelve states currently permit healthcare professionals to decline the provision of contraceptives, including six that specify that pharmacists may refuse to dispense them (Guttmacher Institute 2020).

In a rare example of more specific guidelines, New York has incorporated distinct language about pharmacist responsibilities in its public policy. In part, it states, "When a pharmacist begins practice in a professional setting, he/she should take steps that may include notification to the owner and supervising pharmacist if his/her beliefs will limit the drug products he/she will dispense" (New York Office of the Professions 2009). The pharmacist is still held accountable for ensuring that the patient is not hindered from obtaining necessary legal medications. These features of the New York conscience regulations might help the Arizona pharmacist case. Such an approach would preserve the relational trust of the pharmacy profession. In other words, a pre-existing strategy for dealing with a

pharmacist's known conscience convictions could have mitigated the harmful outcomes of that encounter.

Beyond these legal measures, the most helpful way to resolve such cases is to focus on professionalism. The following are some concrete suggestions to deal with conscience rights on a day-to-day basis.

Privacy issues: the lack of privacy in community pharmacy settings is not uncommon. Particularly in sensitive cases, a phone call ahead of time could help to avoid potential conflicts. Had the Arizona pharmacist attempted to call Mrs. Arteaga, she could have explained her dilemma privately, saving her an unnecessary trip. For patients already on site, a private counseling room should be made available to speak directly with patients about difficult topics.

Communication: Simple, straightforward communication is the key to developing rapport with patients, and pharmacists are experts in asking open-ended questions. Such an approach allows patients to provide details pharmacists may need, without having to ask for each element. In this example, the pharmacist in this case could have tactfully inquired about the purpose of the misoprostol: "What did your doctor tell you this medication was for?" The patient could then have explained that it was for a miscarriage.

Attitude: A pharmacist should always exhibit the utmost respect and compassion. As recipients of society's trust, pharmacists have a primary obligation to provide optimum care to patients, even if they are not the direct mediators of that care. The pharmacist at the Arizona Walgreens, therefore, should have made it a priority to meet the patient's needs. If unable to fill the prescription, he should have immediately transferred it to another pharmacy.

In summary, a pharmacist is more than merely a dispenser of drugs. At best, he or she is a counselor, a trusted leader in the community, and a significant advocate for optimized healthcare. With today's greater emphasis on patient involvement in their care, pharmacists have a higher responsibility to protect relational trust. In the Arizona case, this relationship deteriorated, not because the pharmacist had a conscience claim, but because he failed in his professional attitude and approach.

Declining to fill a prescription due to moral or religious objections should not become a barrier to a patient's health. At the same time, an assertion of a conscience right does not allow the pharmacist to be less

accountable because of his or her moral or religious values. Instead, exercising such rights should hold pharmacists to an even higher standard of practice. Reciprocal, morally-founded trust distinguishes a pharmacist from a small business owner. Thus, entirely rejecting conscience rights will not resolve the controversy. Doing so would only drive individuals with deeply-held convictions away from the profession. Change lies neither in the restructuring of corporate policy nor in legislative mandates. The true resolution of this issue must begin with a renewed emphasis on clinical professionalism.

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The Christ and the Discourse: A Critique of the Historiographical and Rhetorical Trends in the Christ Myth Debate

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Abstract: *The Christ Myth debate is a long-standing argument in New Testament scholarship over whether or not Jesus, as a historical person, existed or not. The debates' origins are largely unknown, but it was already in existence by the 1600s and since then has been found closely connected to the fields of New Testament studies, classics, and philosophy since. Despite the few hundred years that this debate has existed, little has been written providing a proper metacriticism of the debate, instead it has largely existed in a partisan conflict between mostly Christian and secularist (usually atheists or religious groups opposed to Christianity) agents. The present paper seeks to offer a detailed critique of the historiographical and rhetorical methods taking place in the Christ Myth debate as being inherently unobjective and resulting in adverse conditions for women, LGBTQ+, and people of color who participate in it. This happens both purposefully and incidentally by framing the debate through a highly questionable leadership of male figures.*

In her book *The Christ Conspiracy* (1999), Dorothy M. Murdock[1] proposed that there was no historical figure "Jesus of Nazareth." Her basic thesis was that the Gospels were solar allegories, with Jesus and the Twelve Disciples representing the sun's movements through the Zodiac. For her there was no historical figures at the foundations of Christian religion. The book was immediately flagged by, almost exclusively male, scholars and laymen alike, labeling the book and Murdock herself a horribly ill-read amateur, and completely the work inept. What was significant about this was not just, however, how Murdock was vilified by New Testament scholars who disagreed with her on the historicity of Jesus, but how even those who did agree that Jesus did not exist did similarly.

Murdock represents a general trend for those "mythicists" (those who reject the historicity of Jesus) who are women, LGBTQ+, and people

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[1] Writing under the pseudonym of "Acharya S."

of color.[2] The debate on the historicity of Jesus is largely a realm dominated by cis-white men, both in how it is framed and then who is taken seriously, often coming at the expense of hearing women's voices and experiences, a trend which applies to the above groups, especially people of color still. In spite of this, sexist, transphobic, and often openly racist men are primarily those who are heralded as the leading figures in this debate, accompanied by abusive rhetorical tactics to invalidate the experience and participation of marginalized people.

This problem continues to permeate despite recent attempts at providing metacriticism of this debate, such as the work of Justin Meggitt and Raphael Lataster, as will be discussed. The experience of women and desire for intersectionality with feminist thought on the question of whether or not Jesus existed as a historical figure, and what this would mean for theology and religion in general, is not being explored. In none of the metacritical work done on this debate so far has any attention been made to try and illuminate women's perspectives, and, in fact, Raphael Lataster is the only genderqueer individual and person of color to be considered one of the so-called "leading" experts on this issue.

These issues deserve to be properly addressed if the study of Jesus' historicity as a figure is to become not only accessible but also welcoming to marginalized groups, who have otherwise been largely excluded from much involvement in the debate, due to the historiographical, rhetorical, and political tactics that have been taken by the dominant male authors and scholars involved. Indeed, until they are, the debate will likely remain a particularly caustic and resistant one to the progress of methods, intersectionality, and the input of various religious and non-religious thoughts on the possibility of Jesus' existence and the implications of the discussion for theological and philosophical discourse, as well as the future of New Testament studies.

What is the Christ Myth Debate?

Though not the most popularly known side of New Testament scholarship, the Christ Myth debate is one which has permeated the field virtually since modern historical research on the Bible first existed. Knowledge of this debate comes as early as the mid-1600s from primarily

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[2] Some people of color, such as John G. Jackson, have managed to enjoy some notoriety in the Christ Myth debate, however, he was an exception to the general rule.

(as far as the present author is aware of) English clergy who responded to unnamed skeptics challenging church authority.[3] The primary focus is over whether or not the historical person Jesus of Nazareth ever existed, though there are numerous other theories and arguments which are associated with it (such as the idea that Jesus lived in a different time period or was actually a different person, or was perhaps a composite of historical and mythical figures). Those who ascribe to these theories are commonly called "mythicists" or "mythers" in both academic and amateur literature on the matter.[4] Unfortunately, the history of the debate is shrouded in mystery, not least of all because proper historiographical research and elaboration on it has been seen as unnecessary by several commentators, such as Ehrman and Weaver (see below). The historiographical focuses in play are generally fixated on white European cis-men, with little-to-no variation. The present debate, today, is similarly focused.

Historiography and Rhetoric

There is an absolute lack of any significant historiographical research on the Christ Myth debate and the little that is done is often polemically constructed for a rhetorical purpose of either dismissing it or antagonizing those who dismiss it. For example, in his brief chapter on the topic, Walter P. Weaver remarks that the entire question of Jesus' existence is a "lurking monster," and treats the entire issue as one not deserving of proper historiographical research.[5] In total, every major monograph which has been published in the last thirty years on the topic of Jesus' historicity has failed to write more than even a minimal twenty pages discussing the past history of the issue or the arguments that various proponents gave, or even provide basic sociological research as to why they presented the arguments they did. In fact, in the popular work by Bart Ehrman entitled

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[3] Hugo Grotius, *The Truth of Christian Religion: In six Books. Written in Latin and Now Translated into English with the Addition of a Seventh Book Against the present Roman Church*, trans. Simon Patrick (London: J. L., 1700), Book 2 page 40. Originally translated from *De veritate religionis Christianae* (1627); John Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Also Concerning the Messiah* (London: Printed for Various Persons, 1668), 209-210.

[4] The earliest relevant use of the term (currently aware to the author) is T. J. Thorburn, *Jesus The Christ Historical or Mythical?* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 1-25.

[5] Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 71.

Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth (2012), there's barely five and a half pages devoted to the entire history of the issue. What is presented, however, is almost exclusively centered on the writings and experiences of white heterosexual cis men in this debate.

There is a general structure which the vast majority of the historiographical research follows: (1) "mythicism" begins with Volney and Dupuis, sometimes on rare occasions with Bolingbroke's followers preceding them, (2) most scholars argue the issue "remained quiet" until the work of Bruno Bauer, who (3) often is said to have led to it being accepted (through Marx) in the Soviet Union, (4) with its culmination being seen in the early 20th century debates spearheaded by Arthur Drews, William Benjamin Smith, and later by Paul-Louis Couchoud, and finally (5) it is then revived after a "hiatus" by George Albert Wells in the 1970s which leads to its resurgence today.[6] On occasion, a few other groups will be mentioned, but usually only other male academics, such as the Dutch Radicals, which largely can just fall in line with this traditionalist structure.

In these, one would only expect to find passing reference to Murdock's work throughout the entire and brief discussion of the debate's history, though Madalyn Murray O'Hair is occasionally referenced as well, when it comes to the work of women.[7] Other than this, there is virtually no other discussion of the issue. Yet, in contrast to what this utter silence would tell a reader, there is actually a rather rich and long history of women's involvement in this debate, including figures such as Eliza Sharples (1803-1852), an early suffragist and popular lecturer in secular communities in England, who simultaneously started a new religion ("Rational Christianity") and denied that Jesus existed by building on the philosophical grounds of her contemporaries Richard Carlile and Robert Taylor.[8] Others throughout history have included Sarah Titcomb, Elizabeth Evans, Harriette

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[6] For case examples, see Robert van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 6-16; Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 14-19.

[7] Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 16.

[8] For Sharples' writings on this, see Eliza Sharples, "The Editress to her sister Maria," *The Isis. A London Weekly Publication* 1, no. 38 (1832): 593, "The Editress to her sister Maria," *The Isis. A London Weekly Publication* 1, no. 39 (1832): 609, "The Thirteenth Discourse of the Editress: First Discourse on the Bible," *The Isis* 12, no. 1 (1832): 177-183.

Curtiss, Phyllis Graham, Barbara G. Walker, and more.[9] Thus, a major question is left as to why it is that these women are completely overlooked and their history, thereby, erased? Similarly, though it is often remarked how much of a stir Arthur Drews caused in Germany in the early 1910s with his theory, none in this debate take note of the fact that on the same lecture circuit he toured on early German gay and women's rights activists Magnus Hirschfield and Helene Stöcker also participated. Even the notable Anna Kingsfield is remembered as having entertained the debate over Jesus' historicity with her contemporaries.[10] Meanwhile, periodicals like *The Woman's Journal* also had published material promoting discourse on the historicity of Jesus as well.[11]

What is particularly notable is the lack of any apparent research that has been done on the distinct intersection between the Christ Myth debate and women's suffrage throughout history, despite it having been particularly prevalent among activists for women's rights, as noted above. Even Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to run for president of the United States, positively received the mythicist tome *The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors* (1875) written by Kersey Graves.[12] In short, the long history of feminism and the fight for women's rights has also been tied to the debate on whether or not Jesus existed as a historical figure.

There are a number of factors which play a part in why women are so rarely given credit or fairly consulted in this debate. In her 1997 paper "We Are Also Your Sisters", Judith Plaskow commented on how interest in religion had been treated by academics as being the product of

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[9] Elizabeth Evans, *The Christ Myth: A Study* (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1900); Sarah Titcomb, *Aryan Sun Myths: The Origin of Religions* (Troy: Nims and Knight, 1889); Harriette A. Curtiss and Frank H. Curtiss, *The Key of Destiny: A Sequel to the Key of the Universe* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919), 123; Phyllis Graham, *The Jesus Hoax* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1974); Barbara G. Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (New York: HarperOne, 1983), 464-472 and *Man Made God: A Collection of Essays* (Seattle: Stellar House Publishing, 2010); Dorothy M. Murdock, *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (Kempton: Adventures Unlimited, 1999) and most recently before her death, *The Gospel According to Acharya S.* (Seattle: Stellar House Publishing, 2009).
[10] See respectively, Annika Spilker, *Geschlecht, Religion und voelkischer Nationalismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2013), 113-114; Edward Maitland, *Anna Kingsford, Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work*, vol. 1 (1896), 114.
[11] "Notes and News," *The Woman's Journal* 21, no. 29 (1890): 229.
[12] "The Crucified Saviors," *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* 10, no. 19 (1875): 5.

"reactionaries" and this had served, in turn, to feed into delegitimizing and denigrating the work of feminist religious scholars heavily as well.[13] This is still the attitude that scholars have had toward this debate. Among historicists, Mark Allan Powell remarked that those who denied Jesus ever existed were equivalent to "skinheads." Meanwhile, Bart Ehrman denigrates the work of Murdock as merely being on the level of a conspiracy theory.[14] It is, as a general rule, a topic that is often treated with disdain even though it has received far more attention in recent years. Among mythicists, there has been a general trend to downplay the works of women especially. Richard Carrier and Robert M. Price, for instance, are known for their especially vitriolic and polemical attacks on Murdock. Price wrote a very notable review of Murdock's first book which started a short-lived feud between the authors for his harshness, referring to her as "sophomoric." Carrier notably refers to her as having "paranoid claims", refers to her parallelism methodology as a "disease", remarks she has "paranoid fantasies", and more. Raphael Lataster follows suit and remarks that the vilification of Murdock is "not always without good reason."[15] Context does little to alleviate this, since these attacks serve no other purpose than to spite the opposition (Murdock) rhetorically. In this case, I would argue this qualifies as online misogyny and abuse toward women in this field which has been exhibited elsewhere by these same figures.

The mistreatment of women in historiographical research, by silence and verbal intimidation and abuse, can be seen in light of the work of Cristian Tileagă, who has noted how the influx of abusive tactics are used to delegitimize the right of women to participate in politics in online spaces,

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[13] Judith Plaskow, "We Are Also Your Sisters: The Development of Women's Studies in Religion," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1997): 199-211 specifically 199.

[14] Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 168; Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* 21-25.

[15] See respectively, Robert M. Price, "Aquarian Skeptic," *Free Inquiry* 21, no. 3 (2001): 66-67; Richard Carrier, "That Luxor Thing," February 2012, https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/294 (accessed August 18, 2020), and "That Luxor Thing Again," March 2012, https://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/580 (accessed August 18, 2020); Raphael Lataster, *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus: Why a Philosophical Analysis Elucidates the Historical Discourse*, "Value Inquiry Series" 336 (Leiden: Brill | Rodopi, 2019), 352n2.

especially women active in public political life.[16] There are a number of parallels that can be drawn from Tileagă's work and the way in which Murdock and others have been treated, especially the polemical rhetoric. In the case of Carrier, referring to Murdock's (correct) suppositions that people in the Christ Myth debate were merely out to delegitimize her work as "paranoia" serves as a form of gaslighting, causing another person to question their own experiences and mental state in assessing what has happened to them, in an effort to convince them (and/or an audience) that they are not acting (or at all) sane. Carrier's rhetoric serves to not only delegitimize Murdock, but also to then invalidate her experience in this debate and, thereby, her ability to even participate.

Historiographically, then, this serves to further devalue the need to even discuss the importance of women's work in the grand scheme of the history of the Christ Myth debate. This is despite the fact that women such as Eliza Sharples not only led suffragists in England and suffered in prison, poverty, and political harassment as a result, but were also active in the presence and evolution of mythicist positions. Be eliminating women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people from historiographical research on this debate, despite their major contributions to the evolution of these theories and their continued influence on the present day field, it serves to say the leading authorities of this debate do not care for their work or how they aided in the evolution of this debate. Conceptually, this would fall under what Sara Parks has called the "Brooten Phenomenon," where the scholarship of and on women is largely viewed as not belonging to the mainstream and is considered not "real" scholarship in general in the fields of New Testament and Second Temple Judaism studies.[17] In the case of Carrier, Price, Lataster, along with many of their historicist counterparts in this debate, it is clear the work of women like Murdock is not viewed as scholarship or "real", and as a result, this seems to excuse them in not only vilifying it, but when Murdock would protest about how her work was being attacked, to then gaslight her in an attempt to accept her status as being

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[16] Cristian Tileagă, "Communicating misogyny: An interdisciplinary research agenda for social psychology," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 13, no. 7 (2019): 9 pages.

[17] Sara Parks, "'The Brooten Phenomenon' Moving Women from the Margins in Second-Temple and New Testament Scholarship," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 15, no. 1 (2019): 46-64.

inferior to them. In fact, Carrier outright just says that her work is inferior as a theory to that of Earl Doherty's in his articles, specifically to her. As such, this same phenomenon can be demonstrated to exist within the Christ Myth debate to a very notable extent when it comes to historiography and interaction with women's work.

Other contemporaneous women in this debate have faced equal punishments for their involvement, but usually coming in the form of being silenced through ignoring them. Barbara G. Walker, a noted feminist writer, has been largely handwaved and the only detailed analysis of her work has come from other feminist women, such as the theologian Valarie Abrahamsen. In an announced upcoming volume edited by John Loftus and Robert M. Price, Walker and Danila Oder are the only two women included among the fifteen contributors.[18] Her work has been, otherwise, treated as nonexistent (especially by her male colleagues).

Raphael Lataster remains the only high-profile person of color and genderqueer individual in the debate over whether or not Jesus existed, but this largely comes because of his close association with Richard Carrier, who aided in co-writing his second book and was a large influence and consultant on his projects.[19] In addition, his work has a strong favoritism of the interpretational and rhetorical framing that Carrier provides in his own monograph *On the Historicity of Jesus* (2014).

Historiographical research on nations outside of France, Germany, England, and the United States on the issue of mythicism remains rare in English literature. For example, Kōtoku Shūsui (1871-1911) was a Japanese anarchist and was particularly notable in this debate for his own arguments that Jesus never existed as a historical figure, the cross itself being seen as a phallic symbol. He was executed for treason in 1911, but his book published the same year entitled *Kirisuto Massatsuron* [On the Obliteration of Christ] was exceptionally influential in China on the antichristian

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[18] See respectively, Valarie Abrahamsen, "The Jesus Myth According to Barbara Walker," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 5, no. 2 (1998): 188-202 and John Loftus, "Announcing A New Important Anthology On Jesus Mythicism Co-Edited by Robert M. Price and John W. Loftus," April 2020, https://www.debunking-christianity.com/2020/04/announcing-new-important-anthology-on.html (accessed August 19, 2020).

[19] Raphael Lataster and Richard Carrier, *Jesus Did Not Exist: A Debate Among Atheists* (Self Published with Createspace, 2015) and Lataster, *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus*, XIV.

movements and in academia. In all of the supposed histories of the Christ Myth theory that have been written in books, however, his work is not mentioned, nor are the prominent contributions of Chandra Varma and Dhirendranath Chowdhuri, who sparked massive controversy in India over their theories arguing that Jesus never existed. It is further disheartening that the latter two are not more widely discussed given that they also wrote in English.[20] Likewise, the work of people of color in the United States and other "western" nations is also ignored *en masse*. In all of the historiographical work on the Christ Myth debate out there, few (if any) pay attention to John G. Jackson, Yosef ben-Jochannan, Moustafa Gadalla, and others who have all contributed a large voluminous supply to the issue of Jesus' historicity from Afrocentric perspectives, several of these figures even teaching at noted universities and being heavily involved in Civil Rights movements. Nor is attention given to the vast secularist literature among African Americans written throughout history.[21] Instead, like women and LGBTQ+ people, they are ignored and treated as non-entities in the debate.

What this largely tells us is that these works written by women and people of color are, by and large, not valued by either academics or the in-group mythicist collectives which exist largely in secularist and atheist communities (often in those purporting to be allies of LGBTQ+, feminist, and racial equality causes, such as American Atheist). Despite the amount of importance these works have had in the history and growth of mythicism, they are seen as not being "real" scholarship, and the people who produce them are either derided or just given abject silence. The "Brooten phenomenon" that Parks described is alive and thriving within the debates on whether or not Jesus existed, and has for centuries now. What is seen as historiographically relevant literature is mostly that of white men with positions of authority or traditionally ascribed prominence in this debate, which leads us to a pressing question as to the nature of this dominance. Who exactly are the figures that are being favored in current literature?

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[20] For the most comprehensive available scholarship on these figures, see Xuejun Zheng, "Scientism, Nationalism, and Christianity: The Spread and Influence of Kotoku Shusui's *On the Obliteration of Christ* in China," *Cultura* 16, no. 2 (2019): 441-504 and R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Jesus in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 95-120.

[21] Christopher Cameron, *Black Freethinkers: A History of African American Secularism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019).

Favoritism at the Expense of Women's Experience

On June 23, 2020 it was announced that the leading Old Testament scholar Jan Joosten was arrested and charged with the possession of approximately 28,000 images and videos of child pornography by French courts. What followed this was a mass outcry from numerous other Biblical scholars when the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) allowed Joosten to leave the organization of his own volition to allow him his "dignity." This caused many academics to claim that SBL had similarly protected the legacy of other abusers such as Richard I. Pervo, who was never banned after his own convictions on the same charges as Joosten (instead he freely allowed to work with SBL frequently and was given an obituary with high praise by SBL after his death).[22] There is an unfortunate relevance to these events as they demonstrated strong tendencies to protect the legacies and work of abusive individuals involved in the academy. There are analogous situations permeating in the Christ Myth debate as well.

In June 2016, Richard Carrier was banned from all events put on by the secularist organization known as Skepticon for allegedly sexually harassing women and a nonbinary person there, Skepticon stating that he "repeated boundary-pushing behavior." Carrier responded by filing lawsuits against his accusers and against Skepticon itself, wherein emails were released in the affidavits subsequently, which were particularly revealing. In Skepticon's statement during the lawsuit against them, they noted that one of the victims was allegedly touched inappropriately repeatedly by Carrier. This was followed by the exposure of the emails when the lawsuit went to court, wherein Carrier appears to discuss trading favors for a recommendation letter to one woman. By Carrier's own admission (as recorded by Skepticon), he would note that he took advantage of the power dynamic he had over "especially younger women." In another series of emails from another defendant, Carrier is shown to have made several

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[22] For Joosten see Luke May, "Oxford University theology professor is jailed in France after downloading 28,000 child abuse images," June 2020, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8450771/Oxford-University-theology-professor-jailed-France-downloading-28-000-child-abuse-images.html (accessed August 19, 2020) and for Pervo see UPI, "Kiddie porn found on prof's computer," February 2001, https://www.upi.com/Archives/2001/02/13/Kiddie-porn-found-on-profs-computer/1138982040400/ (accessed August 19, 2020). SBL quietly removed the obituary after backlash during the height of the Joosten scandal.

unwanted sexual advances, that were stated to have been repeatedly dismissed by the other individual involved. Carrier's lawsuits were all dismissed for various reasons, including lack of jurisdiction in one case and the statute of limitations running out on another (two others Carrier filed for dismissal himself before they reached the discovery phase where the defendants would attempt to offer a full defense).[23] He was banned from Freethought Blogs (run by P. Z. Meyers) as a result of his actions as well (who also were the subject of his lawsuit). The Secular Students Alliance (SSA) later removed him from the SSA Speakers Bureau after an internal investigation (which Carrier errantly stated included the allegations by one accuser against him, but this was stated not to be the case by SSA), but despite this he was still allowed to volunteer at SSA.[24]

Despite the fact that Carrier is a high-profile figure and rather large in the mythicist communities involved in this debate, the reporting on this issue remains rather lacking in academic and lay circles, except those familiar with some of the defendants in the lawsuits (such as P. Z. Meyers), and he has toured and talked largely across the United States, and continues to be a member of SBL in addition. What is also the case is that his work has had an immense influence on numerous individuals, such as Raphael Lataster, David Fitzgerald, and John Gleason, the latter two being well-known atheist popularizers of mythicism, and Carrier (even when hosts have knowledge of his alleged actions) is still regularly featured on channels on YouTube and in academic venues.[25]

Robert M. Price has been similarly favored despite exceptionally problematic statements having been made throughout his vast literature. Price is politically conservative and has been a frequent critic of feminists,

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[23] For a full overview of this, see "Timeline," Last Updated December 2020, https://allegedlythewebsite.org/timeline (accessed August 19, 2020). For Skepticon's response letter response to Carrier, see Harmeet K. Dhillon, letter, Sept. 1, 2016, downloadable here: https://www.docdroid.net/eUs7E9S/skepticon-response-redacted-pdf (accessed August 19, 2020).

[24] The full transcript and documentation can be viewed here, http://www.ahcuah.com/Carrier_Complaint.pdf.

[25] For popular examples on YouTube, the channels Godless Engineer, InTime, MythVision, David Worley, the Atheist Experience, and more have all hosted Richard Carrier. He has subsequently performed live debates with academic figures such as Christopher Winchester since the allegations came forth. He is also rebutted to semi-frequently in academic literature, mostly recently M. David Litwa, *How the Gospels Became History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 22-45.

especially intersectionalism and gender studies. It finally came to a head at the end of July 2020 when an introduction to an edited sword and sorcery fantasy anthology was released on Amazon, written by Price. In this, Price declared that he was against the "continuous false rape accusations" made against men, and that the victims were "crying wolf." He continued with a caricature of feminist conceptions of rape culture, wherein he stated that feminists were attempting to demonize "natural male interest in women." He then has an entire passage where he remarked upon how, "In some schools boys are encouraged to play with dolls, girls with trucks," as if this is somehow a failure of society. He then states that the promotion of gender-neutral language is to "promote the illusion that gender is a matter of 'social construction'," and then refers to transgender people as an "epidemic." Unlike with Carrier, where the only notable backlash was from Skepticon, the SSA, and certain individual content creators, Price was met with several members of his own anthology withdrawing immediately.[26] He followed this up with an online interview, wherein he stated that the context of this was about the "feminizing" of young men, and stating that this feminization was "softening ourselves up for the kill", with the only noted threat being from "Islamic terrorists." In short, Price appears to be fearmongering about Muslims, transgender people, and insinuating that feminine individuals cannot defend a nation. Instead, in the interview, he insinuates what is needed are ultra-masculine or "macho" men.[27] In effect, his view seems to be that those who are feminine or identify as women are therefore incapable of defending themselves and are "soft," in need of the protection of a patriarchal figure, and those identifying as women but are "men" (from his gender critical perspective) are indoctrinated, being called "sacrifices to a leftist ideology."

Like Carrier, however, Price is still largely upheld in the community and despite many condemning his misogynistic, transphobic, and

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[26] Hemant Mehta, "Authors Demand Removal from Anthology After Right-Wing Atheist's Insane Foreword," July 2020, https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2020/07/31/authors-demand-removal-from-anthology-after-right-wing-atheists-insane-foreword/ (accessed August 19, 2020).

[27] Robert M. Price, "Flashing Words – Robert M. Price Answers his Critics," *YouTube* (August 2020) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3OWiPuq0o0&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR1t2dpt m62r2QVHe_NplSxHDwtnN10HssZrlBUnEveNF_8AFAnPDN5Pl3Y (accessed August 19, 2020).

Islamaphobic statements his fans have largely still come to his defense, heralding him as a champion of free speech who is being attacked by "cancel culture" (this is especially true on his personal Facebook, on which around 5,000 individuals follow him closely). This is all despite the fact that the claims of Price are easily disproven, as leading medical and psychological associations such as the AMA, APA, and WHO all agree that gender is socially constructed, and false rape accusations are exceptionally rare and often the result of poor definitions of what even qualifies as a "false accusation" in the first place not because the victim's experience did not occur.[28]

With this, we can safely note that there is a favoritism in this debate for the male leadership, despite and in spite of women's experiences. This means that the entire question of "did Jesus exist?" is inherently wrapped up in the leadership of individuals who are extremely problematic for the involvement and safety of women, among other groups which I will discuss below. Though anecdotal, the present author has also received anonymous accounts from women academics who have challenged the historicity of Jesus with their colleagues, only to face being dismissed and derided for their positions. What this means is that the thoughts, experiences, and actions that women take within the debate are inherently devalued in favor of protecting a male hierarchy, whether this protection is implicit or explicit is another issue (in Price's case, he and his fanbase are of the latter).

Favoritism at the Expense of Minorities

A similar series of events can be seen in the favoritism of white men over other minority groups, even to the level of excusing them from

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[28] These affirmations from the APA can be found on their style guide here https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/gender#:~:text=Gender%20refers%20to%20the%20attitudes,to%20people%20as%20social%20groups. (accessed August 19, 2020). For the AMA, see Aliana Tedesco, "AMA affirms medical spectrum of gender," November 2018, https://www.healio.com/news/primary-care/20181115/ama-affirms-medical-spectrum-of-gender (accessed August 19, 2020). For WHO, see "Gender" on their website, here https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/news/factsheet-403/en/#:~:text=Gender%20refers%20to%20the%20socially,male%20or%20female%20sex%20categories. (accessed August 19, 2020). For False Rape accusation statistics, see "False Reporting: Overview," *National Sexual Violence Resource Center* (2012), https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Overview_False-Reporting.pdf.

extremely problematic and racist behavior. In the historiographical research, for instance, Arthur Drews (1865-1935) is one of the most frequently discussed figures. Drews was a philosopher and a monist in Germany, who started an international controversy with his book *Die Christusmythe* (1909) [The Christ Myth]. It was published by Eugen Diederichs, and then he went on tour by promotion of the German Monist League across the country, turning his book into a national publicity stunt, which prompted a huge debate in 1910 in the Berlin Zoological Gardens.[29]

What is not commented upon in the Christ Myth debate, however, is that the German Monist League (also associated with mythicists like Arthur Drews and Albert Kalthoff, who was its first president) was specifically instrumental in the rise of Social Darwinism and eugenics. Its founder, Ernst Haeckel, argued in his work (which was later largely disseminated by the Nazi regime) that people with what he regarded as genetic illnesses and mental illness should be sterilized and euthanized.[30] The German Monist League would largely lead to the rise of fascist movements throughout Germany, as Gasman has argued convincingly.[31] Arthur Drews was very much rooted in this exact same culture, in turn arguing for the need of a new German religion to replace Judaism and Christianity, and he specifically ended up endorsing the exceptionally nationalistic and antisemitic Völkisch movements. Yet, despite all of this, none of the historiographical content which the present author is aware of written specifically on the Christ Myth debate has discussed or analyzed these aspects of Drews' philosophy or political attitude, even though they are directly pertinent to his outlooks on Christianity. It is further noteworthy that Drews' publisher, Eugen Diederichs, was a staunch supporter of

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[29] For a full account of the events, see Alfred Dieterich, *Hat Jesus gelebt? Reden gehalten auf dem Berliner Religionsgespräch des Deutschen Monistenbundes am 31. Januar und l. Februar 1910 im Zoologischen Garten über* Die Christusmythe *von Arthur Drews* (Berlin: Verlag des Deutschen Monistenbundes, 1910).

[30] Ernst Haeckel, *The Wonders of Life*, translated by Joseph McCabe (London: Watts & Co., 1904), 123-124.

[31] See Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism* (New York: Routledge, repri. 2017) and *Haeckel's Monism and the Birth of Fascist Ideology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

nationalist and antisemitic movements, including the Völkisch movements as well.[32]

Likewise, William Benjamin Smith (1850-1934), the mathematics professor at Tulane University, was a noted racist, arguing that people of color were inferior in every way to the white man, and wished completely banish all "race mixing," writing an entire book on the subject.[33] His ardent racism is, again, never discussed in any historiographical content.

Currently, however, the issue has not diminished. Revilo Oliver (1908-1994) was a professor at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he taught Classical Philology, among other things. But he published very little content academically, instead writing articles, books, and pamphlets arguing that Jesus did not exist and was instead a conspiracy, which was often tied to his white supremacist and nationalistic views.[34] He wrote contemporaneously with Ben Klassen (1918-1993), who founded the "Church of the Creator" and founded conceptions of a "holy race war" within white supremacist movements in the United States. Within the content he wrote as doctrine for his new religious movement he specifically argued that Jesus did not exist, and that Christianity had been a Jewish construction meant to destroy the white race.[35] And then, more recently, Kenneth Humphreys (a well-known English atheist and secularist) wrote a lengthy book he published with Historical Review Press, a neo-Nazi publisher that became notorious for attempting to spread holocaust denial material in Germany.[36] Richard Carrier has since had a brief open discussion with an avowed neo-Nazi on his own website.[37] Robert M. Price,

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[32] George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: The Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Shocken Books, repri. 1981), 59-60, 72, 327n14-15.

[33] William Benjamin Smith, *The Color Line: A Brief on Behalf of the Unborn* (New York: McClure, Philips and Co., 1909).

[34] Revilo P. Oliver, *The Origins of Christianity* (Uckfield: Historical Review Press, 2001 Digital Version), unpaginated.

[35] Ben Klassen, *Nature's Eternal Religion* (2008 Digital Edition), 241-245, no other bibliographic notes are given on the upload.

[36] Kenneth Humphreys, *Jesus Never Existed: Can You Handle the Truth* (Uckfield: Historical Review Press, 2005). For Historical Review Press, see Graham Macklin, *Failed Führers: A History of Britain's Extreme Right* (New York: Routledge, 2020), digital edition location 1965.

[37] Christopher Hansen, "Did Carrier Just Host a Nazi?" July 2020, https://cmepshansen9.wixsite.com/mysite/post/a-reminder-that-richard-carrier-is-a-horrible-person (accessed August 19, 2020).

as noted before, has recently promoted Islamaphobic comments to justify his desire for a "macho" male gender construction. A colleague of his in this debate, Hermann Detering (the leading neo-Dutch Radical, those who challenge the authenticity of all the Pauline epistles), also has made such comments about taking in immigrants, again fearmongering about Muslim people of color escaping from Syria to Germany.[38]

Despite all of this, none of these individuals have received much of any condemnation in this debate. Meanwhile, the work of people of color (save Lataster) has been largely ignored, with notable figures who had taught at major universities such as Yosef ben-Jochannan and John G. Jackson being completely dismissed without even being referenced the vast majority of the time. The only notable critic of their work on Jesus' historicity to any extent has been a Christian apologist named Albert McIlhenny, whose primary tactic is to insult, deride, and diminish all of the work that they do.[39] During all of this, as well, LGBTQ+ people (again, save Lataster) have been almost entirely dismissed as well, with notable gay rights activists like Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) having almost no presence in any historiographical research on mythicism either, along with the fact that Magnus Hirschfield (1868-1935), an activist in Germany, was a part of the same tours as Drews, as noted before. In addition (as mentioned above), there was a rich debate on the topic of Jesus' historicity in Japanese, Chinese, and Indian literature as well, but this is almost never commented on by those participating in the Christ Myth debate either. This cannot be relegated to a language barrier either (as previously noted Chandra Varma and Dhirendranath Chowdhuri wrote in English).

As was seen with the exceptionally misogynistic attitude toward protecting male leaders in the debate at the expense of women, this is also seen explicitly with numerous other minorities and marginalized groups as well. Note, however, that this is of a rather immense double standard given that the Soviet scholars who widely endorsed the Christ Myth theory are handwaved as having been massively biased atheists, who were more acting out of antichristian values than critical scholarship (which is also, to many

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[38] Hermann Detering, "Bedford-Strohm, Marx und das Kreuz mit der klaren Kante," November 2016, http://hermann-detering.de/klare-kante (accessed August 19, 2020).

[39] Albert McIlhenny, *Meet the Mythicists* (Self Published with Kindle Direct Publishing, 2015)
, *passim*.

extents, untrue). Of course, the only reason that I can find as to why Soviet scholars would be so harshly called out while other mythicists are unchallenged in their publishing with neo-Nazi presses is that these scholars who live in what is now the ex-Western bloc still retain an anti-communist bias themselves, especially given it seems to be the case that historiographers like Van Voorst and Ehrman did not actually consult any Soviet scholarship on this at all, even though there was some in readily accessible languages like English and French.[40] All of this continues to occur, despite recent calls for the promotion of diversity in biblical scholarship, such as most recently by the newly elected president of SBL, Gale A. Yee.[41]

Attempts at Christian Marginalization

The attempts at active marginalization of people groups in this debate does not end with just the fact that the extreme favoritism of white male scholars has led to the erasure of almost all minority and marginalized communities, but also that there is more active goal for several authors in silencing the whole of Christians (academics and laity alike) in this debate. Hints of this were seen in the work of Iosif A. Kryvelev (1906-1991), a Soviet academic of early Christianity and staunch atheist, who had worked closely with antireligious propaganda organizations, along with predecessors of his like Sergey Kovalev. Kryvelev ascribed to Marxist-Leninist "Scientific atheism," holding to the position that one could only perform proper historical research from the perspective of being an atheist, and that all other forms of research were inherently invalid. One had to be an atheist and a materialist, otherwise they could not be historians, social/hard scientists, etc.[42] As such, the implication here is that those who believe in the supernatural or were idealists instead of materialists, would

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[40] Robert Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 9-10 errantly claims that Marx would lead to mythicism being accepted in the USSR, which is ostensibly false as Marx never wrote on the matter, and Engels rejected it. It was actually Arthur Drews and Vladimir Lenin that led to this. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?*, 17 corrects this, but reduces his entire discussion of the USSR's mythicist school down to a singular sentence with no citations of academics involved in it.

[41] Gale A. Yee, "Thinking Intersectionally: Gender, Race, Class, and the Etceteras of Our Discipline," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 1 (2020): 7-26.

[42] Iosif A. Kryvelev, "Overcoming the Vestiges of Religion in the Lives of the Peoples of the USSR," *Soviet Anthropology and Archeology* 1, no. 2 (1962): 11-21.

therefore end up being automatically unscientific individuals whose opinions were forfeit.

The attempts to exclude Christians from this debate become more concrete in the way in which they are rhetorically addressed. Richard Carrier, for example, uses terms such as "apologist" to degrade the work of his peers, despite them being just as qualified as he.[43] This has a particular effect on his readers, those being primarily either scholars or atheists, since there is a bias against apologetic enterprise in both of these groups, especially the atheist community (being pitted against Christianity philosophically and theologically).[44] He is not the only one who does this either. This rhetoric aimed at promoting exclusion of Christians is seen in the work of Robert M. Price, Frank R. Zindler, René Salm, D. M. Murdock, and more. The journal which Price had been the lead editor of, *The Journal of Higher Criticism*, became notable in many of its issues for the intense number of pro-atheistic and naturalistic attempts to disprove various aspects of Christian doctrine, such as the resurrection.[45] One can also point to the frequency with which mythicist books appear in academic presses in comparison to atheist and secularist presses with a stated agenda that is at the exclusion of Christianity (especially conservative forms).[46] In this case, only five mythicist books have appeared in academic presses, while a substantially large number of them have instead been released through American Atheist Press, Prometheus, Pitchstone, and others, all with explicit secularist agendas (Pitchstone also noted for publishing antifeminist materials as well).

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[43] Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 14, 23n9, 164-165n24.

[44] For critique, see Ronald Gaul, "New Atheism: A Critique by way of Marxian Materialism and Scientific Skepticism," *Northern Plains Ethics Journal* 6, no. 1 (2018): 85-96.

[45] For a few examples, see G. A. Wells, "Pentecostal Mutterings and Evangelical Blandishments," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 8, no. 1 (2001): 41-48; Jeffery Jay Lowder, "Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story: A Reply to William Lane Craig," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 8, no. 2 (2001): 251-293; Richard Carrier, "The Guarded Tomb of Jesus and Daniel in the Lion's Den: An Argument for the Plausibility of Theft," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 8, no. 2 (2001): 304-318; Peter Kirby, "The Case Against the Empty Tomb," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 9, no 2 (2002): 161-174.

[46] Christopher Hansen, "Some Ideological Trends of Jesus Skepticism," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 15, no. 2 (2020): 44-58, particularly 48.

The most notable attempt to exclude Christians, however, is actually that of Raphael Lataster who spends several pages of his most recent monograph (*Questioning the Historicity of Jesus: Why a Philosophical Analysis Elucidates the Historical Discourse,* 2019) elaborating on why he thinks that Christians should be actively removed from proceedings in this debate.[47] His arguments are, often times, seemingly grasping. For example, his first major reason is that since Christians believe in a theological Jesus and not the so-called "historical Jesus," they would conceive of the historical Jesus as "blasphemous." There is nothing else here stated, and it appears that there is a hidden implication that they would therefore be biased and unobjective in the debate.[48] Of course, if this were the case it makes one wonder why there are Christians who have actively stated there is no historical Jesus. In fact, there is a long tradition of it.[49] Note that Lataster's attempt does not end there, but he even earlier in his book makes the argument that no New Testament scholar is even qualified to assess Jesus' historicity (yet conveniently analytical philosophers like himself are).[50] Lataster's bias against religious individuals does not end there, however. It extends to how he decides to perform historical research, specifically arguing against any reliability of ancient authors for having miraculous and supernatural stories in their writings.[51] For Lataster, the mere fact that they did not perform history as a modern naturalist scholar would and instead included the gods in their conception and development of history automatically makes them unreliable witnesses. As such, Lataster is paralleling closely the work of Soviet academics like Kryvelev here. For this latest brand of Jesus agnostic and mythicist literature, this demonstrates there is an entire environment that is developed where exclusionary practices are not only a trend, but actively promoted within the debate on whether or not Jesus existed.

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[47] Lataster, *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus*, 14-22.

[48] Lataster, *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus*, 14-15.

[49] For a short number of noted clergy involved in the Church who advocated mythicism: Albert Kalthoff, William Montgomery, G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, Edward van der Kaaij, and Thomas L. Brodie. Then there has also been Eliza Sharples, thus, providing an approximately 200-year long span of Christian mythicists that we are aware of.

[50] Lataster, *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus*, 4-12, 25-26.

[51] Lataster, *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus*, 206-207.

Toward a Christ Myth Debate in Intersectional Discourse

In recent years, there has been an effort to unearth and discuss the work of marginalized communities who have interpreted and commented on the Bible in the past, particularly on the work of women. In 2007 a notable symposium was published entitled *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*, with several needed works detailing the work of women in the 19th century on the New Testament. At the SBL 2019 San Diego Annual Meeting a panel was held on "Recovering Female Interpreters of the Bible," which had several noted speakers including Sara Parks and Joy Schroeder.[52] In addition, there have been active attempts to move the study of marginalized communities further into the mainstream, such as Sara Parks' aforementioned paper on the "Broosten Phenomenon." In short, active feminist historiographical practices are beginning to make waves in Biblical studies in recent years. However, as we have seen, the Christ Myth debate has still resisted such attempts to change with its predominantly white male leadership very much focused on its own preservation and status, seemingly.

Tania Modleski stated poignantly in her book *Femininity as Mas(s)querade: A Feminist Approach to Mass Culture* (1986), "Although women have spoken, then, they have not always been heard, and one of the tasks for feminism is continually to insist upon recognition, as well as upon the priority of its work."[53] I believe this can, and should, be expanded to all marginalized communities in this debate. The question then is, how are we to go about performing proper historiographical research which focuses on illuminating these works?

There are a number of avenues to this, which I could suggest, but two which are often overlooked are the following:

> (1) Explore period popular, secular, women's, etc. journals and periodicals that were published. As already documented above, a number of works by women such

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[52] Respectively, Christina de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor (eds.), *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007); Joy Schroeder, et. al., "Recovering Female Interpreters of the Bible. A Panel Discussion at the SBL Annual Meeting 2019 in San Diego," Uploaded 2020, http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/20_1/pdf/PanelGesamtpdf.pdf (accessed August 22, 2020).
[53] Tania Modleski, *Femininity as Mas(s)querade: A Feminist Approach to Mass Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 37.

> as Victoria Woodhull and others were released in their popular periodicals. Eliza Sharples' *The Isis* journal was where much of her interpretation of the Bible was released and illuminated her views on the historical Jesus.
>
> (2) Investigate spiritualist and new-age religious journals and books. This led the present author to the discovery of the work of Harriette Curtiss, a theosophist and one who held Jesus to not have existed, making use of the work of Arthur Drews.
>
> (3) The reading of diaries, letters, and notes written by various authors of marginalized groups, which often turn up information on these issues as well. Autobiographies and later biographies by other authors also are often helpful, the latter (for example) in the case of Anna Kingsford.

The exploration of these various literary forms elucidates a large amount of mythicist literature by marginalized people. In addition, I would emphasize the need for interdisciplinary historiographical practices for proper analysis to be done here and also would have to echo the work Esther Fuchs, that men should be brought in and participate also in these historiographical research on mythicism, but be wary of the politics and position of dominance (especially white, straight, cis) men have had in the field of Biblical studies.[54] By emphasizing an intersectional approach to the historiography of the Christ Myth debate, we may be able to, in the future, see the erasure of marginalized voices lessen and their past works rediscovered.

On the converse, if we are to continue with the myth of objectivity and unbiased approach which Lataster, Carrier, Price, and others have all attempted to promote at various times, there will inevitably be problems. Sara Parks poignantly remarks:

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[54] Esther Fuchs, "Men in Biblical Feminist Scholarship," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 19, no. 2 (2003): 93-114. For a suggested source on Feminist historiographical practices, see Christine Mason Sutherland, "Feminist Historiography: Research Methods in Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 109-122.

> The claim that one can undertake historical work from a "neutral" or "unbiased" standpoint is problematic at best, and violent at worst. Scientific neutrality is not only impossible, but also unethical. Contrary to what is typically assumed, it is not only the scholarship from or about marginalized voices that is "engaged" and has political and socio-historical consequences; rather, it is just that only some scholarship admits that it is situated from within gendered, ethnic, socio-economic, racialized, geographical, ideological, and cultural standpoints. Women's scholarship may have an engaged interest and an overt bias in its questions—but scholarship that systematically ignores women and non-binary gender and operates from the presumption that being male, white, Western, and Christian or post-Christian is an acceptable neutral "default" is also engaged and biased, under false cover of objectivity.[55]

All of the problems we have seen: the myth of objectivity, that this debate is irrelevant (as many NT scholars have held), that the work of many authors of marginalized groups is seen as unimportant in favor of more "objective" scholarship, the idea that one can dismiss ancient or modern sources based on their religious or metaphysical beliefs, etc., is not only poor scholarship but, as Parks says, "violent." In the current debate, the intellectual personhood of various figures is simply seen as not mattering, due to the persistence of such issues that go unaddressed. As such, it is important that an intersectional and *biased* approach in favor of marginalized groups be undertaken in the Christ Myth debate, so that these voices can be properly and justly heard. Otherwise it will remain predominantly in the unethical realm of misogynistic, antireligious, cis, white men, were these minority contributors to the discussion are marginalized and nonexistent.

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[55] Parks, "'The Broosten Phenomenon'," 53.

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