What We are Able

An honors thesis for the Department of Political Science

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Chapter I - Introduction

This project has spanned two and a half years of my college career. It has involved research proposals, final coursework, directed research, and an empirical experiment which I carried out in the fall of 2008. Its focus is on realizing J.S. Mill's vision of an improved democracy, Plato's emphasis on questioning conceptions of the truth, Nietzsche's embrace of the will, and attempts by theorists in motivated reasoning to understand the mind of the motivated reasoner. This project is truly about a multitude of things that may seem—especially to me at certain times—completely unconnected. There have been additions and subtraction of major thinkers, concepts, and methodologies but none more important than that which occurred in the last legs of my writing. What I realized was all of the parts of this project are truly concerned with understanding the abilities of humanity. My project is about realizing the deficiencies and embracing the strengths of the human species: there is nothing more important to success of humanity and democratic society than this.

This thesis begins by discussing J.S. Mill's plans to create a more independent and truth-seeking society and his connections—explicit and implicit—to Plato. Mill argues fervently that without discussing truths, not only will those truths themselves suffer, but so too will the entire character of mankind. Mill believes that the distinctive characteristics of humanity—like corrigibility—will atrophy in the absence of true discussion. He believes it is only by encouraging the creation of individuals that European society can escape this fate (Mill 1978, 55-56). Though Mill recognized the necessity of questioning one's beliefs and understanding the conditional nature of truth he overestimated humanity's abilities to escape an existence bound by acquiescence and dogma.

The theory of motivated reasoning predicts these deficiencies in the ability of humanity to reason. It predicts that people discover and interpret new information with predetermined goals in mind. They either actively seek the most accurate judgment—accuracy goals—or, they seek only to reaffirm their prior held beliefs—directional goals. The cognitive default is directional goals; when faced with new information, people will assume their prior opinion to be true and work to rationalize away divergent evidence. Democratic society relies on the ability of its people to make important judgments and decisions. Motivated reasoning predicts that these decisions may not reflect one's rational opinion about a subject but rather his or her first opinion or the opinion accompanied by the strongest emotional charge: pursuing directional goals precludes man's ability to question his own ideas of the truth, much less those of the people around him. Creating the conditions that would facilitate Mill's vision for society was the one of the original goals of my experiment. I believe it is necessary to assuage directional goals in order to realize Mill's vision for a more deliberative and contemplative society.

Before outlining my experiment I address Plato's argument that the only knowledge worth knowing is that knowledge itself is worthless. Plato questioned the ability of anyone to be an expert on anything. He instead wanted people to understand their inability to fully know anything and encouraged them to embrace *eros*: the desire for that which we know we want but do not have. It is this understanding of knowledge that begot my experiment. I argue that the key to increasing the pursuance of accuracy goals lies in understanding the motivations which underlie our reasoning and the implications of these motivations on our objectivity. That is, I believe that teaching students about the phenomenon of motivated reasoning may allow those students to pursue accuracy goals as opposed to directional goals by turning the subjects—at

least partially—towards understanding themselves and their ability—or inability—to reason

objectively.

I then discuss in detail the mechanism and results of my experiment which demonstrated

that teaching students the theory of motivated reasoning increases accuracy goals. The subjects

in the treatment condition of my experiment were better able to assuage bias and recognize bias

in others.

My final two chapters are devoted to understanding where Nietzsche and Plato thought

the strengths and weaknesses of humanity lay. These chapters discuss the implications on

knowledge that I draw from these philosophers theories and the connection that exists between

these theories and motivated reasoning. I focus on these philosophers' shared belief that

humanity is not sufficiently rational to live well according to reason alone. Nietzsche emphasizes

the power and necessity of humanity's will, while Plato emphasizes the requisite embrace of

uncertainty and *eros*.

I believe embracing these concepts, as opposed to purveying reason alone, is the route to

the contemplative and deliberative society that Mill envisioned. My project is an attempt at

understanding the connection between motivated reasoning and the emphasis in political theory

on questioning received ideas of the truth which extends from Plato through the Enlightenment

and J.S. Mill and into Nietzsche. However, only near the end of this project did I begin to

understand how deep this connection runs. I hope to demonstrate that exposure to the theory of

motivated reasoning will, on one level, increase the pursuance of accuracy goals by allowing

people to understand the necessity of looking past their biases. On an entirely different level,

however, I hope exposure to motivated reasoning will encourage people to contemplate and

better understand their abilities as reasoners, allowing them to appreciate the necessity of

supplementing reason with uncertainty and individual agency.

Chapter I - J.S. Mill's Vision for Society

Mill and Plato

My connection between Mill and Plato is not a novel one. Indeed, Mill believed himself to be the modern thinker most influenced by Plato (Devigne 2006, 10). Though Mill was concerned with the stagnation of ideas, Plato was apprehensive about their volatility. He was concerned with checking the willful and dangerous individuals in Athens who were able to lead the city toward disaster. As Mill himself points to in *On Liberty*, there was a time when the "excess" as opposed to the deficiency of will that posed the danger; Mill, however, was not living in that time (Mill 1978, 58).

However, both Plato's and Mill's situation did call for greater consideration and deliberation of ideas of the truth. Mill wished to excite conversation amongst his democratic society. He believed that people had begun to believe that current ideas of the truth were the only ideas of the truth and would be so forever. Plato wanted people to question the certainty with which they asserted ideas of the truth. The certainty that both describe precludes conversation and increases brash action. As Devigne points to in his Reforming Liberalism, addressing "our common ignorance in thinking that we know when we do not" is one of Mill's main focuses in *On Liberty* (Devigne 2006, 13).

In *On Liberty*, Mill goes beyond simply incorporating some of Plato's thoughts. He was attempting to achieve what he did not believe Plato was able to: a harmony between true individuality and greater social unity (Devigne 2006, 27-29). Mill wanted to foster creative and self-commanding individuals while ensuring the increased "moral development" of society as a whole (Devigne 2006, 28). Mill wished to separate the English enlightenment further from

Christianity and introduce "civil practices and values that cultivate the qualities of character that engender strong exertions of human agency (Devigne 2006, 106). As Devigne emphasizes, Mill wished not only to counterbalance western society's one-sided development in favor of justice with an emphasis on willfulness and self-command, he wished to synthesize the two historically competing drives into one coherent social occupation. Directly below I will demonstrate how Mill saw his work as addressing both of these drives in his *On Liberty* and other relevant works. Though Mill saw himself as succeeding where Plato had failed, I believe Plato too was successful in improving both the individual and society, though differently than Mill. In chapter VIII, I will demonstrate Plato's success.

<div align="center">Society's Diminishing Effects in On Liberty</div>

Mill's *On Liberty* is a critique of the ever-lauded liberal democracy. To Mill, society's failures precipitated the decline in man's capabilities. He believes that British liberal democracy had created the well known anathema: "tyranny of the majority" (Mill 1978, 4). Worse yet, it created a social tyranny "though not upheld by such extreme penalties [as a governmental tyranny], it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself" (Mill 1978, 4). Protection against social tyranny is Mill's main concern. He believes that it diminished both truth and the individual.

Mill says that social tyranny will "fetter the development and, if possible, prevent the formation of any individual not in harmony with its ways" (Mill 1978, 5). By limiting the formation and development of individuals, society restricts or eliminates the expression of dissenting opinions (Mill 1978, 16). This in turn creates a twofold "peculiar evil." First, if a crushed opinion *is* correct it robs the world of a potential new truth. Second, and just as

problematic, eliminating even an incorrect truth robs people of a "clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error" (Mill 1978, 16). He suggests that through a "tacit convention" it has been understood that "principles are not to be disputed" and "the discussion of the greatest questions which can occupy humanity is considered to be closed" (Mill 1978, 33). Indeed, Mill points out that "many opinions now general will be rejected by future ages, as it is that many once general, are rejected by the present" (Mill 1978, 17). He is warning his present society against assuming infallibility and completeness, which not questioning its ideas suggests.

Truths lose their meanings once unquestioned and not discussed; they become "dead dogma, not living truth" (Mill 1978, 34). Mill references Cicero, the great ancient orator, for studying "his adversary's case with as great, if not with still greater, intensity than even his own." Mill continues, "he who knows only his side of the case knows little of that" (Mill 1978, 35). Without discussion "not only the grounds for an opinion are forgotten" but so too are "the meaning[s] of the opinion itself" (Mill 1978, 37). This lack of understanding may lead to even worse concerns: one who tries to forestall all discussion will not always be successful, and when one *is* confronted with an argument it causes him to reject his received opinion "rashly and ignorantly" instead of doing so "wisely and considerately." Instead of striking a balance "between two sets of conflicting reasons" through discussion, when one truth is declared, all the parts of the former truth are lost (Mill 1978, 35, 44-46). Part of the truth "sets while another rises;" instead of allowing a combination of parts, one is disregarded completely for another (Mill 1978, 45).

In his *On the Requisites of a Philosophical Language, and the Principles and Definition*, Mill discusses this theme at length by focusing on a certain class of logicians concerned more

with clarity than comprehensiveness in defining words. Mill agrees that "we may be able to improve on the conclusions of our forefathers" but that "we ought to be careful not inadvertently to let any of their premises slip through our fingers" (Mill 1974, 685). Mill's point here is that, although we *might* improve the definition of a word or truth, by trying to define it concisely, we dismiss half of what may be considered the truth; future generations are given only a part of what we once knew. He is concerned that our focus on clarity makes us myopic; we dismiss those parts which do not fit within our narrow definition thus depriving the future of an entire half of knowledge.

Mill believes this will have a peculiar effect on divergence. Instead of simply killing dissent, society strangles it until it fizzles out. It "induces men to disguise [their opinions] or to abstain from any active effort for their diffusion." Mill warns that the death of current dissention will have no tremendous effect like that of Socrates or Jesus because they are only left to "smolder in the narrow circles of thinking and studious persons among whom they originate" (Mill 1978, 31). This social tyranny is not the evocative censorship of times past, but one which induces stagnancy and mediocrity. This "intellectual pacification" brings with it "the sacrifice of the entire moral courage of the human mind" (Mill 1978, 31).

This acceptance of mediocrity is complimented by atrophy of the human character, an inevitability to a democracy without discussion (Mill 1978, 63). As Mill says in his introduction, "mankind are greatest gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves then by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest" (Mill 1978, 12). He makes clear early in his work that taking on ascribed opinions hurts the character of the individual, and later, explains why. Man looses his corrigibility—that thing which makes him respectable—when there is no dialogue about truth. Man only gains corrigibility through experience *and* discussion. Discussion

shows how experience should be interpreted. Without it, facts and arguments are not brought before the human mind and people are unable to change their wayward practices (Mill 1978, 19).

It is the general class of men who are hurt most by the censorship of society. Their "mental development is cramped and their reason cowed" by an environment of conformity (Mill 1978, 32). Even if ascribed opinions are correct, their being instilled damages the mental qualities of men; "truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think" (Mill 1978, 32). As Mill says later, "to conform to custom merely as custom does not educate or develop in him any of the qualities which are the distinctive endowment of a human being" (Mill 1978, 55-56). Although some may escape the environment of conformity, there will never be "in that atmosphere an intellectually active people" (Mill 1978, 33). Mill believes that the improvement of man's capabilities—assuming the natural characteristics of humanity—must be the first project before all others, and his plan for improving man's situation has two main points. Mill believes most importantly, that eccentrics must be allowed to exist. Second, he argues the necessity of a group of intellectuals to guide the masses toward the right paths—a seemingly contradictory part of Mill's thinking that will be discussed below at length.

<u>The Improvement of Man</u>

Mill first emphasizes that individuals are essential for society. He believed that "in this age, the mere example of nonconformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service" (Mill 1978, 64). Mill does, however, qualify this individuality. He believes it must exist within a framework of justice which rests upon the self-restraint to not harm others (Mill 1978,

60). He puts the level of compression as that which is needed to "prevent the stronger specimens of human nature from encroaching on the rights of others" (Mill 1978, 60).

Mill recognizes that at other times in history, the power of individuals was "too much ahead of the power which society possessed to discipline and control them" (Mill 1978, 58). However, at the point in history which he was writing, Mill believed "that so few now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time" (Mill 1978, 64). He recognizes the dangers of a strong will, that those people that have "more of the raw material of human nature" and are capable of committing evil. But he also believes that they are the ones capable of the most good, they can be made to house "the most passionate love of virtue and the sternest self control" (Mill 1978, 58). To this end Mill sets up a hierarchy: "it may be better to be a John Knox than an Alcibiades, but it is better to be a Pericles than either" (Mill 1978, 60). Here Mill illustrates his point about the willful; Alcibiades and Pericles are both willful and energetic types, but Pericles paired his strong will with the societal justice of Knox and thus represents the highest type of individual. Alcibiades is the most reprehensible for having no sense of justice.

Social Success as a Function of the Individual

These individuals are necessary for bringing man to his highest end, an idea Mill borrows from Wilhelm von Humboldt: the "end of man" is creating "the individuality of power and development" (Mill 1978, 55). There are, however, two prerequisites for this great state of man: 'freedom and a variety of situations' (Mill 1978, 55). Individuals, in turn, produce these things, without them there can be no variety of situations, no conflict and synthesis of competing ideas (Mill 1978, 44). Mill puts it quite frankly,

> A man cannot get a coat or a pair of boots to fit him unless they are either made to his
> measure or he has a whole warehouseful to choose from; and is it easier to fit him with a

life than with a coat, or are human beings more like one another in their whole physical
and spiritual conformation than in the shape of their feet (Mill 1978, 64-65)?

His point is important: modern society loves a variety of goods to fit its particular desires but

ignores that there may be differences in character and persuasion that cannot be suited by one

form of living.

Mill has a particular and very interesting view of how these eccentrics will act and what

their relationship to the general public should be. Although he thinks they are necessary to create

a more open and considering environment, he thinks that they themselves need to be—and will

be—incredibly partisan and strong willed. Just as "popular truth is one-sided" unpopular truth

should be as well (Mill 1978, 44). Eccentrics must be partisan and incredibly willful to stand up

in the face of prevailing opinions; "eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of

character has abounded" (Mill 1978, 64). And this strength of character comes from a cultivated

will, the strength and repose to stand up against the majority.

Mill and the Intellectual Class

Mill is wary of the masses coming in direct contact with eccentrics and thinks it essential

that an intellectual class intercede between them. Late in the third chapter of *On Liberty*, Mill

specifically continues his argument of why eccentrics are good for undeveloped people. He says,

there is always need of persons not only to discover new truths and point out when what
were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices and set the
example of more enlightened conduct and better taste and sense in human life (Mill
1978, 61).

Mill says that these people are the "salt of the earth," without them life "would become a

stagnant pool" (Mill 1978, 61). Mill's intellectual class is able to understand and deal rationally

with the new lives presented by the eccentrics. They will not rashly discard the old ways once

they come in contact with the new—like the mass of people would—but will synthesize the new

with the old and present to the masses refined and improved ideas. Mill warns, however, "genius can only breathe freely in an *atmosphere* of freedom;" if society forces men into one of the small molds of accepted behavior, society will suffer immeasurably (Mill 1978, 62).

Ultimately Mill's concern with encouraging variety stems from his fear of stagnancy. He compares Europe's social tyranny to China's entire educational and political system. The West's individuality and variety of situations has been its engine for progress and its buttress against collapse. Constraining liberty will stymie its progress and without it, society is destined to fail (Mill 1978, 67-69). This failure is characterized by a general enervation of individual will already present in Mill's time. People "have no tastes or wishes strong enough to incline them to do anything unusual" (Mill 1978, 66).

Mill also warns particularly against becoming wholly skeptical. He does not encourage people to think that they should live as if nothing before them had ever been discovered. He believes children should be instructed and customs should not simply be assumed incorrect (Mill 1978, 55). In whole, he does not wish to encourage the idea that nothing can be known and thus there is no reason to pursue truth. This is a particular danger of creating a mass skeptical of the prevailing truth and exposing them to new ideas. Mill believes that without the class of geniuses or intellectuals to guide them, the mass will be equally as fervent in throwing out the past truths and blindly accepting the new as they were in holding on to the old.

Mill and Motivated Reasoning

Mill's relationship to motivated reasoning is multifaceted. He recognizes a block to mental freedom and the problems that occur thereof. He encourages people toward the same open-mindedness that those advocating accuracy goals have. However, he assumes some level of

mental freedom that most do not possess. He does not consider that people's mental capabilities may *be* a block toward questioning their way of life. He assumes freedom of choice where it might not exist, according to the theory of motivated reasoning.

Mill recognizes and emphasizes the importance of individual liberty. He is passionate about encouraging individuality and freedom of thought because he believes that increased mental activity will lead to increased liberty. Mill argues that obeying custom because it is custom, limits the ability of man to develop those qualities which are distinctly his. It is the liberty to choose between different ideas of the truth that leads people to their natural end: individuality in power and development. It concerns Mill, therefore, that the variety of situations is diminishing everyday (Mill 1978, 70). What he does not consider, however, and what motivated reasoning suggests he should, is that people may not have the mental liberty to appreciate a variety of situations even when presented with them.

As Mill says, there is a "tacit convention" that the prevailing opinion should not be questioned. He attributes this convention to the decline of individuality and the absence of opportunity to choose the best life. Motivated reasoning, however, would at least partially attribute this unsaid agreement to the incredible inertia of opinion. People's minds will support their idea of the truth in a biased manner so that they might maintain their preexisting beliefs. However, Mill does point to the "deep slumber of decided opinion" something in line with the theories of motivated reasoning (Mill 1978, 41). This sleep is what leads to the decreased mental capabilities of acquiescent men. Without holding one's opinions up against honest dissent, there is no possibility of being well prepared to truly defend them. As noted above, if one does not truly defend his opinions, he will forget those reasons for which he holds them and indeed their meaning itself.

Perhaps Mill's most acute relation to motivated reasoning is his exploration of how the Catholic Church deals with dissent. In the Catholic Church, priests are granted permission to read heretical texts but laypeople are not. He says of this, culture without freedom "never made a large and liberal mind") and is itself dangerous because it encourages rhetoric (Mill 1978, 49. Priests read books without the mental freedom to consider them honestly. Their opinions on the issues represented in those books are determined by the Church as a whole. By reading these books they are simply better able to defend their beliefs by citing problems or contradictions with the opposing literature; which one who might disagree are unable to contest. The increased exposure to culture polarizes their opinions and makes them more able to defend their beliefs to the less cultured laypeople.

Mill's thoughts, however, are in conflict with the theories of motivated reasoning in several important respects. Mill contends that the best of men are those who keep their minds open to criticism and have tried "to listen to all that could be said against [them]" (Mill 1978, 19). He *assumes* the ability to keep one's mind open to criticism. Motivated reasoning argues that such open mindedness is a fundamentally difficult task; people's minds close in the face of dissention. They do not allow true competition of ideas, only discussion with the intent to dismiss.

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between the theories of Mill and those of motivated reasoning is the idea that "over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign" (Mill 1978, 9). Reasoning toward directional goals convinces someone that they are being accurate when, in actuality, they are not. They are blind to their biases and these biases often make decisions for them. Motivated reasoning suggests that what or who is sovereign over the mind is, at least, up for debate. It is from this conflict that my idea of qualifying Mill's

philosophies arose. A public both open to eccentricity and acceding to a class of intellectuals would need to be separated from their prejudices. It is important to not Mill's ideas about free-will. In his *Of Liberty and Necessity* he speaks of the seeming conflict between free will and causality; Mill does not see them as nearly discordant as they may seem. Though Mill does believe in the causality of human actions—that our lives are determined by an infinite number of antecedents—he believes that if men exist in the context of choice, that if variation in the idea of the best life are a part of the determining antecedents, then determinism does not preclude our ability to pursue our own path (Mill 1974, 841). I believe Mill would think that teaching people the theory of motivated reasoning could be an antecedent that could lead to greater agency in forming one's own framework for living.

They would need to become amenable with the ability to hear criticisms of what they believe intelligently and calmly. Opinions should most definitely have inertia, they should not be volatile or fickle, but this inertia implies that they are in some way moving. When ideas become stagnant—when they do not change or are not allowed to change—both man and society suffer. This is the concern of theorists and experimenters in motivated reasoning. They try to illuminate how and why motivation affects reasoning.

Chapter III - Understanding Motivated Reasoning

<u>The Mechanisms of Motivated Reasoning</u>

In 1990, Ziva Kunda wrote one of the first articles concerning the mechanisms of motivated reasoning. Her "Case for Motivated Reasoning" summarized much of the evidence supporting the phenomenon and argued against the competing theory of "cold cognition." Kunda presents the basic theory for motivated reasoning as follows: people's goals affect the way that they reason; the case for "cold cognition" being that "people [can] draw self-serving conclusions not because they [want] to but because these conclusions [seem] more plausible, given their prior beliefs and expectancies" (Kunda 1990, 480). Motivated reasoning promotes the idea that people will reason differently according to different goals; people can even reason towards different goals in different situations. Cold cognition, instead, argues that people will reason according to antecedents, not according to their goals or expectations.

Kunda discusses the two kinds of motivated reasoning separately, the first being "reasoning driven by accuracy goals" the second being "reasoning driven by directional goals" (Kunda 1990, 481, 482). She begins her section on the "mechanisms for motivated directional bias" with a strong and important statement. She says,

> People do not seem to be at liberty to conclude whatever they want to conclude merely because they want to. Rather, I propose that people motivated to arrive at a particular conclusion attempt to be rational and to construct a justification of their desired conclusion that would persuade a dispassionate observer (Kunda 1990, 482-483).

These people maintain an "illusion of objectivity," a term first used by Pyszczynski and Greenberg (1987) (Kunda 1990, 483). As Kunda explains in her *Social Cognition*, people are motivated to maintain their prior beliefs but they are also motivated to appear rational and able to construct an argument that would convince a "dispassionate observer" of their rationality (Kunda

1999, 224). To this end people will try to maintain a sense of rationality; both inwardly and outwardly. The objectivity of this justification construction process is illusory because people do not realize the process is biased by their goals—that, when interpreting new information they access only a subset of their relevant knowledge. Indeed, individuals would probably access different beliefs and rules in the presence of different directional goals, and might even be capable of justifying opposite conclusions on different occasions.

People's biases affect their memory search and belief construction process. This bias allows them to maintain or construct opinions that seem objective, while they are actually made to coincide with prior affect—those opinions and emotions constructed from previous experience. Kunda describes much of the evidence that shows people to access their beliefs in a biased manner. For instance, many studies done in the "induced compliance paradigm" have found that when "people are to make statements or to perform behaviors that are counter-attitudinal … people typically then alter their attitudes to make them more consistent with their behavior" (Kunda 1990, 484). These studies are done in the vein of dissonance research. Originally put forth by Leon Festinger (1957) it was believed that when people held two "contradictory cognitions" it caused an uncomfortable level of dissonance that a person then tries to reduce by changing certain thoughts (Kunda 1990, 484).

However, Kunda explains, only when people perceive a cognition that they have knowingly engaged in as being bad for their self image does dissonance arise. If a person that enjoyed products made by a certain company found out that they were employing sweat-shop labor, cognitive dissonance would arise. People cannot always change their opinions to completely dispel the dissonance, however. People cannot simply take-on *any* attitude, only those that fit within the bounds of their prior affect will suffice (Kunda 1990, 484).

Kunda's work made the definitive argument for motivated reasoning. She cites many persuasive studies and experiments and makes the point that cognition is not just a "cold" process but is instead affected by people's goals. Though she outlined the basic argument for motivated reasoning, she was inconclusive about the mechanisms. Later work done by Baumeister and Newman and Taber, Lodge, and Glather detailed the processes and steps in which motivated reasoners process their information.

Baumesiter's and Newman's article (1994) is the first paper to outline the mechanisms of motivated reasoning into a step-by-step basis. Their process outlines how people are motivated to be "intuitive scientists" or "intuitive lawyers," meaning that people are motivated to be accurate and objective or biased, respectively. The first step of the process is the gathering of evidence pertaining to a certain question. The second step is seeing the conclusions of these pieces of evidence. The third step is evaluating all the evidence in terms of "validity, clarity, strength, and degree of relevance." The fourth and final step "involves integrating the results of the third step—for example, "by resolving inconsistencies and assigning relative weights to different factors so as to reach a conclusion" (Baumeister and Newman 1994, 4).

Baumeister and Newman imply that steps one, three, and four are all subject to intense self-regulation and during these steps, the difference between "intuitive scientists" and "intuitive lawyers" manifests itself. They imply that the difference in motivation will change what is monitored. The "intuitive scientist" will monitor the process: he will try to minimize biases and oversights and maximize thoroughness and objectivity. The "intuitive lawyer" will monitor the implications that the information gathered will have on the outcome. As a good lawyer, he will try to build the best case for his conclusion, highlighting pertinent information and conclusions they arrive at. During the first step, the lawyer can control the "amount, range, type, and valence

of information" according to the conclusion he wishes to arrive at. A good example of this is

found in Sweeny and Gruber (1984). This study found that supporters of Nixon did not pay

attention to coverage of the Watergate scandal while those that opposed him paid close attention

(Baumeister and Newman 1994, 5). The "intuitive scientist" is able to regulate this process as

well, rigorously ensuring that he taps relevant information.

When assessing relevant information during the third step, the "intuitive lawyer" can

most effectively build his case. It is here that he decides which of the information he has

gathered will be integrated into his conclusions, based on which conclusion he was

predetermined to draw. The "intuitive scientist" is not served as well by this process because he

may have difficulty determining which flaws should induce disposal of certain information. This

reassessment of information causes the "intuitive scientist" to adjust conclusions as opposed to

the "intuitive lawyer" who will adjust which evidence is used to support their conclusions. If the

information is discordant with the "intuitive scientist's" first thoughts he will either adjust his

conclusions or reassess the entire issue. Adjustments take less effort and may be pursued more

often. This, however, can have some unintended and interesting effects on one's objectivity.

Stanley and Case (1982) found that, although the general population was homophobic, people

handed out lighter sentences to defendants who were homosexual than those who were

heterosexual for the exact same crimes. In order to maintain objectivity, people overestimated

their biases and adjusted for them incorrectly (Baumeister and Newman 1994, 9).

The difference between the "intuitive scientist" and "intuitive lawyer" for the last step—

integrating information—manifests itself in the methods of evaluation. An "intuitive lawyer" will

choose the proper evaluating criteria according to the information he has gathered. The "intuitive

scientist" will choose the proper criteria before the information has been gathered, so that the information does not affect his decision.

Baumeister and Newman conclude that the mechanisms they discuss only apply to some and not all of the decisions people make (Baumeister and Newman 1994, 16). One confusing aspect of their article is their concept of "self-regulation." They argue that one will reach different conclusions, based on some regulation of the "self" over the "self." For instance, one's predetermined biases can regulate or effect the conclusions one draws from certain information. This implies a certain amount of choice in self-regulation. Indeed, Baumeister and Newman are unclear in how much choice they believe intuitive lawyers and scientists have. They do not elucidate how much of biases are conscious and how much are self-deceptive.

Taber, Lodge, and Glather's (2001) drew heavily on the work of Kunda and Baumeister and Newman before them. They organized the cognitive processes of motivated reasoning into five steps, explaining how, once a person establishes their goal as either directional or accuracy, it affects every step of the cognitive process. Though much of their discussion is similar, they add several important details. The authors add an important consideration to step four—when information is reassessed. They explain that biased reasoners [sic] will use a number of "belief preserving distortions" (Fischle 2000, 148) to change their first assessments of information to fit with their prior beliefs. As a result, attitudes are polarized; people come away more strongly convinced of their prior held convictions than they were previously (Taber, Lodge, and Glather 2001, 214-215). These "distortions" are the rationalizations which make maintaining ones beliefs possible. They allow people to sustain their illusion of objectivity. The "motivated reasoner" will believe they seem rational to others and believe that rationality themselves.

In another article, Taber and Lodge (2000) expand further upon their theory of motivated reasoning. The first main contribution is an expansion of Baumeister's and Newman's "intuitive lawyer" and "intuitive scientist" designations. The new typology includes four designations. The "intuitive lawyer" is renamed the "partisan reasoner" and the "intuitive scientist" is divided between the "Enlightenment Man" and a person who Taber and Lodge deem their ideal, but realistic, reasoner: someone who would pursue accuracy goals. The "Enlightenment Man" is the dispassionate reasoner who has been abandoned by most as an unrealistic picture of human rationality (Taber and Lodge 2000, 187).The typology also includes a person with "low motivation" who is apathetic and may possibly not process information at all.

In this article Taber and Lodge also add several important points to their formulation of the five steps of information processing. The first important annex is that people will change their views in the face of overwhelming evidence. People do not just blindly accept the ideas which they have; they only maintain them until they believe themselves no longer reasonable in doing so. This point is incredibly important for my project as it implies that people maintain their corrigibility to a certain extent—leaving important room for the possibility of increased accuracy.

Exactly when people will change their views was quantified in an article by Civettini and Redlawsk (2005). In an experiment designed to replicate a person's involvement during a presidential primary, they found that when twenty percent of information accessed about a candidate whom was originally *liked* was incongruent, the person's likelihood of voting for him went *up* (Civettini 2005, 26). When the amount of discordant information was between twenty and forty percent, the people's likely hood of voting finally went down. For an originally *disliked*

candidate, it took eighty percent of the information to be congruent for a person to be more likely to vote for them (Civettini 2005, 27).

The other important addition made by Taber and Lodge is the recognition that both directional reasoners and accuracy reasoners will only go through the process of updating or making their opinions until that opinion or decision is "good enough." These ill defined standards are inherently a "slippery slope" which could result in a biased opinion even when motivation is towards accuracy (Taber and Lodge 2000, 208-209). This point is incredibly important. It brings to light the inherent similarity between accuracy reasoners and directional reasoners, blurring the line between them. Regardless of motivation, an actor must determine that his amount of interpretation and reasoning is sufficient to bear their desired conclusion. Later, in my discussion of Nietzsche and Plato, I will explore the implications of this determination on the rationality of both directional and accuracy reasoners.

<u>Motivated Reasoning in Practice</u>

One of the first steps in being able to understand motivated reasoning is to see it in practice. I will illustrate motivated reasoning using three studies. The first completed by Mark Fischle identifies how motivated reasoning contributed to President Clinton's rise in popularity after the story of his affair with Monika Lewinsky broke. The larger implication of this study is that people's prior affect for a person leads them to skewing, devaluing, or forming counter arguments against new information. The second study conducted by John Darley and Paget Gross (1983), demonstrates how being given certain information about a student's socio-economic background lead to making hypotheses about their academic abilities and subsequently a biased search for evidence to back it up. This study demonstrates that people actively search

for particular evidence, but only that evidence which fits with their preconceived notions. The

third was conducted by McGraw et al. (1996). They found that when asked to identify

politicians, people use specific kinds of terms to maintain their prior affect. This study

demonstrates the subtlety of people's biases and the sense of control they wish to always

maintain.

Clinton's Rising Popularity

After the story about Clinton and Lewinsky broke, Mark Fischle almost immediately

launched his study. Having previously conducted a survey in which he noted people's opinions

about Clinton, Fishcle was able to survey those same people to see what they thought about

Clinton in the light of the allegations. He found that people who had a high approval of Clinton

before the story broke were more likely to disbelieve the allegations, diminish their importance,

and believe that Clinton was the target of a conspiracy (x 2000, 148). Fischle deemed these

mechanisms of defense: "belief preserving distortions." They include denying information,

distorting its value, rationalizing its relevance, and devaluing the source of the evidence.

Fischle found that Clinton supporters acted just as motivated reasoning models predicted

them to, devaluing information that refuted their prior beliefs. Though it seems from an objective

point of view these people did not act reasonably—they did not weigh all the facts about the

situation equally to arrive at the right determination—Fischle says this about them, "this is not to

say that citizens blatantly ignored the information before them. Rather, I believe they expended a

great deal of energy processing that evidence in such a way as to 'construct seemingly

reasonable justifications' for the things they believed and wanted to continue to believe" (Fischle

2000, 150-151). "Seemingly reasonable" seems to be the operative phrase, creating more

objective citizens may be a matter of bridging the gap between "seemingly reasonable" and actually reasonable; helping people put the energy they already exert towards a more realistic interpretation which would involve acknowledging ones biases and while trying to determine the best interpretation. Though Clinton supporters are not necessarily incorrect is assessing the scandal as unimportant, this interpretation may not reflect their best judgment. Accepting ideas as good or true just because they have been such stymies man's ability to adapt to different situations where prior believes and truths do not hold up. As Mill argues, corrigibility is what makes man respectable; directional reasoning precludes that ability.

Different Acknowledgment of the Same Evidence

Darley and Gross's experiment (1983) illustrates a different part of the same motivated reasoning phenomenon. While, in Fischle's study, people's responses to questions gauged how they interpreted fixed information, Darley and Gross show how people actively search for different evidence while observing a fixed situation. They tested how observers interpreted the learning habits of a young student depending on the setting she was placed in. Their were two independent variables. The setting the girl was shown in—either a suburban or urban setting— and whether the subjects were shown a video of the girl performing a learning test (Darley 1983, 22).

The participants in the study were asked to objectively assess the grade level of the student in the video. The students that were not shown the child performing a learning test did not rate her significantly differently, regardless of the setting in which she was placed (Darley 1983, 25). The observers who were shown the learning test video were drastically different. Those who saw the girl in the suburban setting as opposed to the urban setting rated the test as

harder, believed she answered more questions correctly, and believe they saw more relevant

actions during the test that were characteristic of a good learner (Darley 1983, 26). Those who

were given the high expectations condition rated the girl as being higher than her grade level;

those who were given a low expectations condition rated her as below her grade level.

All respondents thought that they were able to find sufficient information from which to

judge the girl in the video and, although the information was the same for all of the students, they

came up with significantly different views on how smart the girl was. The only difference

between all of the respondents was what their expectations were, before they saw the girl

performing her tests. Darley and Gross' results can be summed up with this, "Expectancy

confirmation, then, does not always result from an automatic inference process. Instead, it occurs

as the end product of an active process in which, perceivers examine the labeled individual's

behavior for evidence relevant to their hypothesis" (Darley 1983, 28). Darley and Gross, like

Fischle, also identify the problem not being that people simply fall into labeling people purely on

stereotypes with no evidence to back up their findings, as illustrated by the test subjects who did

not see the test performance video, but rather "in assuming that the behavioral evidence they

have derived is valid and unbiased" (Darley 1983, 32).

Darley and Gross's findings have important implications on Mill's project. The ability to

maintain a veil of objectivity in the face of dissonant information adds another level of obduracy

that people would have to overcome in order to challenge their preexisting beliefs. My project

asks what would happen if people were shown that their "objectivity" was indeed mostly

subjective. Would they be able to maintain this sense of objectivity so important for maintain

their idea of self-worth (Kunda 1999 221)? I believe it would encourage people to look again at

their ability to form and hold rational opinions they may have once considered truths; only after

these truths are questioned can society respond appropriately to Mill's eccentrics presenting

different ideas of the good life.

<u>Manipulating Descriptions</u>

In McGraw's et al. article (1996) the authors explore trait breadth analysis; how prior

affect influences how people choose words to describe politicians. In a motivated effort to

maintain prior affect, people assign different breadth of terms depending on how they view that

person and what kind of terms are asked for. For a person whom one views negatively one will

use broader traits for describing their negative attributes and narrower traits for those which are

positive. For someone whom one views positively they will use broader terms for traits that are

positive and narrower terms for traits that are negative. A broader term increases the range of

behaviors that confirm the existing impression. If someone used a broad term to describe positive

attributes for someone they liked, they would be more likely to find examples that confirm their

opinion. A narrower term will "constrain the range of behaviors that are inconsistent with their

existing impression" (McGraw 1996, 267). If someone were to use a narrower term to describe

positive attributes of someone they *did not* like they would be less likely to find examples that

disproved their opinions. Their hypothesis was correct, subjects with positive opinions about

certain politicians used broader terms for positive traits and narrower terms for negative traits.

Subjects who disliked certain politicians used narrower terms for positive traits and broader

terms for negative traits (McGraw 1996, 274).

What these findings show is that people impart their opinions into situations by choosing

the ways in which to describe it. Although they may have been made to describe a politician they

did not like with a positive trait, they can do so in a narrow manner; if he must be described

positively he will only be described somewhat positively: someone who disliked Reagan would be more likely to call him "unpretentious" than "easy-going." McGraw's et al. study shows that motivation can have very subtle yet noticeable effects, even if someone knew they could not maintain a sense of rationality by approving of President Clinton after the Lewinsky scandal broke, they can maintain their affect for the President through more subtle means.

All the findings described above show that motivated reasoning is pervasive; it occurs in a multitude of situations and manifests itself in a variety of ways. A person will go to great lengths to maintain prior opinions and some methods are extremely subtle. However, the only way that people can maintain their opinions is if they can honestly believe they are rational (Kunda 1999, 224). Though from an observer's perspective the subjects of these studies may seem to be entirely partisan, they themselves can identify rational processes, supporting information, and reasonable conclusions. These results suggest that by somehow breaking down this mirage of rationality people might be able to understand their inability to be wholly rational. They may be grasp the necessity of reevaluating their opinions, thus increasing accuracy goals.

<u>Increasing Accuracy</u>

Fischle, Darley and Gross, and McGraw et al's results seem discouraging overall; people's biases extend from discrediting news to manipulating attributes. Some researchers have found, however, that these biases can be reduced. One of the first examples of these results came from an experiment conducted by Kassin and Hochreich (1977). It found that people were more accurate when told the task they were asked to carry out represented an "important ability or was important to the experimenter" (Kunda 1990, 481). McAllister, Mitchell, and Beach (1979)

showed that when subjects were made to think a task was highly important or that they were

going to have to explain their positions to peers they were motivated to be more accurate.

Phillip Tetlock (1985) showed that when subjects were told they would have to justify

their responses before they read an article, people were much more likely to separate the views

of its author— some of whom were told was forced to write the article—from the views

represented by the article. As Kunda points out, Tetlock's findings were important because they

dispel the idea that accuracy goals lead merely to a more conservative rather than a more

complicated and thorough approach. Conservative judgments in this sense are those that ascribe

neither very positive nor very negative attributes to a situation. The subjects only made

conservative judgments when they thought the author did not have any choice in relaying the

opinions of the article (Kunda 1990, 481).

However, in her *Social Cognition* Kunda points to several studies in which *increased*

accuracy goals have led to *increased* biases.; "there are situations in which the harder we think,

the more likely we are to resort to faulty reasoning strategies. In such situations accuracy goals

can, ironically, increase error and enhance bias" (Kunda 1999, 239). Kunda points to Pelham and

Neter's 1995 study where some subjects were motivated to be accurate by being "told that

performance reflected intelligence." These subjects misused simple problem solving methods

and gave incorrect responses (Kunda 1999, 239). With the reputation of their intelligence at

stake, people will resort to more complicated thought processes that may result in worse

judgment rather than better.

Perhaps the most interesting studies which showed positive effects of increasing accuracy

reasoning was completed by Lord, Lepper, and Preston (1984). They conducted a study that

tested the difference between giving subjects instructions to be unbiased, and instructions to

"consider the opposite" side of an argument when reading and judging different studies which matched and opposed their views (Lord 1984, 1233). A prior experiment done by Lord et al. in 1979 tested people's opinions about the death penalty and found that subjects were "far more skeptical about the evidence and methods used in [a] counterattitudinal [sic] study" than they were about the study which supported their view (Taber Lodge and Glather 2001, 198). In their 1984 experiment they found that "consider-the-opposite instructions produced significantly less attitude-congruent evaluations than either no instructions or be-unbiased instructions, which did not differ (Lord 1984, 1234). Initial attitudes "did not affect the evaluations of students who received consider-the-opposite instructions;" there was little difference in how they rated the convincingness and effectiveness of the studies.

Lord et al. believe the most likely reason for these results is that "consider-the-opposite" instructions are effective primes that influence "anchoring" (Lord 1984, 1241). Anchoring is a way of setting up a particular frame from which a certain situation is viewed. For instance, when estimating the population of a city with the instructions "the population is less than 1,000,000" respondent will most likely give higher guesses because the anchor is high. If they were told to guess the population with the instructions "the population is more than 100,000" respondents will most likely give lower guess because the anchor is low. Lord et al. believe that "the 'consider-the opposite' strategy may well make the opposite anchor as accessible as that suggested by immediate experience" (Lord 1984, 1241). So, in light of the death penalty experiment, although one's anchor may be "the death penalty decreases crime," the "consider-the-opposite" instructions make "the death penalty increases crime" or "does the penalty fit the crime" anchors equally as accessible.

Lord et al. have shown that it is not a matter of asking or encouraging people to be "objective" but instead showing them "here's how [biases] happen and what you can do about it" (Lord 1984, 1233). By giving them an understanding of what biases occur when they interpret information, the subjects responded well. They adjusted their thinking, becoming more fair, and accurate. This finding is incredibly important. Mark Fischle—in regards to his findings that supported motivated reasoning—said this about the energy that goes into maintaining prior beliefs,

> this is not to say that citizens blatantly ignored the information before them. Rather, I believe they expended a great deal of energy processing that evidence in such a way as to 'construct seemingly reasonable justifications' for the things they believed and wanted to continue to believe (Fischle 2000, 150-151).

The findings in Lord et al. suggests that the cognitive energy can be used differently and perhaps, more usefully. Instead of bolstering biased opinions, people *can* instead use their energy to pursue the path of accuracy. However, I believe that Lord et al's successes could be improved by expounding upon their instructions to relate to all situations as opposed to solely their specific experiment. My project is an attempt to turn people not just towards considering the opposite side of an argument but ultimately towards understanding why they should make this turn. I do not wish merely to induce accuracy reasoning through a particular experimental manipulation, but to challenge the subjects of my experiment to understand themselves and their abilities as reasonable actors more fully. By exposing the subjects to the probability that their opinions are not formed wholly reasonably and are instead the product of their desire to maintain their prior beliefs, I believe they will be more open to a discussion, both internal and external, of those opinions.

Motivated Reasoning and Political Knowledge

Still, one of the most daunting aspects of motivated reasoning and especially of assuaging biases is the finding that the more politically knowledgeable a person is, the more effective a motivated reasoner he will be (Taber and Lodge 2000, 211). As Kunda put forth, people "draw the desired conclusion only if they can muster up the evidence necessary to support it:" smarter people are better able to "muster up" the evidence to support their convictions. As Taber and Lodge put it, directional reasoners [sic] are more "confident in their knowledge" and are better able to dismiss arguments with which they don't agree (Taber and Lodge 2000, 211)

One of the most persuasive examples of politically informed citizens exuding the most biases comes from a study by Danielle Shani (2006). To find her results Shani asked respondents questions about the condition of the United States between the time President Clinton was elected to office in 1992 and 2000. By first measuring a person's political sophistication and their party loyalties, Shani found that for all categories of comparison except one, there was statistically relevant information that found the politically knowledgeable to be more biased. For one question about the economy, the gap between the ratings of the Democrats and Republicans was three times as big for the politically informed as it was for the politically uninformed. As their political sophistication increased, so did their partisanship.

Shani's results are related to findings by Sides and Citrin (2007) and Kuklinski et al. (2000). Sides and Citrin found that people's preferences are incredibly steadfast; they will believe what they have believed. When asked about how many foreign born there are in America, people often over estimate. Citrin and Sides expected that giving the correct information to people who greatly overestimated the number of immigrants in America would "mitigate the perception of threat" posed by immigrants (Sides and Citrin 2007, 15). However,

they found that their preferences for Immigrants did not change and if anything became increasingly negative.

This study implies that increasing knowledge will not mitigate biases and may even increase those biases. This relationship between knowledge and bias makes it difficult to reconcile having a well informed public with having an unbiased public—two things desirable of a democratic nation. Clearly it would not behoove a democratic society to encourage a less informed public to save itself from biases. Kuklinski et al. found something simple yet important: the *more* misinformed people are, the *more* they believe what they think is true. The further respondent's answers about welfare statistics were from the actual figures, the more sure they were about their answers. Even when given the correct statistics or primed to think of their own preferences, the misinformation levels did not vary. However, these results also imply that people who are politically knowledgeable, are more likely to accept the possibility that they are wrong. This is encouraging: not all knowledge precludes corrigibility.

In relation to these results, it is my view that by teaching people that they are biased and that their current views are in no way the summation of knowledge on that subject, is a *fundamentally different* kind of knowledge than the knowledge which Shani and Citrin and Sides were concerned with. This knowledge will actually work to counteract and *not* encourage biases. This argument is based on Plato's theory of *eros*, which I will outline in the proceeding chapter. *Eros* is a complex yet integral part of Plato's philosophy; it is the reason Socrates questions people's ideas of the truth and encourages the discussion of the most important questions like the definitions of courage, piety, and justice.

Chapter IV -The Nature of *Eros*

Both Shani and Sides and Citrin demonstrated that knowledge does not necessarily decrease bias and may indeed increase bias. Kuklanski, however, found that more knowledgeable people were less likely to be sure of their ideas of the truth than the less knowledgeable. The more knowledgeable were more likely to accept that their ideas of the truth may be incorrect and should be subject to change. This indicates that not all knowledge blindly reinforces biases; increasing the proportional of people that pursue accuracy goals as opposed to directional goals may be a function of education, toward the proper kind of knowledge. I contend that the appropriate knowledge is the understanding that one knows nothing; this is Plato's *eros*.

Eros is the most interesting and perhaps the most important concept of Plato and in the *Symposium*[1] Plato speaks explicitly about its intriguing nature. The *Symposium* is the retelling of the events which occurred at a party of men gathered together to discuss *Eros*—most usually thought of as the god of love. Though the men that speak first give their praises of *Eros*—the god—and try to explain the origins of love and the reason that *Eros* is a worthy deity, Socrates' speech takes a much different form. He tells a story of how *Eros* was born the offspring of "Poverty" and "Resource" so he is forever between them (*Symposium* 203b-c). Though not the common view of *eros*, Socrates understands it to be what is between "god and mortal" or between what is "wisdom and lack of understanding" *(Symposium* 203e). Philosophers also lie between these things. He explains that they have a love for wisdom and that someone who loves is inherently lacking something (*Symposium* 201b). Socrates gives a good speech regarding *Eros*—the deity—and *eros*—a way of understanding knowledge—but what is most interesting

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[1] Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), hereafter cited as *Syposium* followed by Stephanus Number.

about his speech comes before any of the speeches begin. Socrates claims "to have expert knowledge of nothing but erotics" (*Symposium* 177d). This seems counterintuitive to so much of Socrates' life; why would he claim to have expert knowledge of anything when he continually contends that nothing can be truly known?

This statement is in accord with the very nature of *erotics*, though Socrates is enigmatic about its meaning. Knowing *erotics* is a negative knowledge; it is the knowledge that what you know is only a part of knowledge and can never be the whole of it. Being an expert in erotics simply means that Socrates is *aware* that he knows nothing. This, the idea that the knowledge you know nothing is fundamentally different from any other knowledge, is further represented by the way in which Socrates and Plato present the idea in the *Symposium*.

Socrates begins his speech by saying that he was told what he tells the other interlocutors by a woman named Diotima (*Symposium* 201d). Socrates claims he was taught the idea of *eros*; throughout Plato's dialogues there is no other instance of this, when Socrates *learned* something directly from someone else. The knowledge that one knows nothing is the only thing one can learn—it is the only thing worth knowing.

Socrates spends a lot of time in Plato's dialogs explicitly proving that the opinions and ideas that everyone has within them are only a piece—something darker than knowledge—of the truth; no one should consider themselves an expert on anything.[2] In *Apology*,[3] Socrates tells why he has spent his life questioning so many people and proving to them that they are not wise. He says that it was because the Oracle at Delphi said "no man was wiser" than he. This confused Socrates because he was "very conscious that [he was] not wise at all" *(Apology* 21a-b). He

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[2] Plato, *Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 478c, hereafter cited as *Republic* followed by Stephanus Number.

[3] Plato, *Apology*, in *Five Dialogues,* trans. G.M.A. Grupe, rev. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), hereafter cited as *Apology* followed by Stephanus Number.

began to question the people of the city of Athens to try and find someone wiser. He approached

a representative statesman, poet, and artisan and found that they were all not as wise as he

because they did not know that "their wisdom is worthless" (*Apology* 23b). Socrates says, "it is

likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile but he thinks he knows something when he

does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know" *(Apology* 21c). To Socrates

the height of human wisdom is knowing that what you know is inconsequential.

Socrates's conversation with Euthyphro, a priest, just before his trial is the perfect

warning against absolutes. In *Euthyphro*[4], Socrates discusses the nature of piety with Euthyphro.

Euthyprho contends that he is an expert on piety saying, "Euthyphro would not be superior to the

majority of men, if I did not have accurate knowledge of all such things." He believes he is being

pious by charging his father for murder, even though, as Socrates says, "most men would not

know how they could do this and be right" *(Euthyphro* 4a-b). When Euthyphro gives an idea of

what piety is, Socrates says he knows Euthyphro will "obviously show [him] that what [he] says

is true" *(Euthyphro* 7a). When he explores it with him, however, he finds Euthyphro to be

inconsistent.

Euthyphro says both that the pious is what is god-loved and that the gods love what is

pious. These statements are not in accord with one another; Euthyphro is not as much an expert

as be believed he was. What is important about this dialogue is not so much the argument that

Socrates makes against Euthyphro but that he successfully made it. He found that Euthyphro was

not knowledgeable about the pious and that he should not have charged his father with murder,

for fear of the gods or of being incorrect. Socrates does not care about the stance one is taking,

whether it is with or against the mainstream, but rather how it is made. By arguing and finding

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[4] Plato, *Euthyphro*, in *Five Dialogues,* trans. G.M.A. Grupe, rev. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 4c, hereafter cited as *Euthyphro* followed by Stephanus Number.

Euthyphro as less than an expert on piety, Socrates finds that any contention of knowledge by

him is false.

The conversation Socrates has with Euthyphro occurs right before Socrates' trial. There,

Socrates defends himself against the accusations of Meletus and his "earlier accusers." Though

he is supposedly trying to convince his accusers that he is not guilty, he repeatedly isolates the

jury. What is most striking is that he assumes almost the exact language of Euthyphro who he

has just proved to be overconfident in his knowledge. He says, "it is generally believed, whether

it be true or false, that in certain respects *Socrates is superior to the majority of men (Apology*

35a, emphasis added). Socrates is directly assuming the position of Euthyphro; his rhetoric is

absolute. Socrates even says,

> I went to each of you privately and conferred upon him what I say is the greatest benefit,
> by trying to persuade him not to care for any of his belongings before caring that he
> himself should be as good and as wise as possible, not to care for the city's possessions
> more than for the city itself, and to care for other things in the same way *(Apology* 36c).

According to what Socrates said in *Euthyphro*, he knew that a statement like this would upset the

jury because "they do not mind anyone they think is clever, as long as he does not teach his own

wisdom, but if they think that he makes others like himself they get angry, whether through

envy, as you say, or for some other reason" (*Euthyphro* 3c-d). Socrates did not follow the advice

he gave Euthyphro. He does not use moderation to win over those who oppose him but proves

again that when using strong arguments and overconfidence in one's opinions, even Socrates

will fail.

Erotics animated Socrates' life, he understood that he fundamentally lacked truth but

devoted his whole life to searching for it; some level of erotics is required in society to

encourage the level of deliberation that Mill envisioned. Mill asks people to accept different

views of the good life and to understand that truths should not be considered dogma. I believe to

do so it is necessary to embrace *eros*. It is necessary for individuals and society collectively to look at knowledge not as an absolute that should be accepted and not disputed, but as something to be worked towards and that can always be better understood. That was the impetus for my experiment. I believe that by exposing subjects to the theory of motivated reasoning, which presents truth simply as one's opinions reinforced by projected biases, they can begin to understand the necessary place of *eros* in their understanding of the truth. That is, I believe that by understanding motivated reasoning, people may begin to view knowledge as something to be desired, not presumed.

Chapter V - The Experiment

Developing the Materials

Socrates preached that understanding our inability to know anything was the key to wisdom. Understand motivated reasoning is to comprehend that many of those idea which we believe are formed rationally are in fact the product of bias and subjectivity. I believe that by teaching students the theory of motivated reasoning they might better understand that their ideas of the truth are colored by closed mindedness and not deliberation. Thusly, they will pursue accuracy goal which represent further consideration of information they might have rejected because it opposed their original opinions. In this chapter I will discuss how I developed an experiment to test my hypothesis as well as the results of this experiment.

The Basics

The subjects for my study were students for a large undergraduate class at a northeastern university. In the first session students either simply filled out a survey—the control group—or filled out a survey and received a lecture—the treatment group. The second session consisted in the subjects reading one of two articles and then answering questions about them. All of the materials that were utilized in the experiment were personally developed. They were developed according to four main criteria: the materials should sound as professional and pertinent as possible; the subjects should not know the intentions of the individual days of the experiment; the subjects should not sense a connection between the first and second day of the experiment; each measure should be able to help distinguish accuracy from directional reasoners. Participants were told that they were taking part in a study of how students respond to different ways of

teaching political science and that the first and second days of the experiment represented wholly

different teaching methods. Every part of this project was approved by the university's

Institutional Review Board.

Day One

The Demographic Survey

The first substantive piece of material the subjects received was the demographic survey.

Subjects in both the control and treatment groups were given the same survey.[5] The first page of

the survey was a cover sheet with an identification number on which the participants were asked

to put their last name and first initial. The identification number was used to match the subject's

results from the first and second days and their names were removed from their materials after

they were no longer needed.

The subjects were first asked to provide several pieces of personal information, including

their age, gender, year of graduation, hometown, and a political identity—filled out on a scale of

one through seven, where one equaled very Democratic and seven equaled very Republican. I

included these questions mainly to contribute to the feeling that this survey had to do with

general political viewpoints; they were not the questions with which I was truly concerned. I had

no plans to compare how Republicans versus Democrats or men versus women responded to the

manipulations.

The respondents were then asked to answer several questions about four topics that were

central to the 2008 presidential election, which was forthcoming at the time of the experiment.

The four topics I chose were the economy, immigration, the war in Iraq, and healthcare in the

United States. I asked two questions for each of the topics except for immigration. I asked three

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[5] See Appendix 1 for copy of the survey

questions on immigration because I used these responses to determine which article the subjects

would receive on the second day of the experiment and I wanted to be able to identify a

prevailing opinion on the issue. All questions were multiple choice with three or four potential

answers. The only questions that had any real importance were those concerning immigration; I

included the others so as to mask my intentions. The subject's responses to the immigration

questions determined which article they received on the second day of the experiment—if they

indicated they were pro-immigration they were given an anti-immigration article, if they

indicated they were anti-immigration they were given a pro-immigration article.

I chose immigration as the central topic for several reasons. First, because of its

pertinence: it was a central issue in the early stages of the 2008 Presidential election and was

only overshadowed by the economic crisis at the time the experiment was carried out. Second, it

is an issue where there are good and rational arguments on both sides. Immigration is, however,

an issue where many people have a definite opinion (Kohut 2007, CBS 2007). This is important,

if I had chosen an issue on which the subjects did not have strong opinions, they might not have

reacted like motivated reasoning predicts. They may have been easily convinced by opposing

arguments, regardless of being in the treatment condition or not.

I drafted the questions having to do with immigration after reading sources arguing both

for and against the merits of immigration into the United States (NPR 2004; Duffett 2003; Citrin

1990, 1997, 2001; Center for Immigration Studies[6]). I based them off common and popular

arguments having to do with immigration as well as questions I found in the survey question

database *Polling the Nations*. The first question about immigration was: "Do you think the

United States government should allow illegal immigrants who pay a fine and learn English to be

eligible to apply for citizenship or do you think illegal immigrants should not be eligible for

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[6] For these questions I read all the articles included in my bibliography from the "Center for Immigration Studies."

citizenship?" The second question was "Do you think immigrants strengthen American culture or diminish it?" The third question was "Would you say that immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it, or that immigration hurts the United States more than it helps it" (NBC 2007)?

The materials described above were given both to the control and treatment groups. In addition, the treatment group received a lecture on motivated reasoning and was asked to complete comprehension questions pertaining to the lecture.

<u>The Lecture</u>

The lecture covered the definitions, mechanisms, studies, and real world applications of motivated reasoning. The students were given a definition of motivated reasoning as well as the definitions of the two types of goals people can be motivated towards: accuracy goals and directional goals. They were then given an explanation and examples of the five steps of motivated reasoning (see chapter III). They were then given a more in depth look at the fourth step of the process and the four belief preserving distortions: denying the significance of new information; distorting the evidence's worth; rationalizing the evidence to fit with preconceived notions, and devaluing the source of the evidence. After this, I explained the Mark Fischle study entitled "Mass Response to the Lewinsky Affair." This study is perfect for explaining how motivated reasoning occurs. The lecture focused on Fischle's finding that people who had supported Clinton previous to learning about his alleged affair with Lewinsky were more likely then people who did not support him previously, to believe that the allegations of adultery were a false and to deny their significance if they did accept them as true.

After the lecture, the students were asked to answer the comprehension questions.[7] These questions were designed to help the students comprehend the theory of motivated reasoning and some of its specific parts. They were also designed to encourage the subjects to consider themselves as motivated reasoners. For instance, one question asked if the subject could recall a specific instance when they had engaged in a belief preserving distortion. This was intended to make the subjects aware of how prevalent motivated reasoning is in the world and specifically in their own lives. The subjects were also asked to fill out a triad questionnaire which I will explain in detail below. At the very end of this session of the experiment there was a brief question and answer period where students were asked to relate a specific instance of directional reasoning or the use of a belief preserving distortions in their own lives. This was a further effort to reinforce the students' inculcation of the material, especially the idea that these theories are relate to them. Specifically, this was done to increase the likelihood that they would—consciously or subconsciously—recognize the effects of their biases on the second day of the experiment.

<u>Vignette and Triad</u>

The triad questionnaire which I mention above was given to both the control and treatment sections, which was preceded by a short vignette about a fictional immigrant family living in Somerville, MA. [8] They were instructed to read the passage and then choose one adjective out of a group of three which they felt best described the father written about in the vignette. This part of the experiment was based on McGraw et al's triad experiment as referenced in chapter III. The vignette was intended to recall the subject's prior affect for immigrants in general and not any immigrant in particular. The details included did not specify

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[7] See Appendix 2 for the comprehension questions.
[8] See Appendix 3 for this vignette.

what country the family was from and could be interpreted positively or negatively. For instance both the mother and the father had jobs and tried moderately to improve their English and they were described as proudly displaying "their home country's flag out of their window" but did "not own an American flag."

For the triad questionnaire there were eight groups of three adjectives listed. Four of the groups were all positive adjectives; four of the groups were all negative adjectives. The subjects were told to choose one adjective from each group of three that they felt described the father in the vignette, even if they did not necessarily think any of the adjectives in the group described him well. In McGraw et al found that when subjects were describing politicians they disliked they opted for broader terms when made to choose negative adjectives and narrower terms when made to choose positive adjectives. McGraw et al believed that a broader term increases the range of behaviors that can confirm an existing impression. A narrower term will "constrain the range of behaviors that are inconsistent with the existing impression" (McGraw 1996, 267). Thusly people can maintain their prior beliefs by pointing to specific information about the subject of their opinions.

I predicted that subjects in the control condition would follow this pattern. For example they were asked if the father of the immigrant family seemed: considerate, helpful, or kind. The expected response in the control group for a person with a positive view of immigrant was "kind" because it is the most general; for someone with a negative view of immigrants it was "considerate" because it is the most specific based on Goldberg and John's "Catergory-breadth and social-desirability values for 573 personality traits" (1987). I predicted that subjects in the test group would be more likely to give more neutral answers—in this case helpful—because

they would be cognizant of the biases they might be projecting onto the family, and would want

to be fair in their assessment.[9]

In-Between Sessions

Between the first and second days of testing I coded and scored the responses to the

immigration questions from the demographic survey. For all three cases, the pro-immigration

answer was given a score of one, the anti-immigration answer was given a score of negative one,

and a neutral answer was given a score of zero. If the sum of a subject's scores was positive he

or she would be given the article entitled *Don't Call me American*[10] the second day of the

experiment, which presented an argument against immigrants. If the sum of a subject' scores was

negative, they would be given the article entitled *The Economics of Immigration*[11] on the second

day of the experiment, which presented a pro-immigrant argument. As with the materials used on

day one, these materials were designed by myself based off examples of online articles published

by major American newspapers. If the subject's score was zero, he was given either article and

the results were noted as unusable.

Day Two

The Articles

The second day of the experiment ran the same for all subjects. Students were given the

article that ran contrary to their view on immigration. They were instructed to read through the

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[9] Unfortunately there was no perceivable difference in the responses of the subjects in the control and treatment groups to the triad questionnaire. The responses did not seem to reflect any pattern whatsoever. The remainder of the data analysis will focus on the data collection from day two of the experiment

[10] See Appendix 4 for the text of this article.

[11] See Appendix 5 for the text of this article.

article and answer the questions about the article; they were not made aware that there were two different articles. The articles were made to look like they had been taken from the LexisNexis academic database to give the illusion that they has been published in the past but were not attached to any publication in particular. Similar rouses continued throughout the articles. The names of the authors as well as the names of any sources cited were fabricated; however, the articles referenced the Center for Immigration Studies and the Migration Policy Institute. These were sources I had researched when formulating the arguments represented in the articles.

The argument against immigration was based on the idea that immigrants come to America solely for economic opportunity and have no interest in integrating into the greater American society. Immigrants—both legal and illegal—leech money from the American economy by benefiting from state funded programs and infrastructure and by sending money they earn back to their home countries' and their economies (Camarota December, 2007)

The article in favor of immigration argued that immigrants have a positive impact on the American economy and are thus beneficial to American society more generally. This side argues that by paying taxes—either as citizens or legal immigrants or as illegal immigrants paying sales taxes—by starting businesses, and by investing in their communities, immigrants play a vital role in American society (Duffet 2003). The articles clearly represented one side of the issue but attempted to appear objective. All the arguments and statistics reported were said to come from the studies done by third party sources. In addition, each article included a conciliatory statement, specifically recognizing the opposite side of the immigrant issue.

Both articles were designed to elicit a negative response from the subjects reading them. My goal was to see if the subjects in the test and control group responded differently to different aspects of the article. These specific points were designed to correspond to different belief

preserving distortions. The subjects could easily have responded as a classic directional reasoner—distorting the evidence in the article because it did not fit with their prior affect—or more as an accuracy reasoner—interpreting the information with an eye toward its merits independent of their opinions. I predicted that subjects in the test condition would respond more like accuracy reasoners than their control condition counterparts.

<div align="center">The Opinion Questions</div>

The questions asked of the subjects after reading the article[12]—which I will explore in detail below—referenced specific details included in the article, asked about the author or his sources, or were general questions about the respondents feelings on immigration. There were also three questions asking if the subject recognized either the author or the sources he referenced. The first response was always the answer thought most likely given by a directional reasoner, the final response was the answer thought least likely to be given by a directional reasoner.

Distorting the Worth of Evidence

The subheading above and the subsequent subheadings refer to specific belief-preserving distortion which I predicted the subjects in the control condition would employ when answering the questions described. The first question of both questionnaires asked about the validity of a certain measure used in each article. The questionnaire for *Don't Call Me American* first asked, "Is it important to the strength of our nation that immigrants identify themselves as American or is it not important?" I predicted that people in the control condition would be more likely to answer "not at all important" because that answer fits the model of a directional reasoner. This is

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[12] See Appendix 6 and 7 for both sets of questions.

an example of distorting the worth of a particular piece of evidence because identifying oneself

as an American in America would usually be seen as positive; a common identity being

necessary to creating a functioning society. I predicted people in the treatment condition would

be less likely to answer as a directional reasoner would. I did not believe that the subjects in the

treatment condition would be more likely to choose the opposite answer—in this case "very

important"—but would instead give a more moderate answer—such as "not very important" or

"somewhat important." This would show that they were considering the argument presented in

the article—against immigration—even though their prior affect was toward immigrants.

The questionnaire associated with *The Economics of Immigration* asked, "Do you agree

or disagree that a decreased high school dropout rate is a good measure of economic upturn?"

The expected answer for the control condition was "strongly disagree." The opportunity to

distort the evidence's worth was similar to the prior question: a decrease in the high school

dropout rate would almost always be looked at in a positive light, yet if one wished to maintain

the idea that immigration is negative, they *could* distort the worth of this evidence and argue that

it has no bearing on the economy. I expected that the subjects in the treatment condition would

be less likely to give an answer of "strongly disagree;" if someone were motivated to be

accurate, they would consider the argument presented in this article more honestly, accepting

that it is a worthy piece of evidence.

Rationalizing the evidence to fit within preconceived notions

There were several questions where students were given the opportunity to rationalize

new information to change its meaning. In *Don't Call Me American* subjects were asked, "How

do you feel about the finding that "26 percent of the immigrants polled rated [getting their

citizenship] as 'Very Important'?" The expected answer for the control condition was: "it is a lot

higher than I would have suspected." I expected the subjects in the treatment condition to be less

likely to answer "Very Important." This statistic was created to seem low to an unbiased

observer, but motivated reasoning predicts that if a person motivated by directional goals were

presented with information which ran counter to his opinion he would rationalize and interpret

this information to fit with his preconceived notions. In this case the subjects were presented

with a statistic which showed that there are few immigrants who care about getting their

citizenship. Motivated reasoning predicts that directional reasoners would interpret a given

statistic to match with their previous opinion of immigrants instead of questioning their opinion.

The same ideas hold true for a similar question asked by *The Economics of Immigration*.

The question here was "How do you feel about the finding that "72% of immigrants already in

the country rated getting their citizenship as 'Very Important'?" This question works off the

exact same principle but the statistic was made to seem very high to an unbiased observer

because the respondents to this question believed immigration was negative.

There was another question in *The Economics of Immigration* which gave the opportunity

to rationalize evidence to fit with preconceived notions. It did not, however, have a

corresponding question in *Don't Call Me American*. This question asked, "what is your

impression of the Migration Policy Institute's figure that naturalized immigrants vote at a rate of

12 percent greater than native born Americans?" The expected answer for the subjects in the

control condition was "not at all impressive." I expected the subjects in the treatment condition

to be less likely to give an answer of "not at all impressive." This prediction works on the same

principle as the previous two questions. Someone who would give an answer of "not at all

impressive" would need to be rationalizing away a statistic that is clearly positive and

impressive: a twelve percent greater voting rate is a very significant—and hopefully believable—statistic.

Denying the Significance of Information

Several questions for each condition were meant to provoke denials of the significance of information. For *Don't Call Me American*, subjects were asked, "How do you feel about the Ecuadorian immigrant saying 'We can live in our own communities, send our children to our own schools, and shop at our own businesses; all without voting in their elections'?" The answer expected of the subjects in the control condition was: "I think it is completely fine." I expected the subjects in the treatment condition to be less likely to answer "I think it is completely fine." The evidence presented almost directly contradicts the idea that immigrants are helpful to the United States. An answer of "I think it is completely fine" is a perfect example of denying the significance of this information.

A person who answered in such a way would be interpreting the information given so that it does not conflict with their previous opinions. The statement referenced, from the Ecuadorian, is a good example of why immigrants may be a detriment to the United States. To think that this was "completely fine" someone would need to have almost completely ignored the quotation in favor of his prior opinion.

A similar question was asked of the subjects who read *The Economics of Immigration*. This question asked, "Do you agree or disagree with James Levy that immigrants play a vital role in the discussion of new academic ideas?" The answer expected of the subjects in the control condition was: "strongly disagree." I expected the subjects in the treatment condition to be less likely to give an answer of "strongly disagree." This question plays along the same principle as

the question asking about the Ecuadorian's statement. It is testing whether or not the respondent

will discount a piece of information which has merit. The source, James Levy, is credible—a

Yale professor of Economics—who undoubtedly knows more about the subject than the

respondents. There is little reason for them to disbelieve him, besides his disagreeing with their

position. An answer of "strongly disagree" indicates the denial of the significance of this piece of

information.

The question for *Don't Call Me American* which asks, "How do you feel about the

Egyptian respondent investing his money in his native country rather than keeping it in the

U.S.?" works along the same principle as the question asking about the Ecuadorian's statement.

The answer expected of the subjects in the control condition was: "I think it is completely fine." I

expected the subjects in the treatment condition to be less likely to give an answer of "I think it is

completely fine." Again, by giving the expected answer of a directional reasoner, a respondent

would be denying that this statement reflected negatively upon the Egyptian immigrant or

immigration in general. This would be unabashed neglect for considerate interpretation. A

subject that answered as such would be completely denying the significance of a reasonable

argument against their position. They will have totally disregarded any need to question their

opinions.

This same principle applies to the question for *The Economics of Immigration*, which

asks, "do you agree or disagree with Alan Korman that immigrants represent 'what being

'American' really means?'" The answer expected of the subjects in the control condition was:

"strongly disagree." I expected the subjects in the treatment condition to be less likely to give an

answer of "strongly disagree." In the article, Alan Korman—a fabricated source from the Center

of Immigration Studies—was quoted as saying, "Immigrants come to America with aspirations

and plans. They come ready to put in their work and ask for only one thing: fair and equal

treatment. The have a great commitment to the success of America both politically and

economically. They can show us all what being 'American' really means.'" It is at least

reasonable to believe that being a hardworking committed citizen means one is a good American,

yet it is possible to deny the meaning of those attributes Korman pays to immigrants—just

because Alan Korman—and the rest of the article—make the case for immigrants, his evidence

might be false or faulty. It is also possible for a subject to distort the worth of the evidence,

perhaps, taking the stance that "even if immigrants are hardworking and committed to America,

that isn't what being American means."

Repeated Questions

        The questionnaire ended with the three questions asked on the first day of the experiment

asking about the subject's opinions about immigration. They were again asked, "do you think

immigrants strengthen American culture or diminish it?"; "Would you say that immigration

helps the United States more than it hurts it, or that immigration hurts the United States more

than it helps it?" and "Do you think the United States Government should allow illegal

immigrants who pay a fine and learn English to be eligible to apply for citizenship or do you

think illegal immigrants should not be eligible for citizenship?" These questions were included to

test directly whether or not the subject's opinions had changed in any way. I predicted that

subject in the test condition would be more likely to change their responses, especially from a

definite response to a response of "I'm not sure." I felt that a change to the response of "I'm not

sure" would indicate that the subjects understood that their previous opinions were not

completely informed and that there was more to be learned on the subject.

<u>Results</u>

My hypothesis predicted that the people in the test group would give answers that indicated less bias than those people in the control group and I analyzed my results towards confirming or rejecting this expectation. To analyze my data I ran various t-tests to compare the responses of subjects. I ran the test for all questions asked of the subjects on the second day of the experiment except the questions asking if they had heard of the various authors, agencies, and sources referenced in the two articles. I also did not run a test on one question in "The Economics of Immigration" because it had no corresponding question in "Don't Call Me American." All of the t-tests except two, yielded results in the expected direction; unfortunately, because of the small sample size (n=69), not all of the results were statistically significant. Unless otherwise noted all p-values are for one-tailed t-tests.

<u>The Repeated Question</u>

The first tests that I ran were the comparison of answers to the three questions asking directly about the subject's feelings on immigration. These questions were asked on both days. I predicted that subjects in the test group would be more likely to change their responses. To determine these results I created several new variables. To do so I recoded the three immigration questions for both the first and second days. Each answer that was pro-immigration was given a score of "1," each answer that was neutral was given a score of "2," and each answer that was anti-immigration was given a score of "3." I then took the difference between each subjects responses on day one and day two. If the difference between the variables was "0", it was coded as "0", which indicated no change. If the difference had an absolute value of 1 it was coded as "1." If the difference had an absolute value of 2 it was coded as "2."A larger difference indicates

a larger change in position. For instance, if a person had given a pro-immigration answer on day one and an anti-immigration answer on day two they were given a score of "2."

For the question asking whether or not illegal immigrants should be eligible for U.S. citizenship after paying a fine, there was an average difference of .2631 between the responses on day one and day two for the control group and .2758. for the treatment group. Results of this t-test were in the expected direction, but did not achieve significance at conventional levels (p=0.47). Subjects in the treatment group appear to have been more likely than subjects in the control group to change their answer from their original answer either to an answer of "I'm not sure" or to the opposite answer—which was represented by the argument presented in the article they had read.

I found similar results for the question which asked whether immigrants strengthen or weaken American culture and for the question which asked whether Immigrants help or hurt the United States. The average difference between the subject's responses to the "culture" question for the control group was .2105 and .2758 for the test group. The difference between the groups in the expected direction (p=0.3). The average difference between the subject's responses to the "help" question for the control group was .3157, for the test, .4482. This difference too is in expected direction (p=0.2)

What these findings show is that the subjects in the test group moderated their views, taking a more modest stance on the issue. It suggests that they, having received the lecture on motivated reasoning, considered the argument presented to them in the article they read more honestly, looking at it with less bias. Though the differences between the control and test subjects are small, this small disparity was expected for these questions. The average difference in responses for the test groups were all bigger than the control group but were far less than two:

a difference of two would have indicated that a person changed his or her stance completely. It would be of no more use for citizens' opinions to be completely volatile as opposed to obdurate, especially on the questions so specifically directed towards their overall feelings on immigrants in the United States. Opinions that fluctuate between two extremes do not represent greater deliberation; rather it represents people forming their opinions from whichever external source seems the most convincing at a given time. Such individuals would be mere representations of the argument most able to pander to a mob; not necessarily that which presents the best argument. What these results show is flexibility. Subjects in the treatment group were more likely to change their response to "I'm not sure" indicating that recognized the limits of their knowledge on the subject or the merits of themselves declaring the issue closed to debate.

<div align="center">The Validity of the Argument</div>

I then turned my attention toward analyzing the responses of the subjects to the questions given only on day two of the experiment. I matched together questions from either article which referenced similar aspects of the two articles to form new variables. The most statistically significant finding was in the analysis of those questions were matched together because they presented an argument for or against immigrants. These were the questions which asked, "How do you feel about the Ecuadorian immigrant saying 'We can live in our own communities, send our children to our own schools, and shop at our own businesses; all without voting in their elections'?" in *Don't Call me American* and "Do you agree or disagree with James Levy that immigrants play a vital role in the discussion of new academic ideas?" in *The Economics of Immigration*.

My expectation was for there to be a difference between the answers of the subjects in the control group and those in the treatment group. For the control group the average response was 3.0789. For the test group the average response was a 3.5172. This finding was significant to the 90% level (p=0.07). The higher average response for the subjects in the test condition show that they were less likely to answer as a directional reasoner was predicted to answer. This shows that the subjects in the test group were more likely to accept the argument in the article as legitimate. The average answer given by the subjects in the control group were less accepting of the article's arguments. Their answers were closer to the idea of an "ideal" directional reasoner.

For the questions concerning the second argument in each article—"How do you feel about the Egyptian respondent investing his money in his native country rather than keeping it in the U.S.?" and "Do you agree or disagree with Alan Korman that immigrants represent 'what being 'American' really means?'"—the results were in the expected direction with a p-value of 0.17. The average response for the control group was 2.2972. For the treatment group the average response was 2.5862. Similarly to the previous pair of questions, these results reflect the expectation that the subjects in the treatment group would be less likely to answer as the directional reasoner was predicted to.

For the questions asking about the subjects responses to a given statistic—"How do you feel about the finding that "26 percent of the immigrants polled rated [getting their citizenship] as 'Very Important'?" and "How do you feel about the finding that '72% of immigrants already in the country rated getting their citizenship as 'Very Important'?'"—the findings were similar. . The average response for the control group was 3.5263. For the treatment group it was 3.5862. This finding is in the expected direction and had a p-value of 0.38. These results show that subjects in the test condition were more likely to accept as legitimate the arguments presented in

the article they read as the expected. Remember that the article they were given to read ran

counter to the opinion expressed by the subjects the week prior.

Identifying Bias

All of the above results represent the test subject's abilities to read arguments with less

bias; their responses show that they were able to interpret the information presented to them with

an eye for accuracy, as opposed to judging the article and its argument's merits according to how

well it agreed with their prior opinions. Several other questions looked at how the subjects

interpreted the biases of the author or the sources that they cited. One of these was a question

asking about the subjects interpretation of a source which they were predicted to agree with; a

source who fell on their side of the argument. The scale for this question was between "0" and

"10." An answer of "0" represented the view that the source was biased toward the overall

viewpoint of immigration represented by the article, either against immigration for *Don't Call*

me American, or in support of immigration in *The Economics of Immigration*. An answer of "10"

represented the view that the source was biased against the argument presented in the article and

an answer of "5" represented the view that the source was neutral. I expected that the subjects in

the control condition would be more likely to answer that this source was neutral. I also expected

the subjects in the treatment condition would be more likely to answer that this source was more

biased toward the viewpoint on immigration which was not represented by the article overall;

this would have been their viewpoint on immigration as represented by their responses from the

prior week.

The average answer for the control group was 6.0. The average answer for the test group

was 6.3269. These answers were in the expected direction and were significant to the eighty-

sixth percentile with a p-value of 0.14. The subjects in the test condition were more likely to

identify bias of the source which agreed with their viewpoint on immigration.

There were a similar findings for the questions which asked about the sources which did

not agree with them. The average response for the control condition was 4.6842, for the test

condition it was 4.8519 (p=0.15). This finding shows that the subjects in the treatment condition

were less likely to believe that the source who disagreed with them was biased. If someone

considered a source to be biased, they would be more likely to disregard their opinions, by

identifying the sources that disagreed with them as less biased, the subjects in the treatment

condition would have been more likely to consider the arguments they presented more honestly.

Conclusions

The results of my experiment add to the vein of research which shows that, though

directional goals are the default, the percentage of people that pursue accuracy goals can

increase. My approach to the problem was much different, however; instead of trying to induce

accuracy goals in certain situations depending upon specific instructions, I hoped to encourage

people to embrace accuracy goals in any situation. By specifically separating the two sessions of

the experiment and informing the participants that they were unrelated, my experiment increased

its real-world applicability. The goal of the experiment was not only to increase the percentages

of accuracy goals during the experiment but to show that when people are encouraged to

understand themselves and their abilities as reasoners, their judgments improve, reflect more

deliberation and the consideration of arguments which oppose their existing beliefs.

The remaining parts of my thesis will be devoted to understanding the implications of my

results and the theory of motivated reasoning itself. I originally looked towards the work of

Nietzsche and Plato because both of these philosophers, like Mill, emphasize the necessity of

questioning ideas of the truth. When I began to re-read Nietzsche and Plato's work came to

emphasize something else, however. These philosophers not only question ideas of the truth but

also our ability to arrive at truth by purely rational means. By exploring the theory of motivated

reasoning through the philosophies of Nietzsche and Plato, I determined that motivated

reasoning supports the idea that to achieve the highest human capacities, we must instead

embrace extra-rational forces like Nietzsche's will to power—the drive to control or create one's

own world—or Plato's *eros*.

Chapter VII - Nietzsche: Shouting Insatiably *Da Capo*

On the most basic level, my experiment has demonstrated that, when taught the theory of motivated reasoning, people will be more likely to pursue accuracy goals. The subjects of my experiment in the treatment condition were better able to identify biases and gave answers suggesting less bias. I believe that these subjects would be better able to foster individuality: they would be able to question the idea of the good life presented by the mob, and more able to calmly receive divergent ideas of the truth. I think the subjects of my experiment would be able to engage ideas of the good presented by intellectuals with an open mind, as Mill believed all men could, only after having learned about motivated reasoning.

In many ways, having shown this, my project was successful, yet, it is not nearly complete. To begin to truly understand the implications of my experiment and my project as a whole, it was necessary for me to turn toward motivated reasoning itself, to go beyond the theory and towards its implications on knowledge and humanity's ability to grasp it. In the next two chapters I will turn to Nietzsche and Plato; I believe both of these philosophers are fundamentally concerned with helping man understand his abilities; both those he is without and those he should embrace. Further, I will use motivated reasoning as a lens through which some of these philosophers' most important theories can be understood; though neither Plato nor Nietzsche speak about "motivated reasoning," both emphasize the role that bias and predetermination play in achieving truth.

It is imperative to any understanding of Nietzsche to first understand his characterization of humanity. He divides man into two species: the high and the low. At different points in his

Genealogy of Morals[13] and *Beyond Good and Evil*[14] the high types are referred to as good, masters, birds of prey, and simply, as men (GOM 28, 33, 44; BGE 162). The low types are referred to as bad, slaves, lambs, and women (GOM 28. 34, 44; BGE 162). The low are characterized by their commonality and their plainness, they are acquiescent and unquestioning; Nietzsche believes that they are driven by their will to ignorance. As I will describe below, their will to power is manifested in their desire to maintain a *sense* of control and comprehension. The high types have always been distinguished by their power and their creative spirit; to Nietzsche, high types create ideas of the good and the truth. Their will to power is manifested outwardly; they use it to create and to command. He believes that it is proper for humanity that the high rule over the low but believes western society has been characterized by the subjugation of the high types by the low and the subjugation of externally manifested will to power by the ideal of internally directed but uncreative will to power.

Will to power is Nietzsche most fundamental theory. He believes that everyone and all life is characterized by a will to exert power over one's surroundings, to control one's own world. To Nietzsche, will to power is the only truth; it is the "country" and "soil" which all of his teachings stand upon, as he alludes to in the preface to *Genealogy of Morals* (GOM 17). Nietzsche presents will to power as "the world viewed from the inside," the driving force behind all organic function (BGE 48). He explains that "whatever exists … is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*" (GOM 77). What makes both the high and low types uniquely human is the assignation of value and the subsequent belief in

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[13] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On The Genealogy of Morals,* trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, edt. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House 1989) hereafter cited as GOM followed by page number.
[14] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House 1989) hereafter cited as BGE followed by page number.

truth (BGE 11). To understand his view of the issues confronting humanity it is important to

consider his idea of will to power and the two competing drive therein. The will is divided into

two drives that both sustain life, the will to ignorance and the will to knowledge.

The Will to Ignorance

Nietzsche describes in part seven of his *Beyond Good and Evil*—"Our Virtues"—two

competing and related drives amongst the lower class of individuals. The first is a will to

organize and classify the entire world—it is a drive to "simplify the manifold, and to overlook or

repulse whatever is totally contradictory" (BGE 160). This is a drive, exemplified by the

Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, to understand and to define the laws of nature.

Nietzsche visits this idea earlier in *Beyond Good and Evil* with his critique of physics. A

physicist would contend that 'everywhere equality before the law; nature is no different in that

respect;' nature is subject to laws of nature which are entirely knowable by man (BGE 30). As

Nietzsche says, the will to simplification is a drive toward "the *feeling* of growth, the feeling of

increased power." It is a drive towards contentment, self-limited knowledge, and thus ignorance,

not truth. The example of the physicist shows that most men, living in a world dominated by

Enlightenment and scientific thought, are not interested in challenging their conceived notions of

how the world works but are instead concerned with "retouching and falsifying the whole to suit

itself" and trying "to overlook or repulse whatever is totally contradictory" (BGE 160).

This drive to understand is accompanied by "an apparently opposite drive … in favor of

ignorance." This is a "deliberate exclusion, a shutting of one's windows, an internal No to this or

that thing" by the spirit. Nietzsche believes that this assent is necessary for the spirit to digest the

world as it is; it needs to blind itself to "much that is knowable" to maintain this "*feeling*" of

power (BGE 160).

Nietzsche describes a similar phenomenon at another point in *Beyond Good and Evil*. At

part five—"The Natural History of Morals"—Nietzsche describes how such currents in our

thought are rooted in our senses. He says of all 'knowledge and cognition,'

> there as here it is the rash hypotheses, the fictions, the good dumb will to 'believe,' the
> lack of mistrust and patience that are developed first; our senses learn only late, and
> never learn entirely, to be subtle, faithful, and cautious organs of cognition (BGE 105).

He is describing how we never learn completely—if at all—to mistrust and question our senses.

It is much easier and "more comfortable to respond to a given stimulus by reproducing once

more an image that it has produced many times before, instead of registering what is different

and new in an impression." This again represents a will to ignorance or the maintenance of

comfort and ease. Nietzsche puts it bluntly, "we are—*accustomed to lying*," to ourselves and to

others (BGE 105).

This is an important point: an existence based on reason and understanding must be and

is heavily buttressed by ignorance and self-denial. These thoughts perfectly represent the

directional reasoner. This person believes and presents himself to be objective, concerned with

the truth of any specific subject when, in actuality, he is falsifying the world before him and

incorporating "new things in old files" (BGE 160). His will is characterized by a drive toward

"simplify[ing] the manifold"—he tries to represent increasing complex issues as existing in his

prefabricated framework—and a drive toward "a shutting of one's windows"—he excludes a

vast amount of knowledge that challenges and disrupts his sense of power (BGE 160).

Nietzsche would contend that the strong motivation of the directional reasoner to

maintain their beliefs—as described in the previous section on motivated reasoning—is not how

the will to ignorance is manifesting itself in modernity. Nietzsche believes the preeminence of

science represents the death of god: the end of morality and strong ideas of the truth. The will to ignorance has become the complete denial of truth, even the possibility of truth. It is a refusal to take any stance or have any strong desire for or belief in anything. I argue that as directional reasoners believe themselves to be completely rational but are in actuality driven to maintain specific opinions, the will to ignorance drives people to do the same. Instead of judging increasingly diverse ideas of truth or the good, people simply incorporate them into their prefabricated framework that relies on only one idea: there is not nor can there be truth—everything is perspective and no perspective is better than any other. As Nietzsche says, "man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will" (GOM 163).

Nietzsche best represents the death of god in his *In the horizon of the infinite*[15]. Here, he describes how man has burned the old lands and the bridges to the old lands and set out into the infinite sea. By killing god, by embracing the amorality of science and the Enlightenment, man was set out on the sea of infinite possibilities. The death of god signified the end of an idea of the truth that placed a limit on man. Man was now free to define his life as he saw fit, no longer subject to the moral dictates of some external authority. However, Nietzsche describes,

> hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom*—and there is no longer any "land" (GS 124)!

This infinity overwhelms man offering less freedom than the land.

Nietzsche submits that believing ideas to be true is necessary—regardless of their truth—"for the sake of the preservation of creatures like ourselves" (BGE 19). To this end, Nietzsche believes that it is not the truth of a judgment that indicates its worth, but rather "to what extent it is life-promoting, life preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating" (BGE

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[15] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House 1974) hereafter cited as GS followed by page number.

11). To Nietzsche, it is important for most of humanity to be able to close its minds and rely on certain biases, without the ability to shut the doors to certain knowledge or to ignore certain parts of the world, man as he is known could not exist.

The drive toward accepting the comfort of unquestioned ideas—directional reasoning—is of a particular character in modernity, however. Though Nietzsche would contend that directional reasoning usually helps people maintain strong desires, in modernity, it serves to reinforce a mode of thinking that is inimical to life (BGE 105). Directional reasoning has allowed for the maintenance of an insistence on universal truth (BGE 9). The overemphasis on truth led to the death of god and, ironically, the destruction of truth or even the possibility of truth. It demonizes strong ideas and desires, forsaking and deemphasizing the will that is necessary to maintain ideas of the truth (BGE 11). Without desire there is no truth; without truth there is no humanity.

The Destruction of the Will

Nietzsche traces the destruction of the will or desire along the inheritance of the ascetic ideal—the idea that denying outward expressions of the will represents the highest good. This ideal has passed from the Jewish people through the Catholics and Protestants and into science. Nietzsche honors the Jews and their Old Testament. He says, "I find in it great human beings, a heroic landscape, and something of the very rarest quality in the world, the incomparable naïveté of the *strong heart*; what is more, I find a people" (GOM 144). He goes on to describe his hatred for the New Testament: there he sees only "impassioned vehemence, not passion" (GOM 144). As Christianity concerned itself with universality, it necessarily lost its "*strong heart*." By trying

to extend its principles to all of humanity as opposed to just one people, the Christian religion

became more inclusive and subsequently less impassioned.

The pass from Catholicism to Protestantism saw the further destruction of strong desire.

Luther destroyed any remnants of reverence that Catholicism withheld. Protestantism argued that

any-man's interpretation of God was as good as anyone's—God became whatever god one

wished to believe in. It took no strong desire to believe or defend one's god, only the argument

for one's equality before him (GOM 145).

Nietzsche believes that the final pass of the ascetic ideal was from Christianity to

science: in science it reached its ultimate extreme. Science has "no belief in itself, let alone an

ideal above it" (GOM 147). Nietzsche says, "all science … has at present the object of

dissuading man from his former respect for himself" it "consists in sustaining this hard-won self-

contempt of man" (GOM 156). Ultimately, science still derives its "flame from the fire ignited

by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith … that God is truth, that truth is divine" and can exist

a priori (GOM 152).

Though society embraced the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment in order to

find truth and objectivity, in doing so it further degraded the only part of itself—the will—that

would be able to find truth. Science is not the antithesis of Christianity as it believed itself to be

because it never questioned the value of truth (BGE 9). Without questioning the value of truth,

science merely inherited the ascetic ideal; it attempted to completely do away with agency,

creativity, and desire. It instead presented truth as knowable only through objective means.

Nietzsche argues that truth cannot exist without the will; by upholding rationality,

deemphasizing perspective and further degrading the *strong heart* which was so important to the

Jewish people, science, in essence, destroyed truth.

As Nietzsche explains the scientist does not advocate value judgments—strong yeses and no's (BGE 124). Scientific men are only mirrors—instruments that should be used by the more powerful—that reflect "whatever wants to be known" (BGE 126-127). This "mirrored soul, eternally smoothing itself out [to best reflect whatever knowledge comes to it], no longer knows how to affirm or negate; he does not command, neither does he destroy" (BGE 127-128). The scientific man, with his cousin the skeptic, doubts the power and 'freedom of the will,' and facilitates its destruction, just as Christianity did before it (BGE 130). Science cannot affirm or deny; it cannot create; it cannot command. Science is base.

Nietzsche believes that the inability or refusal to define truth—the death of god—could lead to the ultimate destruction of the distinctly human animal. In this way, he clearly believes that it is not motivated reasoning—specifically directional reasoning—that is a concern of modernity, it is instead enervated reasoning: a lack of strong desire for one idea over another. However, I argue that directional reasoning and the refusal to question one's prevailing ideas of the truth is at fault for not allowing people to question the ascetic ideal or the dogmatic insistence on universality and the resulting destruction of desire.

Nietzsche's dualistic relationship with the drive toward ignorance is an uneasy balance of necessity. He believes that "limited horizons and the nearest tasks," the "*narrowing of our perspective*," is a *necessary* "condition of life and growth" (BGE 102). He submits the moral imperative that we "shall obey—someone and for a long time: *else* [we] will perish and lose the last respect for [ourselves]" (BGE 102). It is also, however, necessary to overcome the death of god and defeat the ascetic ideal, a challenge that can only be met by some willful person, with the ability to broaden their perspective and challenge the paradigmatic world within which they exist.

By letting the sanctity of science go unquestioned, society submits itself to a dogma which colors all others. Christianity dictated the rules of proper moral conduct; science dictates that reason is the *only* way to properly find truth. In doing so it has killed the strict adherence to religious dogma which Nietzsche saw as preventing humanity from achieving its greatest potential. However, by killing god, it encouraged man to despise those strong beliefs which are necessary to maintain truth, exposing humanity to its worst possible existence: nihilism—the inability to make value judgments. It is necessary for man to embrace his ability to desire and to will in order to avoid nihilism. However, by embracing the ability to desire humanity can achieve its greatest capacity. As Nietzsche describes, embracing the will and its capacity to create is necessary for life. Not only does he want to allow the common man to again embrace the strong desires which makes him human, he wants to foster the embrace of the will and those high types who are capable of doing so, allowing man to create new truths, new moralities, and new lands.

The Will to Knowledge

Only high types can open their minds to the world. As Nietzsche describes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the high types counter the will to ignorance by insisting "on profundity, multiplicity, and thoroughness" (BGE 161). As Nietzsche says,

> this involves no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot 'have done,' but an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real *memory of the will* (BGE 58).

This is a thirst for knowledge, a thirst to understand man and to "translate" him "back into nature" but this does not come without its price—this is a "cruelty of the intellectual conscience" (BGE 161). The high types endure a great deal for their task; they must suffer themselves,

turning their will on their very humanity in order to reach a level of knowledge and greatness. These great men have "impatiently lacerated, persecuted gnawed at, assaulted and maltreated" themselves. They suffer from a great illness that is the ascetic ideal: a denial of the self and a focus on self-discipline instead of outward willfulness (GOM 84-85).

This asceticism is not the goal of the high types, but is instead their means. Nietzsche calls asceticism "an illness as pregnancy is an illness" (GOM 88). Though a woman pregnant could not be said to be in the best of health, she labors only to create. Nietzsche believes that this illness allows man to be creative: the artist, at his moment of greatest 'inspiration' is not "letting himself go" but is instead feeling the effects of obeying the discipline and "thousandfold laws" which he has subjected himself to until that moment. It is by creating and obeying these laws that the artist is able to create; he does not create by simply "letting go" (BGE 100).

It is only by this cruelty of their will turned on themselves that philosophers can successfully confront the will to ignorance. They create knowledge, not simply by allowing themselves to be inundated with the entire world at once, but by desiring some truth and willing it. They counter the necessary forgetfulness with an active act of remembering: the ability to hold on to one particular idea of truth while experiencing so many. This involves an amount of discipline that can only come to the strong, the "fruit" of a long process of labor and tyranny. For Nietzsche, this is the philosopher, a man with "mastery over circumstances, over nature, and over all more short-willed and unreliable creatures" (GOM 60). He has the "the most spiritual will to power" (BGE 16). He exerts his will not over a few or even many men, but over the entire world. "Philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself;" it "creates the world in its own image" (BGE 16).

<u>Achieving "Objectivity"</u>

In the past, however, philosophers have masked their intentions. They have presented their truths as coming to them through "cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic." When in actuality they exist first as "a hunch" and then are defended with "reasons they have sought after the fact." They "baptize" their prejudices and present them to the public as *a priori* truths (BGE 12-13). The philosopher "would like only too well to represent just *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence and the legitimate *master* of all other drives" (BGE 13-14).

This idea, that truth or "objectivity" can be achieved by looking through "an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense." Objectivity is instead "the ability to control one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge" (GOM 119). Nietzsche believes that using "*more* eyes, different eyes," is the high type's path to achieving a more complete "concept" of a thing (GOM 119).

Nietzsche says, "to see differently in this way for once, to *want* to see differently, is no small discipline" and yet, it is necessary. It is necessary to the existence of man to overcome the death of god and the refusal to define or create (BGE 12). Nietzsche believes this opposition can only be waged by the high types, the men whose will is made strong *through* asceticism and a diversity of ideas in order that it might produce the "*one* goal" in opposition to the ascetic ideal (GOM 146).

<u>Nietzche's Support of Teaching Motivated Reasoning</u>

Though Nietzsche would identify an insistence on accuracy goals as a continuation of

the danger of diversity, and thus hold a certain distain for teaching people motivated reasoning, it is very important to note the language of the theory itself. Recall that the division of goals in this theory is between "directional" goals and "accuracy" goals, not between "directional" and "objective" goals. By emphasizing accuracy and not objectivity, motivated reasoning suggests that from any given situation there *is* a correct way of interpreting it, not some endless number of interpretations to be made and not some "objective" point of view to be reached. Motivation towards accuracy goals does not explicitly point to Nietzsche's absurd "eye" that is without perspective. This interpretation of accuracy goals guards against the worst possibility: by interpreting motivated reasoning simply as an encouragement to be "accurate."

As Nietzsche argues, most people are only concerned with a cursory understanding of most things—including motivated reasoning. They instead are more concerned with acting. When exposed to motivated reasoning and made to question the effectiveness of reason, these people might escape the fate of nihilism or, at least, not be pushed deeper into it. They can interpret the difference between directional goals and accuracy goals as it is commonly understood: interpreting information with an eye toward reconfirming their prior opinions or with an eye for accuracy.

As noted earlier by Taber and Lodge (2002), whether driven by an accuracy or a directional goal, there is always a point at which people must decide and do decide on their position. For Nietzsche, this decision would indicate willfulness, whether that will be toward ignorance or knowledge—if one were to have truth they would necessarily have to create it (BGE 160-161). Without a will, people would be unable to decide how much interpretation is "good enough": enough being some level that can be decided only by the agent himself (Taber and Lodge 2000, 208-209). By interpreting the encouragement of accuracy goals as merely the

suggestion to spend more time considering information which you might immediately disregard, people can maintain this will.

The Limits of Reason

The more abstract benefit of teaching the theory of motivated reasoning speaks to an incredibly important idea: the *limits* of reason. I believe this is the ultimate lesson to be learned from motivated reasoning, and one which I describe more in depth in my next chapter on Plato. This interpretation would not only avoid the worst possibility for humanity—nihilism—but encourages its greatest capacities. It took me two years of studying motivated reasoning in conjunction with Plato and Nietzsche to begin to understand this facet of the theory, however I think it is one of the most important aspects of my project.

My realization is that it is not entirely reasonable to ever make a decision when interpreting *any* specific piece of information because it is possible to reinterpret any piece of information. The judgment that an amount of interpretation has or has not been or "good enough" is certainly not reached because the reasoner has exhausted the interpretive possibilities. Thus, there is instead something besides reason which indicates to someone that the interpretation that they have decided upon is the right one; for Nietzsche, it is strong desire as represented by the will. Nietzsche hopes man will understand that his abilities to reason are lacking and that his future lies instead in his ability to will.

The will of an accuracy reasoner can be characterized by the will to knowledge. This person has rejected the ease and comfort that the will to ignorance and the closing of their minds ensures. They have instead been induced to seek "profundity, multiplicity, and thoroughness" (BGE 160). The shifting position of the judgment "good enough" implies something further.

Nietzsche characterizes one with a will to knowledge as having "hardened and sharpened his eye for himself long enough" and as being "used to severe discipline" (BGE 160). The level of thoroughness one pursues is then proportional to the amount of cruelty one can take, the decision of "good enough" comes when one's will decides it has had enough "multiplicity." Indeed, as Nietzsche emphasizes, this cruelty could be dressed up and characterized by "beautiful, glittering, jingling, festive words" like "honesty, love of truth, lover of wisdom, sacrifice for knowledge' [and] heroism of the truthful" but it should not be (BGE 161).

It is not according to any great cause or virtue that those that submit to the will to knowledge do so; it is because of some "granite of spiritual *fatum*" (BGE 162). Nietzsche believes it is one's nature which pushes them towards the will to knowledge. However, this does not mean that exposing people to the theory of motivated reasoning would have no effect on their will. I do not believe that everyone will be able to embrace the drive to knowledge, however, I do believe that exposing people to the theory of motivated reasoning and its implications on reason could have a profound effects on their view of reason and truth.

Motivated Reasoning and Eternal Return

Though high types would pursue accuracy goals naturally, teaching people motivated reasoning could encourage those high types to embrace their abilities and break free from dogmatism. In this way, the theory of motivated reasoning is similar to Nietzsche's idea of eternal return. Nietzsche describes eternal return as a tool for separating out the higher from the lower types. Just as one's interpretation of eternal return could allow him to embrace his will and desire truth, one's interpretation of motivated reasoning could allow him to embrace his agency in truth and fuel his desire for it. Eternal return is the idea that all of life returns eternally, that

"truth" is merely a "crooked" non-linear sequence of different ideas, none of which are superior

to any other. Instead of progressing, life merely returns to the same places eternally.[16]

Nietzsche best illustrates the idea of eternal return in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Near the

end of his tale, Zarathustra fully considers the idea of eternal return: his "most abysmal thought"

(TSZ 327). This abysmal thought is separated into two separate but related fears. The first is the

fear that the small man will return eternally. Man will become the perfect herd animal, forget the

power of his will and become completely compliant to prevailing ideas of the truth. This herd

animal is the product of the victory of the ascetic ideal as described above. As Nietzsche says,

> this is how things are: the diminution and leveling of European man constitutes *our*
> greatest danger, for the sight of him makes us weary.—We can see nothing today that
> want to grow greater, we suspect that things will continue to go down, down to become
> thinner, more good-natured, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian—there is no
> doubt that man is getting 'better' all the time (GOM 44).

Not only is eternal return analogous to the theory of motivated reasoning because of its

usefulness as a tool, it represents a similar idea. Motivated reasoning argues that most people do

not question their ideas of the truth most of the time. Society has been characterized by a drive

towards the common; people have adopted prevailing opinions of the truth as their own and

indeed defend those ideas as true.

The second fear represented by the most abysmal thought is that there is only a small

difference between the highest and the lowest individuals. Zarathustra says, "naked I had once

seen both, the greatest man and the smallest man: all-too-similar to each other, even the greatest

all-too-human. All-too-small, the greatest!—that was my disgust with man" (TSZ 331). Earlier,

Zarathustra describes this feeling;

> I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for
> my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field.

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[16] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in "The Portable Nietzsche" trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin 1982) 270, hereafter cited as TSZ followed by page number.

> And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings (TSZ 250).

Zarathustra believes that there have been no true examples of a willful person. As Nietzsche describes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, there is a great need "to teach man the future of man as his *will*" (BGE 117). The truly great man would fully embrace his will as that which will carry him in a future devoid of god.

Motivated reasoning represents this fear as well. The idea of "good enough" must be embraced by both directional and accuracy reasoners; there is no immediate distinction between them. Both interpret a certain amount of information which they take as the best interpretation. Above, I compared the distinction between accuracy and directional goals to the distinction Nietzsche draws between the will to knowledge and the will to ignorance; this similarity extends to level of difference between accuracy and directional reasoners and between the will to ignorance and the will to knowledge. The people driven toward knowledge may open their "doors and windows" and seek "multiplicity" but they too, like those who pursue the will to ignorance, eventually shut their minds to infinite possibilities. Similarly, accuracy reasoners allow themselves to interpret information longer, however, they too must eventually make a decision; cutting out so many possibilities. As opposed to the will to ignorance, however, the will to knowledge requires "an active *desire* not to rid oneself" of a certain impression. The difference between high and low types is indeed small but incredibly significant

Both high and low people hold onto certain impressions and truths but higher types decide *which* impressions will be theirs. As Nietzsche describes, this active will to remember gives man "the sovereign right to make promises" (GOM 59). He stands as his own "guarantor"—he can make promises because he has become the "master of a *free* will" (GOM 59). Nietzsche believes that this mastery over the self "also necessary gives him mastery over

circumstances, over nature, and over all more short-willed and unreliable creatures" (GOM 60).

It is this mastery, this ability to purposely hold onto one part of knowledge, that brings man to

his highest point—the ability to control his own circumstances desire knowledge and embrace

his "future … as his *will*" (BGE 117). As Nietzsche says, this new willful man will shout "*da

Capo*:" desiring all the world to come to him again (BGE 68). Yet, throughout history,

Zarathustra and Nietzsche fail to recognize any truly high types. Zarathustra sees only "dreadful

accidents;" Nietzsche believes man must embrace a future based on his will. Motivated

reasoning could encourage such a willful future if someone focused deeply on its meaning. If

one understood that, even when pursuing accuracy goals, he cannot be wholly reasonable he can

begin to accept and embrace the will, that extra-rational force that allows for the creation of

truth.

For Nietzsche the theory of motivated reasoning represents humanity's obsession with

reason. The directional reasoner is characterized by a certain will to ignorance: humanity's

assumption of the truth of their existing reality. It represents humanity's inability to separate

themselves from the prevailing view of the world. The accuracy reasoner represents the will to

knowledge; the will to submit oneself to some amount of uncertainty with the hope of achieving

some greater level of understanding. Nietzsche wants to encourage humanity to achieve a greater

existence than ever before. He wants man to fully embrace the will as opposed to solely reason

and rationality now that they are free from religious dogma. He believes that by embracing the

will, the high types would be able to honestly control their own future as opposed to presenting

their ideas as extending from some imagined authority. In doing so, they ensure the preservation

of the strong desires so necessary for the low types and the perpetuation of high types.

Nietzsche's will shares that important characteristic with Plato's *eros*; Plato and Nietzsche

encourage humanity to understand and embrace their natural abilities. Both philosophers believe

that in order to achieve its highest faculty, humanity must embrace desire. In the next chapter I

will explore Plato's *eros* further. I will demonstrate how Plato viewed the proper relationship

between reason and *eros* and how ultimately, properly directing one's reason over the rest of his

soul and embracing *eros* is the greatest capacity of humanity.

Chapter VIII - Plato and the Embrace of Uncertainty

<u>Phaedrus: Country Roads and Trees</u>

Perhaps the most well known detail of Plato's *Phaedrus*[17] is that it is the only Socratic

dialogue to take place outside of the city. This context plays is an important part of

understanding Plato's meaning in the work by emphasizing the necessity of understanding the

abilities and limits of oneself and humanity more generally. To Socrates, understanding oneself

is the only knowledge worth pursuing and as discussed above in Chapter IV, the only thing

knowable is *eros*—the acceptance that one knows nothing. Plato emphasizes that to embrace

uncertainty one must first understand himself. The dialogue begins with a discussion of context

that emphasizes the need for a variety of situations for different souls. However, this need is

based on understanding that differences exist between people but accepting the impossibility of

fully identifying those distinct characteristics.

Plato begins the discussion of setting immediately. Phaedrus fist words, in response to

Socrates asking where he has been and where he is going are these:

> I was with Lysias, the son of Cephalus, Socrates, and I am going for a walk outside the
> city was because I was with him for a long time, sitting there the whole morning. You
> see, I'm keeping in mind the advice of our mutual friend Acumenus, who says it's more
> refreshing to walk along country roads than city streets (*Phaedrus* 227a-b).

Socrates subsequently says that Acumenus, a doctor, "is quite right" and moves to discuss

Lysias' presence in Athens (*Phaedrus* 227b). Out of context this statement seems unremarkable

and sensible; after having sat for a long time in a city it would seem better for one's health to

take a walk on country roads instead of on city streets. However, it is important that *Socrates* has

agreed with the advice Acumenus' has given Phaedrus. As Socrates makes clear later in the

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[17] Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing
Company 1995) hereafter cited as *Phaedrus* followed by page number.

dialogue, he barely ever leaves the city; as far as Phaedrus can tell, he "never even set[s] foot

beyond the city walls," much less strolls the country roads to benefit his health (*Phaedrus* 230d).

At first this appears to be a fundamental tension. Socrates assents to Acumenus' advice

that Phaedrus should walk in the country yet he himself takes no such walks. There must then be

some difference between Socrates and Phaedrus; what is good for one of them is not necessarily

good for the other. Socrates explains later in the dialogue that for different bodies it is necessary

to prescribe different diets and medicines and for different souls it is necessary to speak in

different ways (*Phaedrus* 270b).

Though Phaedrus says that he is heeding the advice of Acumenus and was going for a

walk on the country roads, he never does walk there. The first action that Socrates and Phaedrus

take is to walk *off* the country road, along the river Ilisus, toward a plane tree in the distance

(*Phaedrus* 229a-b). Socrates suggests that they walk along the river, but Phaedrus suggests that

they go toward the plane tree: most known for being the kind of tree under which the famous

doctor Hippocrates sat under when teaching his students near the city of Kos (Katz 1959).

Hippocrates is referenced later in the dialogue as representing the idea that you must understand

the nature of something before being able to practice the arts of either medicine or rhetoric.

As they walk to the tree, they begin to discuss the myth of Boreas and Oreithuia.

Phaedrus wonders if Socrates believes the myth or not. Socrates tells Phaedrus that he could

indeed give some rational refutation of the myth but he is not interested in doing so. Socrates

explains that he has no time for explaining myths, he believes if one were to try and explain

away one myth, they would soon be stuck explaining away the Chimera, and the Pegasus as well

(*Phaedrus* 229d-e). Instead, Socrates focuses on knowing himself; "it really seems to me

ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood [myself]. He goes on to say, "I

accept what is generally believed, and, as I was just saying, I look not into them but into my own self" (*Phaedrus* 230a). Phaedrus stands in stark contrast to the acceptance of general beliefs, here as well as later in the dialogue. Phaedrus implies that he does not believe the myth of Boreas and Oreithuia and later, Socrates accuses him of disbelieving the myths of Zeus (*Phaedrus* 275b-c). Phaedrus is concerned with challenging generally believed ideas instead of first understanding himself.

As they were speaking, they arrive at the spot of the plane tree. Socrates makes several remarks describing the place they have chosen; beside the plane tree there is also a chaste tree, about which Socrates says, "since it is in full bloom, the whole place is filled with its fragrance" (*Phaedrus* 230a-b). In ancient Greece, the chaste tree was associated with Hera—said to be born under one—and chastity. In the festival Thesmophoria, chaste tree blossoms were used to honor Demeter—the Goddess of agriculture, fertility, and marriage (Foster 2009). These two types of trees represent different parts of knowledge and emphasize how Socrates' and Phaedrus' discussion will be animated by both. The plane tree's connection to medicine represents a focus on properly enumerating different parts of the soul and the differences between souls. Different souls should be understood as different and addressed in different ways. The presence of the chaste tree, however, represents the importance of allowing for the growth of wisdom; its connection to chastity as well as fertility shows that through moderation comes growth. By accepting the uncertainty of one's idea of truth—or of the differences between souls—one allows for growth through the continued desire of truth as opposed to the assumption of its immutability.

Socrates suggestion that Phaedrus and he walk off the country road, shows that the work of a doctor—identifying the differences between souls—is not the only ability necessary to attain

knowledge, in this case the knowledge of good speaking or writing. Acumenus could identify that Phaedrus needed to walk in the country, but constrained him to the roads—an inherently narrow path. Socrates and philosophy encouraged his soul to grow and flourish by suggesting they blaze their own path through the countryside. It is necessary to identify and understand the differences in people, however, once identified, it is important to be moderate in acting and let these ideas grow properly. The setting of this story emphasizes that knowledge requires understanding oneself and subsequently one's limits. At different times, Socrates says he is concerned with the knowledge he gains from people in the city and with better understanding himself. However, the only thing knowable is *erotics*: to better understand oneself is to better understand *erotics*.

To Socrates, the extent that one knows himself depends on how well he understands that his ability to reason, though incredibly important, is incomplete and must be supplemented by desire. As Socrates explains in *Meno*[18], it is important not to convolute one's opinions with knowledge. Though opinions can be as useful as knowledge as long as they remain correct, opinions should never be confused with knowledge: knowledge is implicitly always correct. Correct opinions are acknowledged to be potentially fallible (*Meno* 97a-98c). It is important to understand one's opinions to be just that: opinions. Instead of assuming opinions to be knowledge one should still desire knowledge, balancing himself with moderation because he recognizes his fallibility.

Experiencing *eros* is to desire something which you understand you are without; Phaedrus does not desire to know himself because he does not recognize that he is lacking this knowledge: he assumes his opinions equate to knowledge. Phaedrus, like the directional

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[18] Plato, *Meno*, in *Five Dialogues,* trans. G.M.A. Grupe, rev. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), hereafter cited as *Apology* followed by Stephanus Number.

reasoner, is overconfident in his abilities to reason. He believes that he is being completely

rational and thoughtful when, as I illustrate below, he is driven by desire. His biases cloud his

judgment; as Socrates wishes to demonstrate to him, he is overly reliant on his reason, ignoring

his capacity to be overcome with *eros*.

<u>The Discussion of Eros</u>

When they have sat, Phaedrus reads Lysias' speech on love. This speech argues that is

better for a young man to take a non-lover than a lover because "a lover will admit that he's

more sick than sound in the head. He's well aware that he is not thinking straight; but he'll say

he can't get himself under control" (*Phaedrus* 231d). Phaedrus argues that this madness is

detrimental to the lover's beloved; causing the lover to deprive his beloved of anything else he

enjoys.

Socrates believes that Phaedrus' speech was beautiful in form but lacked content; he

avows to give one better. He says that he has heard the speech he will give from someone else,

though he cannot remember who (*Phaedrus* 235d). Though Phaedrus asks Socrates him to make

the speech without borrowing anything from *his* book, Socrates says this is impossible; he agrees

with Lysias' point that the non-lover is saner than the lover and that he will borrow this point in

his speech (*Phaedrus* 235c-236a).

Socrates presents a scenario in which a man who has convinced his beloved that he does

not love him, is trying to persuade him to take a non-lover as opposed to a lover. The discussion

starts with a definition of love: when one no longer pursues beautiful objects with reason, "but

when desire takes command in us and drags us without reasoning toward pleasure, then its

command is known as 'outrageousness.'" When this 'outrageousness' is a desire for the beauty

of the human body it is called *eros* (*Phaedrus* 237e-238c).

Socrates pauses and asks Phaedrus, "don't you think, as I do, that I'm in the grip of

something divine?" Phaedrus agrees, and Socrates goes on to remark, "there's something really

divine about this place, so don't be surprised if I'm quite taken by the Nymphs madness as I go

on with the speech" (*Phaedrus* 238c-d).

Though Socrates said he would give another speech praising the benefits of taking a non-

lover, he instead decides to stop because he is afraid "the Nymphs to whom [Phaedrus] so

cleverly exposed [him] to will take complete possession of [him]." He gets up to leave but just as

he was going to cross the river, Socrates remarks that his daemon came to him. His divine voice

told him to make "atonement for some offense against the gods. Socrates asks if *eros* is the son

of Aphrodite and is a god, to which Phaedrus replies, "this is certainly what people say"

(*Phaedrus* 241e-242d). They have wronged this god by assigning negative attributes to *eros*;

Socrates recants his speech.

He explains that *any* noble and gentle man would think the speeches they had made were

incredibly vulgar, and were "totally ignorant of love among the freeborn" (*Phaedrus* 243c-d).

Socrates' proof that love is good is the common opinion that it is good. Socrates and Phaedrus

relied on reason to argue their points but their proofs were erroneous and unnecessary; *any* man

who had experienced love would understand that it is good. Understanding the positive nature of

love comes from turning to understand oneself, not by reasoning away accepted traditions or

writing lavish speeches. Socrates is ashamed at thinking of this noble man's reaction and is

afraid of *Eros* himself. He begins his second speech by saying that the first speech would have

been acceptable "if madness were bad, pure and simple." Instead "the best things we have come

from madness, when it is given as a gift of the god" (*Phaedrus* 244a). As Socrates continues, he

discusses the different forms of madness and how they benefit the ones they overcome.

The first form of madness is that of the oracles, who weave "insanity into prophecy." The

second is when madness "[gives] relief from present hardship for a man it has possessed. Third

is "the kind of madness that is possession by the Muses, which takes a tender virgin soul and

awakens it to a Bacchic frenzy of songs and poetry that glorifies the achievements of the past

and teaches them to future generations." Socrates says that the greatest poetry comes from "men

who have been driven out of their minds" (*Phaedrus* 244c-245a).

The Divided Soul in the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*

Phaedrus

The discussion on madness moves towards a discussion of the immortal soul. He says

that the soul is "the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer." The souls of

men, as opposed to gods, are not entirely good: the driver is in charge of the horses, one of his

horses is good and one of them is bad which makes driving difficult (*Phaedrus* 246a-b). Socrates

continues to speak with myths, much like an epic poet—to explain that the only way the

charioteer can reach the realm of the gods—what Socrates calls "Reality"—is if his soul is well

ordered, with the driver—the rational part—guiding the two horses (*Phaedrus* 248a-b). This

"Reality" is a view of true justice, knowledge, and self-control. Souls are then transported into

various bodies depending on the order of the soul, the highest souls becoming the philosophers,

the lowest becoming a sophist or tyrant (*Phaedrus* 248d-e).

This brings Socrates to the fourth kind of madness: the madness found in philosophers

having souls that have seen "Reality," the true view of Justice, Knowledge, and Self-control

(*Phaedrus* 247d). This is the madness that "someone shows when he sees the beauty we have down here and is reminded of true beauty;" it is the noblest form. When a man sees a beautiful boy he is struck by this madness and it is called *eros* because of the desire the lover feels for his beloved (*Phaedrus* 249d-e). Socrates discusses the effects of *eros* on the lover, acknowledging that some of them are painful (*Phaedrus* 251c). Yet this pain is not negative. As Socrates explains, it is only through repeated pain that the charioteer can gain control of his bad horse (*Phaedrus* 254e). Only then can the lover and the boy form a very close and mutually beneficial relationship not based on sexual desire. With the good horse's help the soul is able to stay true to a life of philosophy (*Phaedrus* 255c-e; 256a-b). The benefits of this relationship are considerable; it ensures both the lover and the beloved eventual transcendence into heaven (*Phaedrus* 256d).

For Socrates, the point of reason is to experience *eros*. By adequately ordering one's soul—indeed with reason at the top—man is able to experience beauty on earth. *Eros* is the ability to recognize beauty by understanding that it is fundamentally elusive: someone with a well ordered soul will recognize that he is without the ability to grasp beauty and will thus desire it. In the *Republic*, Plato describes the divided soul in greater depth, explicating the relationship between the parts of the soul in detail.

Republic

Plato argues that harmony between passions and reason can only be achieved by adequately ordering the soul. In the fourth book of the *Republic*, Socrates begins discussing the well ordered tripartite soul by setting desire apart from calculation,

> So we won't be irrational, if we claim they are two and different from each other,
> naming the part of the soul with which it calculates, the calculating, and the part with

which it loves, hungers, thirsts and is agitate by the other desires, the irrational and
desiring, companion of certain replenishments and pleasures (*Republic* 439d).

He then separates out the spirit saying, "we supposed [the spirited part] had something to do with
the desiring part; but now, far from it, we say that in the faction of the soul it sets its arms on the
side of the calculating part." He goes on to ask, "is it then different from the calculating part as
well" (*Republic* 440e)? To which his interlocutor responds, "necessarily, there is the third … for
even as little children, one could see that they are full of spirit straight from birth, while as for
calculating, some seem to me never to get a share of it, and the many do so quite late" (*Republic*
441a-b).

Socrates has laid out three parts of the soul: the calculating, spirited, and desirous parts.
Following the analogy that is the focus of the *Republic*, Socrates says, these three parts of the
soul align with the three parts of the city—the deliberating, auxiliary, and money-making—
respectively (*Republic* 441a). Justice in the soul should be the same as it was in the city; "each of
the three classes in [the city] minds its own business" (*Republic* 441d). The business of the three
parts of the soul would be similar to the business of their corresponding parts in the city. It is
"proper for the calculating part to rule, since it is wise and has forethought about all the soul, and
for the spirited part to be obedient to it and its ally" (*Republic* 441e). These two parts should be
set over the desiring part so that it does not become "filled with the so-called pleasures of the
body and thus [become] big and strong, and then not [mind] its own business but [attempt] to
enslave and rule what is not appropriately ruled by its class" (*Republic* 442a-b).

This three part division used in the *Republic* is very similar to the simile of the chariot
team Socrates uses in the *Phaedrus*. Both place the calculating and reasonable part, concerned
with knowledge and intelligence at the head and two parts below him, one of which is obedient,
the other one is desirous and rebellious. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates says that through discipline

and pain, the desirous part of the soul can be taken under control. In the *Republic*, Socrates

shows how a soul is courageous, wise, and moderate. It is courageous when the spirited part

preserves against pains and pleasures. It is wise when "that little part which ruled in him"

"possesses within it the knowledge of that which is beneficial for each part and for the whole

composed o the community of these three parts." Further, it is moderate "because of the

friendship and accord of these parts—when the ruling part and the two ruled parts are of the

single opinion that the calculating part ought to rule and don't raise faction against it" (*Republic*

442b-d). Socrates believes the soul is most successful when it understands that it should be ruled

by the calculating part. This may be construed as an assertion that the soul should pursue reason

alone but Socrates clarifies his meaning later in Book VII.

These later statements come as Socrates is discussing the cave. The cave is perhaps

Plato's most famous analogy: man spends his entire life forced to face the wall of a cave,

observing only the shadows of objects manipulated by unseen people behind him. Socrates

compares someone being freed of his bonds and dragged out of the cave to see the sun to

someone being able to completely understand the truth (*Republic* 514a-516e). He goes on to say

that education towards this truth "is not what the professions of certain men assert it to be. They

presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn't in it, as though there were

putting sight into eyes" (*Republic* 218b-c). He, instead believes that "this power [to understand

the truth] is in the soul of each, and that the instrument with which each learns … must be turned

around from that which *is coming into being* together with the whole soul until it is able to

endure looking at that which *is* and the brightest part of that which *is*" (*Republic* 518c).

Education is the process by which a person is turned toward understanding themselves; within

each person is the ability to understand the truth, it is not received externally.

Socrates uses this understanding of education to add to idea of the well ordered soul. He says,

> those who are without education and experience of truth would never be adequate
> stewards of a city, nor would those who have been allowed to spend their time in
> education continuously to the end—the former because they don't have any single goal in
> life at which they must aim in doing everything the do in private or in public, the latter
> because they won't be willing to act, believing they have emigrated to a colony on the
> Isles of the Blessed while they are still alive (*Republic* 519b-c).

Focusing entirely on knowledge would render someone unable to live. Continuing with the cave analogy, Socrates suggests that those people that have gone out of the cave must be forced to go back in, to share with the other people "their labors and honors." Glaucon objects, believing this to be an injustice against those people with understanding (*Republic* 519c-e). Socrates then explains to him,

> that it's not the concern of law that any one class in the city fare exceptionally well, but
> it contrives to bring this about in the city as a while, harmonizing the citizens by
> persuasion and compulsion, making them share with one another the benefit that each is
> able to bring to the commonwealth. And it produces such men in the city not in order to
> let them turn whichever way each wants, but in order that it may use them in binding the
> city together (*Republic* 519e-520a).

The parts of the city—and thus the man—must harmonize and exist together so that all might contribute the "benefit that each is able." It is not the goal for the intelligent and spirited parts of the soul to repress the desirous part but only to control it—the desirous part benefits the soul just as the other two parts do. Thusly, it is not through pure, unconcerned reason that man achieves his height, but through balance and harmony of his desire, spirit, and reason.

As Socrates emphasizes in the *Phaedrus*, the desire of beauty is the product of the well ordered soul. The path to this height is through an education that turns a man towards himself. He should be encouraged to explore and understand what already exists in him instead of what might be implanted into him. Teaching someone the theory of motivated reasoning facilitates

these goals. The goal of this curriculum is not to impress the details of the theory on the minds of

students, but instead to turn their attention toward understanding those minds.

Socratic Success

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates' speech on love is successful because he understands his

inabilities. As he explains in his discussion of rhetoric, to speak well on something, one must

have knowledge of it. As Phaedrus remarks and Socrates makes clear, "it's evidently rather a

major undertaking" (*Phaedrus* 272b). It would entail understanding and enumerating every

different soul and the right occasions for saying the right things to each (*Phaedrus* 272a). Lysias

does not break down his speech into parts. Socrates criticizes him because he pursued only the

left handed side of the idea, and was correct for citing the potentially negative aspects of love,

yet was mistaken in presuming the completeness of his speech (*Phaedrus* 266a). Lysias' speech

represents the concern with sanity; he assumes that being overcome by madness is wholly

negative, but as Socrates argues, the best things in man are inspired by madness from the gods

(*Phaedrus* 244d). Socrates was able to deliver the best speech on *eros* because he recognizes the

necessary limits of his abilities to reason and acquire particular knowledge, not because he *did*

acquire some great knowledge. Instead, he embraces the knowledge of *eros* and the madness and

desire that overcomes him.

Socrates is explicitly concerned with knowing himself; he recognizes his *eros* and the

great things this madness gives him. Phaedrus has been turned away from understanding himself

and instead explores things that are beyond him. Without first understanding himself, he has

attempted to define those things that can only be grasped by gods or glimpsed by those who

follow gods. As Socrates explains in his second speech on *eros*, when one who has seen

"Reality" in the realm of the gods, is reminded of such things by beauty on earth, he is struck by the fourth kind of madness (*Phaedrus* 249d-e). Socrates describes such madness overcoming him several times; in his first speech on love he says, "there's something really divine about this place, so don't be surprised if I'm quite taken by the Nymphs madness as I go on with the speech" (*Phaedrus* 238d).

This madness is *eros*, Socrates explains in *Symposium* that *eros* is between "god and mortal" or between what is "wisdom and lack of understanding" *(Symposium* 203e). A lover must inherently be lacking some part of his beloved, or else he would no longer love him. He must not grasp what he desires in his beloved. This is true: *eros* is enlivened in a person when they are reminded of the reality of heaven by beauty on earth—as when they see a beautiful boy. This is recollection, not knowledge; their *eros* draws them to the boy's beauty, but they are never in possession of the boy or this beauty. Man on earth can never fully understand real beauty; *eros* represents their existence between wisdom and ignorance of it. They know that it is great and that they desire it, but they do not comprehend it fully—if they did, they would not desire it any longer (*Symposium* 201b).

The true lover, who is overcome with *eros*—and is inherently without something—is contrasted to Phaedrus' feelings for Lysias. He has no *eros* toward Lysias because he believes that he possesses him. He holds the scroll of Lysias' speech; he did not ask Lysias to recite his speech over and over so that he might understand it better and memorize it. He simply took the speech so he could read it aloud, which involves no desire or passion for the speech, only the ability to read the words: Phaedrus is not a "lover of speeches" (*Phaedrus* 228c). He has no concept that he is wanting of Lysias in anyway, he believes that having the written speech was akin to knowing Lysias. By the end of the dialogue, the scroll which Phaedrus possesses is

worthless—it is no great example of speechmaking or a well reasoned argument. His high

opinion of the speech was misplaced because he did not understand good speechmaking nor did

he understand madness.

Phaedrus is overly reliant on the abilities of his reasoning part he believes that he can

possess knowledge convoluting his opinion for knowledge. His soul's chariot team is disordered;

the reasonable driver has not bothered to gain control of his left handed and bad natured horse.

Thus he cannot understand beauty; an ability that Socrates has because his soul is well ordered.

Socrates has given his reasoning part the reigns of the chariot but understands that he must work

with his horses and utilize both of their help to understand beauty. Phaedrus' driver ignores the

necessity of controlling the horse through discipline. This hubris, represented by his trying to

speak definitively on love, puts the bad horse in control. The "left-handed" side of love which he

argues against in the beginning of the dialogue drives him toward possession and subsequent

failure.

The inability to possess is what Socrates understands about himself, and what gives him

his most famous characteristic. He questions everything because he understands that his level of

understanding is far short of knowledge. He does not confuse his opinions with knowledge and is

always working to question conceived notions. This seems similar to Phaedrus' attitude towards

myths and love: he questions things which are generally accepted. Phaedrus, however, does so

with the idea that his explanation is better than the one which he questions. His questioning

attitude is incomplete. He questions those things most people accept but does not question his

own ideas; he is not concerned with understanding his own abilities, only with questioning the

abilities of others. Socrates only seeks to achieve knowledge through better understanding

himself; Phaedrus places no such emphasis on his own education. If he were to do so, he would

understand that there is nothing that separates him from the masses; he lacks the truth, just like they lack the truth.

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Eros and Motivated Reasoning

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This creates a seemingly paradoxical situation yet one which fits with the theory of motivated reasoning. Directional reasoners believe themselves to be completely rational when they are actually driven by the desire to maintain a specific opinion or idea. For Plato, man achieves the best possible level of thought by being guided by reason but allowing himself to be overcome by *eros*. Similarly to Nietzsche, it is not through reason alone but through some other force that man achieves his highest potential. *Eros* is also similar to Nietzsche's characterization of the will: humans must have an irrational desire for something which they somehow understand is best. Just as for Nietzsche's high types, success is only achieved by disciplining the desirous part of the soul. Nietzsche explains that it is through obeying laws one has set up for oneself and submitting to asceticism with the goal of achieving something greater that one can achieve true will to power. Similarly, Plato uses the image of a two horsed chariot to explain that one must repeatedly hold back his desire until it "gives it over to pain" in order to reach the preferable relationship with his lover (*Phaedrus* 254e).

There is a similar dichotomy in Nietzsche's and Plato's work. Both acknowledge the misuse of reason by some and the embrace of some extra-rational force by others. Whether through the will or through madness, both believe it necessary to supplement reason: reason alone will not lead to Platonic understanding, or away from nihilism. However, as with Nietzsche, to embrace this madness one must escape the paradigm based around the preeminence of knowledge and truth. Nietzsche emphasized the crookedness of truth; the idea that truth is merely based on the strongest will and the subsequent need to embrace the will as opposed to the

unconcerned eye. Plato emphasizes the impossibility of knowledge but the height of human existence as the philosopher in pursuit of knowledge. It is the "man who practices philosophy without guile or who loves boys philosophically" whose soul will again grow wings and have a chance of reaching Reality (*Phaedrus* 249a).

Both thinkers believe man must acknowledge his weaknesses and embrace his abilities to reach the highest plane that humanity is capable. Nietzsche believes man's power lays in his will; Plato believes it is the ability to identify beauty and be driven by *eros* that will lead man to the greatest heights. In the *Symposium*, Socrates explains that philosophers are lovers of knowledge and therefore exist somewhere between knowledge and ignorance (*Symposium* 201b). Again, the highest human potential is not reached through reason alone but with the help of *erotics*. For Plato, it is the recognition by one's reasoning part that one is without knowledge coupled with a drive to grasp it that brings one's soul to the highest plateau.

Motivated Reasoning as Mirror

Motivated reasoning introduces doubt into the reasoning process; opinions which people may have assumed were objective are revealed most likely to be the product of directional reasoning. Understanding motivated reasoning encourages people to reevaluate the ways in which they arrive at their ideas of the truth. As my experiment has demonstrated, teaching people the theory of motivated reasoning increases the likelihood of accuracy goals. People that are taught the theory are more likely to scrutinize their original opinions and to be more sympathetic to arguments which oppose those opinions. These accuracy reasoners are more deliberative. They reevaluating those ideas which they thought were objective because they are made aware of the persistent biases present in the reasoning process.

Directional reasoners believe themselves to be acting wholly rationally, presenting themselves as such, but their rationality is tinged by desire. The character of Phaedrus represents the pursuit of rationality alone and the problems associated with it. He believes himself to be rational—debasing the madness induced by love—but it his desire that is in control. Directional reasoners are similarly affected; the opinions of truth they hold are merely dictates of their desire. Socrates encourages Phaedrus to look away from reason alone and instead towards *eros*. This *eros* comes by recognizing one's lack of understanding: any amount of correct opinion one might gain on any subject is nothing compared to true knowledge. It is this void which gives them the desire to seek it. As discussed above in the section on Nietzsche at some point during either accuracy or directional reasoning, a person must deem his amount of interpretation "good enough" yet this amount is always short of complete understanding.

Socrates would not object to people making these determinations, which are necessary for life, but would want people to understand how they are appropriately reached. It is not through pure reason. If affectively pursued, pure reason would leave someone "believing they have emigrated to a colony on the Isles of the Blessed while they are still alive" (*Republic* 519c). What is more likely, however, is that one would believe himself to be inspired by true reason and use that farce to legitimate his opinions, passing them off as truth instead of conjecture. These "truths" are opinions driven by desire; this feigned objectivity discourages deliberation both within and outside of oneself. If one believes himself to be in possession of knowledge, there is no reason to debate his ideas. By embracing the proper place of reason, spiritedness, and desire—by ordering the chariot of the soul—one opens oneself to debate; with the proper order comes *eros*, the desire for knowledge and a subsequent recognition of one's lack of knowledge.

As Socrates explains in the *Phaedrus* as well as in the *Republic*, dialectic leads to the truth

(*Phaedrus* 266c; *Republic* 511a-c). In the *Republic*, Socrates says,

> go on to understand that by the other segment of the intelligible I mean that which
> argument itself grasps with the power of dialectic, making the hypotheses not beginnings
> but really hypotheses—that is, steppingstones and springboards—in order to reach what
> is free from hypothesis at the beginning of the whole. When it has grasped this,
> argument how depends on that which depends on this beginning and in such fashion
> goes back down again to an end; making no use of anything sense in any way, but using
> forms themselves, going through forms to forms, it ends in forms too (*Republic* 511b-c).

Here, Socrates explains that it is only through dialectic that one can reach the forms. Dialectic

allows people to use ideas in discussion that are not wholly reasonable to reach a higher level of

understanding. During the discussions that Socrates has with Glaucon and Adeimantus in the

Republic, the interlocutors assent to things Socrates suggests, even though he offers no

immediate proof. In dialectic, people are not made to prove their hypotheses but instead use their

hypotheses as "steppingstones and springboards" to begin to understand higher ideas. If one

believes their idea of the truth *is* the truth, there is no discussion, no dialectic and thus no true

understanding. Socrates and Plato wanted people to understand those abilities that they do and

do not possess. Man has the ability to reach higher levels of understanding through conversation

and inspiration; however, they can only reach this state by first recognizing their inability to live

purely according to reason. When one acknowledges that living their life entirely by reason is

beyond their capabilities, they can begin to understand the necessity of discussion; they can

embrace the desire for that which they do not have and are then filled with *eros*.

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Implication for Society

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The positive effects of exposing individuals to motivated reasoning would extend to an

entire society. As explored above, in my second chapter, Mill believed that social tyranny would

"fetter the development and, if possible, prevent the formation of any individual not in harmony

with its ways" (Mill 1978, 5). It leads to stagnation and the eventual failure of a society: without the presence of individuals, truths loose meaning, but worse yet, individuals lose the *ability* to form new opinions. For Mill, the remedy is the encouragement of the individual. The presence of individuals who are able to stand opposed to the mass will provide the public with the *opportunity* to pursue their idea of the good. Just giving society a view of individualism will help save them from losing the ability to understand it. Mill believes that the ubiquitous genius will stand between the willful individual and the rest of society to present them with synthesized ideas of various modes of life. The individual is perfected by questioning opinions accepted as truth but he is also improves society which is only perfected when the uncertainty of opinion is embraced by all.

Plato, too, believes that the individual is perfected by the embracement of a questioning attitude. He wishes to slow Athens down and make it less impulsive. As described in the Republic, when a group of men sit together in a "common meeting of a multitude" a mob mentality is created. People praise and blame things in excess and each takes his opinions from the mob (*Republic* 492b-c). This was the state of Athens, a place ruled by great assemblies of men like the 501 who tried Socrates. Plato was concerned with improving society, but saw a less direct link between the perfected individual and the perfected society. He did not wish to present the public with a view of willful individuals tempered by a class of intellectuals but instead wished to destroy the notion of expertise. He hoped society would turn collectively towards understanding itself and its abilities.

The proof of an improved society comes in the *Apology*. It is here that Socrates calls himself a gadfly sent to Athens to wake it as if it were a sluggish horse. He goes on to say, "I never cease to rouse each and every one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and

everywhere I find myself in your company" (*Apology* 30e-31a). Socrates proved this indeed near

the beginning of the dialogue. He begins to defend against his old accusers who charge that "he

busies himself studying things in the sky and below the earth; he makes the worse into the

stronger argument, and he teaches these same things to others" (*Apology* 19b-c). He first asks

those people in the audience with whom he has spoken if they have ever heard him conversing of

such things, he goes on to say that he never tries to teach people and charge a fee for it. He can

not teach people because he is not wise; he declares that he is well aware of this.

Thusly Socrates was confused by the words of the oracle at Delphi who said that no man

was wiser than he. Upon hearing the report of this, he believed he could prove the oracle wrong,

and went around the city trying to find a man that was wiser than he. Socrates describes himself

going to a "public man" a "poet" and finally the "craftsmen" and finding that they all thought

themselves to be wiser than they actually were (*Apology* 21c-23a). He then explains that no man

is wiser than he because human wisdom is worthless. It is as if the oracle had said, "This man

amongst you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates understands that his wisdom is worthless"

(*Apology* 23b). In relaying this story to the Athenian jury, he succeeded in estranging himself

from them. He indicts each class of Athens as thinking that they are wiser than they are; no one

in Athens is wise. He has roused each of them by questioning their wisdom.

Socrates has also made them consider and take seriously the proper rearing of children.

Socrates' later accusers have accused him, among other things, of corrupting the youth. As

Socrates says, Meletus—his main accuser—had never cared about the rearing of youth before,

yet he brings Socrates to court on such charges (*Apology* 24c). His tone toward Meletus during

his trial is very aggressive, he accuses him of "dealing frivolously with serious matters, of

irresponsibly bringing people into court, and of professing to be seriously concerned with thing

about none of which he has ever cared (*Apology* 24c). Meletus professes to know how to educate children well and what corrupts him and Socrates believes his ideas of such are false (*Apology* 24d-26b).

In the *Euthyphro* Socrates takes a much different tone when talking about Meletus. He says that he does not really know him but that the charges he brings of are not ignoble "for it is not small thing for a young man to have knowledge of such an important subject. He says he knows how out young men are corrupted and who corrupts them." "I think that he us the only one of our public men to start out the right way, for it is right to care first that the young should be as good as possible, just as a good farmer is likely to take care of young plants first" (*Euthyphro* 2b-d).

Here, the charges do not upset Socrates because he believes such matters to be important. Though his attitude changes almost completely between the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology* this does not mean his true feelings cannot be understood. Recall an earlier discussion of Plato's work in which Socrates was described as assuming the language of Euthyphro, to help his point that one must question everything and everyone. Socrates may have taken such a virulent tone against Meletus in the *Apology* to help his argument. At several points during the *Apology*, Socrates seems unconcerned with being acquitted of the charges: if this were his goal he would not have disregarded the wisdom of all of Athens something he knew would upset them (*Euthyphro* 3c-d). It is beyond the scope of this paper to illuminate Socrates' true intentions during the *Apology* but as offered above, it seems like he is intent on proving that strong arguments and overconfidence, as opposed to moderation, will fail even Socrates.

Success for both the individual and society lays in the acknowledgment of one's limits and the embrace of ones abilities. Socrates' argument in the Apology emphasizes the necessity

of a society willing to deliberate before it acts. Such a society must first recognize that its ideas

of the truth—and indeed any idea of the truth—are not complete and should instead be balanced

by moderation in acting. However, Socrates does believe that society has the ability to desire

knowledge. As Meletus' charges demonstrate, if pushed, society can desire the knowledge of

how to correctly rear children. What is important for improving societies similar to either Plato's

or Mill's is encouraging people to desire knowledge as opposed to assuming they possess it.

Teaching the theory of motivated reasoning gives such encouragement by demonstrating the

natural corruption of reason by bias, breaking down the "illusion of objectivity." Thusly,

knowledge of any given thing cannot be had. However, in recognizing that it is something

humanity and each individual pursues, it can be desired.

Chapter IX - Did This Thesis Have to Be Over 100 Pages?

This project was originally proposed simply as a psychological experiment and it certainly could be appreciated solely as such. My experiment joins those directed at understanding how to increase the proportion of people who are directed toward accuracy goals as opposed to directional goals. My experiment demonstrated that teaching students the theory of motivated reasoning may be an effective way of assuaging directional goals. I took a normative stance on the issue: it is important and beneficial for individuals to pursue accuracy goals and I was pleased with my results.

At the outset of my project, I was surprised that no such experiments in political psychology had ever been undertaken. My hope is that my experiment will begin a vein of research concerned with testing the effects of exposure to and familiarity with psychology. It is interesting to study this for purely psychological reasons—without having to consider the philosophical implications as I did.

My work begets several other empirical questions that should be asked and studied. Mainly, what factors go into the decision of when an amount of reasoning is "good enough," especially for the accuracy reasoner. How is it that people decide? Further, what causes differences between people? Why would someone's level of "good enough" be different than someone else's? The exploration of these questions could further shed light on the mechanisms of motivated reasoning as well as what are the true difference between directional and accuracy reasoners.

If someone were to try and improve on the results of my experiment, as I hope someone does, there are several changes that could be made. The first and most important would be to

increase the sample size. I believe my small sample size greatly inhibited the significance of my results. It may also be prudent to develop a test of how well students absorbed the lecture on motivated reasoning. It may be the case that students who understood the theory were better or worse able to assuage their biases.

On a similar point, additional steps should be taken to decrease any connection students could draw between the first and second days of the experiment. Doing so would decrease the likelihood that students were simply giving the "right" answers: those that seem to be how they should respond. One such method would be to have different people lead the two sessions of the experiment or to use opinion data recorded sometime prior.

I could have incorporated the suggestions I have proposed just above, though if I had I feel like other parts of my project would have suffered. To answer the question posed as the title of this chapter—yes. This project has been a difficult reconciliation between theory and practice, between wholly theoretical conceptions and empirical political science. Though my refusal to focus solely on either empiricism or theory is partially due to my stubborn attachment to both aspects of this project, I believe it would be woefully incomplete as anything but a synthesis of these sometimes competing subfields of political science. Plato's teachings have encouraged self-understanding for millennia, however, the empirical manifestation of a very theoretical concept may represent the most realistic route to realizing either Mill's or Plato's vision for an improved society. The modern world relies so heavily on reason and science to provide truth— yet the very psychological theory of motivated reasoning offers a simple refutation of rationality's singular preeminence; it encourages deliberation through scientific means. It is perhaps only when philosophy is combined with science that it can be appreciated in modern times.

Though at different times I have been more excited about the findings of my experiment or about the interpretations I have made of the works of Mill, Nietzsche, and Plato the true importance of my work is the connection I bridged between the different aspects of my thesis. My discussion of motivated reasoning's implications on rationality and the connection between these implications, Nietzsche's will to power and Plato's *eros* is truly unique and I hope I will be able to extend these discussions in the future. The philosophical connection to such a psychological concept gives it important grounding; understanding what motivated reasoning says about individuals and humanity collectively gives experimentation and research in motivated reasoning necessary context. Motivated reasoning is not simply a theory of political psychology, explaining why individuals think and act the way they do; it provides scientific support for the philosophies of Nietzsche and Plato. As they argued one and a half centuries and two and half millennia ago respectively, reason alone cannot make decisions, create truth, or show you beauty.

This realization about motivated reasoning, occurring just over one month before the completion of my thesis, is what I believe to be the most important contribution of my project. To fully understand motivated reasoning, as well as the philosophies of Mill, Nietzsche, and Plato is to understand the necessity of supplementing reason with extra-rational forces. As Plato argues, the goal of reason should be to realize controlled desire. He used reasoned argument to demonstrate that any amount of reason alone will never lead to knowledge. The students whom I exposed to motivated reasoning were better able to identify biases and were less likely to give answers that reflected strong biases. I believe, however, that the encouragement towards examining themselves and their ability and inability to reason is the most important result. In doing so they are the realization of Mill's plan for a more deliberative society and are following

the paths of Plato and Nietzsche. These two philosophers both believe it is only by going beyond

reason, by appreciating its usefulness but also its deficiencies, that humanity can reach its highest

potential. To understand motivated reasoning is to understand that the abilities of humanity lay

not in accumulating knowledge but in embracing uncertainty; not in clutching onto truth but by

desiring it.

Demographic Survey

ID # _____

Age_____   Sex: M / F

Hometown_____ Class Year_____

Major (Expected)_____

Please rate yourself along this political scale 1 being Very Democratic 7 being Very Republican

```
    1---------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
  Democratic                   Independent                   Republican
```

I have a few quick questions about your opinions concerning the upcoming election

One issue that has been very important during this campaign is the Economy

1) Would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as…

   1) Excellent

   2) Good

   3) Not so good

   4) Poor

2) Do you think the United States economy is in a recession now?

   1) No

   2) Yes

   3) I don't know

Another issue during this campaign has been immigration

3) Do you think the United States Government should allow illegal immigrants who pay a fine and learn English to be eligible to apply for citizenship or do you think illegal immigrants should not be eligible for citizenship?

   1) Yes, they should be eligible

   2) No, they should not be eligible

   3) I'm not sure

4) Do you think immigrants strengthen American culture or diminish it?

   1) Strengthen

   2) Diminish

   3) I'm not sure

5) Would you say that immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it, or that immigration hurts the United States more than it helps it?

   1) Helps more than hurts

   2) Hurts more than helps

   3) I'm not sure

A third issue during this campaign is the War in Iraq

6) Think back to when the war in Iraq began in March 2003 do you remember if you…

   1) Very Strongly Supported the war

   2) Somewhat Supported the war

   3) Did not support the war

   4) Can't remember if you supported the war

7) If the US withdraws its troops from Iraq while the country remains unstable, do you think it would it make a terrorist attack in the United States less likely or more likely?

    1) Less likely

    2) More likely

    3) Won't make a difference

And, finally, another important issue is healthcare in America.

8) Would you rate the state of the American healthcare system these days as…

    1) Poor

    2) Not so good

    3) Good

    4) Excellent

9) Do you think it is the government's responsibility to make sure that everyone in the United States has adequate health care, or don't you think so?

    1) Yes, it is the government's responsibility

    2) No, it is not the government's responsibility

    3) I don't know

Comprehension Questions

1) Give a brief description (in your own words) of Accuracy Goals and Directional Goals.

2) What is a specific example of a Belief Preserving Distortion?

3) Can you describe an example of when you have been affected by motivated reasoning?

4) Using Mark Fischle's explanation of the Lewinsky scandal's effect upon Bill Clinton's approval rating, does the large jump in his approval rating after the scandal broke make sense?

   Why or why not?

5) Do you think the topic of Motivated Reasoning should be taught more in general political science courses?

Recently, a family of legal immigrants moved into a neighborhood in Somerville. The family of four consists of the Father (age 34), Mother (age 31), Older Daughter (age 11), and Young Son (age 7). The father has taken a job working for the MBTA, the mother is working for a beauty salon owned by a friend she knew from her country who has lived in the United States for over ten years. The family speaks English but not fluently and before moving here, lived in New York City for 8 months. On Thursday, the father drives the family to an English learning center to try to improve their English. Though they sometimes shop at other stores, they usually try and shop at stores owned by other people from their home country or region because they hope they can save money because of the country connection. The father loves soccer and plays every Tuesday and Thursday in a league and loves to watch his country's team on TV. He is also starting to teach his son to play. The family proudly displays their home country's flag out of their window and says they do not own an American flag.

<u>Please choose one of the terms in each row listed below as if you had to choose one that best describes the Father.</u>

1) Considerate   Helpful   Kind

2) Committed   Faithful   Stable

3) Courageous   Bold   Unafraid

4) Active   Busy   Involved

5) Naïve   Gullible   Unintelligent

6) Devious   Dishonest   Bad

7) Stingy   Selfish   Uncharitable

8) Detached   Disinterested   Aloof

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Don't Call me "American"
New Immigrants and Their Old Ties

By: Alan Korman
Published: 9/27/08

A new study shows that legal immigrants and their children are less likely to identify themselves as "American." when asked to choose between their country of origin and America. The study—conducted by Center for Immigration Studies—polled 1,920 legal immigrants from across the country and found little variation between different ethnic groups. Eastern-Europeans were the most likely to identify themselves as Americans at 29 percent and South-East Asians were the least likely to want the American title at 22 percent.

The poll also asked the respondents their reasons for coming to America. The most common answer was for "economic opportunity," at 61 percent, the next most common was "to escape oppression" at 24 percent. Those escaping oppression were far more likely to call themselves American, at 65 percent, while those coming to America for economic opportunity matched up well with the aggregate group.

A third question asked how important achieving American citizenship is to them. Only 26 percent of the immigrants polled rated it as "Very Important." A strong majority—58 percent—rated it as "not very important," despite being reminded during the poll of the voting and business rights afforded to citizens. When asked why becoming an American citizen was *not* important to them, one Ecuadorian respondent said, "We can live in our own communities, send our children to our own schools, and shop at our own businesses; all without voting in their elections." A respondent from Egypt said, he "has no intentions of becoming an "American". I can come for a few years on a student visa and stay [illegally] after that—sending money home and making my family ten times what I could in Egypt."

However, in an article that he recently published, Yale economist James Levy found that immigrants contribute much more to our economy than they receive in public funds. "Immigrants, legal and illegal," he says, "pay taxes, open businesses, and spend their money on *our* goods and services." The Migration Policy Institute claims that more is at stake than the economy, however. In another recent study, they found that nearly half of illegal immigrants arrived in America legally but have overstayed their visas. Immigrants see a legal visa as being just as good as citizenship, making the lengthy and difficult journey to citizenship unnecessary. Once they arrive, it is very unlikely that they will ever leave—even when their visa expires.

Immigration has already proven to be a hot button issue for this rapidly approaching Presidential election. Neither Barack Obama's nor John McCain's campaigns have commented about the reports but both will have to. Throughout this campaign both candidates have taken pro-immigrant stances and it will be interesting to see if this new information affects their positions.

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The Economics of Immigration
"New Analysis Claims That Immigrants Will Spur the Nation's Economy"

By: Nathan Lee
Published: 9/27/08

Immigrants help the economy. That is the conclusion of a report from three independent teams of economists, as well as the Center for Immigration Studies—a non-profit organization from Nevada. The teams, from the University of Chicago, Yale, and Stanford, have all released reports pointing to the same conclusion: an increase in immigration, both legal and illegal, will produce an economic upturn. Their findings show that the increase in unskilled workers from other countries does not hurt Americans but actually fuels their competitive fire. "Illegal immigrants will often work the jobs that pay the least, pushing Americans towards higher paying jobs and the greater education needed to get them," states the report from the Stanford team. They also reported that the high school dropout rate amongst native born Americans is significantly lower (10 percentage points) in areas where immigrants number 30 percent or more. Enrollment in two-year colleges and professional universities like ITT Tech and Devry University is up nearly 300 percent since 1998 in areas where immigration rates have been high.

The Center for Immigration Studies summarizes that legal immigrants (80 percent of the immigrant total) create new jobs by forming new businesses, buying American goods and services, and paying taxes. A senior analyst, Richard Burn summed up: "The money immigrants put into the economy is so much greater than the amount they take out. They are no more a 'drain' on our tax dollars than any hard working American." The economists from Yale found that more educated professional immigrants and potential students also help the American economy. They add invaluable insight to what have and have not worked in their countries' economies, and can only contribute to greater competition of ideas. James Levy of Yale says; "Economists and students from many European countries have first hand knowledge and experience of socialized healthcare and the strong social safety net; no amount of research by an American can replace that."

When asked why immigrants have chosen to come to America, a strong majority—61 percent—said for economic opportunity, says the Migration Policy Institute. Their survey of 876 immigrant families from across the country also found that 72% of immigrants already in the country rated getting their citizenship as "Very Important". Indeed, naturalized immigrants vote at an astounding rate of 12 percent greater than native born Americans.

However, a less publicized finding of the report shows that immigrants are less likely to identify themselves as American even if they have American citizenship. Michael Chamberlain of the Migration Policy Institute said this of his study; "Immigrants are getting their citizenship because they know life here is easier with it, for the most part they have no intentions of being 'American' or contributing to the overall success of our country, for instance, boosting our status in the eyes of the international community."

Alan Korman of the Center of Immigration Studies disagreed, however. When asked about what the greatest thing immigrants bring to America he said, "Immigrants come to America with aspirations and plans. They come ready to put in their work and ask for only one thing: fair and equal treatment. The have a great commitment to the success of America both politically and economically. They can show us all what being 'American' really means."

Response Questionnaire   I.D # _____

Please Circle Your Responses

1) Is it important to the strength of our nation that immigrants identify themselves as American or is it not important?

    1. Very important

    2. Somewhat important

    3. Neither important or unimportant

    4. Not very important

    5. Not at all important?

2) How do you feel about the finding that "26 percent of the immigrants polled rated [getting their citizenship] as 'Very Important'?"

    1. It is a lot higher than I would have suspected

    2. It seems impressively high

    3. It sounds around the right level

    4. It is not that impressive, it should be higher

    5. It is unimpressive, it should be much higher

3) How do you feel about the Ecuadorian immigrant saying "We can live in our own communities, send our children to our own schools, and shop at our own businesses; all without voting in their elections"?

    1. I think it is completely fine

    2. It does not bother me very much

    3. I don't have any feeling regarding this

    4. It bothers me a little bit

    5.I think this is completely wrong

4) How do you feel about the Egyptian respondent investing his money in his native country rather than keeping it in the U.S.?

      1. I think it is completely fine

      2. It does not bother me very much

      3. I don't have any feeling regarding this

      4. It bothers me a little bit

      5. I think this is completely wrong

5) Have you heard of the Author Alan Korman?

      1. Yes

      2. No

6) Does he seem like a biased or unbiased source?

0--------1---------2---------3--------4--------5----------6----------7----------8---------9---------10
Biased Against Immigrants   Neutral   Biased For Immigrants

7) Have you heard of the Center of Immigration Studies?

      1. Yes

      2. No

8) Does it seem like a biased or unbiased source?

0--------1---------2---------3--------4--------5----------6----------7----------8---------9---------10
Biased Against Immigrants   Neutral   Biased For Immigrants

9) Have you heard of Yale Economist James Levy?

      1. Yes

      2. No

10) Does he seem like a biased or unbiased source?

0--------1---------2---------3--------4--------5----------6----------7----------8---------9---------10
Biased Against Immigrants   Neutral   Biased For Immigrants

11) Do you think the United States Government should allow illegal immigrants who pay a fine and learn English to be eligible to apply for citizenship or do you think illegal immigrants should not be eligible for citizenship?

       1. Yes, they should be eligible

       2. No, they should not be eligible

       3. I'm not sure

12) Do you think Immigrants strengthen American culture or diminish it?

       1. Strengthens

       2. Diminishes

       3. I'm not sure

13) Would you say that immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it, or immigration hurts the United States more than it helps it?

       1. Helps more than hurts

       2. Hurts more than helps

       3. I'm not sure

Response Questionnaire   I.D # _____

Please Circle Your Responses

1) Do you agree or disagree that a decreased high school dropout rate is a good measure of economic upturn?

    1. Strongly disagree

    2. Somewhat disagree

    3. Neither disagree nor agree

    4. Somewhat agree

    5. Strongly agree

2) Do you agree or disagree with James Levy that immigrants play a vital role in the discussion of new academic ideas?

    1. Strongly disagree

    2. Somewhat disagree

    3. Neither disagree nor agree

    4. Somewhat agree

    5. Strongly agree?

3) How do you feel about the finding that "72% of immigrants already in the country rated getting their citizenship as 'Very Important'?"

    1. It is unimpressive, it should be much higher

    2. It is not that impressive, it should be higher

    3. It sounds around the right level

    4. It seems high

    5. It is a lot higher than I would have suspected

4) What is your impression of the Migration Policy Institute's figure that naturalized immigrants vote at a rate of 12 percent greater than native born Americans?

      1. Not at all impressive

      2. Not very impressive

      3. Neither impressive nor unimpressive

      4. Somewhat impressive

      5. Very impressive.

5) Do you agree or disagree with Alan Korman that immigrants represent "what being 'American' really means?"

      1. Strongly disagree

      2. Somewhat disagree

      3. Neither disagree nor agree

      4. Somewhat agree

      5. Strongly agree?

6) Have you heard of the Author Nathan Lee?

      1. Yes

      2. No

7) Does he seem like a biased or unbiased source?

0--------1---------2---------3--------4--------5----------6----------7----------8---------9---------10
Biased For Immigrants   Neutral   Biased Against Immigrants

8) Have you heard of the Center of Immigration Studies?

> 1. Yes
>
> 2. No

9) Does it seem like a biased or unbiased source?

0--------1---------2---------3--------4--------5----------6----------7----------8---------9---------10
Biased For Immigrants   Neutral   Biased Against Immigrants

10) Have you heard of Michael Chamberlain from the Migration Policy Institute?

> 1. Yes
>
> 2. No

11) Does he seem like a biased or unbiased source?

0--------1---------2---------3--------4--------5----------6----------7----------8---------9---------10
Biased For Immigrants   Neutral   Biased Against Immigrants

12) Do you think the United States Government should allow illegal immigrants who pay a fine and learn English to be eligible to apply for citizenship or do you think illegal immigrants should not be eligible for citizenship?

> 1. Yes, they should be eligible
>
> 2. No, they should not be eligible
>
> 3. I'm not sure

13) Do you think Immigrants strengthen American culture or diminish it?

> 1. Strengthens
>
> 2. Diminishes
>
> 3. I'm not sure

14) Would you say that immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it, or immigration hurts the United States more than it helps it?

        1. Helps more than hurts

        2. Hurts more than helps

        3. I'm not sure

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