

THE SHARED VALUES SOCIETY: ON THE INABILITY TO VALIDATE BELIEFS  
AND ITS EFFECT ON PLURALISTIC GOVERNANCE

By

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## ABSTRACT

The nature of truth affects beliefs in such a way that all worldviews are left on a level playing field, each with no more of an objective claim to truth than any other. As a result, no one worldview has an intrinsic right to dominate the government or, through it, other worldviews. Furthermore, philosophical secularism's noble notion of protecting individual freedoms by limiting the influence of moral values in the government has led to a loss of intergroup bonding and a value vacuum in public life. At the same time, because beliefs constitute some of the most profound aspects of a person's identity, and every person possesses a worldview, each categorical worldview should have a say in how the government operates without these worldviews operating the government. Thus, I contend that a form of consociationalism in which the shared moral values of each worldview present in America are incorporated into governmental operations is not only more favorable than the exclusion of such values but rationally necessary. To practically accomplish this task, I suggest that the federal government convene a temporary Worldview Council comprised of an equal number of representatives from each major worldview in American society. These representatives, joined by teams of researchers, would compromise on a Values Charter detailing the moral values common to all worldviews in America. These values will serve as a guide to governmental legislation and institutional operations. I conclude with an initial list of values that I believe are common to all the worldviews in America and discuss how they might guide future institutions in a Shared Values Society.

*Keywords:* pluralism, secularism, value theory, worldviews, natural language processing

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Shared Values Society (SVS)

Moral Values Table (MVT)

Basic Legitimation Demand (BLD)

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Natural Language Processing (NLP)

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA)

European Parliament (EP)

Statistical Analysis System (SAS)

Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS)

Structural Topic Modeling (STM)



# **The Shared Values Society: On the Inability to Validate Beliefs and Its Effects on Pluralistic Governance**

## **PART 1: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PLURALISM**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The separation of church and state is a pillar of the American project. Since America's founding, the American population has become increasingly diverse, religiously and ideologically (Pluralism Project, n.d.-a). At the same time, secularism's promise of uniting diverse communities has yet to be fulfilled, as is evidenced by the frequent news headlines detailing today's cultural wars concerning areas such as race relations, gender inequality, social justice movements, abortion laws, and Donald Trump (Pew Research Center, 2020; Hunter, 1991; Reyes, 2012). As a result, a dissonance has emerged between the moral values that citizens hold in their private lives and the values present in the public sphere.

Additionally, although *secularism* is often used in academic discussions and news debates, agreement on the term's definition is still lacking. Whereas some define secularism as the attempt to exclude religious influence from the public sphere (Neuhaus, 1988; Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Rosentiel, 2007), others maintain it is the inclusive effort to support freedom of thought (National Secular Society, n.d.; Güllalp, 2022). Wilfred McClay suggested distinguishing these divergent ideas by naming the former "philosophical secularism" and the latter "political secularism" (Rosentiel, 2007, para. 1).

From this perspective, the objective of this thesis is to argue against philosophical secularism and advocate for political secularism. The reason is two-fold: (1) no worldview has any more of a claim to truth than any other, and (2) philosophical

secularism—the exclusion of religious values—does not work in ideologically diverse societies.

This thesis seeks first to demonstrate that the epistemological origins of truth affect beliefs in such a way that all worldviews are left on a level playing field, each with no more of an objective claim to truth than any other. My argument in Chapter 2 is as follows:

1. The truth-claims constituting beliefs are unvalidatable.
2. Worldviews are comprised of beliefs.
3. Therefore, worldviews are unvalidatable.

In this way, I provide a negative argument for the inclusion of moral values, where, as a logical result, no one worldview has an intrinsic right to dominate the government and, through it, other worldviews.

Second, I offer a positive argument in Chapters 3 through 5, which contends that including moral values in governmental operations will yield a more unified society. Chapter 3 begins with a brief analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of today's institutions. Chapter 4 embarks on a thought experiment with an analysis of the hypothetical new system, which I will call the Shared Values Society (SVS). It asserts that because beliefs comprise the deepest aspects of a person's identity (Schwadel et al., 2021), and every person possesses a worldview, each categorical worldview should have a say in how the government operates, without these ideologies themselves operating the government (National Secular Society, n.d.).

In Chapter 5, I analyze the moral values held by the dominant worldviews in American society and present the preliminary Moral Values Table (MVT) (see Appendix

A), and suggest a practical system for incorporating shared values into governmental decision-making. Thus, I use the two arguments above to maintain that including ideological values in the government is more favorable than excluding them.

## **Methods**

To understand the role that worldviews play in government, I first conducted qualitative research by surveying the relevant literature pertaining to value theory and normative political philosophy. I then undertook an inquiry into the epistemology of truth and its logical effects on beliefs and worldviews. This inquiry began with a metaphysical analysis of beliefs and used logical reasoning to pinpoint the effects of belief's composition on worldviews. Next, I examined today's cultural institutions to identify some of their deficiencies. To repair these shortcomings, I used inductive inference to theorize a political system based on the inclusion of worldviews and their underlying moral values. Finally, I identified the primary moral values of each of the ten categorical religions and ideologies that constitute the worldviews present in the American population (Public Religion Research Institute, 2021) by evaluating numerous articles and websites and extracting the values into the MVT (see Table 1).

The worldviews surveyed included Atheism (Atheist Alliance, n.d.; Zindler, n.d.), Buddhism (Chu & Vu, 2022; Saisuta, 2012; United Religions Initiative n.d.), Christianity (Bucher, 2022; Compassion International, n.d.; *English Standard Bible*, 2001/2016; United Religions Initiative, n.d.), Hinduism (Hindu Association of the Northern Territory, n.d.; Srivastava et al., 2013), Islam (Akgunduz, n.d.; Al-Mawdudi, n.d.), Jehovah's Witnesses (Jehovah's Witnesses, n.d.-a; n.a.-b.), Judaism (Freeman, n.d.; Rosenfeld Community of Practice, n.d.), Mormonism (Johnson & Mullins, 1992; Pew

Research Center, 2012; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, n.d.), the Religiously Unaffiliated (Center for Religion and Civic Culture, n.d.; Schwadel et al., 2021), and Unitarianism (American Humanist Association, n.d.; Unitarian Universalist Association, n.d.)

Similar lists of shared moral values have been proposed (Schwartz, 1992; Harbour, 1995; Schwartz, 2005; Swidler, 2014; Curry et al., 2019; Bentahila et al., 2021), and I will utilize both the MVT and Kinnier et al.'s (2011) value list as possible solutions for the “value vacuum” described in Chapter 3. This study uses Schwartz’s (1992) definition of *value*, which is defined as “the criteria people use to select and justify actions and to evaluate people (including the self) and events” (p. 1). The conceptual content of values is further discussed in Chapter 1.

I then conducted quantitative research by utilizing Natural Language Processing (NLP) and the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model for structural topic modeling (STM) on the MVT. Topic modeling produced the ten most salient general topics for the MVT, each composed of the ten most probable words for that topic (see Table 2). I subsequently used the LDA model to condense all the moral values from the MVT into the ten best-fitting categories represented by a single moral value (see Table 3). Further research is needed to understand how private and public institutions might utilize these values in policy legislation as part of a SVS.

## **Literature Review**

The first debate this thesis speaks to concerns the nature of values. Within this debate, two significant schools of thought prevail in modern discussions. On the one hand, value monism asserts that only one intrinsic value exists (Blum, 2023). Under this

single value rests “a faith in the ultimate unity of the moral universe and belief in the singularity, tidiness and completeness of moral and political purposes” (Edyvane & Tillyris, 2019, p. 1). This is not to say that only one value exists, but that there is one value for which all other values exist.

Regarding these secondary values, Moen (2016) suggested that they “gain their worth exclusively by virtue of standing in a contributory relationship to a single intrinsic value” (p. 1380). As such, all secondary values may be ordered according to their contribution to the primary value. Klockslem (2011) pointed out that the many values possible in an object exist as value *states* of the single intrinsic value *type*.

Congruous with the monist tradition is the inability to determine which value constitutes the single intrinsic value and which are the contributing values. Still, monism enjoys a strong heritage in the history of political theory and can be evaluated in the works of authors such as Aristotle, who believed *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing, was the one intrinsic good, Bentham (pleasure), Mill (happiness), Kant (the categorical imperative), Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the modern political realists (power), and Ayn Rand (life) (Klockslem, 2011; Mason, 2023; Mill, 1861/2001; Kant, 1797/2017; Crowder, 2022; Moen, 2012). Value monism likewise finds support from contemporary philosophers like Dworkin (2000) (equality), Rawls (1971/1999) (justice), and Talisse (2011) (pragmatism).

On the other hand, value pluralism contends that many intrinsic values exist and are distinct. Similar to the monists, the pluralists lack agreement on how many intrinsic values exist and what exactly they are. Advocates for value pluralism include Burke (Fives, 2022), Berlin (Crowder, 2020), Kekes (1995), Crowder (1998), Chang (2004),

and Galston (2010), among others (Blum, 2023). Among the distinctive characteristics of pluralism is the concept of incommensurability, which asserts that each of the intrinsic values is a good *in itself* and cannot be ranked in an objective order. If diverse values could be ranked against one another, they must be ranked according to an external standard, an inference affirming the monist's position. For this reason, pluralists view values as incomparable or incommensurable, each value presenting an equally "good" option to choose in real-world dilemmas.

Forrester (2022) further delineates the incommensurability camp into three subgroups. First are those pluralists who maintain that incommensurability is the consequence of vague language. For example, Broome (1997) highlighted the vagueness inherent in the comparative phrase "better than" and suggested that although intrinsic goods could hypothetically be compared, language's inability to distinguish moral characteristics of value instances properly precludes the possibility of determining all value comparisons. The second subgroup is headed by political theorists such as Berlin (Crowder, 2022) and Chang (2002), who claimed that diverse intrinsic values are incommensurable *as such* since values are distinct goods that are equally good, and one is not better than any other. The final subgroup, supported by Forrester (2022), claims that the incommensurability of values is only *apparent* and stems from ignorance concerning how to compare goods. As a result, all goods are viewed as being commensurable, given that the knowledge of how to compare them is discovered.

In addition to the main positions, lesser supported theories include Nietzsche's (1886/1990) monism with persistence on the "will to power" not as a good to be strived for but as the innate drive of natural humanity, Rodríguez-Alcázar's (2017) value

minimalism with its focus on the reciprocal containment of morality and politics, and Kölbel's (2009) value relativism.

The second debate with which this thesis is involved is in identifying the role morality plays in politics. The two main camps in this debate are political realism and political moralism. Political realists believe that individual values and principles are divergent and irreducible. They seek to understand "what the real motivations of people are and how real institutions work at a given time" (Rodríguez, 2017, p. 728). For this reason, realists find that "a modus vivendi without agreement on first principles is often the only practical possibility" (Galston, 2010, p. 385).

Galston (2010) clarifies that realists do not view morality as having no place in politics, but that moral preferences are only one of many pieces of information politicians should consider when making decisions, rather than morality enforcing political obligations or constraints. In this sense, Newey (2010) contended that politics retains a certain normative function but that this function is internal to politics and not influenced by personal moral norms or precepts. Rossi & Jubb (2013) further suggest that William's Basic Legitimation Demand (BLD), which states that legitimacy is inherent in the idea of politics and not a part of a pre-political morality, demonstrates how politics can possess a distinctly political normativity apart from a preeminent morality.

In contrast to realism, political moralism asserts that morality prescribes political behavior. Politics and morality are not distinct arenas with differing rules and principles. Instead, politics is the outgrowth of morality in the collective decision-making sphere, either by prescribing political principles or providing moral constraints on political action (Williams, 2005). Aristotle believed that the critical purpose of politics was the good life

(Crowder, 2022), and Kant (1795/2016) agreed that “all politics must bend the knee to the principle of right” (p. 183). Modern moralists like Rawls (1971/1999) similarly asserted the priority of morality over political considerations. In this way, political moralism rejects the notion of the separation of individual moral principles from political decision-making.

However, as Erman and Möller (2015) pointed out, the “ethics-first” perspective does not preclude politics from retaining some form of autonomy. Erman and Möller (2022) divide political moralism into two views. First, the “domain view” stipulates that the political domain possesses a distinct normativity, though this normativity is moral in nature. Second, the “role view” “traces distinctness to the role-specific demands that normative-political principles make” (p. 305). In this view, normative distinctness is attributed to the role each person plays in society, where complex moral considerations will guide the political actions of citizens differently depending on their societal roles, such as that of parent, politician, voter, judge, or taxpayer. As such, politics is viewed as distinct from morality while still under morality’s purview.

## **Scope**

This thesis follows the overarching arguments given for value pluralism and political moralism, although with some skepticism about the former for the following reasons. The vital points of contention between the monists and pluralists lie in each’s metaphysical evaluation of intrinsic value. Underpinning both theories is the assumption that propositions, concepts, and events do indeed have value in and of themselves. However, the object of a person’s attention lacks meaning or value until meaning is “imputed” to that object through rational analysis on the object’s representation in the



person's mind. In other words, it is the person, not the person's object, that spawns meaning and value. This value is attached in the person's mind to the representation of that object. The object's physical composition, in isolation, is unchanged before and after value is attached to it.

For instance, freedom is a descriptive term used to differentiate the empirical sense of balance from imbalance (also descriptive terms). This term is attached in the mind to an object, such as "religious beliefs," that appears to belong to the same qualities as the descriptive term. This object is then judged by some other normative faculty to determine the object's meaning or value, either good or bad. In other words, freedom as a descriptive concept itself is neither good nor bad; instead, freedom's "value" is rooted in a third party's judgment of the object to which freedom is attached, in this case religious beliefs. This third party may be personal experience, a theoretical subscription, a natural disposition, or anything else. As a result, the debate of intrinsic value does not begin with the inherent nature of objects but with the mind's judgment of that object according to some other moral faculty.

Thus, intrinsic value is not intrinsic. Value, though it may be constrained by reason or the mind's neurology, is attached to the representation of an object's metaphysical makeup constructed in the mind. Although this argument suggests that each person attributes their own sense of value to an object, it does not support the relativistic idea that each person's sense of value is of equal worth with or wholly independent of another person's sense of value.

Some external standard appears to exist that informs a person's sense of value, given the recent empirical studies demonstrating the near equivalence of moral value

definitions and presence in disparate cultures over time (Schwartz, 1992; Harbour, 1995; Kinnier et al., 2000; Schwartz, 2005; Swidler, 2014; Curry et al., 2019; Bentahila et al., 2021), whether the standard is some form of culturally collective intuition, intelligent design, the evolutionary construction of the human mind, natural law, or something else. Otherwise, we might have already observed numerous groups oppositely identifying and defining values, rather than the world's civilizations remaining relatively close in how they define morality. Given this social phenomenon, the arguments contained in this thesis assume a principle similar to Rawls' "reasonable pluralism," suggesting that although a plurality of values exists, these values tend to be closely related to one another and tend to have non-opposing views of the good life (Wenar, 2021).

In this sense, values could be commensurable or incommensurable, given knowledge of the external standard. This metaphysical fact would need to originate from the external standard and not the personal value judgments of individuals since the latter would presuppose not that intrinsic values are incomparable but that personal value judgments are incomparable, leading to personal relativism as the basis for incommensurability. In this way, although values could possibly be commensurable or incommensurable according to an external standard, our lack of knowledge of the standard prevents us from forming a definitive conclusion.

More thought is necessary to prove the unreliability of contemporary value theory and the validity of the above theory, as well as what exactly comprises the external standard. For these reasons, this thesis follows the conclusion that a universal sense of value is expressed in a plurality of real, albeit non-intrinsic, values. Whether these values are commensurable is not necessary knowledge for the arguments that follow.

This thesis also subscribes to political moralism as opposed to political realism. The reason for this follows from contemporary scholarship which asserts that some universal moral values exist (Schwartz, 1992; Kinnier et al., 2000; Schwartz, 2005; Curry et al., 2019; Bentahila et al., 2021), that moral values are closely connected to religious and ideological worldviews (Harbour, 1995; Swidler, 2014; Schwadel et al., 2021), and that these values significantly influence citizen behavior (Ryan, 2014).

Additionally, Schwartz et al. (2014) attempted to extend the Basic Human Values theory into the political sphere. The authors hypothesized that the ten basic human values are the basis for political values. While basic human values represent the overarching goals a person has in their life, core political values symbolize a person's preferences for how a government should be operated.

The authors found that basic values better accounted for the variation in political values among the participants in the cross-national study than did age, gender, education, or income. In other words, the basic human values proved to be a reliable indicator of a person's political preferences. This study also suggested that political movements not rooted in basic human values are less likely to survive in the long term than those that are. Along these lines, this thesis presumes that a plurality of values exists across cultures and informs citizens' political decisions.

Finally, the following arguments support the multiculturalist claim that collective values are vital for individual identities within their larger social context. This theory contrasts the "melting pot" notion and contends that minority populations should not be expected to assimilate into the majority culture, religion, or political ideology, but that each cultural group should enjoy legitimate access to the democratic apparatus.

Multiculturalism also advocates for organizational and governmental restructuring to include the values and views of minority groups in their policies and procedures (Song, 2020).

Kymlicka (2007) further contended that justice for minority groups entails a mixture of targeted policies, in which specific individuals or groups are afforded special rights, and general policies, which extend to all minorities. The thesis that follows is primarily concerned with the notion of multiculturalism as it pertains to the equal representation of religious and ideological values of all worldviews in public institutions. In a Shared Values Society, ideological minorities need not assimilate to dominant worldviews, and governmental legislators can ensure that the moral values of the whole population are considered in public policies.

## **Chapter 2: An Inquiry into the Ontology of Truth**

### **A Universal Acceptance of Ignorance**

People are apt to assume not only that their beliefs are true, but that they are capable of believing the truth in the first place. Moreover, they assume that they *can* know that their beliefs are indeed true. These few assumptions can catapult an otherwise rational person into irrational and harmful behavior, as is evidenced by the historical relationship between ideological differences and the propensity for interstate conflict (Maynard, 2019; Gartzke & Weisiger, 2014). With these assumptions intact, humanity will seldom live peaceably in diverse communities.

In light of this reality, peace may be achieved through the understanding that validated knowledge is not possible for humans. Thus, the limitations inherent in human nature preclude any person from lording their beliefs over another person. The following

section considers this epistemological phenomenon and asserts that a proper understanding of truthful beliefs prepares a diverse society to live peaceably with one another.

### **The Metaphysics of Worldviews**

A *belief* is a proposition a person holds that is informed by experience and reason and to which its possessor attributes likeness to an objective reality. A belief is *true* when it corresponds to objective reality. In this way, *truth* is the content of objective reality. A *worldview* is a system of beliefs through which a person understands themselves, other human beings, and the world around them. Furthermore, a *value*, being the criteria through which people evaluate and justify actions, is the normative consequence of a belief or set of beliefs within a worldview. In this way, every human being possesses a worldview, regardless of their religion, political affiliation, or cultural heritage. The beliefs that make up a person's worldview are gathered from a multiplicity of sources over the course of one's life. For this reason, worldviews are also *fluid* in that they are culpable to change as new information is processed by an individual and credited as closer to objective reality than a previously held belief.

In this way, all people shape their worldview or have it shaped by others by receiving information gained through experience, which is then processed by reason. When multiple people intentionally hold a similar worldview, they comprise an *association* sharing an *ideology*. When this association concerns spiritual propositions, it is a *religion*. The *natural telos* of reason's maintaining a worldview is to create a perception of reality that coincides perfectly with objective reality, even though this is likely unattainable in practice.

The beliefs that constitute a worldview are informed by the experiences a person has. For example, when a person believes that the sky is blue, they mean to say that when they first looked up to where they were told the sky is, the light waves that entered their eyes sent signals to their brain, which reconstructed the experience in their mind. This representation was then joined with the suggestion given by someone, such as a parent, teacher, or friend, who claimed that the perceived sky had a characteristic known as the color blue. In this way, the person's belief about the sky's color is not formed innately but *a posteriori* through their senses and reason. These beliefs, regarding everything from visual descriptions of the world to the existence of God, provide a person with the framework necessary to understand their life and make decisions.

### **On the Standards of Truthfulness**

Every person believes that their beliefs are true. In other words, every human being assumes that the propositions they hold do indeed coincide with objective reality, for, one cannot rationally believe something to be true that they also believe to be false. When reason analyzes these beliefs, the foundations for why a person believes them to be true are readily present. Any belief a person holds is believed by that person to be true because they think the belief accords with either (1) an external standard perceived to be objective, such as a divine command, human reason, or the laws of nature, or (2) an internal standard which is subjective opinion. A person believes something because they perceive it to originate from, or agree with, one of the above standards.

The internal standard of subjective opinion is untrustworthy because the same individual is the receiver of information and the standard, or judge, of its truthfulness. The individual uses her reason to judge whether her experiences coincide with objective

reality. However, because she does not interact with objective reality directly but only through her senses, she possesses a mere *representation* of objective reality. Thus, she is not capable of deciding whether her belief accords with objective reality. In this way, self-deception is inevitable unless the individual is extremely lucky so that all her beliefs happen to accord with objective reality; yet, even in this case, she would still not *know* that her beliefs accord with objective reality and would thus still lack true knowledge.

A similar fate befalls the person who founds his beliefs on what he perceives to be an external objective standard. Whether he concludes that his belief agrees with a divine command, a preeminent philosopher, or the laws of nature, he will only be capable of making that decision by comparing his belief, which is based on his representation of objective reality, with the external standard, of which he is only capable of becoming aware through his senses—by reading a book, being taught by someone else, or his empirical observations. He would be comparing a subjective proposition with a subjective experience to judge whether it coincides with objective reality. This problem may be avoided if a being is able to train—without experience—his rational faculty to a degree that it could faithfully affirm that a belief accords with some sort of *a priori*, or innate, knowledge that also corresponds with objective reality.

However, he could not analyze his reason's ability to judge a belief's correspondence with objective reality without using reason itself. And because he cannot validate that his reason accords with the objective reality, using his rational faculty to analyze his reason is redundantly futile. If one could hypothetically accomplish this feat, we would have to assume that human reason directly interacts with and is familiar with objective reality and can thus faithfully identify a true belief on its own and without the

senses; otherwise, the rational faculty would merely be guessing. As of now, humanity has not identified this kind of innate knowledge, and even if we did, we could not validate that the innate knowledge is telling us the truth since this would require that our use of reason both correctly interact with objective nature and faithfully relay that information to our subjective reality, both of which we cannot validate.

Every standard of truth, internal and external alike, therefore, fails to bridge the gap between objective reality and perceived reality. The dilemma is not that these are unfaithful standards of truth; rather, that a person cannot *know* whether the standard is telling the truth. A command given by God or a proposition from man's reason may well be true in that it accords with objective reality, and a person would do well to believe it; however, because the person's only frame of reference for truth is a *representation* of objective reality, they could never be sure that what they believe is in fact true.

### **On the Separation of Mind and Knowledge**

The only way that a person could *know* that what she believes is true is perhaps if her faculty which is responsible for representing reality could experience objective reality apart from her senses. In this case, although her beliefs about the objective reality would be true, her knowing that this faculty is indeed valid would be an assumption and not testable knowledge. Alternatively, a third party could validate the truthfulness of the belief, such as God or a valid inner sense or feeling. However, a similar dilemma occurs here as well. The validator (e.g., God) may well be truthful in claiming that my belief is accurate, and I might assume that it is, but I could not know that the validator is telling me the truth. I would require yet another validator, and thus unto infinity.

This gap may be bridged if the brain were somehow constructed only to believe



true propositions. However, if this were the case, we would still not be able to trust the information coming from the scientific experiments that tell us that the brain is constructed in this way, even though all our beliefs would happen to be true. One decisive counterexample to this suggestion is that two people can hold contradicting beliefs, with both believing that their belief is true, while logically, only one could be true. An objective validator is required for us to know which belief is true, and the same problem persists. Thus, there is no way to know that a belief is true, even if one proves that it is empirically consistent within their representation of reality. They will still not know that it corresponds with objective reality.

### **On the Likelihood of Truth's Existence**

However, this does not mean that truth does not exist. If truth does not exist, the truth claim made to present this idea is itself a contradiction. Although some have argued that this proposition is not a truth claim but rather an expression of one's opinion, it is not possible to reason about a concept such as truth without first expressing that it is a possibility. If one argues that the existence of truth is indeed possible, but it just happens not to exist, then an objective reality could not exist, and the universe must exist solely inside the mind as in solipsism, or else we are nothing more than brains in vats.

Thus, truth (objective reality) likely exists, and either human beings can or cannot know this truth. If they cannot know the truth, then philosophy and science are useless. If they can, they either (1) know that they know it, (2) do not know that they know it, or (3) do not know that they do not know it. Many claim to behold the truth, but without substantial evidence to support it, and if true knowledge was already known, then the human population likely would have heard about it and believed it. On the other hand,

because humans are not capable of validating the truthfulness of their beliefs, they also cannot know whether they are capable of knowing the truth nor if they are capable yet simply do or do not know the truth yet. Therefore, truth likely exists, and we must assume that we *can* know it; at the same time, however, we are not capable of knowing whether we know it or not. But because every person must make decisions in their daily life, people must believe something, even though they are unable to verify its truthfulness.

Similarly, because humans appear to be predisposed to believe in their own existence and that of perceived objects, despite our inability to validate such beliefs, we tend to assume that an objective reality exists. *If* objects exist outside of our perception—which we have no substantial reason not to believe—objects must dwell in a dichotomous state of either existing or not existing. Logically, objects cannot exist and not exist at the same time and in the same sense. Thus, to assert the existing state of an existing object is to assert a *true* statement, whereas to assert that an existing object does not exist would be a *false* statement since the former statement correlates with objective reality, constituting the assertion's truthfulness. Although a person cannot validate that a perceived object is existing or not, logic dictates that the possibility of existence itself demonstrates the necessity of truth and falsity.

Additionally, if things exist in ontologically dichotomous states, the perception of an object through the senses, though unvalidatable, provides better evidence for its existence than a lack of being perceived. In this way, although the senses likely do not communicate an unfiltered perception of reality to the rational mind, the data they provide represent a closer association to reality than non-perception or pure rational

thought can. In this way, humanity can build airplanes according to the laws of nature and grow wheat according to the best practices of older generations. Although I may not be able to *know* that the computer which I perceive to be in front of me exists, I am still able to reach out and touch an object that is represented in my mind. I cannot be perfectly sure of its existence, but I am naturally dispositioned to believe in its existence. Thus, we live an unideal life on earth, stuck between the planes of true knowledge and utter ignorance, with no indication to which side we are closer. Though beliefs lack validation, worldviews rest on beliefs and are necessary for making daily decisions. In this way, the following arguments assume that truth exists in objective reality and that the senses are indicators—albeit imperfect ones—of this objective reality.

Although one worldview might be true and all others false, humans cannot know which one is true. Because of this, no worldview, whether religious, political, or other has any more of an objective claim to truth than any other. Rather than concluding that the government should become a religious void, a system in which each worldview shares equal representation likely provides a stronger argument toward human flourishing. For this reason, as humans live together in their various societies and cultures, they should prioritize understanding and compromise to make society an inclusive and functional place to live.

### **Validation and Pluralism**

The problem of truth validation relates to pluralism in the following way. Crowder (2022) asserted that a plurality of distinct goods exists, constituting a diversity of values, and that liberal politics provides the best political framework for promoting diverse values. Crowder added that the form of liberalism that best suits diverse values is

egalitarian liberalism, in which negative liberty is balanced with other values like social justice and freedom (p. 222). This contrasts with the Hobbesian theory advanced by Weber, Schmitt, and Mouffe which promotes a diverse society with one ideology dominating the others (p. 220). And finally, that “a global concern for individual autonomy” (p. 223) should take precedence in governing structures.

Crowder (2022) claimed that “From [value diversity] follows a global concern for individual autonomy in the strong sense that pluralists should want people to have the capacity to reflect critically on how they want to live” and “pluralism imposes hard choices on people, especially in the modern world, which can only be navigated, or best be navigated, by those capable of the critical reflection at the heart of strong autonomy” (p. 223).

I follow Crowder’s (2022) assessment of pluralism to a certain point. Where I differ from Crowder is in his leap from liberalism to the necessity of individual autonomy. Instead of vying for personal autonomy, I contend two main arguments:

1. Because truth offers no possibility of validation, no single worldview should dominate governmental legislation.
2. Because values are among the most profound facets of a person’s identity, governmental legislation should embody these values.

As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, individual autonomy has proven harmful to American society in recent decades. Additionally, the promotion of individual autonomy is at the citizen level, not the governmental level. Individual autonomy does not provide a convincing method for producing governmental policies since legislators cannot act autonomously as individuals but rather must act as a part of the public

framework. Legislated autonomy protects citizens' liberties from governmental and private interference, but it does not specify the limits of freedom or public intervention.

For example, protecting citizens' autonomy to practice their religion will prevent harm done to their freedom by the government or other citizens. However, one may speculate that most Americans would prefer not to protect the religious autonomy of violent Islamic jihadists or neo-Nazis residing in America. Unfettered freedom is not viable in diverse societies since differing ideologies tend to conflict in their beliefs and practices. Liberty has limits, and these limits are informed by values. The goal is to find where to place the limit between complete autonomy and total restriction. Thus, autonomy alone does not suffice as the goal of government; instead, a political framework that includes the equal representation of values, not the avoidance of them, provides a foundation for the limits of liberty.

The following chapter analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary American institutions to uncover the obstacles they face, including individualism and moral autonomy, and how the Shared Values Society theory might aid these institutions in promoting diverse values.

### **Chapter 3: Analyzing Current Public Institutions**

Before discussing one practical implementation of the Shared Values Society, this chapter will examine today's political, economic, and cultural institutions. I will review their historical influences, central characteristics, and strengths and weaknesses to illustrate how the lack of publicly endorsed shared values is one possible cause for the cultural clashes that have occurred in recent decades (Pew Research Center, 2020; Hunter, 1991). I further suggest that these clashes are at least partially due to the

ideological diversification of American society coupled with a “value vacuum” in the public sphere that has lead Americans deeper into their in-groups and away from interideological understanding.

The modern age is marked by individualism and moral autonomy. At the core of these concepts are such notions as the separation of church and state, philosophic rationalism, and individual freedom. At the same time, the American population has become more religiously and ideologically diverse. As a result, the values that citizens hold onto in their private lives often do not appear in public life.

This dissonance between private values and public representation might be a cause for the political squabbles America has witnessed in recent decades. Rather than unifying the people, philosophical secularism, by excluding religious influence from public life, has divided citizens who consequently find solace not with other Americans who subscribe to different worldviews than them but by burrowing further into their credal communities.

Instead of receding deeper into exclusive secularism and the privatization of religion, the political, economic, and cultural institutions of America could operate on a set of values shared by the various worldviews present in the country. This “civic faith” could help unify the population and give American society a common goal for which to strive. A system of governance centered on the inclusion of ideologically diverse principles, rather than excluding these principles, can result in a more unified population than the current system can produce.

## **Contentions of the Current System**

### ***Historical Influences***

The political, economic, and cultural institutions present in modern Western Civilization are the products of history. With the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the modern notions of the sovereign nation-state and the separation of church and state came into being (Gülalp, 2022). The political institutions in the West have since been assembled on these foundational conceptions.

Adam Smith, writing in the mid-1700s, presented a comprehensive economic system founded on the idea of free individuals conducting trade in a free market (Ross, 2021). The subsequent wave of capitalism that has occupied a prominent place in Western economies is predicated on the notion of individual liberty and the vilification of governmental interference in certain economic activities.

Following the Protestant Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe, central cultural institutions, particularly Protestant churches and families, became autonomous from the religious papacy and began growing in their faith independently. As the Reformation sparked the beginning of Protestantism, it also became the precursor to religious individualism (Sandefur, 2008). By emphasizing the priesthood of all believers, whereby individual Christians have a direct relationship with God and are thus in no need of a class of human mediators, Protestantism helped birth the notion of individual responsibility and identity before God (Fesko, 2020). Individual responsibility and autonomy have become cornerstones of modern cultural institutions in the West.

Furthering all the proceeding historical influences was the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, which focused on the individual as the center of philosophical and

scientific inquiry. As a result of these forces, Western societies transitioned from their religious-based pasts to an insistence on science and the natural world, contributing to the isolation of individuals from their broader faith communities. Contrasting the current political, economic, and cultural institutions with a set of proposed institutions founded on shared moral values can further illustrate some of the weaknesses present in today's system.

### *Secularism*

Secularism first rose to prominence through the philosophies propagated by the Enlightenment of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Copson, 2019). During this time, Western governance shifted from adherence to religious values to non-religious principles as foundations for their constitutions. In America, the separation of church and state is a central tenet, as demonstrated by the US Constitution's Establishment Clause, which prevents the US government from establishing an official religion. Although some have understood this tenet as seeking to create an ideologically inclusive society that supports the free, private practice of any religion, others have taken it to mean that the public arena should be void of all religious influence. As a result of this philosophical secularism, religiosity is increasingly marginalized and nearly absent from political life (Neuhaus, 1988).

The primary issue with this understanding of secularism is that it is a farce. Those who seek to bar religious influence in the government end up achieving the opposite result. Because all people adhere to a worldview comprised of beliefs and assumptions (whether traditionally religious or otherwise), and the government is made up of rational beings, a worldview-absent government is not possible. People's moral values influence



every decision they make in their official roles. Secularism is not the absence of religion; it is a religion of its own with values and principles that represent a small but growing number of Americans (Smith, 2021).

In this way, ridding the public sphere of religious influence is to replace it with a different source of ideological influence. This new influence is often marked by relativistic values and ideas prone to change with the newest political and social trends. While attempting to create a fair political playing field, philosophical secularism has instead advocated its own postmodern values in place of traditional religious values.

### *Diversity*

While public life in America has become less influenced by traditional religions, the American population has become more religiously diverse. Prior to the 1960s, most Americans belonged to one of three religious traditions: Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism (Herberg, 1960). In 1965, Congress passed the Immigration Act, which loosened restrictions on immigrants from non-European origins settling in America (Pluralism Project, n.d.-a). As a result, numerous Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and others joined the American project.

In the 1950s, nearly 95% of Americans identified as religious (Pluralism Project, n.d.-b). Herberg (1960) insightfully pointed out that in the years leading up to this time, Americans were more likely to identify socially according to their religion than their ethnicity. In other words, as migrants settled on American lands, they and their progeny were willing to leave their old national identities behind but not their religious affiliation.

Although religious identification in the US dropped to roughly 74% by 2019, most Americans remain religious today (Pew Research Center, 2019). At the same time,

the number of religiously unaffiliated Americans rose steadily from 16% in 2007 to 26% in 2019. These non-religious Americans self-identify as atheists, agnostics, and non-religious, all of whom still adhere to particular worldviews built on assumptions and beliefs about the world. With this increase in ideological diversity, American leaders can no longer assume that the population will support the Judeo-Christian principles that have underpinned American society since its inception (Neuhaus, 1988, p. 138).

### ***Individualism***

America is also characterized by its insistence on individual rights and liberties. Today, many believe that the government's primary role is to provide order and protect citizens' liberties so they may act free from governmental interference (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 195). The emergence of modern individualism has its roots in the Enlightenment period of the seventeenth century. As faith in science made individuals and their rational faculties the focal point of epistemological debate, the concept of individual freedom enjoyed a prominent place in political deliberation (Shapiro, 2003).

The liberty bestowed on modern individuals is further extended to American institutions. Political, economic, and cultural institutions are free to operate according to whatever values they deem credible and are unrestricted in promulgating these values into society. As a result, every person is free to do whatever he or she desires within the law's limits with no obligations concerning the needs of society. Putnam (2000) asserted that this unraveling of social bonds has had negative consequences on neighborhood crime rates, mental health, and the economy and concluded that "the performance of our democratic institutions depends in measurable ways upon social capital" (p. 349).

Finding ways to increase social unity may help prevent the unraveling of American society, even if this means limiting the extent of individual liberties.

### **Strengths of Today's Institutions**

From the modern perspective, political institutions in the West afford their citizens great benefits. Among these benefits are the protection of freedoms and the assurance of individual rights. The heritage of Locke and Hobbes is at the forefront of how many people in the West understand their government's role. These and other social contract theorists contested the conventional conflation of *right* and *law* and maintained that these were necessarily separate concepts. They suggested that a right is a positive freedom toward something or some action, whereas a law restricts a person's ability to act in a certain way (Shapiro, 2003).

This distinction is critical for the role of modern government. As MacIntyre (2007) pointed out, governments in the West see themselves as possessing the role of providing order for a society of individuals, each to "pursue their own self-chosen conception of the good life" (p. 194). Although democratic governments establish order within society by enforcing laws and public policies, they are equally bound to resist promoting any one moral or ideological outlook in these laws and policies. This protection of individual rights and liberties helps to prevent the government from taking advantage of its immense power to force citizens to adhere to a single ideology.

Similarly, the separation of church and state has worked in varying degrees to preclude the government from establishing a national religion. This idea is evidenced in the Establishment Clause of the US Constitution, where Congress is barred from mixing religion and governmental affairs. In other Western nations, however, this separation is

less extensive. Although no state-sponsored religion exists in Germany and Britain, for example, their governments and religious organizations share a special relationship: The British Prime Minister advises the Monarch on the Church of England's leadership, and the German "Basic Law" allows religious organizations to levy taxes on their members and be granted status as public law corporations (Torrance, 2022; Gesley, 2017). In any case, Western nations typically extend equal rights to all religious groups, whether they possess or lack a formal relationship with their government.

Another advantage of modern political institutions is the separation of powers that keeps each governmental element in check. Rather than centralizing power into one office or party, modern political institutions attempt to divide responsibilities and power among multiple parts to prevent one part from exercising too much control over the population. This separation is a benefit to society because it helps ensure the protection of citizens' rights and liberties from governmental coercion.

The strengths of modern economic institutions emerge from similar foundations. Although many modern Western economies are not pure, free-market economies, they are closer to the *laissez-faire* form of economies than the centralized tenets of communist economies. While the amount of governmental intervention varies from country to country, Western societies typically enjoy an open market in which individuals are free to buy and sell goods at their leisure. In this type of economy, private property rights and the enforcement of contracts are vital for creating a safe market atmosphere free from governmental direction or chaos.

In modern economies, people are rewarded based on their efforts and are largely unincumbered in what they may buy or sell. This system encourages hard work and

allows individuals to keep much of what they earn without significant portions of their income going to taxes, freeing them to invest their extra cash in profitable projects (Gwartney et al., 2016, p. 94). Businesses are also incentivized to produce innovative products and marketing schemes to compete with other sellers, resulting in better products for consumers.

The bedrock underpinning political and economic institutions likewise endows cultural institutions with the freedom to express and teach any values they desire. Because of this, an organization exists for every person, and if someone cannot find an association with which they agree, they are free to create their own. No one is forced to believe in or associate with any religious, ideological, or cultural group. Additionally, the diversity of ideas in Western societies creates competition and encourages organizations and individuals to have the best defense of their values.

### **Weaknesses of Today's Institutions**

The centralization of power is among the current political institutions' primary weaknesses. Chupp (2017b) asserted that the historical tendency of civilizations has been toward the centralization of power. He added that the US has become more politically centralized since its founding, resulting in the centralization of power in the presidency and the subsequent corruption of political parties who seek to control this seat of power rather than advocating for their constituency's needs. A commonly held fear is that strong central governments can abuse their power at the population's expense more easily than decentralized governments can. Empirical evidence may suggest that centralization provides better governance in specific types of demographically heterogeneous societies

(Boffa et al., 2016). For this reason, increasingly centralized governance is undesirable for Western nations' diverse populations.

Another weakness of modern political institutions is their focus on secularism and the exclusion of religious influence. While the drive for secularism has provided a basis for the government to stay out of private matters of faith and protect its citizens from infringement on their religious liberties, the lack of religious voices in public life has led to increased persecution of religious ideas (Chupp, 2017a). This becomes clear when a government employee seeking to defend religious values is scrutinized for projecting their private values into public work.

Turning to economic institutions, a current weakness of the individualistic free market economy is the wage gap that results from the notions of economic desserts and private property. Economic desserts ensure that, in theory, a person who works harder and for longer hours deserves a higher income than someone who works less hard and for fewer hours. Desserts, in this context, assumes that fairness allows everyone to get what they deserve according to their effort, in contrast with the idea of fairness as equality.

However, as many scholars have pointed out (Meyer, 2021; Mitchell, 2016; Muradoglu et al., 2023), everyone is born with unequal talents, opportunities, and support, in addition to other systemic barriers placing certain elements of the population at an economic disadvantage. The privatization of property entails individual responsibility for that property; however, those who begin their journey with less must work harder and for longer hours than others who started with more to enjoy the same standard of living. By attempting to sustain a fair economy of desserts, economic inequalities increase, and poverty persists as those who are initially economically

disfavored are counted as apathetic or otherwise poor workers. One cannot become a millionaire solely by working the McDonald's cash register.

In line with the weaknesses that individualism presents to political and economic institutions, cultural institutions have become the social battlegrounds in which free individuals and organizations disparage those with whom they disagree while recruiting their adherents to further their interests. One stark example is the cultural war between ideological associations—especially evangelical groups—who advocate for the prohibition of abortion and those groups—some of whom are religious while others do not adhere to traditional religions—that support women's choice of abortion.

Of course, these disparate arguments emerge from different worldviews with different assumptions and beliefs about the world, but rather than having a common ground on which both sides work together in constructive ways toward policies that benefit both sides, they are forced to fight for their values without compromise. Putnam (2000) suggested that as social bonds between groups decrease, so too does societal tolerance. At the same time, he pointed out that American social capital has decreased significantly since the mid-twentieth century. This increased individualism and the subsequent intolerance between groups may have provided the backdrop for the current ideological wars between cultural institutions.

Some people claim that protecting moral autonomy and ridding the state of religious influence prevents the governmental infringement of rights and preserves ideological freedom. Because tyrannical states have historically emphasized communal values and a strict, state-led ideology (and since the West is bent on vilifying all non-

democracies), some people assume that swinging to tyranny's extreme opposite, which is total individual freedom, is the best for society.

However, this choice is a false dichotomy. More than the two options of extreme tyranny and extreme liberty are achievable in a society and the optimal option is likely balanced between the two poles. For example, a better society may be community-based and share a single set of values while utilizing the full extent of democratic practices, especially free and fair elections, where government officials are chosen by the people they govern and are precluded from using their power at the expense of the population. In such a society, governmental interference would remain minimal, but what influence it does have over society would be based on shared values.

Others are more pessimistic about the future of the current system. Chupp (2017a), speaking about the United States, predicted that as the federal government continued to centralize power and the family unit continued to break down due to a loss of public religion, the country would eventually break apart and consolidate into a handful of regions according to political affiliation. However, if America were to break apart, it would likely not be according to political affiliation because, although politics are a striking point for deep convictions, people's political ideals can change at a moment's notice and are often influenced by contemporary policy debates and political figures (Jones, 2022). A breakdown of American society would probably revolve primarily around religious or ideological affiliation, which is less fickle.

Social decay and the loss of mutual trust have rendered the West a lonely, unhealthy, and egocentric society. A societal breakdown in the West's future is possible,



but making fundamental changes to fix where society has faltered can prevent a societal collapse and strengthen the bonds between social groups.

## **PART 2: THE SHARED VALUES SOCIETY**

### **Chapter 4: The Shared Values Society**

#### **The Terrestrial Envoy to Mars**

The year is 2050. The Global Initiative for Space Travel (GIST) has launched the first wave of pioneers to the rusty mountains of Mars. This group of 100 travelers occupying five state-of-the-art spaceships constitute the first germ of human society to colonize another planet. Consisting of teachers, builders, engineers, public officials, specialized horticulturists, journalists, entrepreneurs, and, of course, a handful of brave families sourced from all over the earth, the Terrestrial Envoy to Mars seeks to establish a lasting colony that will pave the way for future Martian generations.

As the Envoy touched down in their interstellar crafts and departed to their new habitats, one by one they began to wonder, “What if someone tries to steal my oxygen, or accidentally pops a hole in my laboratory, or tries to sell me potatoes at an exorbitant price? Who will protect us from an alien ambush?” Clearly, some sort of government would be necessary for protecting the rights of the pioneers and guarding against an extraterrestrial attack. Because the Envoy is comprised of people from all over the earth, each with a unique worldview and set of values, according to what principles should the new government operate? The following section explores the possible outcomes of diverse communities converging to form a government.

## **The Possible Outcomes of Diverse Societies**

Ideology was chosen as the choice demographic characteristic for this study for the following reasons: (1) Race and ethnicity are unchangeable in a person and can be associated with any system of moral values, (2) political affiliation fluctuates according to contemporary policy debates and the influence of political figures (Jones, 2022), (3) wealth is highly culpable to change from external circumstances and is not reliably correlated to moral behavior (Zagorsky, 2017), (4) education level has a positive relationship with moral behavior generally (Doyle & O’Flaherty, 2013) but does not suggest that education levels are associated with different value systems, (5) the direction of the causal relationship between political ideology and moral intuitions lacks agreement in academic debate (Hatemi et al., 2019), and (6) age and gender do not appear to have a major impact on moral reasoning (Doyle & O’Flaherty, 2013). In contrast, religious and ethical ideologies exist as frameworks for grouping moral values and beliefs. For this reason, religious and ideological associations may provide the best grounds for assessing moral values and their significance in governmental legislation.

When diverse populations live together in society, many possible outcomes exist as the various groups venture to operate their government:

1. The various sects can fight (violently or non-violently) to decide which religion or ideology will take the lead, either at the total exclusion of other ideologies or allowing them only a small degree of freedom.
2. They can split up geographically into smaller states, each according to a different ideology.

3. They can agree to strip the government of religion by replacing it with philosophical secularism (the exclusion of religious influence).
4. They can agree to give each ideology equal influence on governmental affairs.

The first option embodies many historical allegories and is not favorable if no one ideology has an objective claim to truth. This option finds refuge in the thoughts of Neuhaus (1988), who promoted a vision first conveyed by Pareto (1916/2018) and which shares overtones with Marx's class antagonisms. Neuhaus asserted that secularism has replaced religion in the public domain as a result of the enlightenment and other historical events, and that groups of elites, both religious and secular, have replaced each other as public arbitrators cyclically throughout history. He claimed that secularism has left a void in the public domain wherein traditionally Protestant principles used to preside, which is waiting to be filled by another group of elites and their shared worldview. Given his notion of the elite power cycle, Neuhaus contended that the future of American society holds two possible futures: One in which the Judeo-Christian worldview, and Roman Catholicism in particular, retakes its authoritative position in public politics; and another in which the democratic project comes to an end and totalitarianism takes its place (Neuhaus, 1988, pp. 248-264).

However, Neuhaus' (1988) two futures present a false dichotomy. More than the two polar positions of authoritarianism and liberalism exist in political theory and practice. Additionally, the two options Neuhaus mentioned are not mutually exclusive. The overtaking of governmental affairs by a Christian worldview could easily lead to authoritarianism as it has many times in history. In contrast to Neuhaus' pessimism, I

maintain that a more favorable option between religious control and religious voidance can be achieved through the Shared Values Society.

Option two encourages secession along ideological lines (Lijphart, 1977). One critical issue with this option is that fragmenting a nation into homogenous communities would decrease toleration and social capital between in-groups, resulting in less solidarity and more hostility between them (Budziszewski, 1997). The third option of ridding the government of religion has created issues in modern society concerning the effects of value-dissonance and individualism mentioned in Chapter 3. The final option of equal ideological representation may help mend the wounds caused by option three, but how?

There are multiple ways to incorporate equal ideological representation into governance in such a way that allows values to act as guides to public policy, although the implementation might not be perfect on the first try. Moreover, ideological representation would likely decrease the dissonance between private and public life that philosophical secularism has introduced and produce a society that is more socially cohesive.

One method is to follow the example of Lebanon's consociationalism, which defines governmental power-sharing among sectarian polities (Nagle & Clancy, 2019). Under Lebanon's Taif Accords, this power is shared equally among the Muslim and Christian sects (United Nations, n.d.). Specifically, the office of the president is reserved for Maronite Christians, the prime minister for Sunni Muslims, and the speaker of the house in parliament for Shia Muslims (Nagle & Clancy, 2019). Although this construction appeared promising at its outset, the divided system has led to the politicization of ideological associations and has deepened the sectarian rifts within the

population (Henley, 2016). As a result, communities have receded further into their sectarian in-groups and the sectarian cleavages have deepened.

In contrast to Lebanon, a second way to incorporate ideological influence into public life is to identify values common to all Americans which can serve as a benchmark for governmental operations. This method might include creating a temporary Worldview Council composed of an equal number of religious and ideological representatives that, through deliberation and compromise, create a Values Charter outlining the foundational, common values held by each of their associations that governmental legislation will abide by. This council could utilize a popular vote to encourage political participation in identifying the values and to verify that the population holds these values. This list of values would be the agreed-upon basis for public and foreign policy legislation and serve as a common *telos* for American institutions.

### **From Mars to America**

America could benefit from inviting religion (taken generally as ideology)—which is a fundamental force in everyone’s life—into the public square through mediated debate and conversation to counter the negative effects of individualism and ideological ostracism. Additionally, institutions would have a shared set of values as a starting point for their operations that retain the free practice of religion and cultivate ideological inclusivity.

Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of such institutions will need to be based on a hypothetical conception of a society that has transitioned from the modern condition to a value-based society. How these institutions will operate and cooperate depends on the values specified by the Worldview Council and the population; however, their

potential strengths and weaknesses are imaginable and can be contrasted with those of the current system analyzed in the previous section.

## **Institutions in the Shared Values Society**

### ***Political Institutions***

Political institutions, such as the legal system, political parties, and the president, play a significant role in shaping national interests at home and abroad. The laws and decisions made by these institutions set a precedence for how the nation's leaders perceive the country's trajectory. In the current system, decisions are made according to the changing ambitions of the political party in power. With a set of shared values, policies and laws would be based on a single foundation rather than having various groups fighting to create and change laws according to their particular worldviews and interests.

### ***Economic Institutions***

Economic institutions include banks, regulatory organizations, and business bureaus that comprise the market framework for the transactions conducted by Americans every day. Some believe that economic institutions are value-neutral entities concerned solely with statistics and separated from ethical concerns. This could not be further from the truth. In modern America, wealth and the movement of goods can demonstrate what people hold as priorities. For instance, to figure out if someone cares about local businesses, one should check their bank statements. Economic institutions facilitate how people pursue their dreams, give to charitable causes, indulge in vices, and think about the future.

### ***Cultural Institutions***

Cultural institutions, including libraries, cinemas, universities, and families, comprise the most crucial institutions. These institutions preserve culture and cultural values and help mold citizens according to those values. In an individualist society, institutions possess the same liberty as individuals and are free to teach whatever principles they desire, whether they build up or tear down society. If a clear set of values were present, these cultural institutions could flock around these values and support one another in shaping Americans into the type of citizens the society wants to have.

The importance of collective action via institutions cannot be overstated. For example, the Singaporean government published a white paper announcing that the Ministry of Health would shift its health resources from reactive health care to proactive prevention (Singapore Ministry of Health, 2022). The white paper explained that the goal was for Singaporeans to live healthy lifestyles and that this was achievable by connecting every family with a primary family doctor. The government would subsidize medications for chronic illnesses and incentivize families who complete their first medical checkup.

Additionally, the Singaporean government identified the family unit as the “bedrock” of Singaporean society because families are the primary means of passing along cultural values (National Population and Talent Division, 2013). Cultural institutions are vital in facilitating a population to uphold specific values.

### ***Strengths of the Proposed System***

In contrast to the division and hostility resulting from the focus on individualism, political institutions built on a set of values common to the whole population will be able to legislate laws and policies more efficiently. Rather than listening to arguments

stemming from the contradicting beliefs of worldviews, governments will have a place to start the conversation about critical public issues. Even though every member of society is free to hold different beliefs, they will not start from the complete outset; instead, they will be able to assume that all sides want to uphold the shared values and then make their arguments from there. In this way, political institutions can mitigate some of the partisan obstacles that stem from each party holding disparate worldviews.

One of the advantages of value-based economic institutions is that businesses would be more compelled to adhere to ethical business practices that align with the shared values. Their patrons will likewise have a better foundation for holding businesses accountable. Indirectly, a society that acknowledges shared values may also witness a decline in crime rates due to communal accountability, which helps businesses hedge losses. For this reason, businesses may find it financially beneficial to support other institutions that teach these common values.

A common understanding of values would also disincentivize unethical practices in the free trade of everyday people. As communal bonds grow because of a shared acknowledgment of values, people may be less likely to cheat or steal from their neighbors. In contrast, the modern secular system encourages each person to fend for themselves since the individual is central and the community has become less of a priority than individual freedom of choice, even if that choice is unethical and detrimental to society.

One strength of the cultural institutions in this new system is that there would be less social sparring between groups of contradicting worldviews. Different groups would all have a shared starting point they agree on and from which they can build their



arguments. In this way, different ideologies can start from a place of understanding rather than incompatibility. This primary connection may also lead to increased social capital and a healthier, wealthier, and happier society (Putnam, 2000).

In the proposed system, the family would become even more vital to the survival and thriving of society because they would have a set of values according to which they can raise their children to be good citizens without replacing their previously held religious values. Society will remain ideologically diverse, but the common values list will provide a moral compass parents can use to teach their children about inclusive social interaction. In this way, society will become more unified while remaining ideologically diverse.

Additionally, the size-independent nature of the SVS renders the framework completely scalable and applicable to small-group governance as well as international governance. The only requirements for an SVS are the deliberation and presentation of common moral values that serve as the bedrock for social decision-making. In this way, any existing government can become an SVS by adhering to these simple requirements.

Kymlicka (2007) recognized that one critical impediment to the acceptance of multiculturalism is the reluctance of state leaders to share their power with minorities in the name of national security and democratic stability (pp. 9, 298). The theory presented in this thesis demonstrates not only that a significant overlap of moral values exists across all worldviews—deeming the argument that minority influence is a security risk spurious—but that the values of minority worldviews can be incorporated into public policy without demanding diverse ownership of public offices, such as is the case in Lebanon.

Furthermore, implementing the SVS theory at the international and national scales may also help secure non-generalized recognition and justice for targeted minority groups and indigenous peoples (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 310). In fact, the SVS framework provides a secure path toward protecting minority voices through the equal representation of their worldviews.

### ***Counterarguments to the Proposed System***

Turning to the weaknesses of the new system, the most realistic is the opposition that would ensue against the change from the current system. People on one side would assert that the transition is a façade for mixing religion with the government to install a theocracy or Christian democracy. In contrast, the other side would claim that the new system encroaches on their personal liberties and, thus, is inevitably abusive.

In reality, the new system will prevent any single worldview from dominating the government by ensuring that every worldview's values are considered without the adherents of the worldviews themselves possessing any special political office or influence. Regarding the second objection, the new system would indeed encroach on personal freedoms, but since when were personal liberties limitless? The current system itself limits personal choice through the law, but the current laws are founded either on sporadic ideas and social trends or on decreasingly held Judeo-Christian values rather than acknowledged values common to the population they govern. Freedom is always limited; the objective is to find where the limit should be placed.

Concerning economic institutions, one weakness is that people would fear increased governmental interference in the market under the guise of promoting the shared values. This may take the form of restricting what people may purchase, such as

items detrimental to society like cigarettes, vapes, and fast food. Today, modern governments already maintain a firm grasp on certain types of items through regulatory organizations. For example, cigarettes are taxed highly to disincentivize their use; however, in the proposed system, cigarettes would likely be banned due to the substantial amount of research proving their harmful effects.

One of the weaknesses of the proposed social institutions is that these institutions, especially universities, religious communities, and the family, might not choose to adhere to or teach according to the shared values. Although these social entities are free to make that choice, the political and economic institutions cannot change society on their own; they need the population to believe in the benefits of accepting a set of shared values on which they can establish public life. However, because public life would be founded on the values of private citizens, people would likely be incentivized to support the shared values instead of reject them.

### **Chapter 5: Shared Values in American Society**

The specific rules for how these institutions might operate are not apparent. These rules would largely depend on the values agreed upon by the Worldview Council or popular vote. Still, if political, economic, and cultural institutions operated on the openly affirmed set of values, one may predict that social bonds between in-groups would increase. Moreover, private and public organizations could find creative ways to educate the public on the values, and the government would be able to make policy decisions that find support among the population with confidence.

To demonstrate the theoretical validity of the new system, I will identify a set of common values and discuss how they might practically affect public and private

institutions. First, I gathered a list of the dominant worldviews in American society using Pew Research Center's (2015) most recent Religious Landscape Survey and the Public Religion Research Institute's (2021) 2020 Census of American Religion.

These surveys cover the religious affiliation of 99% of the American population, with the other 1% composed of New Age and Native American religions. These were excluded from the present study due to the lack of research regarding these systems' moral values, their lack of religious texts, and the hypothetical and limited nature of this section's discussion on moral values. Finally, I searched numerous articles and websites to identify the moral values held by each worldview. Although additional values may be identified for any worldview, the Moral Values Table (see Appendix A) provides an efficient means for comparing moral frameworks in this study.

### **Using Natural Language Processing**

Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a subdiscipline of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that focuses on enabling computers to understand human language (IBM, n.d.). Because computers cannot learn human languages as people can, scientists have developed a system for using statistics and mathematical inference to teach computers how to relate human words to one another. For example, a data scientist may write code instructing a computer to take an English word and compare it to thousands of articles containing that word. Then, using computational linguistics, the computer identifies the word's part of speech, root, semantic meaning, alternative meanings, sentiment, and position within the sentence. Finally, using computer algorithms and learning models, the computer determines the most likely meaning for that word given the above attributes and the word's immediate and extended contexts.

NLP enables social scientists to analyze human words and concepts in much the same way that statistical software applications such as SPSS and SAS allow scientists to analyze numerical data. Academically, NLP has been used extensively for interpreting human language, given its ability to digest large amounts of data and quickly process it for further analysis. Doogan et al. (2023) conducted a systematic literature review of 189 articles that used NLP to analyze textual sentiment in social media posts. Similar to the present study, McDonald (2014) used NLP to analyze the average overlap in noun categories for nine religious texts and discovered a similarity rate between 40% and 60% for each text.

As a part of NLP, the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model is the most popular approach to classifying a body of text according to topics, also known as latent topic modeling (Jelodar et al., 2023). The LDA model asserts that every text is composed of various topics that can be determined by the particular vocabulary used in the text (Blei & Lafferty, 2007). The LDA model is used with traditional NLP processing to determine overarching topics for texts ranging in size from a corpus of documents to a single sentence. Topic modeling with LDA allows scientists to identify the significant themes found in a document and understand the relationship between two or more documents or pieces of text. For example, LDA analysis of an article concerning the effects of climate change on education in the regional South might yield topics like “temperature,” “attendance,” “performance,” “race,” and “poverty.” The researcher could use these topics to identify other articles with related content or determine how best to classify the article within a larger body of literature.

Xue et al. (2020) used LDA topic modeling to analyze the psychological responses of Twitter users to the COVID-19 outbreak early in the pandemic. The researchers were able to identify 11 salient topics they then classified into ten major themes. They found that fear of the unknown origin of COVID-19 was the dominant theme among Twitter users at the time. Additionally, Greene and Cross (2017) used an LDA variant to analyze the most prominent topics of European Parliament (EP) speeches from 1999 to 2014. The authors found that the focuses of EP speeches evolved significantly over the 15-year span and were influenced by outside factors.

I use NLP and the LDA model to analyze a list of moral values held by dominant worldviews. By writing an open-source Python script that employs the Natural Language Toolkit (Bird et al., 2009) and Gensim (Řehůřek & Sojka, 2010) libraries, I was able to examine the list of moral values and generate the Moral Values Table's ten most representative values (Smith, 2023). Utilizing NLP, I first processed the list of values by removing duplicates and non-significant words. I then created a new dictionary that contained each unique word alongside its integer ID, which is used to show how many instances of that word exist in the list. Finally, I use the LDA model to classify the list of words into the ten most salient topics, with the values themselves as the options for classification. As a result, I identified the ten most representative values that best encompass the entire list of moral values.

The techniques used in this study are undoubtedly imperfect; however, my intention is to conduct this study as objectively as possible. Thus, I decided to use NLP and the LDA model to evaluate the list of moral values to offer a more objective analysis that can be tested by the larger research community, instead of basing my conclusion

solely on my personal bias. The following section discusses the significance of the Moral Value Table and the ten value topics.

### **The Moral Values Table**

Although other studies utilizing NLP on religious texts have been conducted (McDonald, 2014; Varghese & Punithavalli, 2019; Verma, 2017), they have focused on semantic analysis and general topic similarity. None have analyzed religious texts for similarities in their moral values. For this reason, I set out to conduct a preliminary analysis of the moral values found in the dominant religious and non-religious traditions in America. The 30 sources that were used to extract the moral values of each major worldview were comprised of primarily secondary sources (see References for Appendix A).

Among the insights of the MVT is that although none of the ideologies contain the exact same moral values, various values are shared by multiple worldviews. Figure 1 (see Appendix A) portrays a frequency distribution graph with the most used values in the MVT. “Love” and “peace” are shared by over half of the worldviews, while “compassion” and “justice” are shared by half. As noted, the MVT offers the results of a basic survey of worldview values. In future research, a more thorough survey may yield a higher number of congruent values between worldviews.

Strikingly, all the worldviews share a similar sentiment underlying their values. Instead of some worldviews prizing hatred and deceit while others revere love and truthfulness, all worldviews appear to support a certain directionality in their values; namely, a trajectory aimed at cultivating social harmony and self-actualization. This directionality can be observed in seemingly contradicting values, such as “liberty” and

“communalism.” Both values have similar goals. Liberty aims at protecting individuals’ freedom of self-expression—for self-actualization—while preventing the infringement of this freedom between persons—for social harmony.

Similarly, communalism—prioritizing communal needs over individual needs—emphasizes the need for social bonds as a necessary component of human flourishing or self-actualization while seeking unity as a driver of social harmony. This conclusion is concurrent with previous research suggesting the existence of a universal ethical code (Schwartz, 1992; Harbour, 1995; Kinnier et al., 2000; Schwartz, 2005; Swidler, 2014; Curry et al., 2019; Bentahila et al., 2021).

Additionally, this directionality implies the commensurability of values since if a culture that promoted the values present in the MVT decided to promote injustice as well, their decision would appear irrational. This may stem from the MVT values’ directionality toward some good, whereas injustice differs in its aim. This is not to suggest a single *good* that underlies all the values; instead, it is unclear whether one or multiple similar goods exist that share certain qualities or are of a similar *type* possessing the same directionality. The present study simply observes that all the worldviews in the MVT appear to share a common directionality or type of values, regardless of the values’ surface-level contradictions.

The results of applying NLP and the LDA model to the MVT yielded the overarching topics that best represent the values in the MVT. Although the LDA model produces an arbitrary number of topics, the ten most salient topics were chosen as a representative sample. Table 2 (see Appendix A) lists each of the ten topics with the ten most correlated keywords for each topic. The LDA model identifies keywords that are



most likely to be associated together, given numerous linguistic factors (Doogan et al., 2023; Blei & Lafferty, 2007; Jelodar et al., 2023; IMB, n.d.).

However, because the LDA model does not automatically group these keywords into a single category, further processing was conducted to categorize the topics. Using the LDA model, each topic was classified according to the single moral value that represented the topic best. These moral values are presented in Table 3 (see Appendix A) alongside their probability score in descending order. In order, the values are integrity, equity, freedom, religion, truth, communalism, kindness, compassion, love, and peace. Hypothetically, these ten values are representative of the whole MVT and symbolize the moral values held in common by 99% of the American population.

It is worth noting that six of the ten value categories equate to one of the topics' first keywords. Justice, family, respect, and generosity did not have an equivalency in any primary keywords; however, an examination of Table 2's topic keywords reveals that these four values are high in various topics, suggesting that the top keywords for each topic in Table 2 can be used to classify the topic with a single value. Using a single, representative value will make later analysis easier and facilitate usage in the Values Charter. At the same time, the additional words in each topic help to clarify the value's meaning. For example, the topic headed by communalism also contains acceptance, selflessness, understanding, and cooperation as keywords. This context makes the meaning of communalism more explicit.

I suggest these ten moral values might comprise the basis of the Values Charter that the Worldview Council will draft. The Council would further define each of the values and deliberate on their practical impact on politics. Political, economic, and

cultural institutions would establish their policies according to these values. Although this study provides a preliminary analysis of shared values using NLP and the LDA model, an extended cross-field study would offer additional insights into the most representative moral values.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **Synopsis**

This thesis sought to demonstrate that the epistemological basis of truth affects beliefs so that all worldviews are left without an objective claim to truth. As a logical result, no one worldview has an intrinsic right to dominate the government or other worldviews. Furthermore, philosophical secularism's noble notion of protecting individual freedoms by limiting the influence of moral values in the government has led to a loss of intergroup bonding and a value vacuum in public life.

Additionally, because beliefs constitute the deepest aspects of a person's identity, and every person possesses a worldview, each categorical worldview should have a say in how the government operates, without these ideologies themselves operating the government (National Secular Society, n.d.). Thus, I contended that a form of consociationalism in which the shared moral values of each worldview present in America are incorporated into governmental operations is not only more favorable than excluding them, but rationally necessary.

To accomplish this task, I suggested that the federal government convene a temporary Worldview Council comprised of an equal number of representatives from each of the major ideologies present in American society (Public Religion Research Institute, 2021). These representatives, joined by teams of researchers, would

compromise on a Values Charter detailing the moral values common to all worldviews in America. These values serve as a guide to governmental legislation and the operations of political, economic, and cultural institutions. Importantly, this is not to suggest that these ideological representatives would govern or legislate in any way, but only that they would produce the Values Charter according to which government officials would govern and legislate. In this way, the Shared Values Society is a template that can be applied to any pluralistic society in any geographic location, as well as to global governance. I concluded with an initial list of values I believe are common to all the worldviews in America and discussed how they might guide private and public institutions in the future.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One limitation of this study is the lack of primary sources used for identifying the moral values for the Moral Values Table. On the one hand, future research could utilize online formats of major worldviews' religious texts to conduct topic modeling on them using a list of moral values, such as Kinnier et al.'s (2000) or the MVT, as samples. The results would yield weighted topics for each religious text's most salient moral values. These values could then be compared to those of other texts to determine similarities and differences between worldviews. On the other hand, surveying a large, representative sample of the population would yield a list of values that everyday citizens adhere to and, in this sense, might prove more relevant to future research on this topic. Since each of these methods would require an immense amount of time and resources, they are outside the scope of the present study.

Additionally, incorporating the values of less-represented ethical ideologies in the American public like those of Native Americans (<0.3%) and New Agers (0.4%) will

extend the reach of this study (Pew Research Center, 2015). Finally, further research will test the efficacy of the system proposed in this thesis by theorizing how its principles and an extended version of the Moral Values Table can be used to effectively legislate policies for private and public institutions in the Shared Values Society.

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## APPENDIX A

### Tables and Figures

**Table 1**

*A Table of Abstracted Moral Values by Worldview*

| Atheism          | Buddhism         | Christianity | Hinduism            | Islam          |
|------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Acceptance       | Attitude         | Contentment  | Accommodation       | Amiability     |
| Beauty           | Effort           | Courage      | Compassion          | Bravery        |
| Community        | Environmentalism | Faithfulness | Harmony             | Communalism    |
| Consequentialism | Family           | Generosity   | Honesty             | Compassion     |
| Cooperation      | Harmony          | Goodness     | Integrity           | Contentment    |
| Creativity       | Meditation       | Honor        | Karma               | Dignity        |
| Justice          | Mindfulness      | Hope         | Love                | Equality       |
| Love             | Obedience        | Humility     | Meditation          | Family         |
| Reason           | Truth            | Justice      | Non-Violence        | Fidelity       |
| Science          | Understanding    | Kindness     | Peace               | Freedom        |
| Self-interest    | Wisdom           | Love         | Selflessness        | Frugality      |
|                  |                  | Obedience    | Straightforwardness | Integrity      |
|                  |                  | Patience     | Truth               | Intellect      |
|                  |                  | Peace        |                     | Justice        |
|                  |                  | Respect      |                     | Life           |
|                  |                  | Self-Control |                     | Magnanimity    |
|                  |                  | Truth        |                     | Peace          |
|                  |                  |              |                     | Politeness     |
|                  |                  |              |                     | Religion       |
|                  |                  |              |                     | Restraint      |
|                  |                  |              |                     | Self-Sacrifice |
|                  |                  |              |                     | Truthfulness   |
|                  |                  |              |                     | Wealth         |

| Jehovah's Witnesses <sup>1</sup> | Judaism      | Mormon <sup>1</sup> | Unaffiliated     | Unitarianism <sup>2</sup> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Communalism                      | Communalism  | Civility            | Achievement      | Acceptance                |
| Compassion                       | Courage      | Compassion          | Economic-Justice | Compassion                |
| Love                             | Curiosity    | Fairness            | Hedonism         | Democracy                 |
| Peace                            | Descent      | Family              | Individualism    | Equity                    |
| Respect                          | Freedom      | Purity              | Openness         | Humanity                  |
| Unity                            | Friendship   | Religion            | Power            | Justice                   |
|                                  | Generosity   |                     | Self-Direction   | Liberty                   |
|                                  | Gratefulness |                     | Service          | Love                      |
|                                  | Hospitality  |                     | Stimulation      | Nature                    |
|                                  | Humanity     |                     | Tolerance        | Peace                     |
|                                  | Humility     |                     |                  | Reason                    |
|                                  | Inclusivity  |                     |                  | Science                   |
|                                  | Integrity    |                     |                  | Truth                     |
|                                  | Justice      |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Kindness     |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Love         |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Peace        |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Perseverance |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Protection   |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Religion     |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Repentance   |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Reputation   |                     |                  |                           |
|                                  | Respect      |                     |                  |                           |

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<sup>1</sup> Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses share a heritage with Christianity and therefore share many values with Christianity (see Johnson & Mullins (1992) and JW.org (n.d.-b)). Still, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses place unique emphases on specific values and are thus distinguished from Christianity here and elsewhere (see Public Religion Research Institute (2021) and JW.org (n.d.-a)).

<sup>2</sup> Unitarianism is also known as Universalism or Humanism (see American Humanist Association (n.d.)).

## Natural Language Processing Results

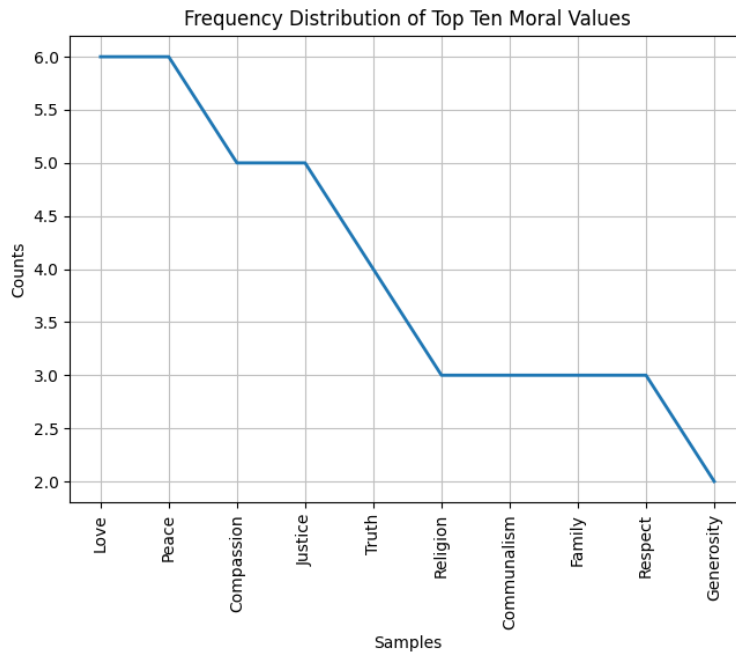
Using the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) Method for structural topic modeling (STM), I created software<sup>3</sup> that:

- produces a frequency distribution for the top ten most used moral values
- identifies the top ten LDA topics for the Moral Values table
- classifies the top ten LDA topics into a single value

The results are as follows:

### Figure 1

*Frequency Distribution Graph*



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<sup>3</sup> The full list of Python commands used to obtain these results can be found at the reference entry for Smith (2023).

**Table 2***Ten Most Salient Topics with Top Ten Weighted Keywords*

| Topic 1                | Topic 2                  | Topic 3                  | Topic 4                     |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 0.120   Communalism    | 0.096   Dignity          | 0.156   Integrity        | 0.142   Religion            |
| 0.081   Courage        | 0.096   Science          | 0.106   Contentment      | 0.096   Humility            |
| 0.081   Reason         | 0.096   Kindness         | 0.055   Self-Interest    | 0.050   Economic-Justice    |
| 0.081   Acceptance     | 0.096   Obedience        | 0.055   Hospitality      | 0.050   Patience            |
| 0.042   Honesty        | 0.050   Friendship       | 0.055   Purity           | 0.050   Creativity          |
| 0.042   Gratefulness   | 0.050   Hedonism         | 0.055   Truthfulness     | 0.050   Self-Control        |
| 0.042   Selflessness   | 0.050   Curiosity        | 0.055   Democracy        | 0.050   Community           |
| 0.042   Self-Direction | 0.050   Mindfulness      | 0.055   Civility         | 0.050   Politeness          |
| 0.042   Understanding  | 0.050   Faithfulness     | 0.005   Obedience        | 0.050   Descent             |
| 0.042   Cooperation    | 0.005   Justice          | 0.005   Consequentialism | 0.050   Reputation          |
| Topic 5                | Topic 6                  | Topic 7                  | Topic 8                     |
| 0.061   Goodness       | 0.205   Compassion       | 0.179   Truth            | 0.106   Freedom             |
| 0.061   Hope           | 0.084   Humanity         | 0.135   Respect          | 0.106   Meditation          |
| 0.061   Protection     | 0.084   Liberty          | 0.092   Generosity       | 0.055   Power               |
| 0.061   Amiability     | 0.084   Harmony          | 0.048   Wealth           | 0.055   Environmentalism    |
| 0.061   Intellect      | 0.044   Attitude         | 0.048   Self-Sacrifice   | 0.055   Achievement         |
| 0.061   Openness       | 0.044   Equality         | 0.048   Restraint        | 0.055   Straightforwardness |
| 0.061   Equity         | 0.044   Accommodation    | 0.048   Honor            | 0.055   Perseverance        |
| 0.061   Karma          | 0.044   Wisdom           | 0.048   Fairness         | 0.055   Frugality           |
| 0.061   Fidelity       | 0.044   Life             | 0.004   Communalism      | 0.055   Bravery             |
| 0.006   Attitude       | 0.004   Hedonism         | 0.004   Justice          | 0.005   Respect             |
| Topic 9                | Topic 10                 |                          |                             |
| 0.255   Love           | 0.245   Peace            |                          |                             |
| 0.130   Family         | 0.205   Justice          |                          |                             |
| 0.046   Unity          | 0.044   Nature           |                          |                             |
| 0.046   Stimulation    | 0.044   Individualism    |                          |                             |
| 0.046   Beauty         | 0.044   Non-Violence     |                          |                             |
| 0.046   Repentance     | 0.044   Consequentialism |                          |                             |
| 0.046   Service        | 0.044   Inclusivity      |                          |                             |
| 0.046   Effort         | 0.004   Integrity        |                          |                             |
| 0.004   Reason         | 0.004   Communalism      |                          |                             |
| 0.004   Curiosity      | 0.004   Harmony          |                          |                             |



**Table 3**

*Classification of Moral Values Based on the Ten Most Salient Topics Ranked Highest to*

*Lowest*

| Topic       | Probability Score  |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Integrity   | 0.2625690102577209 |
| Equity      | 0.1375010907649994 |
| Freedom     | 0.1374924778938293 |
| Religion    | 0.1374846398830413 |
| Truth       | 0.1374808698892593 |
| Communalism | 0.1374703943729400 |
| Kindness    | 0.0125003801658749 |
| Compassion  | 0.0125003792345523 |
| Love        | 0.0125003792345523 |
| Peace       | 0.0125003792345523 |