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A Compatible Dichotomy: An Exploration of Confucian Democracy

I. Introduction: A New Vision of Democracy

In an age of demagogues, political polarization, and democratic backsliding, there has never been a better moment to explore alternative visions of democracy. One vision in particular, and the one I will be exploring in this paper, is Confucian democracy. To many, this concept may seem inherently oxymoronic, as Confucianism's historical associations with "Oriental despotism" and elitism appear to contradict the key liberal democratic tenets of liberty and equality. However, by analyzing seminal works in Confucian democracy, namely Daniel Bell's "*Beyond liberal democracy*", Tan Sor-hoon's "*Democracy in Confucianism*", and Bai Tong-Dong's "*Against Political Equality*", among other relevant texts, I endeavor to show that the two concepts are indeed compatible, and in fact, could even bring out the best in each other.

II. How Confucianism and Democracy Are Compatible: A Values-Based Approach

To its detriment, Confucianism has long been associated with “autocratic practice” and blamed for China’s “backwardness” (Tan, 2012, 293). Indeed, the very ideas of the Sage-king and the rule of the wise seem to take for granted the concept of a monarchy; even Huang Zong Xi, one of the most radical thinkers of the time, “yearned not for the people to take over the reins of power but for an ‘Enlightened Prince’”, even as he criticized absolute monarchy and despotism (Tan, 2012, 293).

It is, however, important to note that these ways of thinking were ultimately products of their time: when politics featured as a theme in Confucianism, it was usually to discuss the ideal role and characteristics of a leader, not the intricacies of political systems. Hence, these negative initial impressions do not preclude us from looking to a more modern, fluid interpretation of Confucianism that possesses broader values compatible with democracy.

Thus, although democracy and Confucianism initially seem to be irreconcilable, analyzing the two concepts based on their values reveals a surprising degree of compatibility and overlap between them. Fundamentally, the former can be distilled to the values of equality, freedom, accountability, and truth, while the latter can be represented by Mencius’ Four Sprouts: humaneness (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), ritual (*li*), and wisdom (*zhi*) (Mencius, 2A6, 6A6). In this section, I discuss how these values could intersect to form a working basis for a Confucian democracy.

A. Equality

Early Confucianists believed in the perfectibility of man: that anyone could become a *junzi*—a uniquely Confucian term referring to a person who displays exemplary conduct, particularly *ren*, or humaneness—as long as he or she was educated to possess the superior moral character becoming of such a lofty title. On this subject, there existed two slightly different frames of thinking: one, relatively narrower, espoused by Confucius, and the other, more all-encompassing, adopted by Mencius.

Confucius himself likely did not believe that everyone was equal, though he did agree with a “limited sense of equality” (Bai, 2019, 33). This was in the sense that “either everyone should have some education or we cannot predetermine who is educable and to what level one can be educated until we actually educate him or her” (Bai, 2019, 33). Following this line of thought, each person would be given the chance to receive an education, through which he or she could potentially become a *junzi* fit to rule.

Mencius, however, went a step further than Confucius, asserting that everyone was educable and possessed in equal measure the potential to become a *junzi*. He eschewed the deterministic belief that any person was intrinsically more capable than another, declaring that “the sage and I are of the same kind” (Mencius, 6A7). To him, what chiefly separated a sage (or, by this logic, *junzi*) and a common person was *effort*: the former type of individual cultivates his or her “original goodness” to the fullest (Bai, 2019, 33). And he explicitly declared this belief: when asked if anyone could become a Yao or a Shun, or a sage-king representing the Confucian ideal of a person, he replied in the affirmative (Mencius, 6B2).

Regardless of which of the two aforementioned stances one chooses to view as representative of Confucianism, it is clear that the early Confucians believed in the notion of

equality of opportunity: that all people should be educated such that they are given an equal chance at becoming a *junzi* fit to rule or contend for political office. Although the early Confucians differed on *why* not everyone would end up a *junzi*—with Confucius ascribing this to capability and Mencius to effort—it is reasonable to consider this incongruence as immaterial in practice, as long as everyone is educated to the extent they wish to be.

While some critics consider Confucianism to be incompatible with political equality, this can be refuted by examining existing political realities. Although it is true that “the degree of realization of [the] potential [to become Yaos and Shuns] determines the degree of political participation” a person can partake in, most, if not all, democracies also stipulate some sort of preconditions for suffrage or running for office (Gao & Walayat, 2021, 222). For example, citizenship is viewed as an essential prerequisite for political participation, presumably because citizens have a greater vested interest in, and knowledge of how to achieve, their country's success. Should one not be born a citizen, he or she will then need to “acquire” the right to participate politically through some kind of mechanism, such as naturalization. Furthermore, there is generally a minimum age for voting or running for office, beyond which one is deemed to have accumulated sufficient experience and knowledge to execute their political rights in an adequately lucid and wise fashion (Gao & Walayat, 2021, 223). In this regard, modern democracies also believe that the right to partake in political matters needs to be in some way acquired, even enshrining this in law. Thus, the Confucians’ greater emphasis on moral education and development as a precondition for political participation is not mutually exclusive with a belief in political equality. In fact, the early Confucians *wanted* each citizen to “cultivate their potential for virtue” so that he or she could participate politically (Gao & Walayat, 2021, 223). Taking this information and their treatment of equality of opportunity into account, we can

reasonably surmise that the early Confucians were proponents of equality, a key tenet of democracy.

B. Freedom

The link between Confucianism, freedom, and democracy is less immediately clear, perhaps in no small part due to differing cultural conceptions of the latter. To the Confucians, it is not exercising one's free will as one chooses that leads to liberty, but making a decision in line with Confucian moral values, in particular *ren* and *yi*. By this logic, a person who acts hedonistically or selfishly would be unfree, even if they made this decision of their own accord (Gao and Walayat, 2021, 230).

However, the Confucians still believed in independent thought—a notion that implies freedom—with Confucius himself maintaining that “the *junzi* fosters harmonious relations, but is independent-minded” (Confucius, 13:23). Following this logic, we can infer that the early Confucians would have likely agreed with freedom of choice, as long as these decisions were arrived at independently, rationally, and with the Confucian morals in consideration.

Furthermore, the Confucians also, rather liberally, thought that in order to be empowered to make such good choices, the people must have their basic needs satisfied. Mencius made this viewpoint clear when he said: “When [people] have sustainable property, they develop a sustainable heart toward moral goodness... Once they do not have a sustainable heart toward moral goodness, they will indulge themselves and do devious things without limits”, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling the people's material needs to ensure their liberty (at least in the way the Confucians think of it) (Mencius, 3A3).

Therefore, although the early Confucians were not particularly approving of unbridled freedom, they were proponents of individual choice for the greater good, and of ensuring the necessary material conditions that would facilitate this—again supporting an important democratic cornerstone.

C. Accountability

Be it through *ren*, *yi*, or *li*, early Confucians placed great importance on harmonious social relations. To elaborate, *ren* means humaneness (mentioned briefly above in the discussion of *junzi*), a feeling of benevolence toward other beings, *yi* refers to righteousness and justice, and *li* signifies the nuanced rituals that respectfully shape our relations with others. These ideas all relate to the notion of a social contract, in which there is a correct way people should treat one another. We can then draw a connection to democratic political systems, in which governments are generally held accountable to the governed.

One Confucian concept in particular that emphasizes the above is *min ben*, which can be translated as “people as the root of the nation” (Tan, 2012, 294). It implies that the Confucians advocated for, and even expected, a government *for* the people, one not self-serving or corrupt. For one to be a *junzi*, one had to rule in the best interests of the people, which meant ensuring that their material (and moral) needs were met.

Moreover, Confucius deemed that “the legitimacy of every member of the ruling class is determined by service to the people”, supporting the democratic notion of a social contract between the government and people, through which the former’s authority is sustained by the latter (Bai, 2019, 40). Since according to early Confucian thought, “heaven hears as the people see, heaven hears as the people hear” (Mencius, 5A5), and leaders are chosen by Heaven, a

leader's mandate was essentially provided by the people (albeit somewhat indirectly). It was thus in the leader's interest to ensure that the people were satisfied by his or her leadership.

The early Confucians thought that governments were responsible for more than just providing their citizens with basic material needs: they also had to ensure the moral development of the populace. This is exemplified by the story of a sage king appointing a minister of education whose duty was to “teach the people human relationships: love between father and son, duty between ruler and subject, the distinction between husband and wife, precedence of old over young, trust between friends” (Mencius, 3A4). To the Confucians, it was up to the government, or rulers, to ensure that the people knew of their place within the broader society, a notion simultaneously a result and perpetuation of the social roles and norms so key to Confucian thought.

What if, then, governments failed to live up to the standards of governance the Confucians held them up to? The idea that citizens should have the right to rebel against leaders who do not fulfill their duties, one that stems from the concept of popular sovereignty, is also reflected by Confucianism, which holds that the “violent removal and ... killing” of an “incompetent” and “tyrannical” ruler is “justified” (Bai, 2019, 41). While it was never explicitly mentioned if it was the *people* who should carry out this removal, it is at least observable that the early Confucians believed that a leader should fulfill his or her duties to the people, and suffer consequences—including perhaps even the ultimate consequence—upon failure to do so. This idea that a government is accountable to the people is consistent with that of democratic ideals: that the government derives its power from the people.

Interestingly, it is entirely possible that integrating Confucianism with democracy would *enhance* civil liberties. Under a Confucian thought framework, ensuring every citizen was

sufficiently educated so that he or she could achieve moral and intellectual development, as well as making it possible for citizens to participate in politics if they were ready would become mandatory tasks of government; failing to perform their role would then lead to consequences, which they would have to accept.

D. Truth

The last of Mencius' Four Sprouts that we have not yet discussed is *zhi*, or wisdom, which goes hand in hand with the last of the democratic values I have listed: truth, as it relates to transparency and information. This particular aspect forms perhaps the crux of the rationale for a Confucian democracy: not only is it important in both Confucianism and democracy, but it also proposes a solution to what could be democracy's fatal flaw.

The Confucians prioritized true learning and education, which becomes apparent if we analyze the Chinese word *zhi dao*, or to know: *zhi* means "to realize", and *dao* means "the way" — to "know" means to "realize the way", and to not simply follow it (Tan, 2012, 300). In this vein, Confucius said: "Learning without thinking leads to confusion; thinking without learning leads to danger", emphasizing the importance of critical thinking in the acquisition of knowledge (Confucius, 2:15). Mencius also poignantly stated that "the way of study and inquiry is none other than the search for the lost mind" (Mencius, 6A11). This was preceded by him relating this "search" to *ren* and *yi*: "*ren* is the mind of human beings, and *yi* is their path" (Mencius, 6A11). This could be interpreted to mean that Mencius believed in integrating Confucian values in every aspect of the pursuit of understanding, such that knowledge was acquired in a humane fashion.

The aforementioned ideas have the potential to be a powerful antidote to some major problems faced by modern democracies. The first of these problems is voters' rejection of

education as a signal of alienation from the common people. As a result, in a bid to gain “electability”, political candidates often hypocritically accuse their opponents of being ivory-tower elites (if only to deflect from *their* ivory-tower-eliteness). The second is that since modern democratic societies are “so large that it makes it impossible for the majority of the citizenry to be adequately informed about state affairs”, voters ultimately “fall back on their self-interest” when faced with a plethora of issues to which they largely are “politically indifferent”, contributing to the perilous phenomena of single-issue voting and political polarization (Bai, 2019, 67). These two issues (among others) —primarily caused, in my view, by a dearth of, and outright rejection of, truth and knowledge—have played a significant role in democracy’s devolution into demagoguery. Thus, it is evident how Confucianism, with its emphasis on education and knowledge pursued in a way that respects others, has immense potential to counter the noxious forces of anti-intellectualism and extremism that plague democracies today.

III. In the Real World: Implementations of a Confucian Democracy

Having acknowledged the substantial overlap between Confucian and democratic values, what, then, separates a Confucian democracy from a regular one? A primary difference is that Confucian societies institutionalize “a stable mechanism capable of producing...a government of the best and brightest”, as well as a hierarchy that is not “hereditary”, but “is the result of an equality-based, meritocratic competition” (Bell, 2006, 154). The key here is that this hierarchy is mobile, not rigid, and that the Confucian emphasis on harmonious social relations encourages “compassion, especially from superiors to inferiors” (Bai, 2019, 106).

A Confucian democracy is not a pipe dream: Singapore, for example, is defined by its East-West fusion of representative democracy and Confucian heritage values. Building upon these models, some scholars, such as political scientist Daniel Bell, have also proposed novel implementations of Confucian democracies.

A. Singapore’s Flavor of Confucian Democracy

East Asian heritage societies continue to subscribe to the “Confucian scholar-official mentality” today, and Singapore is no exception (Bell, 2006, 154). Ascribing to the idea of the rule of the wise, in Singapore, well-educated and learned government officials—many of whom hail from some of the world’s most prestigious universities—make decisions in the citizens’ best interest (or so they claim) without suffering the influences of populism or cronyism. Because of the respect and deference accorded to top government officials, roles in the civil service tend to be even more highly prized than those in the private sector. In a Confucianist fashion, the

question of who takes up these roles is ultimately decided by a meritocratic system of “fair” nationwide examinations that, from childhood, separate people according to ability.

Such a system is both good and bad: while the government typically refrains from making populist decisions that come at the expense of the long-term benefits of the population, it is also paternalistic, oftentimes stripping the people of their agency and voice. This latter consequence has further deleterious implications: the government’s rule has been known to take an authoritarian turn, with political opponents having historically been bankrupted, arrested, or both. Thus, although Singapore is ostensibly a democracy, alternatives to the ruling party are often weakened to the extent that they no longer present themselves as viable options, depriving voters of a real choice.

Yet another uniquely Singaporean concept that relates to a Confucian democracy is the Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) scheme, in which individuals unaffiliated to any political party with expert knowledge or extensive experience in some field are appointed to the Parliament by the President and a committee of regular MPs. This was introduced primarily as a countervailing force against the aforementioned criticisms of Singapore’s political system, accommodating alternative views and “constructive dissent”. Ideally, the NMPs then be freed from the need to appeal to the populace through rhetoric, and would instead prioritize the substance of the matters at hand. While this Confucianist idea has been criticized as undemocratic and technocratic, perhaps it is not this innovative scheme itself, but rather the very structure of the Singaporean political system that begets these characteristics.

B. Bell’s Thought Experiment

Some thinkers have sought to improve upon these real-world examples with new ideas. In particular, one of the most hotly debated implementations of a Confucian democracy is Daniel Bell's *Xianshiyuan*. Essentially, he suggests a “bicameral legislature, with a democratically elected lower house and a Confucian-inspired upper house composed of representatives selected based on competitive examinations”, the upper house being the aforementioned *Xianshiyuan* (Bell, 2006, 152). Notably, the examinations through which the members of the *Xianshiyuan* would include questions on ethics, so as to “filter out political demagogues and brilliant but morally insensitive technocrats” (Bell, 2006, 168). According to Bell, a supermajority in the *Xianshiyuan* would be able to override a majority in the lower house, such that the rule of the wise would take priority over populism (assuming, of course, that the lower house was susceptible to its influence). Finally, to “reduce the incentive for corruption”, Bell also proposes that the *Xianshiyuan* be “paid handsome salaries” (Bell, 2006, 170).

One can observe parallels between Bell's ideas and the Singaporean system. Firstly, *Xianshiyuans* of NMPs, though a key difference is that the power of NMPs is significantly more curtailed than that of the *Xianshiyuan*. Furthermore, in Singapore, all MPs are rewarded with high, competitive salaries, ostensibly also to reduce the incidence of corruption and cronyism.

Some political philosophers have further developed Bell's idea, namely Tong-Dong Bai, who acknowledges that the *Xianshiyuan* selection mechanism of competitive examinations also falls prey to the pitfalls of meritocracy. In his view (which I agree with), should the spots in the *Xianshiyuan* be less than the number of qualified applicants, the successful candidate may be chosen at random, or worse, by corrupt means, breeding discontent among the people and leading to a loss of the trust so essential to the functioning of this system (Bai, 2019, 74). He opines that the *junzi* in the upper house should not be given *too* much power, for that may lead to

a slippery slope. Rather, the “elite branch” should be regulated by a “respectable and stable rule of law” and checked by the “house of the people” (Bai, 2019, 89–90). In this way, meritocracy serves as a check to democracy, and democracy as a check to meritocracy. While Bai acknowledges that there is no real way to guarantee that those in the upper house would *definitely* make wiser and better-informed political decisions than the common people, he expresses a hope that the qualities of moral values and extensive experience, by which the ruling elite are selected, would facilitate this desired result (Bai, 2019, 90–95).

Therefore, as evinced by these examples, a political system that integrates positive aspects of both Confucianism and democracy is possible. While its true efficacy can only be determined by empirical experimentation, it is at least a viable idea.

IV. Conclusion: Opposites Attract

While my vision of Confucian democracy was constructed using rather liberal interpretations of the two concepts, it must be acknowledged that one's assessment of its compatibility greatly hinges upon how strict one is with their definitions and technicalities; while I am not a purist in this regard, others may very well be, and would thus reasonably disagree with my conclusions. Also, as mentioned in the previous section, the question of feasibility continues to loom large, since this relatively novel political system has yet to be extensively tested in the real world, especially outside Asia. When it comes to real-world stress testing, we do not yet know how the cards will fall.

Ultimately, however, the idea of a Confucian democracy is so worthy of pursuing—at least in my opinion—because it represents a fusion of East and West, old and new, that is fascinating in its uniqueness. It is a perfect example of how two ostensibly contradictory concepts can be combined into a novel idea that draws out the positive traits of both while leaving aside the negatives. In fact, it is symbolic of our modern times, where binaries are being broken down, and dichotomies destroyed. It teaches us an important lesson: that not everything is as different as it seems, and, stripped down to the core, most things are surprisingly similar. For all these reasons, a Confucian democracy is an incredibly interesting concept at its core; political philosophers seeking to resolve the problems of today's democracies would be remiss not to consider it.

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Brain Death and Organ Procurement: Definitions and Decisions

In this paper, I examine the question: *Is it morally permissible to procure organs from patients who are brain dead?* The ethical concern arises because there are some who consider brain dead patients to not truly be dead, thus making it immoral to procure their organs. My thesis — in which I argue that it *is* morally permissible to procure organs from brain dead patients — responds to this concern in three parts, taking counterarguments into account: first, I will explain how brain death is a “legal death” (instead of biological death) that is both not painful nor harmful to the patient and advantageous to society. Then, I will explain how society has also deemed it morally permissible for hospitals to procure organs from bodies that are technically biologically alive, as in donation after cardiac death (DCD). Finally, I state that while it is morally permissible to procure organs from patients who are brain dead, it is not ethically required, so policies should allow families of patients to keep the patient on an artificial life support machine and reject organ procurement.

Philosophers have wrestled with the definition of death for centuries. Modern medical ethicist James Bernat defines death as “irreversible and permanent loss of the critical functions of the organism as a whole” (Bernat, 38). Following definition, Bernat asserts, we must then identify criterion for death, then tests for the criterion. While other ethicists are willing to assume Bernat’s definition of death as permanent cessation of the integrated functioning of the whole organism (Chiong, 22), many disagree with his support for the “whole-brain” death criterion, which posits that when the entire brain ceases to function, the person dies. The connection

between death and brain death have grown obscure as modern medicine allows the body to grow and “live” despite full cessation of brain function. Alan Shewmon identified 175 cases where bodies of patients who fulfilled the whole-brain criterion of death were maintained for days, even years, with little more than mechanical ventilation. Among these patients, 13 successfully gestated a fetus, 2 children sexually matured, and all exhibited a “litany of non-brain-mediated somatically integrative functions” (Chiong, 22). This idea that brain death cannot equate death sparks debate, as it contradicts our currently common medical practice of procuring vital organs or withdrawing treatment from brain dead patients who maintain other bodily functions, under the assumption they are dead.

I argue it is morally permissible to procure organs from patients who are brain dead, because brain death is a societal construct that benefits the greater good with no harm to the patient. I also argue that moral permissibility of organ procurement from brain dead patients does not mean enforcement of procuring organs after brain death, because this decision derives from personal beliefs on whether humans can be considered functioning — or life be meaningful — with no brain activity. Therefore, the decision as to whether the patient donates organs once brain death is diagnosed should be left to the patient themselves while still conscious, or to their guardian, closest living relatives, or loved ones.

To justify procuring organs after brain death, Truog and Miller from the National Institutes of Health argue that brain death is a social construct, to be viewed differently from clinical death. Life and death are mutually exclusive, and one cannot be *more* or *less* dead. “Brain death” then, is the state of having a body which is alive, but under law you are considered dead. Another example of “legal fiction” is legal blindness: if your vision is less than 20/200, you are legally blind despite not being biologically blind. The advantage of this legal fiction is to

draw lines for social decisions, such as weighing if you qualify for disability support, or should be allowed to hold a driver's license. Likewise, viewing brain death as legal and not biological would serve perceived public policy needs, namely organ donation (Truog, 10).

Opponents may claim brain death cannot be legal fiction because the people who benefit are not the one whom the fiction is imposed upon (as it is in the case of being deemed legally blind). This counterargument is founded on the disjunction between the effects of legal blindness and legal death, which are: recognizing an individual as legally blind may grant this *same* individual certain social services, while recognizing an individual as legally dead will benefit *another* individual while sacrificing the first. I argue that the idea that organ procurement is done at the unfair expense of the brain dead patient is invalid because the patient themselves, from the point of being brain dead, can be neither benefited nor harmed, since they have no brain function, and thus no consciousness, no will, nor plans for the future. As brain death is also irreversible, there is also no future at all for the individual who is brain dead. Additionally, from a utilitarian perspective, legal fiction is very favorable because it emphasizes the greater good. According to the U.S. Health Resources and Service Administration, over 100,000 people are on the national organ transplant waiting list, and 17 people die each day waiting for a transplant (2022). In healthcare, well-being of the majority — in this case, multiple other lives that can be restored to health thanks to donated organs — is a greater good that can be achieved if we were to use brain death as a socially beneficial legal fiction.

Opponents of my argument may believe it is intuitively immoral to procure organs from a human body that is not biologically dead, even if they are declared legally dead. Opponents may also ask: would you procure organs from a patient in a persistent vegetative state (PVS)? No, of course not, because PVS patients have a chance of being resuscitated, while brain dead patients

do not. Also there is no debate over whether PVS patients are alive or not; they are considered alive and also different from brain dead patients because they have a functioning brain stem and can usually breathe on their own.

As for brain dead patients, if we agree that they are legally dead but biologically alive, it may seem intuitive that they should not lose their vital organs. However, hospitals are already taking organs from bodies technically still alive, and society has accepted that to be morally permissible. Consider organ donation after cardiac death (DCD). Many of these donations are examples of when organs are procured from a body that is technically still alive. Most donations after cardiac death cases occur after a family decision to withdraw life support, and cardiac arrest results. If in 2-5 minutes the heart does not begin beating on its own, it will never beat on its own, so death is declared (Marquis, 24). Since electric shocks can resume a heartbeat, or in rare cases the heart may begin beating after 5 minutes, some have questioned whether donors are biologically dead. However, many responses support assigning a legal status of death of DCD donors rather than classifying them biologically. For one, Bernat argued that “since the loss of circulation in these patients is permanent and soon will become irreversible, it is acceptable to treat them as if the loss is irreversible at an earlier point in time” (Truog, 11). Also, in DCD cases, it is not removing livers and kidneys from patients that causes death; it is the removal of life support, done under consent. The principle that it is wrong to kill an innocent human to save another human is not violated in DCD cases (Marquis, 30). If legal death is accepted in this case, it suggests the moral permissibility to procure organs from a patient who is brain dead also.

What follows if we deem organ procurement from brain dead patients morally permissible? I argue that the choice of whether an individual’s organs are procured after they are declared brain dead should remain within personal jurisdiction. Organ procurement in regular

deaths is morally permissible because we have legal consent from the patient prior to death. I propose that when we ask individuals whether they are willing to become organ donors (usually when they receive or renew their driver's license), we also ask if they are willing to become organ donors when brain dead. This leaves the individual to choose whether to accept the social construct of brain death.

Returning to Bernat's definition of death as the "irreversible and permanent loss of the critical functions of the organism as a whole," I argue that the phrase "loss of critical functions" begs the question of what "function" of a human organism means. I believe that is up for individuals to decide, not the hospital nor state through a blanket policy, in order to allow for religious and individual freedoms, and in order to allow people to assign meaning to their own lives. Some may argue the function is simply physical: keep the blood flowing, heart beating, lungs breathing. However, others may argue human life holds fundamental value deeper than the life of a single-cell organism. People who believe in this deeper or perhaps less biological, more spiritual function, believe that consciousness, will or desire, and purpose are crucial components to life. Thus, being brain dead would place the individual in a status "as good as dead." To lose all brain activity irreversibly would mean the loss of a most critical function, and thus these persons would be willing to donate their organs upon brain death.

Opponents of this view may raise concerns regarding the arbitrariness of considering death to be a social construct and allowing people to make their own decisions about whether or not their organs should be donated after brain death. If death can be a social construct, where do we draw the line? If there were an extreme shortage of organs, would it become morally permissible to harvest the organs of a PVS patient? Or if one person declared to believe

themselves dead only after their body begins to decompose, even after a cessation of all vital functions, could they legally be considered alive (and thus not buried, or not transfer property)?

I reject these concerns of arbitrariness because they are irrelevant to legal ethical action. The ethics of organ donation will not matter in such outlandish cases, for example a decomposing body. When we give the individual the right to choose, we are giving them three options to choose between: 1) become an organ donor upon death, 2) become an organ donor upon brain death, or 3) do not become an organ donor at all. Each option is medically sound, and I believe any medical professional would debunk the claim that a person is alive until the point of decomposition, or that a PVS patient is as good as dead. The fact that no patient declared brain dead has ever regained consciousness (Senelick) — in contrast to the numerous PVS patients who have — I find a clear medical difference between the groups and no need to fear for organs being procured from the latter. However, we are able to add brain death to the checklist of options for becoming an organ donor only because of technological and medical advances of the past few decades. Perhaps in the future, our policies and moral discernments regarding this process of organ donation — whether it's diagnosis of someone as brain dead, the surgical procedure of procuring organs, or perhaps even resuscitating someone who is brain dead — may change as technological and medical advances continue to evolve. But for now, the choice of whether or not we procure organs from brain dead patients must be constrained within the reasonable limits of scientific soundness regarding brain death, and these limits are currently well-defined and support such organ procurement.

Finally, regarding those who outrightly refuse to acknowledge legal brain death under the genuine belief that someone who is brain dead is wholly alive, simply ill, and may even wake up, I argue that patients in these cases should be allowed to be kept on life support, and their organs

should not be procured upon brain death. If the individual themselves have already answered the question (whether they want to become an organ donor upon death, or upon brain death) we should respect their wishes made while living, even in death, the same way that we honor legal wills and declarations. If a grown adult has *not* stated a desire to be left off life-support, or donate healthy organs upon brain death, then the choice may be left to their closest family. Many cases in which we see families unwilling to “let go” are when parents vehemently object to the discontinuation of ventilation and care for their child who is declared brain dead. I argue that the parents have a right to not let go. Even from a utilitarian perspective, allowing families to care for loved ones in this way, especially if they believe their patient to be alive, should be good for overall well-being. And even if someone in the ward next door needs an organ transplant, there is no law declaring people must be good samaritans or kindly give up their own organs. It is morally permissible to procure organs from brain dead patients, but it is not ethically required. It may not be the most moral decision for a family to ignore the sufferings of others for the sake of keeping the brain dead patient living off life-support with no hope of recovering consciousness, but the hospital and the state do not have the right to take away that decision from this family.

In conclusion, the legal concept of brain death is a social construct that gives us the option for procuring organs from patients who are brain dead, so we should adopt this as a socially beneficial policy (in fact, we already do similarly in DCD cases). While this view of brain death allows for the organs of brain dead patients to be procured, and for these patients to be treated as dead, it is ultimately still up to the individuals involved in each case to decide, because interpreting death is so closely linked to personal values, which should not be controlled by policy. Some may be concerned that this view essentially allows people to decide on their own definition of death. I argue however that we are not allowing people to redefine death —

instead, we are allowing them to choose whether they consider brain death to fall under biological death depending on what they believe the function of a human life to be. In a sense, then, we are allowing individuals to define the meaning of their life, and choose when to give up their lives to help others, which I believe to be very moral indeed.

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Appearance and Truth: Kernels of Moderation Found in Nietzsche's Maximalism

In the preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes his early intention “to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life.” (BoT, 5) While this task reflects Nietzsche's discussion of art in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it also illustrates a common thread throughout his oeuvre. This task, which he claims to not have “grown any more of a stranger to,” (BoT, 5) demonstrates Nietzsche's belief that art and science should be viewed through the lens of life. This paper aims to explore Nietzsche's undertaking of this task through the will to truth and the will to appearance. The will to truth—often exemplified in science—and the will to appearance—often exemplified in art—are two major drives constantly at work. A tension between these drives is impressed upon the reader throughout Nietzsche's works. Ironically, behind Nietzsche's ostentatious diction seems to lie a layer of moderation; his works indicate that in order to flourish and live a good life, neither drive should dominate. Each drive becomes pathological when in its absolute or hypertrophied form, but benign when exhibited in moderation. The “great health” can be interpreted as a consequence of the balance between the will to truth and the will to appearance, which allows one to live a deeper life. Through this balancing act, one is able to affirm one's life in a manner that would likely not be possible otherwise according to the terms established by Nietzsche. We will later see that this moderation actually facilitates Nietzsche's maximalist outlook on life.

This paper examines the idea that the enthusiasm for life which Nietzsche espouses is paradoxically achieved by finding an equilibrium between the will to appearance and the will to truth. These counteracting drives find—according to the thesis—their fullest expression in the

life of a particular individual when used to balance one another. Throughout the paper we will examine Nietzsche's perspective on the "good life"¹ which allows the individual to flourish. Subsequently, through the analysis of Nietzsche's concept of the will to truth and the will to appearance across various texts within his oeuvre, this paper aims to demonstrate how the two are brought together to bring an enthusiasm for life that allows one to love one's fate, thereby affirming one's own life. This discussion often hinges upon his idea of the great health, a concept that we will contextualize before concerning ourselves with the main thesis.

The "great health" (GS, 246) which Nietzsche espouses in *The Gay Science* underpins his perspective on human flourishing, and allows us to view Nietzsche's writings through the "prism of life." In the preface to *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche states that "Only great pain is the liberator of the spirit... I doubt that such pain makes us 'better'—but I know that it makes us *deeper*." (GS, 6-7) Here Nietzsche defines one of his major goals: to live life *deeply*. This goal is only accomplished through the embracement of life, which brings with it both pain and pleasure. In order to flourish, one must live abundantly, because "if you want to decrease and diminish people's susceptibility to pain, you also have to decrease and diminish their *capacity for joy*." (GS, 38) This indicates Nietzsche's ardent belief in maximalism; one has to experience pain in order to experience greater pleasure, but one should not simply endure pain and enjoy pleasure.

Behind Nietzsche's maximalism lies a goal. To merely endure life is to view life as something to be endured, perhaps accepting the joy while discarding the bad. Nietzsche would rather that one affirm life in all its contrasting forms. Affirmation implies enthusiasm and

¹ "Good life" here is used in a strictly non-moral sense; this paper is not concerned with the moral good life, but rather with living *well* according to Nietzsche. The discussion of living well in Nietzsche's thought may not be entirely non-moral; however, the moral implications of this life are not the focus of this paper.

engagement with one's experience as opposed to detachment. This is why music, dancing, cheerfulness, forgetfulness, experimentation, and most importantly self-overcoming (GoM, 117) become major motifs for Nietzsche. These motifs converge to form "the great health," (GS, 246) which forges individuals who are "braver... than is prudent... often suffering shipwreck and damage, but... healthier than one would like to admit, dangerously healthy." (GS, 246-247) This "superhuman well-being and benevolence... will often appear *inhuman*" (GS, 247) because it rejects seriousness in favor of playfulness and naive experimentation, and results in a herculean enthusiasm for life. The great health also depends on the idea of *amor fati*, or "love of one's fate." (GS, 157) In order to appreciate life as one does with the great health, one needs to have the ability to love one's fate. Key to this discussion is the idea of *affirmation*; to love one's fate is to affirm it, and to affirm one's life is to live healthily. The great health is the most probable lens through which Nietzsche views the importance of the twin drives to appearance and truth; a drive is only healthy insofar as it supports the great health, and unhealthy to the extent that it impedes it. With a basic framing of Nietzsche's terms, we will begin to analyze the first drive: the will to truth.

When Nietzsche describes the will to truth in *The Gay Science*, it seems as though it is something malignant. The unconditional will to truth—as Nietzsche describes it—is the drive towards truth as a metaphysically valuable object in itself; it is associated with Science and other forms of asceticism² (GoM, 109-111). According to Nietzsche, the unconditional will to truth relies upon the claim that "nothing is more necessary than truth; and in relation to it, everything

² Asceticism as used here has a definition specific to Nietzsche, which is developed throughout this paragraph. As used in this paragraph, an ascetic ideal is something that is placed above all else in importance, ultimately leading to the denial of life (GoM, 109-111).

else has only secondary value.” (GS, 200) However, Nietzsche notices that there is no reason to believe that truth is always better than deception, and that as a result, the unconditional will to truth seems to rest upon “metaphysical faith.” (GS, 201) He also claims that “those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense...*thereby affirm another world than that of life...*” (GS, 201) Unconditional proponents of the will to truth place it on an other-worldly pedestal, because they aim to place truth above all else. This results in a drive which is hostile to life, because life does not seem capable of providing us with the ultimate truths that are desired by the absolute will to truth. In *The Genealogy of Morality* this realization leads Nietzsche to claim that the unconditional will to truth “is the belief in the ascetic ideal itself...” (GoM, 109-110) because it attempts place the ideal of truth *above* existence. Because this unconditional will places truth above all else, Nietzsche regards it as the “will to self-belittlement” and as a root cause of “self-contempt.” (GoM, 112) While this characterization of the will to truth is altogether negative, it should be noted that Nietzsche only seems to be opposed to the *unconditional* will to truth. The will to truth may be less harmful if it does not aim for unconditional or absolute truth.

The will to truth is simply the drive towards the truth. In its unconditional form, Nietzsche clearly finds it deleterious to human life, because it makes an abstract and absolute form of truth³ one’s *only* goal above all others; this puts the affirmation of one’s own existence in jeopardy. However, the will to truth in its moderated form appears to be benign. For example, Nietzsche’s concept of *amor fati* depends on some recognition of truth, because it is the active affirmation of one’s life (GS, 157). In order to love one’s fate, one must decide not to “allow

³ Consider absolute truth as the goal of the unconditional will to truth. For the purposes of this paper, ultimate truth, abstract truth, and absolute truth refer to the unmitigated sort of truth that the unconditional will to truth strives to reach.

oneself to be deceived” (GS, 200) to some extent. One must first accept the truth of one’s existence in order to affirm it, which implies that one must exhibit the will to truth in some capacity to embrace *amor fati*. But this more modest will to truth differs from the unconditional will to truth in that it makes no claims about the metaphysical value of some abstract truth; it simply supports the recognition of reality as truth so long as it allows one to affirm oneself and to support the great health. The will to truth is not damaging to the health if it does not attempt to dominate one’s life and “sacrifice all other convictions to itself.” (GS, 200) Therefore, a moderate sense of the will to truth—which is not constrained by a quest for some absolute truth—seems to be supported in Nietzsche’s philosophy. It appears that the will to truth becomes ascetic when hypertrophied, but helpful when moderated. The will to appearance also exhibits moderate and dominating forms.

In opposition to the will to truth, Nietzsche often discusses the will to appearance, or the will to deception. In *The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche claims that art is the practice in which “the lie hallows itself,” and in which the “will to deception⁴ has good conscience on its side.” (GoM, 111) This will to appearance opposes the ascetic ideal because it counters the search for an ideal truth. Art is an inherently deceptive practice, because one plays with appearances which are merely tangentially related to reality.⁵ The will to appearance can be a positive drive when it promotes good conscience, preventing one from feeling shame for oneself or one’s existence; however, like the will to truth, it can also become a negative drive when

⁴ In this case, deception has a positive connotation, and can be aligned with the idea of appearance. Nietzsche’s flamboyant word-choice is often intentionally subversive.

⁵ Even the most realistic painters fail to capture the event that they strive to portray. In this sense, they do not deal with “truth,” but rather representation. A more expansive paper might consider the connections between the contents of this paper and the Apollonian and Dionysian, aesthetic principles that Nietzsche describes in the *Birth of Tragedy*.

overdeveloped. Interestingly, both drives can deceive⁶ one into denying part of one's own existence.

In "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," Nietzsche introduces two types of men: the "man of reason" and the "man of intuition" (BOT, 152). "Both desire to rule over life," (BOT, 152) and serve as perfect examples of how one will deceive oneself and deny life by either overstating the will to appearance or the will to truth. Nietzsche associates the man of reason's methods with *coping*. The man of reason deals with his problems by approaching them stoically; he "governs himself by means of concepts," (BOT, 152) using reasoning in order to deal with life. According to Nietzsche, the man of reason "performs, in the midst of misfortune, a masterpiece of pretense." (BOT, 153) The man of reason appeals to abstraction as a means of "warding off misfortune," however he does not derive happiness from abstraction, and "strives merely to be as free as possible of pain." (BOT, 153) Reason provides a pretense because it allows him to maintain a "dignified equilibrium" (BOT, 153) which is barely human. Clearly, the man of reason does not exhibit the great health. Instead of embracing life as it is and charging naively towards self-overcoming, the man of reason uses concepts and his ordered view of reality to render his life tepid. Ironically, the man of reason's stoic, ordered demeanor is as *deceptive* as a mask; his defense against misfortune requires that he blunt the experience of existence. Here, the will to truth becomes hypertrophied because it is used to *deal with* life rather than to affirm it.

The man of intuition also uses pretense, but in a different fashion. In an attempt to "rule over life," the man of intuition "only acknowledges life as real when it is disguised as beauty and

⁶ Deception in this case has a negative connotation, as it implies the rejection of a part of one's existence.

appearance,” (BOT, 152) and, “when he suffers, he suffers more severely... and knows no solace.” (BOT, 152) In this case, the will to appearance is used in order to blatantly disregard the man of intuition’s own reality. The will to appearance displaces truth, and attempts to take charge of his life. This prevents the man of intuition from being able to affirm his own life, because he is unable to appreciate the life that is truly in front of him; he is, in a sense, *too* playful. While Nietzsche would likely appreciate the man of intuition more than the man of reason because of his closer alignment with maximalism, it appears that neither paradigm fits with the great health. The man of reason represents the will to truth in its hypertrophied form, and similarly, the man of intuition represents the will to appearance in its hypertrophied form. The wills to appearance and truth can therefore become malignant; when they attempt to *dominate* life, each is as deceptive as the other.

Now that we have analyzed the will to truth and the will to appearance, it is important to understand how they might interact to form the great health and *amor fati*. The major question to be answered is: how can one love fate? The stoics learned how to bear fate, but more in the way that a fortress bears an assault. In order to truly embody *amor fati*, one cannot merely bear fate; one must love it. It is clear that in order to love one’s fate, one must first accept it, but love encompasses more than simple acceptance. This fact is best understood through the thought experiment of eternal recurrence. If one were asked the “question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’” (GS, 194) this thought could lie on one’s actions “as the heaviest weight,” (GS, 194) because it gives so much gravity to each action. To truly love and affirm one’s fate Nietzsche believes one must will their existence to repeat itself in this sense. However, the thought of eternal recurrence could become so heavy that it becomes an

encumbrance. To continue to love one's fate, it seems that one needs to use appearance as well as truth.

Nietzsche believes that it is impossible to love one's fate without appearance, which helps one to adequately separate oneself from the weight of true existence. The "good will to appearance" allows one to view existence "as an aesthetic phenomenon." (GS, 104) Nietzsche claims that "At times we need to have a rest from ourselves by looking at and down at ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *at* ourselves or crying *at* ourselves." (GS, 104) This distance is essential to Nietzsche's understanding of the good will to appearance, because it allows one to temporarily separate oneself from one's immediate existence. One can laugh or cry *at* oneself because one is no longer living "entirely under the spell of that perspective which makes the nearest and most vulgar appear tremendously big and as reality itself." (GS, 79) This first-person perspective can often cause anxiety and shame, because if one is worried about the tragic features of existence—like its lack of inherent meaning—one is unable to accept them. The "fool's cap" (GS, 104) which one dons through appearance lightens the load of existence, and allows one to view reality from afar in a more light-hearted and liberating way. One can find delight and beauty in the tragedy of existence. This is beneficial because one is no longer "afraid of slipping and falling at any moment;" (GS, 105) one can embrace life and feel more free for experimentation and self-overcoming—two major features of the great health. It is essential to note that this good will to appearance does not define the individual or his or her life; artistic distance is used to supplement reality—not to supplant it. When the will to appearance is overdeveloped, one is not be able to love one's fate, but suffers more greatly like the man of intuition, or merely keeps misfortune at bay like the man of reason.

The “good will to appearance” allows one to truly love fate, because through appearance one rids oneself of shame so that one can “float and play above” (GS, 105) morality and those other demands that we make for ourselves. The sense of aesthetic distance is essential, because it not only provides repose—as though one can simply float above everything—but also a sense of longing. In an enigmatic section in *The Gay Science* entitled *women and their action at a distance*, Nietzsche asserts that “the magic and the most powerful effect of women is...*actio in distans*: but that requires, first and foremost — *distance!*” (GS, 71) According to Nietzsche this magical effect allows one to feel as though one can “move over existence.” (GS, 71) Distance thus creates not only a sense of suspension from immediate existence, but also a sense of *longing*. We can draw a parallel between this section and the discussion of the “good will to appearance,” because aesthetic distance seems to provide the longing required for love. However, *amor fati* does not merely consist in longing for existence, as it also requires actively *existing*.

Nietzsche writes about love as something that “must be learned” (GS, 187) as one becomes more familiar with its object. Just as in music, “one needs good will and effort to stand...” this object “...despite its strangeness; patience with its appearance and expression, and kindheartedness about its oddity.” (GS, 186) It is useful to consider this description of love as it relates to *amor fati*. One finds delight and longing for existence in the will to appearance, but one cannot love one’s fate without a distinct familiarity of it. This familiarity is only possible through the acceptance of fate and of one’s own existence. Thus *amor fati* seems to be the result of a balancing act between the will to truth and the will to appearance, where neither drive dominates, and each accompanies the other.

There clearly exists a tension between the will to appearance and the will to truth; however, it appears that one needs both in order to exhibit *amor fati* and consequently enjoy the great health. A moderate version of the will to appearance helps one to find delight in one's fate, and the moderated will to truth allows one to actually accept it. With this mixture of drives, one can face life with a child-like naiveté that paves the way for self-overcoming, and thus allows one to—not only experience, but in fact *affirm*—both great pain and pleasure. This great health is the “dangerous” enthusiasm for life that allows one to live more deeply. Surprisingly, we find that Nietzsche's philosophy supports maximalism through moderation, as two regulated drives can create an abundance of life.

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An Ethical Argument for the Reparation of the Conditions of African Americans

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Section 1: A Thick Description of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

Ethnography is the scientific process by which ethicists place themselves in cultures or societies in order to aptly study and describe cultures and human behaviors. In *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, the famous American anthropologist Clifford Geertz stated “Ethnography is thick description.”¹ Thick description is an appropriate method for introducing the topic of post traumatic slave syndrome.

Plomer Harshaw was an 86 year old former slave who lived in Muskogee, Oklahoma at the time of the interview. Plomer Harshaw detailed the violent treatment slaves were subjected to stating

There was lots of means things done in the slave days. Both the white people and the negroes was wrong part of the time... It happened on our own place. Master had a hickory club and was going to lay it on but the negro grabbed that stick and took it away from master. Then he run, out toward some bushes. But that was far as he got. The dogs leap on him and tear him to pieces. I saw it with my own eyes. (Lankford, 6)

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Strikingly, Plomer Harshaw described the actions of the master and the rebellious slave as being wrong. Harshaw also described how slaves were further dehumanized at “nigger shows” stating “The ones going to be sold was stripped down to show off the muscles. Like folks buy a horse, they look at the teeth.”³

Frances Banks was born near Doaksville, Oklahoma before the Civil War. She stated “Old master wanted all his young slaves to grow up strong and natchel like, and none of us never done no hard work till we was plumb grown and matured.”⁴ Another important quote from Banks reads “I never did learn to read though some day I’s e gwine to be wid my old friends and

¹ Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, 10

² George E. Lankford, *Bearing Witness : Memories of Arkansas Slavery*, 6

³ George E. Lankford, *Bearing Witness : Memories of Arkansas Slavery*, 7

⁴ Baker & Baker, *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, 28

if our skins here are black, dey wont be no colors in heaven, our souls will all be white.”⁵ This quote is striking. From Banks’ perspective heaven, which she insinuates is an ideal society, is one without diversity. White is the only color in heaven whereas black and all other colors have no place there. This interpretation by Frances Banks possibly reflects what may likely be poor self-esteem and internalized hatred.

African American Health and Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: A Terror Management Theory Account explains poor social and psychological wellness in African Americans by investigating the causes and effects of post traumatic slave syndrome. Post Traumatic slave syndrome asserts the traumatic effects of slavery were inherited by successive generations of formerly enslaved African Americans. Halloran states “Akbar (1996) maintained the social and psychological impact of enslavement persisted across generations and still affects the African American personality, in that contemporary Black Americans have inherited an extensive list of dysfunctional attitudes, habits, and behaviors from the era of enslavement”⁶ Epigenetics, the study of the ways in which gene expression is affected by an individual's behaviors and environment, reinforces the claim that post traumatic slave syndrome exists by asserting that the psychological effects of a parent’s environment may be displayed by their children even if they are not exposed to the same or similar environments.⁷ Experiencing trauma likely affected the formerly enslaved and their posterity; consequently, the negative effects on the slaves’ mental health may have been inherited and affected their progeny regardless of the societal factors they experienced⁸. Halloran then states “Theorists on PTSS are also generally in consensus about the

⁵ Baker & Baker, *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, 28

⁶ Michael J. Halloran, *African American Health and Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome: A Terror Management Theory Account*, 6

⁷Michael J. Halloran, *African American Health and Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome: A Terror Management Theory Account*, 6

⁸ See *From Circuits to Chromatin: The Emerging Role of Epigenetics in Mental Health* by Phillips Mews et. al for more about the role of epigenetics on mental health

significant role intergroup processes play in intergenerational transmission of PTSS; negative race relations, prejudice, and oppression have prolonged the trauma of enslavement.”⁹ Systemic racism and discrimination have prolonged the trauma of enslavement. This is achieved by restricting socioeconomic mobility, creating stigma of inferiority, and discriminating against minority groups.¹⁰

The Epidemiologic in Catchment Area Study (ECA), the largest population-based US study of specific psychiatric disorders in persons in treatment, found that adults in the lowest quartile of SES (based on a composite measure of income, education, and occupation) were almost three times more likely to have psychiatric disorder than those in the highest quartile. This strong inverse relationship between SES and psychiatric illness in the ECA was evident for both and whites... It is also likely that residence in the highly segregated, economically impoverished neighborhoods created by institutional racism can adversely affect mental health.¹¹

African Americans have been burdened with enduring the cycle of suffering that was initiated by slavery. Slavery created socioeconomic disparities between African Americans and other racial groups in the United States. Systemic racism following the emancipation of slaves exacerbated preexisting socioeconomic disparities between African Americans and other racial groups thereby adversely affecting the mental health of emancipated slaves and their posterity. The effects of slavery and systemic racism on African Americans are now generational and cyclic. The subjugation of African Americans has placed African Americans in need of government assistance to repair socioeconomic and psychological damages caused by slavery and systemic racism. Consequently, the reparation of the conditions of African Americans, or more commonly referred to as slavery reparations, has been proposed as a possible solution. Slavery reparations is the proposed restitution paid by the U.S. government and qualifying state governments for the damages caused by slavery and systemic racism. The study and discipline

⁹ Michael J. Halloran, *African American Health and Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome: A Terror Management Theory Account*, 6

¹⁰ Morris & Williams Morris, *Racism and Mental Health: The African American Experience*, 243

¹¹ Morris & Williams Morris, *Racism and Mental Health: The African American Experience*, 251

of ethics reinforces the claim that reparations for African Americans are ethical; more specifically, reparations for African Americans are supported by the ethics of care and utilitarianism.¹²

Section 2: An Ethical Argument for the Reparation of African Americans

2.1 The Ethics of Care's Argument for the Reparation of African Americans

Joan Tronto, author of *An Ethic of Care*, stated “Often in our culture, *ethical* and *moral* seem to refer to conformity to set principles and precepts: stealing is wrong, do not lie. ‘Ethics’ and ‘morality’ seem to evoke big questions, impossible dilemmas, or conformity to predetermined codes of behavior. By this account, there is no obvious moral issue in insisting that a dying patient continue to be engaged in life, or in staffing levels in a nursing home.”¹³ The ethics of care implies that relationships and dependencies in human life are morally significant. The ethics of care involves maintaining the world of, and meeting the ends of, ourselves and others. Care is defined as “A species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web”¹⁴ Care ethics is similar to virtue ethics in that they both place an emphasis on the importance of practice. However, care ethics places more emphasis on a mental disposition of concern and the improvement of relationships and social interactions. In care ethics, living a good life entails repairing the world and helping those in need.

¹² For a Kantian argument, see *At the bar of conscience: A Kantian argument for Slavery Reparations* by Jason R. Fisette

¹³ Joan Tronto, *Towards a Feminist Theory of Caring*, 15

¹⁴ Joan Tronto, *Towards a Feminist Theory of Caring*, 40

The ethics of care supports the claim that Americans should provide care to all other Americans whenever necessary because it allows all Americans to live as well as possible. The well-being of every American is necessary to the construction of an America in which all of its citizens may live as well as possible. African Americans must be provided with the necessary care to adequately repair the damages caused by slavery and systemic racism.

It follows from the information given in section one that African Americans are an ethnic group that have suffered from the negative mental effects of slavery, racism, and discrimination. This has caused African Americans to experience precarity. Precarity is one's loss of security in their position in society.¹⁵ The legacy of slavery and systemic racism have effectively disabled socioeconomic mobility and psychological wellness in African American communities. This precarity carries within itself the possibility for change marked by care-based action. If African Americans are assisted with reparations, African Americans will be more well-equipped to improve their lives which, in turn, will improve the lives of all Americans. This is because, as the ethics of care implies, we are all connected in a complex social web. Normatively, the ethics of care seeks to maintain a network of social relations in which the well-being of all care-givers is promoted. Joan Tronto states in *An Ethic of Care*

In general, care judgments require that those involved understand the complexity of the process in which they are enmeshed. Caring involves both rational explications of needs and sympathetic appreciation of emotions. It requires not an abstraction from the concrete case to a universal principle, but an explication of the "full story." Yet, at the same time, those engaged in care practices need to be able to place some distance from their own version of what is happening and other perspectives.¹⁶

The effects of slavery and systemic racism on African Americans have been studied and observed, as evidenced by section one; therefore, it is rational to conclude that there is a necessity for care. It is also important to understand the significance of the thick description in

¹⁵ Anne Allison, *Prekarious Japan*

¹⁶ Joan Tronto, *An Ethic of Care*, 5

section one. The thick description provides the reader with a sympathetic account of the plight of African Americans. It is because reparations are a reaction to a necessity and a reflection of a sympathetic appreciation of emotions that the reparation of African Americans is supported by the ethics of care.

2.2 Utilitarian Argument for the Reparation of African Americans

Consequentialism claims that the moral permissibility of an action is determined by the outcome of the action. In this normative ethical framework, the character of the person performing an action is not of importance. Furthermore, actions do not have internalized good or bad qualities, rather the consequences of an action determines whether it is ethical to perform an action. Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism. Utilitarianism asserts that consequences can be classified as good or bad according to the “principle of utility.” Utility refers to what is good for human beings, and it is most generally understood to refer to the overall welfare or happiness of human beings. To determine whether an act is morally permissible, one must determine if the action will increase the welfare of human beings.

The reparation of African Americans is a morally permissible act according to utilitarianism. Although reparations have not yet been given by the United States federal government to African Americans, the possible effects of giving reparations to African Americans can be reasonably hypothesized. It is reasonable to predict that if reparations will act to reverse the mental health problems facing African American communities, then the welfare of African American communities will be increased. John Stuart Mill states “Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.”¹⁷ It was stated earlier in section one that discrimination and systemic racism

¹⁷ John Stuart Mill, *What Utilitarianism Is*, 7

decreased mental and psychological wellness in African Americans. If reparations effectively reversed this, then they would be promoting happiness because happiness is integral to good mental health. However, not all outcomes of the reparation of African Americans can be reasonably hypothesized to promote happiness. For example, it is likely that there are people who would disapprove of the reparation of African Americans. As a result, their happiness would not be promoted. However, to not support the promotion of happiness elsewhere to preserve one's personal happiness is not morally permissible according to utilitarianism. Withholding the reparation of African Americans to protect an unethical action is also unethical, so African Americans should be assisted with reparations.

Additionally, the intent of the reparation of African Americans is not important. Mill states "He who saves a fellow creature from drowning does what is morally right, whether his motive be duty or the hope of being paid for his trouble."¹⁸ The importance lies in the consequence that a significant population will benefit from the action without also causing detriment to others. Therefore, if the hypothesis holds true, then the reparation of African Americans is morally permissible.

Section 4: Counterarguments and Rebuttals

This section will concern itself with addressing two of the most prominent objections to slavery reparations: the issue of culpability and the impossibility of reparations.

4.1 The Issue of Culpability

U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell has previously stated "None of us currently living are responsible."¹⁹ McConnell used this as a premise in his argument for which he concluded that

¹⁸ John Stuart Mill, *What Utilitarianism Is*, 18

¹⁹ Felicia Sonmez, McConnell says he's against reparations for slavery: 'It would be pretty hard to figure out who to compensate'

African Americans aren't owed slavery reparations. While the claim is certainly true, it is short-sighted. The effects of slavery in the United States have worked to create a society in which there is socioeconomic stratification between African Americans and other races. Consequently, psychological distress and mental health issues are rife in African American communities. This is all to say, the United States is responsible for slavery and all of its immediate consequences, not only the atrocity itself. African Americans are in need of effective aid from the government which would be paid by a portion of citizens' taxes. This is how other Americans can help African Americans in the complex social web. In turn, African Americans would be more able to help other African Americans also. This promotes a society of care-giving in which the overall happiness of those in the society would be increased. From a utilitarian perspective, tax rates can be apportioned based on income so that those who pay taxes will not pay an amount that is to their detriment. In this way the possible economic harm done unto taxpayers is outweighed by the increase in happiness experienced by all Americans.

4.2 The Impossibility of Reparations

The impossibility of reparations is an argument made by writer David Frum. Frum expresses five major points to support his argument: the program will expand to additional groups, the question of who qualifies will become more contested and embittered, side effects will be large and unexpected, the program will cause severe inequities, and the legitimacy of the project will rapidly fade.²⁰ This section will exclude the second point and the fifth point as they aren't claims about ethics. The rebuttal to the first point made by Frum is similar to the argument made in section 4.1 regarding the utilitarian perspective on properly apportioning income-based tax rates to mitigate financial stress and promote the overall happiness of citizens.

²⁰ David Frum, *The Impossibility of Reparations*

The expansion of care by means of reparations is also supported by the ethics of care as doing so would further create a societal web better characterized by care. To refute Frum's third point, his analysis is heavily centered on the notion that slavery reparations will be like affirmative action. This is not necessarily true because opinions about how slavery reparations should be implemented aren't at all concurrent in African American political science. To better substantiate his claim, more than one possible way in which reparations could be implemented should be considered. Lastly, Frum's fourth point argues that not all African Americans are poor and not all non African Americans are rich. He continues by questioning how money should be paid to its beneficiaries. He inquires if it would be need-based or not, and if so, how would necessity be determined?²¹ Similar to the rebuttal of Frum's third point, he is only considering the instance in which African Americans directly receive a sum of money as reparations. There are many more possibilities to consider, and Frum should explain why the scope of his argument doesn't extend beyond this limited perception of what slavery reparations could be.

Section 3: Conclusion

The accounts of Plomer Harshaw, Harry (Jim) Johnson, Anthony Taylor, and Frances Banks among thousands of other slave narratives and research investigating the effects of slavery, racism, and discrimination on the mental health of African Americans substantiate the claim that African Americans are in need of reparations. The study and discipline of ethics reinforces the claim that the reparation of African Americans is ethical; more specifically, the reparation of African Americans is supported by the ethics of care and utilitarianism. The ethics of care identifies a necessity for the reparation of African Americans and sympathy toward African Americans who continue to experience the negative effects that slavery, racism, and discrimination has had on the mental health and overall wellness of African Americans.

²¹ David Frum, *The Impossibility of Reparations*

Utilitarianism identifies the reparation of African Americans as a morally good action because it seeks to promote happiness in the lives of African Americans. Utilitarianism and the ethics of care provide the same verdict on the moral permissibility assisting African American communities with reparations. However, the ethics of care is better equipped to explain what form of reparations should be given to African American communities to facilitate the cleansing of the stain that the slavery, racism, and discrimination have left on African American communities. The ethics of care identifies the precarity that African American communities experience, and implies from a mental disposition of sympathy and concern that there is a moral imperative to repair African American communities. Americans should work together to develop a complex social web of caring and compassionate Americans who understand that the promotion of happiness in others promotes personal happiness. Utilitarianism provides an explanation of moral permissibility that is also to be valued. Utilitarianism's simple yet convincing argument characterizes itself as more readily presentable to the average American citizen. The moral permissibility of the reparation of African Americans from the perspective of utilitarianism is not difficult to understand, it presents an argument that is relatable. Help those in need. The exercise of this simple yet powerful utilitarian message is necessary to the repair of the generational damages of slavery and systemic racism.

Hopefully, the two normative ethical frameworks will be applied to public policy to facilitate the reconstruction of psychological wellness and socioeconomic prosperity in African American communities in the near future. This should be not done not only in the pursuit of promoting the happiness of African Americans, but it should also be done to to construct and maintain an America in which society is characterized by care.

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“The Lunatic, the Lover, and the Poet:” Love and Reason in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare creates a stage on which to explore the intertwining themes of vision and reality, casting the characters into a dream-like state facilitated by fantastical creatures where reality cannot be separated from what one senses. In this setting, Shakespeare is able to explore how these notions of perception and reality come into play in a particular region - love; specifically, how love interplays with reason and rationality, and whether these disparate ideas are truly at odds, or if they can and should be reconciled, providing new light to the classical teachings of Plato and Aristotle. In the final act of the play, when multiple sets of lovers have emerged from a dream-state and have attempted to reconcile their experiences with reality, the Duke of Athens, Theseus, asserts: “Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, / Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend / More than cool reason ever comprehends. / The lunatic, the lover, and the poet / Are of imagination all compact...” (V.I.4-8). In this way, Shakespeare draws a comparison between the lover, the lunatic, and the poet on the basis of their ability to perceive with heightened imagination things not available to the naked, scientific eye. By setting this play in Ancient Athens, Shakespeare is able to show that while love can cause one to perceive things apart from reality, as Plato would argue, this is necessary both to defy social conventions and to make choices guided by practical wisdom, in line with Aristotelian philosophy. And by exploring the classical debate regarding the relationship between love and reason in light of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, it becomes clear that these two notions are married in the figure of the poet, representing one who is able to respond to their emotions through clear articulation.

At first glance, it may seem that Shakespeare is in fact equating love to madness, recognizing that both the lover and the lunatic can have visions that are apart from reality. Plato,

a contemporary philosopher of the lovers in the play, in fact marries these two personas, repudiating “emotion and appetite as corrupting influences, insisting that correct practical judgments are reached only by encouraging the intellect to go off ‘itself by itself,’ free from their influence as far as possible. The condition of the person in which they lead or guide intellect is given the pejorative name of ‘madness,’ which is definitionally contrasted with rationality or soundness of judgment” (Nussbaum 76). Thus, Theseus’ claim is in line with this classical idea of allowing the emotions to guide one’s judgments being equated to “madness,” as in the lunatic and the lover. The character of Helena seems to concur with this equation when she laments an unrequited love from Demetrius, after love has caused her to mistake his baser qualities for virtue. Helena states: “Things base and vile, holding no quantity, / Love can transpose to form and dignity: / Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, / And therefore is wing’d Cupid painted blind; / Nor hath Love’s mind of any judgment taste” (I.II.232-236). In this way, Helena claims that love can in fact cause one’s perceptions to be deceived and prone to error, adding ground to Plato’s belief that following the emotions is incompatible with “soundness of judgment.”

Shakespeare further represents this phenomena in a hyperbolic manner through the romance between Titania, the fairy queen, and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Compelled to fall in love with a weaver whose head has been magically transformed into that of an ass, Titania emphasizes the subconscious and irrational influence of love on the senses, saying, “Mine ear is much enamour’d of thy note; / So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape; / And thy fair virtue’s force perforce doth move me / On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee” (III.I.133-136). Thus Titania, motivated primarily by the sense of sight, errs so much as to devote herself to a literal ass due to the force of “love” - in this case a magical love-juice that has been

poured on her eyes - showing in an extreme exaggeration what Helena has experienced as well, which is love causing one to abandon rationality and misperceive another's virtues. Bottom himself recognizes the mistake, as he responds, "Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for / that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love / keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make / them friends."

(III.I.137-141). In this way Shakespeare presents a contrast between love and reason, especially in the act of choosing whom to dote upon given only sensory perceptions, yet there remains an element of foreshadowing in Bottom's wish. Bottom does not declare that love and reason are incompatible, but rather that they "keep little company together nowadays." Further, by desiring that some "honest neighbors" will reconcile the two forces, Bottom casts a new light on the ensuing experiences of the young lovers in whom love and reason may be united.

Therefore, despite the fact that the characters of Helena and Titania show that love can cause one to err in judgment and misconstrue what one perceives as virtuous, thus equating love to madness under Plato's definition, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* simultaneously implies that love and reason may be reconciled for good. Principally, love as it is represented in the play provides a vehicle for the characters to break free from social conventions and restraints.

Shakespeare places the tale in the setting of Ancient Athens, where legal constraints on marriage and love, particularly in terms of the rights of women, were highly restrictive. If a man wished to marry, "he had to come to an agreement with the father or other *kyrios* of a suitable woman... It was not legally necessary for the woman to be present or to consent or even to know that she was to be married" (MacDowell 86). It is thus highly inconsistent with the norms of this society for women to have had a say in who they were to marry, let alone to stand up against their fathers' wishes, and by setting the play in such a society Shakespeare thereby provides a stage on which

to evaluate how such literal constraints of societal forces on the pursuit of love can be maneuvered against.

In fact, it is precisely because the force of love “knows neither social nor logical compulsion” that it is able to allow its subject to avoid social and, in the case of Ancient Athens, legal constraints (Schalkwyk 16). As argued by David Schalkwyk in his *Shakespeare, Love, and Service*, love’s “performative capacity to see the world differently under its peculiar compulsion gives it the capacity to refuse conventional calls for what may be no more than conventionally accepted notions of reason or restraint” (Schalkwyk 13). Therefore, the uniquely perceptive abilities exclusively available to the lover, the lunatic, and the poet allow these agents to resist conventional restraint. Because of the strong, often subconscious, compulsion associated with bestowing one’s love, “the lover is not open to any other form of external compulsion to look with another’s judgment” (Schalkwyk 14). This is poignantly true in the case of Hermia’s love for Lysander in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. When Hermia refuses to marry the man her father has chosen for her, Demetrius, but rather desires the object of her love, Lysander, her father appeals to Theseus, stating: “I beg the ancient privilege of Athens: / As she is mine, I may dispose of her; / Which shall be either to this gentleman, / Or to her death, according to our law / Immediately provided in that case” (I.I.41-45). In this case, rational judgment would cause Hermia to reject love and the pleasure it may bring in order to avoid ruinous punishment. Yet because the force of love has caused her to remain “untouched by the supposedly objective qualities of empirical sight and rational debate,” Hermia is able to remain steadfast in her devotion to Lysander, choosing to risk everything in running away to the forest with him rather than abide by social conventions (Schalkwyk 16). In this way love actually proves a more virtuous force than mere rationality, causing Hermia to overcome fear and external pressures to

ensure her own happiness. Guided by rationality alone, Hermia would willingly conform to the social and legal constraints of her time, but rather because she has been compelled by love's force to "madness," it can be argued that she has in fact made a choice that can be described as none other than reasonable.

Such a view on love and reason is directly supported by the views of Aristotle, departing from Platonian beliefs that the act of allowing one's emotions to influence their choices can be equated to "madness." In her *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, author Martha C. Nussbaum summarizes Aristotle's philosophy thus: "It is obvious,' he writes, 'that practical wisdom is not scientific understanding.'... For he makes it clear elsewhere that it is in the very nature of truly rational practical choice that it cannot be made more "scientific" without becoming worse. Instead, he tells us, the 'discernment' of the correct choice rests with something that he calls 'perception'" (Nussbaum 54-55). Aristotle therefore goes so far as to equate following one's emotions and imagination not just to reason but to *practical wisdom*, wisdom that comes directly from "perception." And this "perception" is what Theseus claims comes directly from being cast in the role of the lover, the lunatic, and/or the poet, the ability to have "such shaping fantasies" that feed one's imagination.

This can be applied in particular to Hermia's case in choosing to defy both her father and the law of Athens. According to Aristotle, summarized by Nussbaum, "Emotions are composites of belief and feeling, shaped by developing thought and highly discriminating in their reactions. They can lead or guide the perceiving agent, 'marking off' in a concretely imagined situation the objects to be pursued and avoided... Emotion can play a cognitive role, and cognition, if it is to be properly informed, must draw on the work of the emotive elements" (Nussbaum 78). Contrary to the belief that emotions cause one to lack proper judgment, Aristotle thus argues that emotions

actually *sharpen* one's judgment, allowing them to discriminate between objects to be pursued and avoided, and therefore to steadfastly refute social conventions if they do not align with one's idea of virtue. Hence, "Aristotle tells us in no uncertain terms that people of practical wisdom, both in public and in private life, will cultivate emotion and imagination in themselves and in others, and will be very careful not to rely too heavily on a technical or purely intellectual theory that might stifle or impede these responses" (Nussbaum 82). And it would appear that Shakespeare concurs with this philosophy, as evidenced in another play of his portfolio, *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the play, four men choose to avoid women in pursuit of wisdom, believing that books and remote study alone will yield such a result. However, one of the men, Berowne, delivers a momentous monologue that aligns precisely with Aristotle's teachings, stating: "For when would you, my liege, or you, or you, / In leaden contemplation have found out / Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes / Of beauty's tutors have enriched you with? / ...From women's eyes this doctrine I derive. / They sparkle with the right Promethean fire. / They are the books, the arts, the academes / That show, contain, and nourish all the world" (IV.III.294-327). Hence, Berowne emphasizes that love provides what no books or scientific study alone could deliver, which is a true understanding of the world and consequently the accompanying wisdom and virtue that the men are seeking through their sequestering. The underlying themes of *Love's Labour's Lost* thus shed light on what Shakespeare may be trying to convey in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which, as underscored by Aristotle, is that the cultivation of emotion and imagination, often through the vehicle of love, while it causes one to perceive the world differently and perhaps irrationally, actually aids in the making of reasonable decisions and the pursuit of wisdom and virtue.

How, then, can these two seemingly contradictory presentations of the effects of love's imaginative elements - one of the danger of error as in Helena and Titania's case, and one of the benefits of the compelling emotive force of love in aiding one in defying social conventions and making wise decisions - be reconciled? The answer for both Shakespeare and Aristotle lies in the power of poetry and artful language to help make sense of what the perceptions of the lover reveal, thus separating him from the lunatic. In Theseus' comparative speech, after aligning the imagination of the lover to that of the lunatic, he adds the caveat that: "And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen / Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name" (V.I.14-17). It would seem that the role of poetry is therefore to help make sense of what madness and love reveal, to give a name, a concrete identity to the fleeting perceptions of the senses and to set them down in stone. Berowne's speech in *Love's Labour's Lost* picks up this thread and adds that: "Never durst poet touch a pen to write / Until his ink were tempered with Love's sighs" (IV.III.320-321). Hence the notions of poetry and love appear to be inseparable, as the latter feeds the former, which in turn makes sense of and provides concrete identity to the perceptions of the latter. This idea closely mirrors Aristotle's views on emotion and imagination feeding practical wisdom, which are that: "The person of practical wisdom lies surprisingly close to the artist and/or the perceiver of art... in the sense that we are asked to see morality as a type of vision of and response to the particular, an ability that we seek and value in our greatest artists, and especially our novelists... Fine conduct requires above all correct description; such description is itself a form of morally accessible conduct" (Nussbaum 84). Therefore, Aristotle claims that the artist, particularly the novelist, having the ability to perceive moral truth through vision tempered by emotion - specifically the

emotion of love, as Berowne postulates - and to express it in descriptive form, is truly representative of an elevated standard of moral conduct.

Within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, amidst a collection of folly and fancies that span multiple characters and differing trajectories of falling in love, the pair of lovers in which love and reason are truly brought together, in accordance with Bottom's wish, is Helena and Demetrius. After awakening from the effects of the fairies and the disorienting events of the night, only one character's affections are proven different from the previous day: Demetrius. And Demetrius is the only one of the lovers whom Shakespeare provides with the language and ability to express his sentiments. Demetrius exclaims: "And all the faith, the virtue of my heart, / The object and the pleasure of mine eye, / Is only Helena. To her, my lord, / Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia; / But like a sickness did I loathe this food: / But as in health, come to my natural taste" (IV.I.168-173). In accord with Theseus' poet and Aristotle's artist, Demetrius "turns to shapes," or provides a concrete identity to, the perceptions of his lover's eye and thereby proves that this decision is grounded in truth and virtue. Therefore, the role of the fairies' intervention and the love-juice that ultimately makes Demetrius return his affection to Helena is to symbolically represent the intertwined roles of reason and love in proper courtship. As Demetrius first loved Helena and was in fact betrothed to her, it can be assumed that love's vision first caused this enamourment. By contrast, Helena informs the audience that "through Athens I am thought as fair as [Hermia]," meaning that perhaps it was not love's vision at all that made Demetrius switch his pursuit from Helena to Hermia but rather an influence of rationality, as his position of having been granted Hermia's hand by her father represents the rational, socially condoned method of courtship rather than the boundless, irrational path of love (I.II.227). The actions of the fairies in altering Demetrius' affections back to their original muse

is therefore consistent with the view that reason necessitates love and not mere logical and social compulsion. For “not until the imagination of Demetrius has been reoriented (for love waits upon the prompting of imagination) does the love-conflict become amenable to reason. It is for the power beyond reason which works that change that the compulsive magic of the love-juice stands. Far from the irrational in love being a source only of aberrations, it has an essential part in love’s true order” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* cxxxvi). Hence, the resolution of the opening conflict of the play relies on a crucial shift on the part of Demetrius, whereby he abandons rationality - through the love-juice placing him back in the grasp of his original emotions - and finally returns to a state of practical wisdom.

In conclusion, Theseus’ declaration regarding the lover, the lunatic, and the poet can be seen in a new light when viewed in respect to the relationship between Demetrius and Helena in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. While the lover and the lunatic are both apt to fanciful visions and flights of the imagination, Shakespeare’s choice to place the events of the play in the setting of Ancient Athens provides grounds to assess the moral implications of these perceptions. In a society with courtship laws that effectually remove the element of love, Shakespeare shows not only how Hermia is given the strength to forgo rationality and break free from social convention and restraint through the influence of love, but also creates a unique lens through which to view Demetrius’ changing affections. While his love for Helena was first prompted by the lover’s gaze and later reestablished by the fairies’ love-juice - characters and events of which are inherently tied to the concept of the imagination - his “love” for Hermia on the other hand is grounded in societal convention and his accompanying courtship is undertaken in accordance with Athenian law. Love and reason are thereby firmly united when Demetrius ultimately rejects the role of rationality and convention in his choice of a partner and allows love to guide his perceptions once

more, resulting in a poetic declaration of his sentiments. And by solely providing Demetrius of all the lovers the ability to concretely define his experiences, the play seems to support the idea that what ultimately separates the visions of the lover from those of the lunatic is the ability to transform these spectacles into concrete descriptions, which, as Berowne explains in *Love's Labour's Lost*, only a poet inspired by love can truly do. Therefore, while *A Midsummer Night's Dream* plays on two competing philosophical schools of thought of antiquity - those of Plato and Aristotle - in regards to the roles of emotion and imagination in rationality, Shakespeare's distinct portrayal of the path that Demetrius takes in renouncing a rational courtship and returning once more to the original object of his affections, expressed through poetic language, shows how even if the fanciful visions of the lover border on "madness," they are necessary for one's choices to be grounded in reason.

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