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The Exchange

ART, BUSINESS, & LITERATURE

CORNERSTONE

INTEGRATED LIBERAL ARTS

The Exchange: Art, Business, & Literature is produced by Purdue University's Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts Program. It celebrates the critical, literary, and artistic accomplishments of Purdue's undergraduate students who enrolled in Cornerstone for Business sections of SCLA 101 and 102, as well as for other students of Cornerstone SCLA courses who participated in Cornerstone for Business programming. Cornerstone for Business is designed to provide an outstanding grounding in the liberal-arts tradition specifically tailored to undergraduate students in the Mitch Daniels School of Business.

A PDF version of this issue may be downloaded via the following QR Code:



On the Cover:

"The Windshield" by Abhipsa Prajapati



Abhipsa Prajapati is an undergraduate Economics major at Purdue's Daniels School of Business. She created the artwork in Dr. Troy Seagraves' SCLA 102 class. The work explores variations of what

prosperity looks like based on perspective and time.

2nd Place—Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest: "Prosperity"

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The Exchange:

Art, Business, & Literature

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1 | In Conversation: Award-winning Teachers



Each year, Purdue awards The Cornerstone for Business Teaching Award to a faculty member demonstrating excellence in teaching and mentorship for the College of Liberal Arts and Daniels School of Business. The award is open to faculty teaching in the Cornerstone for Business sequence (SCLA 101 or 102), as well as to faculty teaching a course under the Management and Organizations theme of the Cornerstone Certificate.

In 2024, the award was given to Dr. James Mollison, who is an Assistant Teaching Professor in the Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts program and is a former director of Purdue's Speech and Debate program. He teaches Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102.

In 2025, the award was given to two faculty members. Dr. Jesse Crosson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and the co-director of Purdue's Program on American Institutional Renewal (PAIR). He teaches Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 and a variety of political science courses. Dr. Rhodes Pinto is an Assistant Teaching Professor in the Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts program and is a former Andrew W. Mellon Fellow for Scholars in the Humanities at Stanford University. He teaches Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 and 102.

We sat down with each of them to gather their insights for success and learn more about what makes them tick both inside and outside the classroom.

In conversation with

Dr. James Mollison

How do you make your classes appealing to students? Tell us your secrets!

I don't make my classes appealing to students. Since that answer is likely off-putting, let me to explain what I mean. As I see it, my primary role as a Cornerstone for Business instructor is to guide students through seminal, economic texts with an eye toward (i) reconstructing their arguments in their historical context and (ii) excavating these arguments' underlying presuppositions. Along the way, my students and I repeatedly ask: how might these arguments, or their presuppositions, bear on contemporary issues? Of course, I prepare examples of how the ideas broached in our readings might be seen today, provoking discussions about, say, whether Marx's four-part account of alienation applies to undergraduate coursework, whether smartphones, streaming-platforms, and generative A.I. exemplify Schumpeter's concept of creative destruction, or whether tariffs illustrate Hayek's warnings about government interventions into markets. I also throw in some competitive debates, short stories, and in-class games to keep things fresh... But if anyone finds my class appealing, I strongly suspect it's because I actively make space for *students* to extract lessons from our texts and to apply them to issues *they* consider exciting, interesting, or urgent. Fortunately for me, most students in the Daniels School of Business have a fairly firm grasp on their interests and the texts assigned in Cornerstone for Business courses are virtually inexhaustible! So, like I say, I don't really make my classes appealing. I just try to help students see the (frankly, obvious) value in some great texts and then I do my best to help them use these texts to pursue their own goals.

What is your favorite transformative text to teach in Cornerstone for Business?

Of the transformative texts taught in Cornerstone for Business, my *personal* favorite is probably Karl Marx's "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844." My favorite text *to teach*, though, is John Maynard Keynes' "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren." Writing in 1930, Keynes hypothesizes that if the economic growth and technological progress unlocked by capitalism continue at their current rates, then, in 100 years, the quality of life in industrial societies should improve four-to-eight times over *and* the amount of labor required to sustain the population



should reduce by a whopping 75%. Keynes responds to this seemingly optimistic prediction with trepidation. Since the vast majority of human history has been preoccupied with (what he calls) 'the economic problem,' he worries that humanity

simply won't know *what to do* if the economic problem is no longer pressing. To be fair, part of why I enjoy teaching Keynes' essay is that my classes read it immediately after *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism*, where Max Weber makes a case for how one's occupation now functions as a *vocation*, or even as a *personal calling*, that defines one's moral character and purpose in life. In this way, Weber nicely sets up Keynes' worries about how the elimination of work might be *deeply*, perhaps even *existentially*, disruptive. But even without Weber's backdrop, Keynes' short article provokes great discussion. Everyone seems to agree that Keynes' prediction will *not* come true in the next five years. And yet, if anything, Keynes *underestimates* the rate of technological progress that unfolds in the second half of the 20th century. (After all, he didn't foresee the rise of the digital age!) Hence, we find ourselves asking: where, exactly, does Keynes' reasoning go wrong?

What are the most important things you want your students to take away from your class?

At the risk being cliché, I hope students leave my class with a deeper sense of curiosity and with a deeper commitment to leading thoughtful lives. I know, the preceding sentence might make you embarrassed on my behalf. (Sorry about that.) Let me try to make up for it with a second, less sappy, answer. Part of what I enjoy about teaching Cornerstone courses is their interdisciplinary—perhaps *pre-disciplinary*—character. Cornerstone for Business courses are no different in this regard. Marx contends that labor undertaken beyond what's needed for survival, or what he sometimes calls 'spontaneous productive activity,' is a *defining feature* of the human species. Weber views modern labor as intimately connected to individuals' *spiritual* lives, similar to how Keynes' considers work crucial to humanity's traditional sense of *purpose*. Schumpeter ventures that economic thinking might be at the foundation of humans' capacity for *logical thought* and for *creative breakthroughs*. Hayek contends that economic freedom is a prerequisite of *every other* kind of freedom. Without further belaboring the point, I think these kinds of claims illustrate something crucial, something I hope my students learn to appreciate: economics, far from being a discrete and isolable discipline, is bound up with perennial

concerns about human nature, about morality and spirituality, about decision making and historical progress, about justice and freedom. If my class can help students appreciate this fact, I'm confident it will also help them lead more innovative and richer lives. (Yes, the ambiguity in the preceding sentence is intentional.)

How do you approach feedback and assessment to support student growth and development?

As I mentioned earlier, I try to guide students through our assigned readings, exploring their historical context, their central arguments, and their presuppositions. From there, I try to give students freedom to draw connections between our course content and their personal interests. When students seize this opportunity, it becomes fairly easy to provide feedback that promotes their personal growth and development. Advice, say, about how improve a thesis statement ceases to be a 'box-checking' exercise aimed at accumulating 'points' for a class and becomes something more valuable: a chance to clarify *one's own thinking* on an issue, to express *one's own view* with nuance and precision. Likewise, feedback, say, about how to improve one's arguments become a chance to *advocate* for oneself, or one's chosen cause, more effectively. If I may indulge in another, intentionally ambiguous turn of phrase, the more students invest in our course together, the more they stand to profit from its assignments and from my feedback. Over the semester, I hope students acquire the skills needed to refine their views, as well as their ability to express and to defend them, without my help.

How do you prepare students for the evolving landscape where AI plays an increasing role?

A central and recurring theme in my Cornerstone for Business course is the importance of *work*. My students and I try to appreciate how work does not have to be viewed as a regrettable, and perhaps unavoidable, means to some end. Work can also be seen as an exceedingly valuable opportunity—a chance to *express* and to *expand* our human nature (Marx), our sense of purpose (Weber and Keynes), our logical and creative capacities (Schumpeter), and even our freedom (Hayek and Friedman). From this vantage, using generative A.I. to complete one's work is more than unattractive; it is very likely *harmful*. Uncovering the value of work, I take it, helps inspire students to *continue* working hard, to *continue* improving themselves. As for other people's reliance on generative A.I. programs, it presents a great opportunity! Large Language Models, by design, yield outputs that fall in the median of a normal distribution. They are *designed* to reproduce whatever is *most common* in the data used for their training. Sure, there's an 'evolving landscape where A.I. plays an

increasing role.' But the landscape is a desert—to wit, a desert of homogenous thought and mediocrity. Placed on *that* terrain, anyone capable of thinking for themselves stands out easily. To prepare students for a future where overreliance on A.I. is all-too-common, then, I encourage them to think critically and creatively. There are no rewards without risk, no mountains without valleys... But suffice it to say that valleys are typically more fertile than *deserts*.

How is what you study important?

As someone who studies philosophy, I ask myself this question *daily*. This is not a self-deprecating joke about philosophy's practical irrelevance. I mean the point literally. The philosopher I study most closely, Friedrich Nietzsche, raises this *exact* question, albeit in a more general, and more terrifying, form. Nietzsche invites us to ask: how can *anything* we do seriously be considered *important*? Or, to approach the question from a different angle, he invites us to ask: what makes *anything* valuable? By my lights, this is a fascinating question—and one that likely takes priority over most, perhaps all, others. If we do not know what values *are*, much less what our values *should be*, how can we be sure that we are not wasting our lives? Nietzsche is often mistaken for a nihilist, for someone who thinks *nothing* is meaningful, valuable, or important. This view has things backward. Nietzsche thinks nihilism is the most pressing problem, the *definitive* problem, of our late modern condition. His whole philosophical project attempts to address this problem so that we might lead more passionate, more meaningful, and more valuable lives. That's what I study.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of academia?

Outside academia, I enjoy reading literature. Somewhere along the road, I developed a particular affinity for modern, Latin American authors—like Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, and Roberto Bolaño. I also love of pulp detective stories, or noir fiction, written by folks like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. Oh! And short stories by Flannery O'Connor, Ernest Hemingway, and Otessa Moshfegh. And... Actually, I'll cut myself off on the literature front. There are too many great authors to name. Books aside, I find a lot of joy listening to and playing guitar, though I don't do either as much as I would like. To be candid, I wish I had something more eccentric to share on this score! ('I spend my weekends planning elaborate art heists and creating 3-D models of works by M. C. Escher.') For the most part, though, I try to enjoy simple things: cooking dinner, walking my dog, finding humor in day-to-day confusion, and having long conversations with my wife.

In conversation with



Dr. Jesse Crosson

How do you make your classes appealing to students? Tell us your secrets!

I try to do three things in all of my classes, in order to make them appealing and engaging for students. The first begins long before the first class. To me, syllabus design is crucial for an interesting and engaging class. I want my students to see a trajectory in our readings and discussions. I want them to understand why I have assigned particular readings, and why I have assigned them in the order that I have. Ultimately, this helps to better direct their reading of each text—especially the difficult ones—and encourages them to leave the semester with some personal answers to big, important questions. The second “ingredient” is skills acquisition: a good course teaches not only interesting content but imparts useful skills. Even if a student is not enamored with the content of a course, the course should still offer them skills that are transferrable to the workforce. For my Cornerstone courses, of course, these are oral communication skills: skills that every employer expects from a strong worker and future leader. And as I remind my students, in the age of AI, being articulate and compelling sets you apart from AI: creativity and charisma are part of what make us “different,” and my classes focus on helping students find their “voice.” Finally, I strive always to bring out “real-world” applications of the concepts that are covered in our readings. In SCLA 102B, for example, students periodically watch a documentary about real American families, which draws out complex themes from our other readings. I have found that these connections help our class more deeply interact with and understand difficult concepts.

What is your favorite transformative text to teach in Cornerstone for Business?

This is a really hard one. Let me narrow it down to a “unit.” My C4B course is themed around the question, “What Is Prosperity?” A key dimension of one’s views about prosperity is the individual’s relationship with work. So, in the class, we spend a fair amount of time talking about work. Why do we work? Why do we value work ethic? What responsibility as leaders do we have

for creating a positive work environment? As part of that discussion, we read a wide array of great thinkers on labor, work ethic, growth, and management. But two of my favorites to teach are Weber in *The Protestant Work Ethic* and Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*. Weber challenges students—and me—to think about why we seem to feel a moral obligation to work hard. Nearly every American values a great work ethic, and from an economic perspective, it is easy to see why a strong work ethic is valuable. Yet, most students feel that work has some sort of intrinsic value. When posed with the question, “If you won the lottery tomorrow, would you still work?”, nearly all say “yes.” Weber offers an opportunity to think through where that urge may come from. Even if one disagrees with Weber’s answers, he puts his finger on a question of foundational importance to modern American life.

Later in the unit, we read *Metamorphosis*. The central “conflict” in the novel, of course, is the main character’s (Gregor) transformation into a bug-like creature. Upon awakening as an *ungeziefer* (most translations call him a bug, but it is important to note that Kafka never actually uses that word directly!), Gregor’s first concern is whether he can make it to work on time. Understandably, students recoil at that: Gregor seemingly has bigger issues than a reprimand from his boss. Yet, the preposterousness of his situation, and his reaction, provide a wonderful lens through which to examine the relationship between one’s work and one’s identity. As students begin the first steps of their life’s work at Purdue, the discussion that follows always proves enriching.

What are the most important things you want your students to take away from your class?

First and foremost, I want students to leave feeling more confident and comfortable speaking in front of others. I firmly believe that we all have a “voice,” and the job of my class is to help students find theirs. Although there are general characteristics that all good speakers share, there are many different ways a “good speaker” can speak. Second, more substantively, I want students to come away from my class with a stronger sense of what they believe “prosperity” entails. What does it mean for them to personally prosper? How does this relate to others’ prosperity? And how has capitalism unleashed human prosperity over the past several centuries? Finally, I hope that students leave my class with an appreciation for the complexity of the social, political, and economic world. Just as every virtue has a vice, even the most positive and successful of systems and societal forces exhibit weaknesses that we must appreciate.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of academia?

I'm an outdoorsman (fishing in the spring and summer, hunting in the fall and winter), musician (voice and piano; I especially enjoy playing at my church), and avid sports fan (particularly football, basketball, and baseball – though as a good Pennsylvanian, I do follow wrestling and volleyball fairly closely!).

How is what you study important?

I study legislatures and policymaking for a living. But, I do not think one needs to be a political scientist to conclude that American government is not operating at its best in recent years. Indeed, as I type this, the federal government remains mired in one of the longest shutdowns in American history, threatening the livelihoods of our brave soldiers and the food security of our most vulnerable. Hundreds of top, appointed positions are occupied by temporary and acting leadership because Congress and the President cannot agree upon suitable replacements. Even the federal judiciary—in many ways, playing a more central role than ever—today operates with nearly 50 judicial vacancies. At the most basic level, American political institutions are simply not discharging many of the fundamental duties that our Constitution requires of them.

In the broadest strokes, my research examines why American institutions struggle to operate as intended—and how we might address those issues. In some cases, this might mean returning to “tried and true” methods for breaking through dysfunction and solving common problems. In other cases, it might mean tweaking the rules that govern our institutions in a new way. In all cases, though, my research aims to understand the incentive structures that lead to suboptimal behavior, and how we might find ways to realign those incentives. Given that state and federal governing institutions deeply affect our day-to-day lives—including funding the very university for which we work!—I believe these topics are of central importance not just to U.S. citizens but to anyone with a stake in how our government operates.

I should note here that I feel so strongly about this, in fact, that I co-founded and co-direct a research center here at Purdue, the Program on American Institutional Renewal (PAIR), which seeks to address these problems. PAIR produces research, engages with policymakers, and provides educational programming aimed at creating and disseminating important knowledge about the challenges our institutions face, and how we might meet those challenges. The program offers a wide variety of opportunities for students to engage with our work, and I invite anyone reading to take a look at our web page.

In conversation with



Dr. Rhodes Pinto

How do you make your classes appealing to students? Tell us your secrets!

There are two main secrets (though I guess they are no longer!) I have to making appealing classes. The first one is that rather than just march through texts in chronological order I like to choose and juxtapose texts to create thought and discussion in the students. For instance, in 101 we have read Dickens' *Hard Times* in-between Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and we read Cicero's *On Duties* followed by Machiavelli's *The Prince*, followed by Sophocles' *Antigone*; in 102 we will go from Schumpeter's *Can Capitalism Survive* to Thoreau's *Walden* and then Benjamin Braun on Asset Manager Capitalism. The other secret is brining unexpected texts, videos, or topics to class to connect historical readings and abstract theories to practical problems and contemporary issues. For instance, I use videos of Mr. Beast, MTV Cribs, and football star Ochocinco (aka Chad Johnson) in teaching Smith's doctrine of sympathy, and we discuss how his theory relates to social media. Students compare Machiavelli's advice for how to rule against a video on how Japanese shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu actually ruled. We discuss the use of AI in the criminal justice system with *Hard Times*; eminent domain with Locke's *Second Treatise*, and even the Japanese government's space business development plan with Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*!

What is your favorite transformative text to teach in Cornerstone for Business?

For me it would have to be Adam Smith, albeit both of his major works *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* together. One major reason is the depth of Smith's engagement with ancient Stoicism, which is an area of my research and interest. Indeed, the core of Smith's thought (around the invisible hand) brilliantly reworks a major ancient objection to Stoic ethics recorded in Plutarch—that greed and other vices, since they are found commonly in people, are natural and so would have had to be implanted in us by the god of the Stoics, who they held to design the world and everything in it to be as good as possible. Smith argues that operating under self-interest in commerce

does indeed yield the best possible results for society, while at the same time (borrowing from his philosopher-friend David Hume) god also implanted a sense of “sympathy” to balance our self-interest such that we will still act just as morally as the Stoics think we should. Indeed, Smith's clearest statement of the moral balance we strike is actually a translation of the words of the greatest Stoic philosopher, Chrysippus. Another reason I love to teach Smith is that despite the fame of the “invisible hand” and the centrality of his thought to the economic and political development of the modern world, students are unfamiliar with the depth and richness of his thought; the above reflects one dimension of that, but there are others, for instance his claims that workers should be well-compensated and that one should avoid trying to be come rich, as well as his pessimism toward corporations. It is always fun to discuss whether Smith has gone too far or not far enough.

What are the most important things you want your students to take away from your class?

I want students to come away with an appreciation for “vision.” What do mean by “vision”? Well, vision is about having and bringing to bear a broad perspective. Another key aspect of vision I emphasize to my students is to get to the core of issues by probing the basic, underlying assumptions. There is a great Japanese proverb based on Zhuangzi that I think perfectly captures these features: *i no naka no kawazu taikai o shirazu*, “the frog in a well knows nothing of the ocean.” Vision is the guider of being able to be create success—innovation—and to sustain it, and a narrow perspective will not be able to catch sight of what is needed. That's why we read some of the greatest works ever written, look at great art, listen to great music, etc.—to give students that perspective. That is also why I am careful in class to connect the thoughts and ideas that emerge from these works to all sorts of contemporary issues of relevance to themselves and the business world, so they can understand how these often historical works can yield insight, as well as how they shed light on our underlying values and thought processes.

How do you approach feedback and assessment to support student growth and development?

“Assessment” is a word I avoid using, as to me assignments are themselves an integral part of the learning process itself rather than a mere measure of the outcome of that process. Hence I carefully design assignments that will actually facilitate further learning and thought. For instance, the research paper in my SCLA 101 course centers around each student identifying and discussing a company they consider to be “good,” which requires students to actively apply the

ideas we have been studying to the current, business world. Likewise, it is because I see assignments as part of the learning process that I always make myself available as to meet to discuss draft work as many times as students want, and, moreover, that I provide detailed, individual feedback on all student work. Some students even say—because they have never had a teacher that did it before—that I don't know how to teach because I give constructive feedback even when they receive a good grade!

How do you prepare students for the evolving landscape where AI plays an increasing role?

When Steve Jobs came back to Apple in 1997, one of the first things he did was launch a new marketing campaign that reflected both Apple's core values and those values it saw in its users, the iconic "Think Different" campaign. I emphasize the first half of that slogan so that in the professional world students will be able to complete that slogan. The reality is that LLMs (as currently construed around transformer-based models) cannot provide original thought—they only output probable texts strings based upon the entered text string (prompt). "Probable" means what most prevalent in the training data, and based on the limited variability they are designed to provide ("temperature"), it means that they output the much the same statements that reflect this prevailing majority. When you have 120 students and they all use ChatGPT to answer a question or produce a plan or proposal, you so clearly see that get the same few answers and ideas for all of them; it really is shocking. Think of what this would mean in the professional world. I want my students to be future business leaders and innovators, and that will never happen if they are relying on the same ideas that are being fed to all of their colleagues and competitors. More than ever, in the future business success will be based around the development on one's own ability to think and so to generate truly original or "different" concepts and plans. That is why I keep ChatGPT out of my classes so that they can build both the skills and confidence to develop their own thoughts. I see my classes as the chance to provide that valuable service, while professors in their specific business subject areas can teach them how best to incorporate specific AI tools for specific use cases.

How is what you study important?

My main area of research concerns the earliest thinkers in all of western thought—the so called Presocratics. We have only small fragments and later evidence on what they thought, so recreating and understanding their views is a similar task to ancient pottery you may have seen at museums where they have reconstructed a piece from only the shattered

one-third of the pieces that were found. It matters because humanity builds on, whether by improving, modifying, or disagreeing with, the ideas of its predecessors. Therefore, to understand fully the ideas we have today—and to get to the core of them and reveal what underlies them—it is essential to understand their earliest origins. And it is with the Presocratics that we find many important ideas first occurring. For instance, scientists today aim for a "Grand Unified Theory of Everyone"—ideally one equation that can embrace everything. That tendency actually goes back to the Presocratics, several of whom argued for a single principle that embraced everything! So too we find the first theory that the universe it made up of microscopic atoms, the first argument for their being only one god, the first formulation of the logical law of non-contradiction, and even, so it is reported for the very first of the Presocratics, Thales, the creation of the first business monopoly that made him vast sums of money! While I have some doubts about the reliability of that report on Thales (given by Aristotle), it is interesting and important to think what it tells us that the very first philosopher in the history of western thought is credited with a major business discovery.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of academia?

I have three big hobby-passions that I enjoy in my free time. The first involves passenger rail travel. I love taking long train rides—over the years I have surely racked up well over 50k miles on trains—especially because of how it gives a real window into the ways of lives of various peoples and communities, as well as different natures and geographies. In addition to riding, I have amassed a considerable archive of books, original documents, blueprints, etc. as well as ephemera. The second is photography; I particularly enjoy taking landscape and close-up nature photographs. The final is playing Riichi (Japanese) Mahjong, which is kind of like rummy or poker on steroids! There are thirty-seven kinds of winning hand formation, some of which can combine and stack to create valuable hands. Further, points are always only exchanged between players, and if a player claims a tile you discarded to win, then you must pay them the point value of the hand, while if they draw the tile themselves the payment is split between players. What this means is that unlike many games, Riichi Mahjong is primarily defensive in its strategy—avoiding discarding other players' winning tiles. I enjoy this unusual vibe of winning by favoring rational calculation and resisting the overt desire to win hands, while trying to navigate the very tricky balance between defensive safety, winning hand value, and speed to win hands. Overall, it's a pretty eclectic list, I know!

2 | Case Competition Winners



In spring of 2025, the Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts Program and the Mitch Daniels School of Business held a Cornerstone for Business Case Competition for undergraduate students taking or having taken Cornerstone for Business courses. The case presented a multifaceted scenario in which social media companies must develop defensible policies regarding misinformation while considering multiple perspectives. It tasked students with delivering a presentation to the Meta Board of Directors and CEO to offer a well-reasoned approach to fact-checking and misinformation on its platforms in the United States.

The in-person juried finals took place on April 30th during the Cornerstone for Business Conference: Markets and Moral Sentiments. First place was awarded to Daniels School of Business undergraduate William Hahn. Congratulations to him and to all of the entrants!

We are also pleased to report that Daniels School of Business undergraduate Benjamin Gottlieb was named one of ten grand prize winners of Duke University's Fuqua School of Business' 2025 New Ideas Competition with The Dialogue Project.

Cornerstone for Business Case Competition Winner

William Hahn



William Hahn is a Finance major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. His winning presentation carefully argues for a “Responsible Profit Model,” invoking the thought of both Plato and Milton Friedman. The PowerPoint presentation used for his first-round entry follows.

A video of his first-round presentation may be viewed by following this link: <https://tinyurl.com/HahnC4B> or by scanning the following QR Code:



THE CURRENT SITUATION



In January 2025 Meta announced that they will be phasing out their partnership with independent fact-checkers by mid-2025. This decision will affect Facebook, Instagram, and Threads.

Meta's official justification for the change was cost reduction, streamlining operations, and shifting toward AI-based solutions.

This decision creates potential problems for users, advertisers, society, and for Meta itself. My proposal brings a more balanced approach to Meta's fact-checking process.



Balancing Profit & Truth: A New Approach to Meta's Misinformation Policy

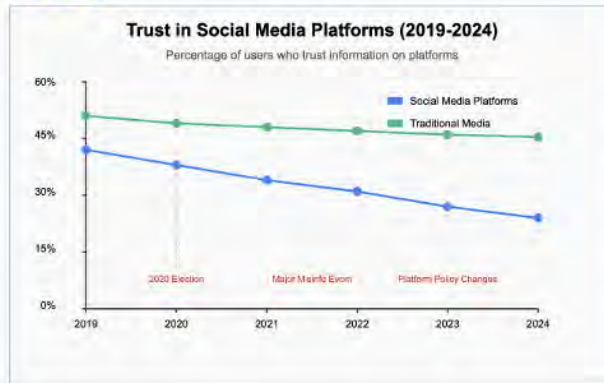
Will Hahn



CURRENT SITUATION CHARTS

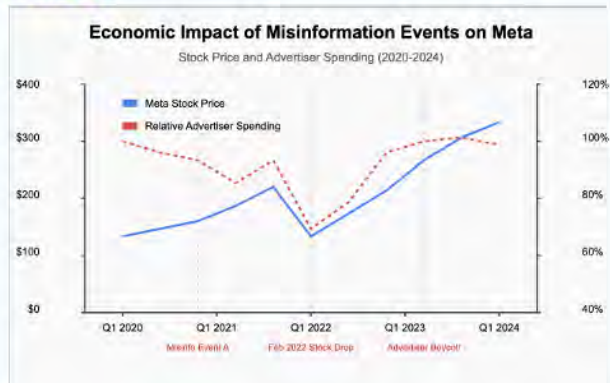


TABLE 01



This chart shows trust in Social Media Platforms in the past 5 years. This shows a clear downward trend in social media trust following major events compared to traditional media.

TABLE 02



This chart shows the economic impact of misinformation events on Meta. This labels several large events and how both Meta's stock price and advertiser spending changed as a result.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS & CONCERNS



SHAREHOLDERS

- Need sustained user engagement and growth
- Face regulatory and reputation risks
- Require cost-effective solutions



USERS

- Demand freedom of expression
- Need reliable information sources
- Diverse views on platform responsibility



PUBLIC

- Concerns about effects on Democratic Process
- Social cohesion and polarization impacts
- Trust in information ecosystem

PLATO'S FRAMEWORK



The Pursuit of Truth:

"The truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images."

"The rational part should rule, and the spirited part should support it, while the appetitive part should obey."

From Plato's *The Republic*:

- Societies flourish when guided by truth and reason
- Unchecked freedom without structure leads to disorder
- Education and knowledge guide better decision-making

Application to Meta:

- Platforms shape the modern "cave" of information
- Responsibility to create systems that help users discern truth
- Balance between absolute freedom and harmful restriction



FRIEDMAN'S FRAMEWORK



The Business Perspective:

"The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" -Milton Friedman

Core principles:

- Primary responsibility is to shareholders
- Profit maximization within legal boundaries
- Social issues best addressed by markets, not businesses

Application to Meta:

- Content policies must prioritize business sustainability
- Intervention justified when misinformation threatens profitability
- User trust and engagement are business assets to protect





PROPOSED SOLUTION

- Clear articulation of your policy recommendation
- Implementation strategy

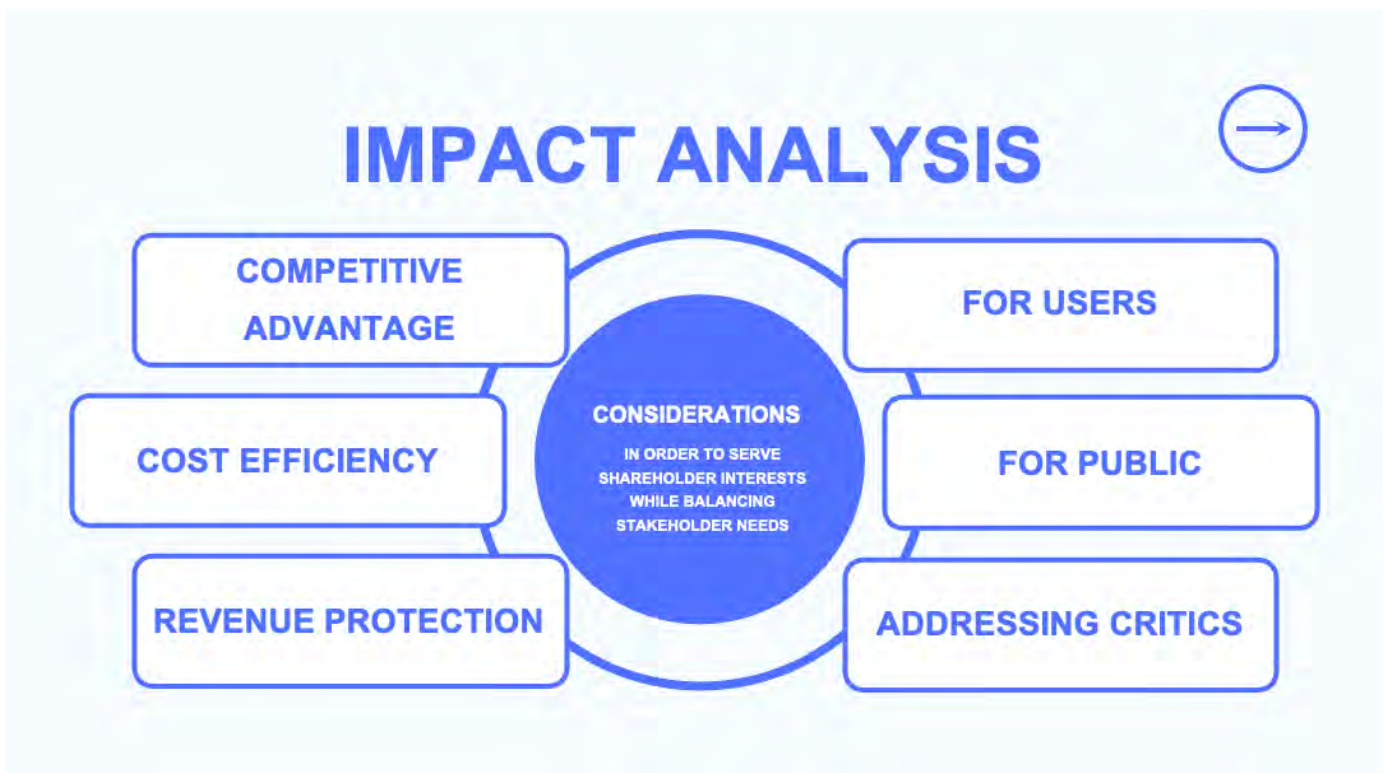
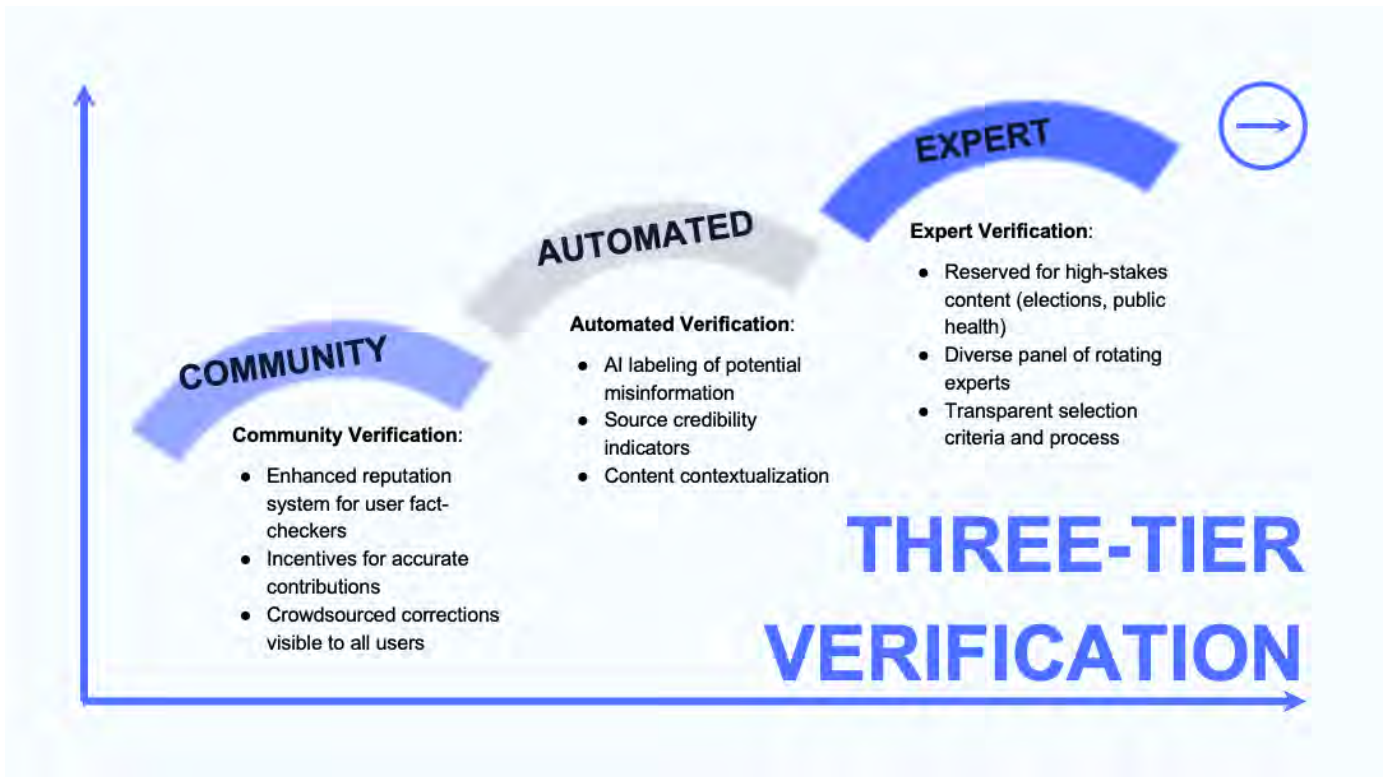


Meta

Information Integrity Policy

“Responsible Profit Model”

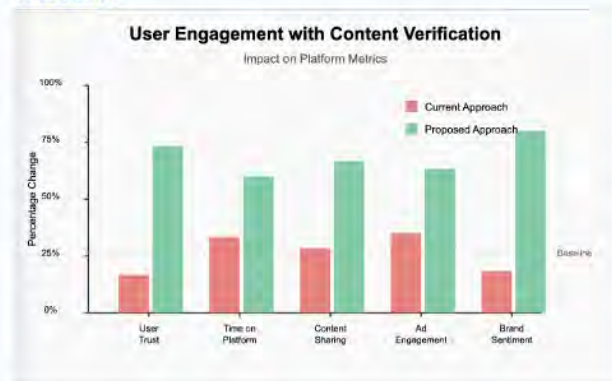
Ensuring accuracy, truthfulness, and reliability of information on Meta’s platforms. This includes efforts to detect, prevent, and correct misinformation.



PROJECTED IMPACT

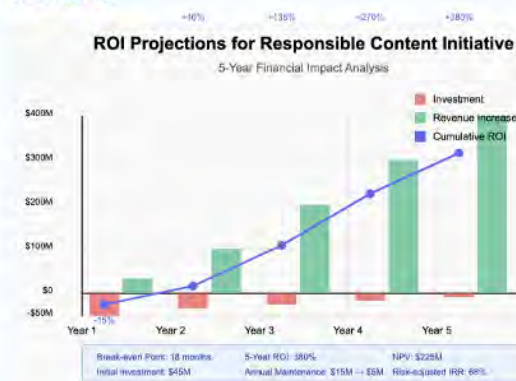


TABLE 01



This chart shows projected User Engagement metrics such as user trust, time on platform, ad engagement, and brand sentiment.

TABLE 02



This chart shows a 5-year financial projection with initial investment and returns. The key part of this projection is that there is projected to be a **380% ROI** and an 18-month break-even.

THE PATH FORWARD

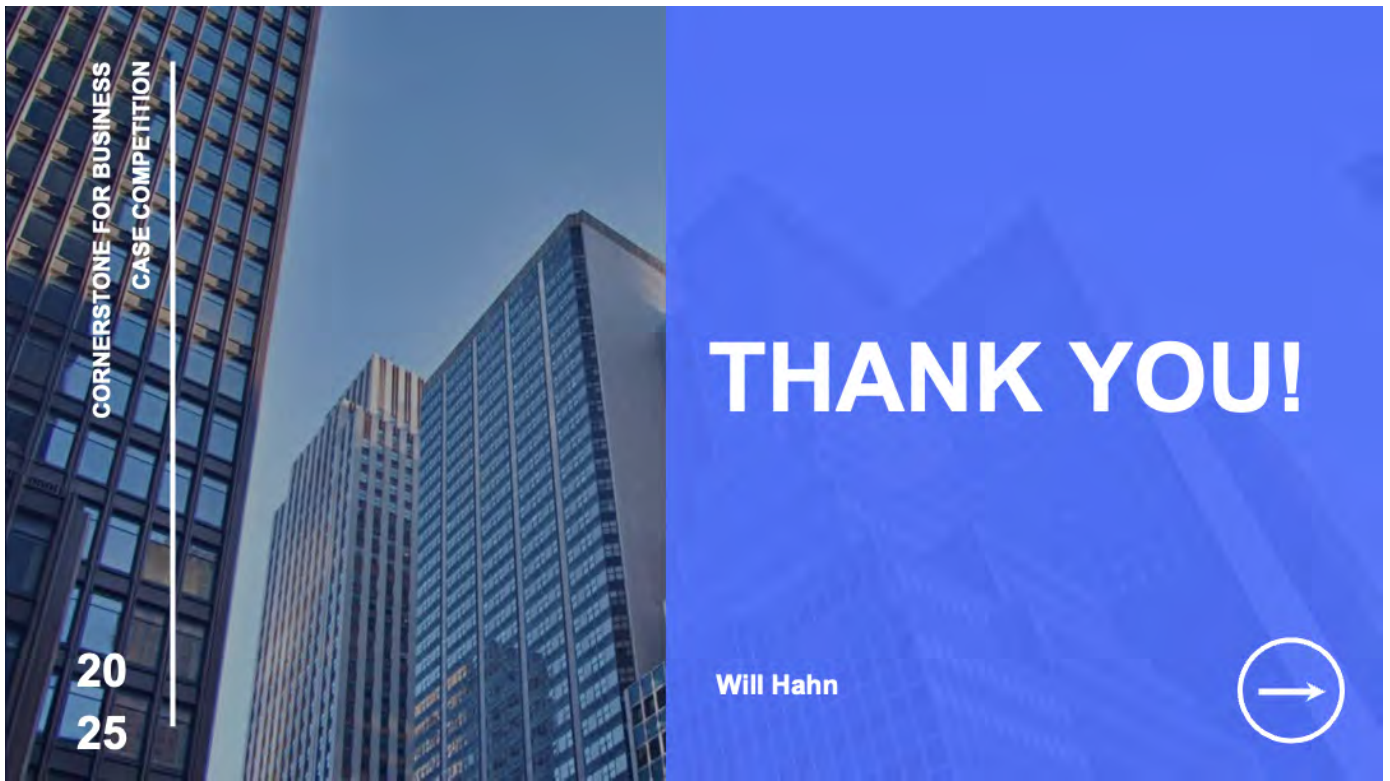


Our approach balances Friedman's profit imperative with Plato's pursuit of truth in order to form a more responsible profit model.

This solution aims to address shareholder needs with acknowledging broader responsibilities.

We believe that implementing a Responsible Profit Model will be a differentiator for Meta's platforms, allowing them to lead the industry in a way where everyone wins.

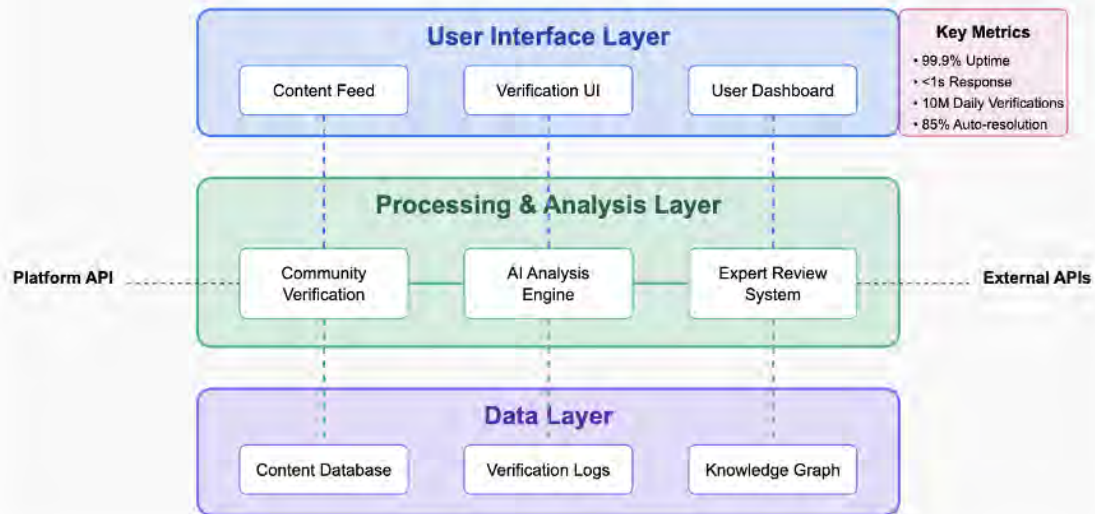




Appendix

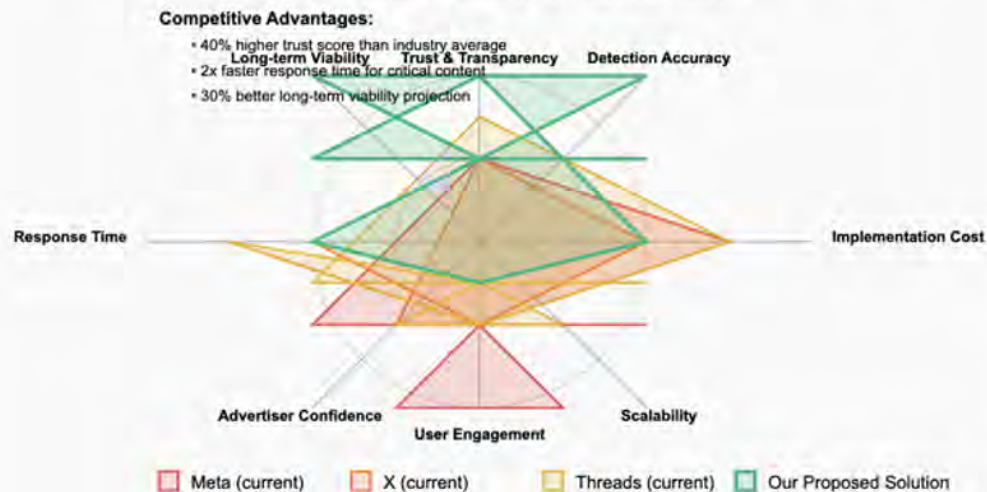
Technical Implementation Architecture

Three-Tier Content Verification System



Competitor Analysis: Content Moderation Approaches

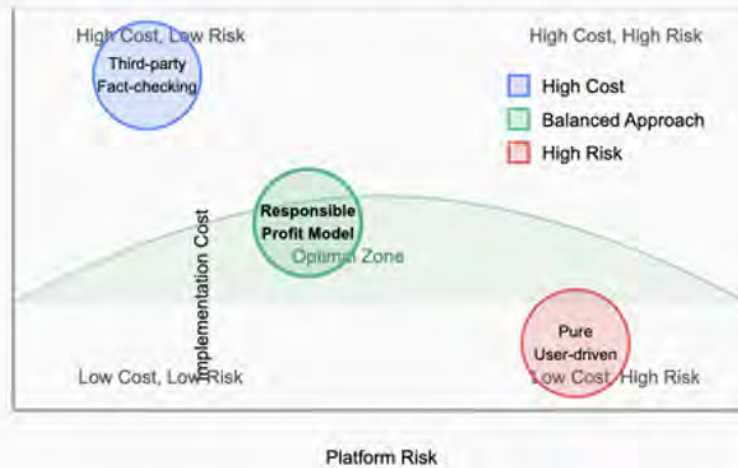
Comparison of Industry Standards vs. Proposed Solution



This radar chart shows my solution compared to current approaches from Meta, X, and Threads. My solution shines in critical areas: trust & transparency, detection accuracy, long-term viability
KPI's: 40% higher trust scores, 2x faster response times 30% better long-term viability

Content Moderation Cost Analysis

Cost vs. Risk Comparison of Different Approaches



8-WEEK IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
PHASE 1	COMMUNITY VERIFICATION							
PHASE 2		AI-POWERED ANALYSIS						
PHASE 3				EXPERT VERIFICATION				
PHASE 4						EVALUATION & OPTIMIZATION		

2025 Fuqua New Ideas Competition Winner

Benjamin Gottlieb



In 2025, Duke University's Fuqua School of Business held its third annual New Ideas Competition. The competition asked freshman through junior undergraduates nationwide to explore the different ways business can be a force for good in society, with a particular focus on "improving civil discourse and reducing polarization in society." Benjamin's grand-prize winning entry essay, which follows, proposes a new social media platform, DebateX, that fosters structured, civil, and profitable debate via inspiration from the thought of John Locke.

Benjamin Gottlieb is a Finance major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto and Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. James Mollison.

"Cornerstone for Business offered a completely different approach to written and oral communication than I had experienced before. Rather than focusing on what to think, as many of my earlier English courses had prior to Purdue, the courses emphasized how to think, an approach that enhanced the way I approach problem-solving and the communication of these solutions. Class discussions and assignments were framed in a business context, which couldn't have been more helpful when I entered the Fuqua New Ideas Competition. I found myself thinking back to the lessons from my freshman year to help build the framework of what ultimately became my winning idea. The oral communication lessons I received through Cornerstone were just as important, helping me clearly and persuasively convey my concept to the other winners and the advisory panel."

Imagine what this country would be like if the founding fathers had access to Twitter in its current iteration. Would Hamilton and Jefferson engage in spirited debates over threads, passionately arguing their visions for the nation's future reduced to nothing but a few memes and insults? Would the Federalist Papers become nothing more than a fleeting trend, with likes and retweets but forgotten after 24 hours? Today, we find ourselves in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, where technology shapes how ideas spread and how nations define themselves. This raises the question: What would the founding fathers have done with technology? Would they harness its immense power to inform, unite, and foster collaboration, or would they let it amplify division and hatred? Their vision of democracy, rooted in reasoned constructive discourse and shared ideals for the future but differing means of getting there, offers a timeless framework for reimagining how we can evolve our digital public square to meet today's challenges.

Social media platforms have strayed from the democratic ideals the founders cherished, often amplifying and rewarding polarization instead of fostering collaboration and learning. One of the largest contrasts between the discourse of the founding era and today lies in the means of communication. In the 18th century, figures like Benjamin Franklin engaged in debates not only with their opponents but even with themselves, publishing arguments under multiple pseudonyms in various newspapers. These thoughtful exchanges allowed citizens to see both sides of an issue, encouraging them to form informed opinions and choose a path forward, creating our country. Today, the landscape is drastically different. Politicians frequently use social media to spread misinformation about their opponents, often prioritizing vilification of opposition over truth. The goal is no longer to persuade or build consensus, but to deepen divisions and only sometimes try to pick up the pieces later.

Regardless of where individuals fall on the political spectrum, they are made to feel as though they themselves are the problem, rather than part of the solution. A survey of Americans showed that 79% think negatively on politics and commonly used the word "Divisive" to describe them (Pew Research Center). This shift in discourse has eroded the foundations of civil debate, replacing collaboration with hostility. The loudest voices on social media often represent extremes, while the majority in the middle share more common ground than they realize. There is no tangible evidence of this however, with algorithms designed to give the loudest voices a platform, not the consensus.

One of the largest platforms that has the potential to become a true digital representation of a public square is Twitter. Since Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter in 2022, the platform has undergone significant changes, many of which aim to bolster the First Amendment rights our founders left us with. Under his leadership, efforts have been made to reduce censorship and introduce new features to ensure Twitter remains relevant in an ever-evolving digital landscape. Among the most notable changes is the rebranding of the platform to 'X,' signaling a decisive separation from the Twitter that many criticized for deplatforming free speech. One of the most recent innovations introduced under Musk's leadership is Grok, a cutting-edge large language model designed to compete with tools like ChatGPT, integrated into everyone's X account. Grok represents a bold step in advanced AI technologies being accessible for the everyday user to improve engagement with content and ideas.

Even with these developments and new features, since October of this past year, leading into the election, daily users on X have dropped by 8.4% (Mashable). This dip comes at the height of the past election cycle. Tens of thousands of people daily get into constant arguments that commonly dissolve into just attacks at people which have worn down the average twitter user and decreased overall engagement.

Evolution is humans' key to survival, and organizations are no different. This shows how critical success is for Elon's new features to the platform. These shifts underscore Musk's vision of transforming Twitter into a modern, open, and technologically advanced public square, accessible by anyone, anywhere.

Now reimagine X as the modern-day equivalent of the founding fathers' public square and editorial disputes. A dynamic platform where citizens engage in thoughtful debate, exchange ideas, and work toward shared solutions. By utilizing the already integrated advanced technology, such as Grok moderation to enforce fair debate rules, X has the potential to evolve into a place that prioritizes reasoned discourse over division. Much like the town squares and newspapers of the 18th century fostered informed discussions that shaped a nation, this reimagined platform could become a digital hub for collaboration, understanding, and progress, bridging divides in a polarized world. While one could argue that this solution would increase polarization, by having both parties agree to preset standards, not restricting speech but rather on scope of debate keeping things focused, it will have the reverse effect of this criticism, especially with Grok there to mediate. Instead of a messy fight full of personal attacks, this new type of debate would shine the light on nuanced policy disagreements, making people realize how much they truly have in common.

When reflecting on the current state of division in America, many analysts across the political spectrum have described the last three elections as some of the most contentious in our nation's history. While these times may feel uniquely divisive to us and our reality, they pale in comparison to the turmoil of the Civil War era. The 1858 Illinois Senate race epitomized this division, as the nation was split with the contentious question of whether slavery should expand into new states. The incumbent, Stephen A. Douglas, faced a rising political figure, Abraham Lincoln, in a tightly contested campaign. Over the course of this race, they engaged in seven statewide debates, each presenting their beliefs on the future of slavery and the Union. Though Douglas ultimately won re-election, the debates were the steppingstones for Lincoln's career, and a model of public square discourse in America. Transcripts of their exchanges were widely published, propelling Lincoln into the national spotlight. Just two years later, this newfound prominence helped Lincoln secure the presidency in the 1860 general election, bringing on the end of slavery and making the world that we have today.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates were the gold standard for public discourse over controversial issues. Now imagine what they would think of today's discourse landscape where insults are levied from people sitting on their couches arguing with random people on their phone because they feel like it. The same way that their debates were broadcasted across the country with the mediums of the time, people's conflict on X are broadcasted worldwide. It is estimated that 48% of voters 18-29 get their election information from social media (BU News

Service). This number will only grow as the children who grew up with social media reach the voting age. The main contrast is that people aren't debating to learn more and let good ideas prevail, they are just giving into and creating larger and larger echo chambers for themselves.

With the introduction of a DebateX feature, Grok would play a pivotal role in moderating these debates. Just as Lincoln and Douglas followed a strict format during their pivotal debates, Grok established custom ground rules for each discussion. Beyond rule-setting, Grok would ensure participants follow the agreed framework while asking probing questions to maintain engagement and depth, all of which gets added to the complex models learning. Most critically, Grok would not censor speech within the agreed parameters of the debate, preserving the integrity of free expression and our first amendment rights. This approach parallels the function of the public square during some of the most divisive periods in American history, fostering open dialogue while maintaining structure and fairness. By utilizing already built structures, applying them in this way would have an incredibly positive impact on civil engagement and reduce polarization.

As these debates would involve high-profile individuals with large followings, integrating DebateX into X offers significant opportunities for enhanced engagement. One promising avenue is leveraging X's existing live audio chat feature, Spaces, to expand the reach and impact of these discussions. Spaces allow hosts to facilitate live, podcast-style conversations with the unique ability to invite listeners to contribute their thoughts in real time.

Imagine a DebateX session between two congressmen from opposing sides of the aisle, discussing foreign policy and moderated by Grok. Simultaneously, a corresponding Space could host thousands of listeners, including industry experts and commentators, who provide live analysis and additional perspectives. And following the debate, the public would get to vote on who they thought won and publicly discuss that. The depth of learning and engagement during such an event could rival the cumulative insights gained from years of social studies classes in high school. This integration not only elevates the debate experience but also transforms X into a hub for dynamic, real-time civic education and discourse.

Critics might argue that debates like this could deepen polarization. However, the structured format of DebateX is designed to foster understanding by focusing on the root of issues and encouraging participants to recognize their shared humanity. Listening to understand as opposed to listening until it's time to make your point, is the key to making these moments of togetherness. By engaging in open, public discussions, people are reminded that these debates concern real-life challenges and involve real individuals—not abstract opponents. This openness strengthens the foundation for informed decision-making and provides access to better, more nuanced information.

Rather than censoring what might be deemed “wrong” speech, this format allows for a natural competition of ideas, where good speech rises above bad. With fair moderation and access to a broad spectrum of perspectives, individuals are empowered to come to their own conclusions, fostering a more informed and collaborative public discourse through this cream rises mindset. The same way that people have the right to share with the world their

intelligence through this free speech forum, they have the same opportunity to show their lack of knowledge and let the audience decide for themselves what to think.

While Elon Musk purchased Twitter with the intent of transforming it into a free speech platform, it remains, at its core, a business. Musk did not spend \$44 billion to simply add another pet project to his portfolio alongside Tesla, SpaceX, Starlink, and The Boring Company. His business-driven approach is evident in the introduction of features like the pay-for-verification system and in-feed ads, both of which align with X's revenue-generation strategy while maintaining free speech. The DebateX feature would seamlessly integrate into this model. For individuals seeking to participate as debaters, it could be offered as an additional pricing tier, adding a few dollars per month on top of the current subscription fee. High-profile debates would also provide lucrative opportunities for ad placements, as this type of content would attract significant engagement and viewership. And at the end of a high-profile debate, users would have the opportunity to vote on what they thought were the better ideas and overall winners.

The voting feature offers the potential to generate valuable consumer and voter insights while maintaining strong user data protection. Traditional polling methods have struggled to accurately capture public sentiment in recent elections, often failing to reflect how voters truly feel about key issues, resulting in incorrect predictions. This feature introduces a new form of polling, enhanced by transparency and detailed engagement metrics, allowing for a clearer understanding of which ideas resonate with various demographics. By analyzing real-time participation data, such as regional trends, age group responses, and issue-specific voting patterns, DebateX can provide unprecedented insights into the motivations and priorities of voters. Importantly, these analytics would be generated using anonymized and aggregated data, ensuring that individual privacy is safeguarded. This commitment to user data protection builds trust in users while enabling policymakers, businesses, and campaign strategists to address the concerns of their target audiences more effectively and create more inclusive and representative policies or campaigns. One of the best ways to combat division is to find out what the people genuinely care about, and work to find positive solutions for those issues.

Attracting high-profile candidates for these debates would require little effort with the right approach. A pilot round, featuring Elon Musk himself in a debate, would generate immense attention and engagement. Imagine a DebateX between Musk and Bezos over whose space company will have the capacity to reach mars first. Musk and Bezos have been deploying opposite strategy with their space programs with Musk taking a learn from failure and power through strategy with SpaceX and Bezos being more deliberate and slower with Blue Origin. The success of this initial event would naturally draw interest from other prominent figures, intrigued by the potential for increased visibility, ad revenue, and publicity. In addition, with the incentive of gaining access to analytics about ideas they hold, they would be more than willing to debate countering viewpoints. As the feature gains traction, its popularity would grow exponentially, creating a self-sustaining cycle of participation and monetization. While so many people today profit from making others angry and rage-bait, this offers an alternative way to make money while building a community and culture of togetherness.

The DebateX feature will not be limited to political discussions; its potential applications are virtually limitless. It can serve as a platform for lively debates on topics that captivate public interest across various domains, increasing accessibility and access for those around the world. Imagine two high-profile celebrities debating one of the most enduring sports questions: who is the best player in basketball history, Jordan, or LeBron? Or envision entertainment icons sharing their perspectives on the latest viral news. These debates would not only spark widespread engagement but also draw diverse audiences to the platform. The best part about America is that no two of us have the exact same experiences. This impacts our opinions and if places are created for people to show how these experiences drive beliefs, the bond between not just Americans but all humans will be strengthened.

If the founding fathers were alive today with access to DebateX, the possibilities for their discussions would be equally fascinating. Picture Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton engaging in a spirited debate from topics ranging the Russia-Ukraine conflict, who deserves the last spot in the college football playoff or arguing which of Taylor Swift's albums are the best. By extending the format beyond traditional political topics, DebateX can tap into popular culture, sports, and entertainment, making it a truly dynamic and versatile tool for fostering dialogue and engagement. Users still can clash in comment sections of tweets, but when truly looking to find the underlying cause of an issue, DebateX would be there.

In a world that is increasingly feeling polarized and full of the amplification of extremes, DebateX represents a transformative step in rebuilding a public square for civil discourse. Drawing inspiration from the timeless frameworks of the founding fathers and the iconic Lincoln-Douglas debates, this feature has the potential to redefine how we engage with ideas and with one another in the digital age. By leveraging advanced existing technologies like Grok and integrating seamlessly into X's platform and revenue model, DebateX combines the best of history, innovation, and business strategy.

This feature transcends the biggest limitation of today's social media by fostering meaningful debates across politics, culture, and entertainment, bridging divides, encouraging collaboration, and bringing people together. Rather than perpetuating echo chambers and conflict, DebateX emphasizes shared humanity and constructive dialogue, empowering individuals to make informed decisions based on open and fair exchanges of ideas. In doing so, it aligns not only with X's mission to be a modern public square but also with the enduring democratic ideals that shaped this nation from one where a human could own another to what it is today.

At its core X isn't just an app, DebateX isn't a just feature; it's a vision for the future of civic engagement. A place where technology is a force for unity, understanding, and progress. By creating spaces where good ideas rise above bad and where diverse voices are heard and respected, DebateX offers a tangible path toward reducing polarization and strengthening the social fabric. In the spirit of those who laid the foundation for democracy, this is a tool that has the power to educate, inspire, and bring people together, proving that business can indeed be a force for good.

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3 | Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest

“Wealth”

Cornerstone for Business contests ask students to create original essays, short stories, poetry, artwork, or other creative content inspired by the transformative texts they read in SCLA 101 and 102 based on a different theme each semester. The contests are open to all students currently enrolled in SCLA 101 and 102 and are judged by a committee of Cornerstone faculty.

The theme of the Fall 2023 contest was “wealth”: what does wealth mean to you? Why is it important? Is it our nature to “pursue riches and avoid poverty,” in the words of Adam Smith? How much is enough? Is there never enough? Does its pursuit lead to happiness?

Adam Smith would have been an AC/DC Fan

Zachary Alvin



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — First Place

Zach Alvin is a double major in Supply Chain Management and Finance in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. His short story tells the tale of a conversation with the reincarnation of Adam Smith.

I just had a conversation at the Times Square subway station with a man wearing a holey AC/DC T-shirt, athletic shorts, and Crocs. It may be far-fetched, but I think he was the reincarnation of Adam Smith. He was smiling and singing, **“Tailored suits, chauffeured cars. Fine hotels and big cigars. Up for grabs, up for a price.”** We hit it off as I told him that AC/DC Moneytalks is my life’s jam and sang a few lines, **“The dollar’s up, down, you’d better buy the pound. The claim is on you, the sights are on me. So what do you do that’s guaranteed?”** With the reincarnation of Adam Smith’s excitement for AC/DC, we hit it off. I thought it was odd to talk with a stranger about my financial future, but this guy rocked! We sang and debated the song together and I argued that AC/DC was correct, money does talk, but it is not everything.

I explained to him that I was a student at Purdue University and my dream was the acquisition of wealth to live a dream life with luxuries like a **“Big house with king size bed,”** a Beemer, and a shore house. As we walked up the subway stairs to the street, he encouraged me to go for it by telling me “Nobody but a beggar chooses to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow-citizens,” (p.169). I control my own financial destiny and need wealth in order to earn the business of friends and customers. Would you hire a lawyer, doctor, or financial manager dressed like the reincarnation of Adam Smith? Will you choose the dentist with bad teeth? No way! Wealth is needed to advertise the success of my service, especially as a money manager. We sang the classic lines together, **“Come on, come on, listen to the money talk.”** In society, when the money talk begins, it is human nature that the appearance of wealth makes friends or clients listen harder, watch you more, and sign up for your services.

The horns of cabs were loud as we entered the crowded streets of Times Square; I told his reincarnation of Adam Smith that I was scared that I was not doing enough and said to him “I’m just trying to keep up with and hope to surpass the Jones’.” He replied that it was natural and “every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another,” (p.72). I spent some time at my friend's shore house this summer, and as human nature dictates, was impressed and dream of having a shore house for myself one day.

We walked by the cop who had a pickpocket in handcuffs and Adam and I looked at each other and jokingly sang, **“Hey little girl, you break the laws, you hustle, you deal, you steal from us all.”** The pickpocket sounded like Karl Marx as she yelled at the cop, “Man got out of a limo, can’t he share?” The cop chuckled and whispered a line from AC/DC in her ear, **“Money talks, BS walks.”** We all want a better life, even if we have not been put in a position to achieve it. I was lucky, but I know the hardships my family came from to make it to the bougie town of Basking Ridge, NJ. I told Adam that I will never forget to help those in need on my wealth journey.

As I asked him where he was headed, I said, “You are going to be walking for hours if you are headed to Wall Street. May wanna get back on the subway and head south.”

The reincarnation of Adam Smith smirked and replied, “I see it ahead, my destination. Back the Future is playing on Broadway. I hear it is a hit.”

“Nice chatting,” as I waved, whistling more AC/DC, **“The furs, the diamonds, the painting on the wall.”** As John Locke theorized, humans have the right to life, liberty, and property (pg. 12) so I’m headed back to Purdue to continue the chase to be successful. I want it all, but I would like to use my invisible hand to help others too.

Wealth is Spelled

Zarni Win



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — Second Place

Zarni Win is a Mechanical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He took Cornerstone SCLA 102 with Dr. Andy Baker. His piece is an acrostic that revels in the varied richness of life.

Wealth is spelled through moments and memories. Small blips in time in which we feel and absorb. Moments of joy, pain, sorrow. It is the fully felt existence of our lives, lived to the brink.

Every passing moment is a chance, an opportunity to occupy and experience. Exciting isn't it? Seize the moment and ride the waves of life as it crashes, and flows through you. Every battle, obstacle, and challenge you face and conquer, all of the awards, recognition, and achievements no matter how small, add to the wealth of your life and its experiences.

All that life has to offer, with all of its ups and downs. Every moment counts. The excitement and accomplished feeling of a promotion. The grief and loss of a loved one. The peace and bliss of an autumn afternoon. To live is to feel, and take in these emotions.

Love. For what is life without love? Love of oneself and one's existence. Romanticize life, feel like the main character because you are. Enrich every blip with intense feelings. You could go grab a cup of coffee. Or you could make it an adventure, look around, enjoy the sun shining on you, or the fall breeze. Love the journey, as well as the destination.

Time passes. Time is always running out. Why would you want to live forever? Our lives are short, that's what makes them priceless. Time isn't money, it is so much more. Wealth is time well spent, however one wants. To make the best of it is essential as we don't have much left. The wealthiest people are those who find a way to enjoy their time.

Humanity is full of wealth. Each of our eight billion individual lives, with billions of moments. The human experience, the wealth of our lives summed up. We all have so much wealth to share, so much to learn from each other. Our wealth is spelled out in all of our moments and memories. Every interaction, emotion felt. It is our existence, our wealth. So go on and share it over your next cup of coffee, dinner date, or study session.

From Capital to Contentment

Pranav Ramnath



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — Third Place

Pranav Ramnath is a Computer Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He took Cornerstone SCLA 101 with Dr. Robert King. His short story examines the promises and pitfalls of different paths to fulfillment.

Krish was slipping away. He was just too fast running up the mountain. Arjun was far behind. He had vowed to himself to beat Krish in the race to Mango Rock one day. He could not let his older brother keep beating him. This time, however, Arjun was going to claim the title of second place.

“You’re so slow, Arjun!” yelled Krish from afar.

Breathless. Tired. Fatigued. Arjun was barely holding on now. He could not even muster up a response to his brother’s insult.

Once Arjun reached the top, all his pain faded away. He set aside his competitiveness and replaced it with an emotion that words could not describe. Arjun climbed up Mango Rock and sat beside his brother. Krish had been there for a while, waiting for Arjun. He smiled at Arjun.

“Good stuff, man. You held on till the end. You’ll beat me one day,” he said with brotherly warmth.

“Thanks, *bhai*,” Arjun replied weakly, still a little out of breath.

A race all the way from their home to the peak of Mount Kail. Breathing in the crisp, cool air, running through the lush green grass, scaling up the colorful rocks, and finally reaching the end: Mango Rock. They sat together, admiring the view. They were at the top of the world. They could see everything – other smaller mountains, the lake not too far away, and the city. The big city. Their father had told them the city didn’t exist when he was a child. Instead, there was a forest, a meadow, and plenty of nature.

“There used to be life here,” their father would tell them. “I used to run all the way to Mango Rock and gaze at what *Bhoomi*, the earth, offered.”

However, even with the city occupying *Bhoomi*’s space, the view was still unbeatable. The day was ending. The sun painted everything orange. The world was calm now. Arjun stared at the sun. He loved what he had. He loved his life because it was simple. Even after living this life for twelve years, he wanted nothing to change. Krish, on the other hand, wanted something more. He felt a desire for a more fulfilling life. Krish would also gaze at the landscape. His eyes would eventually find their way back to the city. Krish felt the city’s pull. It was calling him.

He thought to himself, “What I really want, I can find there.”

Krish was only fifteen. The brothers had a long life ahead of them.

The sun eventually set. The night draped the landscape in a quiet and serene tranquility. The brothers began walking back home. They walked back together, side by side.

Arjun and Krish reached home and collapsed on the sofa. The next best thing after Mango Rock was the sofa. Arjun was ready to fall asleep but Krish was still awake, thinking about the city.

“So? Who won?” said a voice from another room.

Krish smirked and said, “Who do you think, Mom?”

“I’m going to beat you soon!” yelled Arjun.

“Alright, alright. You both won. Now go to sleep. You have a long day tomorrow,” said Mom in her usual mom voice.

*

Arjun woke up in the morning. Muscles sore from all the work last night. He was the man of the house now. He’s been the man of the house ever since his Mom and Dad had gotten older and weaker. Fifteen years ago, sitting on Mango Rock with Krish, Arjun wished to live this simple and satisfactory life forever. Now, he still lives that life and is equally content. There was just one piece missing from his heart, though. There was only one thing that twelve-year-old Arjun had that the current one didn’t. Krish. Arjun never really understood why Krish left. Everything was perfect, right? Why did Krish have to go to the city? Mom and Dad were reluctant to let him go but didn’t want to hold him back from living his life.

“He doesn’t really talk to us that much anymore,” said Arjun to himself. “Whatever. It is what it is.” He continued on with his day.

*

The aroma of his new sandalwood diffuser was enchanting. His assistant picked it out for him. ‘It goes well with the view from the office on the top floor of the skyscraper’ she would say. The view was enchanting too. As the CEO of Zenomark Care & Biotechnologies, Krish was always surrounded by enchanting things – scents, views, tastes, you name it. He had a luxurious life, to say the least. Ever since he moved to the city at the young age of eighteen, Krish has been deeply involved with his one goal – to make more money. Everything he did to earn the title of CEO was beneficial only to Zenomark. Everything he did after becoming CEO was beneficial only to him. Not everyone agreed with his ways of leading the company. The economists and self-proclaimed experts nowadays throw all sorts of phrases around – “autocratic,” “controlling,” or “bossy.” It was honestly a drag to deal with people like this.

Often when Krish stepped out of the office, he would be surrounded by hungry reporter-sharks who aimed to get a rise out of him. It would sometimes work and his response would be, “The ones that are criticizing me right now don’t even know the spelling of hard work. I’ve worked harder in a day than you all have in your entire life!”

Krish stood up from his five-figure leather chair, buttoned up his five-figure blazer, left his sandalwood-smelling room, and traveled sixty-seven stories to the exit of the building. It was pleasant outside today. Krish checked his brand new watch; it seemed to not be working.

“Stupid thing,” he muttered under his breath.

His driver was waiting for him outside the building.

“How’s it goin’, sir?” asked his driver.

“Same as always, my friend,” Krish replied. “Always giving it my all out there.”

As he rode back home, he looked outside the window. Enormous, towering skyscrapers surrounded him. Wide and bright neon signs blinded him. The sounds of the city - cars honking, people yelling, machines grinding, all deafened him. The soul of the city was reminding Krish how small he was. Krish, however, remained calm. He never wavered against anything that stood in his way. He fought the city and its minions every day and still came out on top as the best capitalist out there. With the new title of CEO, things were a lot easier for him. The city seemed to have lowered the intensity. The competition was lower now. He gazed at the flock of gray herons flying over him. They always hang out close to the city. Not long after, a solitary black eagle follows them.

“There are only birds with dull colors here,” Krish said out loud.

“Everything here seems to be dull, sir. Except for the neon signs. The neon signs are nice and vibrant,” said the driver.

“I guess so. They’re not too efficient though. I don’t really like that,” replied Krish, deep in thought about his new discovery.

“They do provide a good number of jobs to people though. Definitely more than LED signs, for sure,” posited the driver.

“I don’t care too much about that. Imagine the employer of those people working with the traditional neon signs. Think about how much money he would lose by paying them their salaries,” replied Krish.

And that final statement seemed to have ended the argument. The driver simply replied with a nod, as if he understood and related to what Krish had just said. The driver knew better than to keep arguing with him. Minutes passed as Krish stared at his home, the city. Another gray heron glided above him.

“I do miss the colorful birds back in the country,” pondered Krish.

“The country? Did you visit it recently?” asked the driver

“No. I grew up there. It was my home.”

*

Breathless. Tired. Fatigued. Arjun was barely holding on now. It was too much. He let go and felt everything slip away.

“Arjun! Arjun! Wake up!” A voice shouted.

Dazed, Arjun slowly opened his eyes. His eyes were open, but he couldn’t see. His hands were reaching out, but he couldn’t feel. His brain was running, but his thoughts were a

scramble. He eventually gained his vision back. He could now see his blurry mom, his blurry dad, and a few other blurry people.

“Beta, what happened?” Inquired Arjun’s mother, concerned.

“I- I don’t know. I was just working and I remember feeling really tired. I think I just pushed myself a little too much,” replied Arjun.

His mom berated, “Yeah, I’m never letting you go and do something like that ever again!”

“Whatever, mom.”

With a stern face, as usual, Arjun’s dad answered the phone. It had been about a week since Arjun’s incident. He maintained the same expression throughout the call. It was as if he was incapable of utilizing his facial muscles. Arjun could tell it wasn’t a good phone call, though. Rarely did his father ever seem upset. It pained his heart almost as much as the injury pained his body. It also pained him to see his mother upset as of late. He wasn’t sure how bad his situation was, but it seemed like his parents were. His father finally put down the phone.

“What did they say, dear?” Asked his mother.

“He’ll need to be admitted to proper medical care. He’ll make a full recovery if he receives the help he needs,” replied his father, face more stern than usual.

Arjun’s face sank. If only he hadn’t pushed himself carrying those logs. As a physical laborer, he should’ve known his limits. His family could hardly afford any sort of proper medical care. They admitted Arjun to the nearest location: Zenomark Care & Biotechnologies.

“This is Krish’s organization. Our son will give us free treatment. Don’t worry *beta*,” said Arjun’s mother in a reassuring tone. With a pit in his stomach, Arjun worried about how much his recovery would end up costing his family. He forgot he had a brother who owned the nearest healthcare location he was in.

Eventually, Arjun recovered physically. He had undergone intensive therapy. His mood was improving too. He was smiling and laughing more. He got up from his bed and went to talk to his parents about how good life was.

“You cannot be serious! Our own son is making us pay for the treatment?” Yelled Arjun’s father at the receptionist, “He knows we can hardly afford it. Helping his family out won’t even affect him at all!”

“I’m sorry, sir. There’s nothing we can do about it,” replied an intimidated receptionist.

“This is a matter you’ll have to take to the corporate office. We’re just a branch at this location and have no control over matters like these.”

“Making us, *his own family*, pay for the treatment. This is ridiculous!”

Arjun heard it all and his good mood washed away. It was once again replaced by the feeling of guilt and sorrow.

Betrayed. Tired. Fatigued. Arjun was barely holding on now.

The next day, Arjun walked up to Mango Rock. He retraced the steps he took while running up as a child. It was the first time he walked up Mango Rock with a feeling of hopelessness, betrayal, and guilt. The race to Mango Rock used to symbolize something positive and wholesome. Now, Arjun was simply walking up there to relive the memories he created.

The sun was setting as Arjun took a seat on the rock. All the negative thoughts simply washed away. All that was left in the world was the sun, the landscape, Mango Rock, and Arjun. The sun painted everything orange once more. He laid his eyes on the city, a virus that had been growing for the past several years. It had become even bigger now. He could see Zenomark's skyscraper. It stood up tall as if it wanted to challenge the mountain that Arjun was perched upon. The building will never beat the mountain. To Arjun, everything else was small. He stared at the skyscraper, all sorts of thoughts flowing through his head.

"It is what it is," he whispered to himself.

*

Sandalwood was not doing the job anymore. The smell wasn't enchanting. It filled up the office, no doubt, but Krish couldn't find himself in a peaceful place anymore. Ever since receiving that call from the receptionist who dealt with his father, Krish was filled with a feeling of unease. He had to do it, though. He had to charge them for the treatment. It was expensive and Krish didn't want to lose any profit. After all, that's the only reason he became CEO. His efficiency and drive to always maximize profit. That's what got him to this point and that's what will keep him going. He didn't feel guilty at all, though. He put all his faith into capital and trusted that everything would work out.

The sun was about to set as he got up from his chair and stood by the window. He gazed outside, looking at the city below him. Everything looked small from the top of the skyscraper. He gazed at Mount Kail and his eyes settled on Mango Rock. Mango Rock looked small to him but it was noticeable enough. He stared at Mango Rock with all sorts of thoughts flowing through his head.

"It is what it is," he whispered to himself.

Krish made sure to keep this incident under wraps so that the piranha journalists wouldn't spin a story about how he betrayed his own family.

"Krish! Krish! You need to see this!" Said his assistant, rushing into his office.

"What's wrong?" Asked Krish.

"We're being sued for malpractice in our biggest location!"

"Malpractice? Medical malpractice? You cannot be serious. This is going to ruin Zenomark!" Krish felt an emotion he hadn't felt in a long time: fear. Raw fear.

*

Afraid. Tired. Anxious. Krish was barely holding on. As he entered his meeting room, his eyes scanned over everybody: his assistant, the board, and all of Zenomark's higher-ups were waiting for him. Krish took a seat at the head of the table. He, of course, made sure to not show any fear or signs of weakness. This meeting room was not the place to show any cue of vulnerability.

"Good afternoon, everyone."

Zenomark was in a grave situation. During the board meeting, it was made clear that the biggest Zenomark branch in a large city did conduct severe medical malpractice. Even though the people responsible were dealt with, it wasn't enough. Slowly, Zenomark began to lose its power and charisma. Their stocks diminished, and so did their clients. Krish was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Facing a lawsuit, he sat in his chair in his office on the top floor of the Zenomark headquarters. He stared at the bright neon signs on the rooftops of buildings. Always shining bright, never losing their prominence. With his eyes, he traced the raindrops sliding down his window. The raindrops kept going down, and down, and eventually, it disappeared out of sight. Soon, that raindrop was going to be Krish if he lost the coming lawsuit. He took a deep breath. It didn't help at all. Breathless. Tired. Hopeless. It might be over for Krish.

"What do you mean they won't represent me?!" Yelled Krish on the phone. "They're supposed to be there for us when things go bad for Zenomark!"

Things were now even worse for Krish. He was without a lawyer and his only choice was to represent himself. The journalists caught wind of what was happening at the top of the Zenomark skyscraper and published it everywhere. 'The downfall of medical monopoly Zenomark' said the headlines.

*

Hot water was good. Good for health, good for the mind, and good for the soul. That's what Arjun's father believed. Well, that's what he believed after his wife removed coffee and a lot of other items from the periodical shopping list. After paying for Arjun's treatment, the family couldn't spend much on other luxurious items. Coffee was a luxurious item after the incident with Arjun's injury and the Zenomark healthcare center. As he was sipping hot water, he read his newspaper that was delivered every Sunday. Every Sunday, he would learn about what was happening in the city, in nearby places, and all sorts of other news. He flipped to a page and his eyes widened. He set his mug of hot water down as he read the headline: 'Zenomark Care & Biotechnologies approach a 'ZenoDARK' future as lawsuit threatens their fortune.'

Lawsuit? What happened? As Arjun and Krish's father read the article, his heart was pacing. His son didn't even have a lawyer to represent him in court. He remembered the days when he used to be a lawyer. It was a very long time ago, but he still was a lawyer at heart. His mind was racing. His mind told him to not show any remorse for Krish – he robbed his own family. However, his heart told him to be a father. Krish may have outgrown his father's lap, but he never outgrew his heart. Krish's father stared at *Akash* - the sky. The big, never-ending,

and inspirational sky. He then looked down at *Bhoomi* - the earth. The welcoming, nurturing, and strong earth. The father felt *Vayu* - the wind - in his face. The cool, calm, and energetic wind. He picked up his glass and took a sip of *Neer* - the water. Smooth, refreshing, and clean water. Finally, he gazed at *Surya* - the sun. The venerable, majestic, nourishing, fatherly, and supportive sun. All the entities present calmed his mind, gave him courage, and strengthened his heart to be a father to Krish. He decided he would represent his son, Krish, in court.

*

"Hello? Who is this?" Said Krish.

"It's been a while, son," spoke a voice through the phone.

Krish was filled with a feeling of guilt, shame, and sorrow. He didn't regret charging his family for the treatment back then. However, in his current situation, Krish realized what he had done.

"Dad. I screwed you over and I screwed up. I'm... sorry," Krish choked out, almost in tears.

"I'm your father. You don't ever have to apologize to me," said Krish's father in a tone as smooth as the water. "You may have chosen your path in life, but I will always be there for you," said Krish's father in a tone as inspirational as the sky and strong as the earth. "You may have let go of my hand, but I still have your back," said Krish's father in a tone as venerable and fatherly as the sky. "Now, let's get to work. We have a case to win, my son." Said Krish's father in a tone as energetic as the wind.

Arjun and his mother, though angry with Krish, still cared about him. They supported the father with his new mission to save his son.

*

"Order, order! My court will not be subject to your constant yapping!" Yelled the judge. It was hard to maintain order when the case was as big as this. The judge was surprised that this was even a case at all. There was clear evidence that Zenomark committed unforgivable acts. With a multitude of cases on his portfolio, the judge had enough experience to know how this case would end. The lawyer who represented the defendant was good. Very good. There was something unique and natural about him. He seemed very pure and straightforward. However, it simply wasn't enough.

Zenomark lost the case. They weren't a medical monopoly anymore. They were nothing. Krish had nothing left now. It was over. All of his work gone, reduced to nothing. All the drive and power to chase efficiency and peak capitalism ended in this. Mistakes made by someone else caused Krish and many others to lose their livelihoods. Krish didn't see any hope. There was no way out of this and he could never recover.

*

Krish was up all night. He talked with his family after the verdict. He would go back and live with them again. Krish was happy to live that life. Eventually, the sun rose, marking a new

dawn. A new day. Krish had lost all that he had worked for: His title, his office, his chair, his sandalwood scent. Everything material was now no more. He sat on the earth and let himself be bathed in the rising sun. He had abandoned everything about the spiritual and natural world when he began his chase for capital, but now, he gained that back. He finally felt *Vayu*, *Bhoomi*, *Surya*, *Akash*, and *Neer* after a very long time.

Three people approached him: Krish's father, Krish's brother, and Krish's mother. Krish's mother gave him a big hug. His eyes started tearing up.

"I missed you, Mother," said Krish. "Where did I go wrong?"

"It doesn't matter, *beta*. What matters is that you're back," replied his mother.

"Yeah. I'm back. And I won't leave again."

"You better not, bro," said Arjun in an uplifting tone.

"Son, are you ready to lead a new life? There is nothing left for you in the city," inquired the father.

"I'm done with that. I'm back," replied Krish.

Krish was back.

*

Happy, calm, and grateful, the brothers walked up Mount Kail together in the evening. This time, they walked up together. They weren't racing. They were there for each other. As they sat together on Mango Rock after years, they conversed.

Arjun said, "When your sandalwood scent fails, *Vayu* will cool you. When your luxurious drinks fail, *Neer* will refresh you. When your view from the skyscraper fails, *Akash* will amaze you. When your expensive chair fails, *Bhoomi* will support you. When wealth fails to provide you with happiness, *Surya* will encourage you and inspire you. Most of all, when you fall down, we, your family, will pick you back up. What is in the past is in the past. It doesn't matter now.

All we need to do is enjoy the present."

Krish didn't know what to say. He couldn't say anything.

"It's okay. You don't have to say anything. I already understand what you feel," said Arjun. "True happiness is only achieved when you're at peace with the world. True happiness is only achieved when your heart is happy and your soul is fulfilled."

"All this time," said Krish. "All this time I've been chasing something that made my brain happy. Something that made my body happy. With this new life, I wish to nourish my heart."

Arjun took one last look at the landscape and got down from Mango Rock.

He said, "Let's go home, brother".

The Circuit of Tomorrow

Charlie Bendell



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — Honorable Mention

Charlie Bendell is a Supply Chain Management major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. His poem is an exploration of the intersections of technology and humans, woven together through metaphor. It is a vision of the future as both graceful and triumphant.

In the neon-lit corridors of silicon dreams, Where algorithms hum and binary streams, The future of work unfurls its wings, A symphony of bytes, where innovation sings.

Gone are the cubicles, the nine-to-five grind, Replaced by holographic desks, where minds unwind. Remote galaxies connect through quantum gates, As telecommuting souls explore their fates.

AI colleagues, tireless and wise, An orchestra of code, they harmonize. They sift through data, weave neural threads, In the cathedral of cyberspace, where knowledge spreads.

Blockchain architects build trust anew, Immutable ledgers, transparent and true. Contracts etched in cryptic runes, no middlemen, Decentralized utopias rise from the den.

Virtual realms, where avatars roam, Creativity unbound, a digital home. Artists paint with pixels, architects sculpt with light, And poets string stardust into verses of flight.

Quantum laborers, entangled and free, They compute in parallel, dance with glee. Solving riddles of existence, unlocking doors, As quantum supremacy whispers, "There's always more."

Biohackers, weaving DNA strands, Customizing genomes with deft hands. Health and longevity, a genetic quest, In the alchemy of cells, they find rest.

Robotic companions, chrome and grace, They serve tea to astronauts, navigate space. From Mars to the asteroid belt, they roam, Silent sentinels guarding our cosmic home.

And humans? Ah, we adapt and evolve, From flesh to data, our essence resolves. We code our destinies, blend with the sublime, In the binary dawn of the post-human time.

So raise your quantum glasses, toast to the fray, For the future of work is a nebulous ballet. In circuits and stardust, we find our worth, As pioneers of progress, shaping the Earth.

A Poem on Wealth

Brady Eggleston



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — Honorable Mention

Brady Eggleston is a Business Analytics and Information Management major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. James Mollison. His poem uses the concept of time to probe the nature of wealth and human life.

Wealth,
The most tangible of intangible things,
The most influential of artificial things,
And the most insatiable of all desires.
What is Wealth?
Is it millions of dollars in a bank,
And a private plane at one's disposal,
Or is it the feeling you get when you laugh and smile,
A care-free summer night driving with the windows down,
Or walking through the door after a long day to be greeted with love.
I would argue Wealth can be any of these things,
And many, many more.
For Wealth is ubiquitous,
It lives even where it cannot be seen.
Now, if Wealth is so important and widespread,
And if Wealth can be almost anything,
What kind of Wealth matters most?
I would argue that the most important Wealth,
If such a thing exists,
Becomes clear to a person when they are no longer privileged with Time.
Ah yes, Time.
Perhaps the most underappreciated blessing of life.
I would venture to say that Time is a form of Wealth,
And that Time is also related directly to Wealth.
For when one no longer has Time,
When one has fully exhausted their right of survival,
One may finally know what Wealth is.
I do not dare say what it might be,
For I suppose that is for each individual to decide for themselves.
I would venture to guess that Wealth,
Though different for each person, has a common theme.

When one reaches the end of life,
And is looking back on what it meant live, and be human,
I think Wealth will no longer “live where it cannot be seen.”
I think one, in that state of final meditation, will look back and understand.
They will finally see where Wealth truly existed in their life.
They will remember the smallest of instances, which, as a healthy person, they would not have
thought twice about,
And they will finally feel it.
I think, in that sense, a truth about humanity is revealed:
Everyone dies knowing they were Wealthier than they ever realized.

Fueling the Fire

Samantha Magro



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — Honorable Mention

Samantha Magro is a Construction Engineering major in the College of Engineering with a minor in Management. She took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. James Mollison. According to her submission, her pencil drawing “is a piece on the addiction that many wealthy people tend to face and how money often just fuels their addictions.”



Wealth Song

Will Shearin



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — Honorable Mention

Will Shearin is a General Management and Finance major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. Will used the music app Launchpad to create music that he deftly analyzes for us here:

“This song has three main movements. The first movement is very light, colorful, and fast paced. This is meant to symbolize how people can spend their wealth frugally when they have no care in the world. The original melody comes first, with secondary tracks being added in. With each addition, more tracks are being played over top of each other, representing the competing interests the world has for a person’s money – food, a home, and most strongly, entertainment and unnecessary spendings. The melody fades for a moment, but then comes back at full force, representing a slight thought at not spending as much money. Then the thought goes away as the spending occurs once again. After the slight withdrawal, the melody changes, at first only a small amount, and then, at the

cymbal, a large amount. This abrupt shift begins a person's fall into financial hardship as their spending quickly catches up with them.

The second movement begins with a much darker and melancholy tone. This movement symbolizes a person's difficulties with not having much personal wealth, and the trials that can bring. Suddenly, a rougher melody comes to the front, and a harsh cello sound is repeatedly heard, showing one unexpected turn of events after another. Then comes a loud drum crash, symbolizing a large financial burden like a huge medical bill or debt coming due but that cannot be paid. After this, a final melody begins, at first quiet but gets louder. Again, it is meant to sound sad, reminding the listener of the past bad decisions that were made. The cello sounds once again, and a person's crying can be heard, adding to the dark tone. One last crash is heard, and then the melody winds down in preparation for the third movement. This section is the longest, showing how hard times can seem to go on for longer than they actually do.

The third movement comes, and it begins with a simple and calm drum. A peaceful melody soon follows, representing what happens when money is spent on what can bring the most joy – family and friends. The theme of the third movement is as such, and it is by far the most tranquil movement. A little twinkling sound is played, then the melody expands and changes, brightening with each layer. However, this brightness is not like the first bright movement. That one was quick and always changing. This movement is more consistent, showing stability when a person is not chasing the cares of the world all the time. This movement is also the shortest, showing how time can fly when money and attention are focused on the things that truly matter. The twinkling sound is heard again, as another reminder of the fact that a good life is not necessarily fast, but intentional. The song winds down and finishes with a fading ring, effectively closing a life well lived.

About the software and creation: Launchpad is an IOS program that gives the user thousands of individual tracks of pre-made music with very little organization. From the long list of tracks, I selected certain ones that I felt could adequately tell the story I had in my head. None of the individual tracks can be legally sold or used standalone, but as a larger song they are copyright-free.”

Will's composition may be listened to by following this link: <https://tinyurl.com/ShearinC4B>
or by scanning the following QR Code:



The Role of Wealth in Politics

Cooper Thelen



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2023 Contest: “Wealth” — Honorable Mention

Cooper is an Economics major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone SCLA 102 with Dr. Andy Baker. His essay puts the ideas of classical liberals like Adam Smith into conversation with the ideas of more radical thinkers like Mikhail Bakunin and Henry George.

For centuries the divine right of kings was used in Medieval Europe to legitimize the rule of a king over his subjects. It was reinforced by the religious belief that God had bestowed the right to rule upon the monarchs and that they must act as intermediaries between God and the people. The Catholic Church, and later the Protestant denominations, had supported this doctrine for centuries, cementing its influence over society. How could you argue against the will of an all-knowing God? For some, they had to let go of the fact that the will of God should define how their societies are run. They turned to their human faculties such as reason and observation. The Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution saw a dramatic shift in how intellectuals thought, and what they directed their energy towards. In Medieval Europe, an intellectual was almost synonymous with theologian. Many of the intellectuals were supported by the Church and spent most of their time theorizing, explaining, and justifying Christian theology. That changed with the start of the Scientific Revolution. Influential thinkers like Nicolaus Copernicus and Galileo Galilei brought traditions and age-old beliefs into the light of reason and scientific inquiry. They questioned millennia old beliefs like the Ptolemaic model, which stated the Earth was the center of the universe, and proved them to be false, with the tools of science and reason. It was a paradigm shift in philosophical inquiry that was unlike any other. But the use of reason was not limited to just natural philosophy. It was used to explain many social phenomena, such as politics, economics, social relations, and government. Some of the most well-known philosophers of this era include John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, James Madison, and Montesquieu. Many Enlightenment era ideas culminated in the philosophical school of thought known as liberalism. The ideals of liberalism are conveyed succinctly in the French national motto, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. The liberty and freedom of the individual, the equality of the values and rights inherent within each individual, and the brotherhood and solidarity of all people. Although these thinkers were concerned with the arbitrary and unjust domination of coercive political power over individual citizens, classical liberal philosophy, with its justifications of free-markets and private ownership, does not provide a satisfactory solution to the issues of economic inequality that plague us today. Russian anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin, conveys this truth, "Without political equality there can be no real political liberty, but political equality will be possible only when there is social and economic equality," (Bakunin, 1866).

In book one of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, and father of economics, Adam Smith, states that, "Wealth, as Mr. Hobbes says, is power ... The power which that possession immediately and directly conveys to him, is the power of purchasing; a certain command over all the labour, or over all the produce of labour, which is then in the market," (Smith, 1776). Wealth, which may be defined as the amount of capital, physical or financial, one owns that can be sold in a market, is effectively power over labor or the product of labor, as Smith puts it. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx responds to Smith's statement, saying, "Capital is thus the governing power over labour and its products. The capitalist possesses this power, not on account of his personal or human qualities, but inasmuch as he is an owner of capital. His power is the purchasing power of his capital, which nothing can withstand," (Marx, 1844). Wealth can be used for numerous purposes, but in an economy that utilizes money to mediate transactions and one that promotes free-markets, wealth can be used as a means of power and

influence over those who seek material gain. Wealth can be used to purchase labor or purchase goods. The actions of individuals who seek wealth are determined and ultimately controlled by those who have wealth to dispense.

Wealth commands economic power, and coercive force commands political power, but there is one unifying factor that can legitimize the use of this power. The consent of those that are affected by it. The very American saying, “no taxation without representation,” was first used in response to the Townshend and Tea Acts imposed on the American Colonies by the British government. The sentiment behind it was that American colonists should not be taxed by a government which they had no say in. Although there were few American colonists that participated in the government of Great Britain, many believed it was their right that they must have a greater say in it. A similar argument can be made for the management of the economic sphere of society. If the lives of ordinary citizens, and even politicians, can be so affected and influenced by wealth, should they not have a say in how it is managed or distributed? We elect politicians to all branches of government at all levels, while many of us do not know exactly what they do, we still believe that the democratic process is the best way of deciding who should hold political office. Not because the people know who the best rulers are, but because in order to win an election, politicians must appeal to the social good, at least nominally.

A democratic process is already possible within the current structure of joint-stock companies. Most owners of stock in a company are entitled to a vote in the elections of the board of directors. That does not mean they were democratically elected, though. Democracy comes from the Ancient Greek words ‘*demos*,’ meaning people, and ‘*kratos*,’ meaning rule. For the time being, voting power will be considered ruling power, but who are the people? If the president of a country is elected by only people from one region, or only people with a certain amount of wealth, that would not be considered a democratic election. The people are the stakeholders of any given election. The people who the election directly concerns. The citizens of California get to vote in an election for the Governor of California, the citizens of the U.S. get to vote for the U.S. President, but the citizens of Washington do not get to vote for congressional elections in North Dakota. Many joint-stock companies have a board of directors that are elected by their shareholders, but that leaves out the much more broad category of stakeholders. While shareholders, those who own shares of the company, are included in the category of stakeholders, they are not the whole of the stakeholders. Olivier Frémond, an advisor at the World Bank, states that the stakeholder model of corporate governance, “ensures that interests of many constituents are taken into account. This helps to assure that corporations operate for the benefit of society as a whole,” (Frémond, 2000).

But that is just on the issue of changing the politics of the corporate entities themselves, in order to serve a broader range of social interests, not just the interest of shareholders. The role wealth plays in the political process is another issue. One phenomenon that is present in the United States today is that of wealth and how it affects the political process. I am not going to claim that many Americans are blind to the fact that money influences politics, but I believe that many don’t think about how this problem can be solved in a way that doesn’t require populist politicians destroying the institutions that hold up the government or raising taxes exorbitantly on those who possess massive wealth. I hear many people today say “follow the

money” or ask “how is this person or this organization funded,” but what I don’t hear are people asking how these people or these organizations got their money in the first place, or how, in a more legal sense, they are allowed to use it in the way they do. The right to vote in elections for political representatives is one of the key ways the people of a society can participate in government. But there are other ways to influence politics and legislation. Money plays a massive role in how our government makes its decisions. First, campaign finance is one of the most important, if not the most important, parts of running for office. It seems like almost every year campaign fundraising records get broken. And almost every year, they do. From the 2004-2020 presidential election, every candidate who has won the election, except for Trump in 2016, had raised more money than their opposition.

The political institutions in our country are blind to the role wealth plays in the processes of our democracy. Wealth is not viewed as a social concern that should be managed and distributed by society as a whole. It has been interpreted as an individual concern, that should primarily be up to the discretion of those who come into possession of it. Many left-leaning politicians will argue for taxing the rich, but less often do you hear the case for limiting how money is spent. Politicians will vaguely gesture towards “the rich” or “the elite,” but they are often hollow words. Representative democracy and free markets are justified by the supposed freedom it gives to individuals, but when those individual freedoms are limited by corporations bidding for the cheapest worker and by politicians who are influenced by money more than public opinion, it is difficult to remain supportive of those institutions. In an excerpt from *Progress and Poverty*, a widely influential book by economist Henry George, he observes the issue of wealth inequality in 1879, “Equality of political rights will not compensate for the denial of the equal right to the bounty of nature. Political liberty, when the equal right to land is denied, becomes, as population increases and invention goes on, merely the liberty to compete for employment at starvation wages. This is the truth that we have ignored. And so there come beggars in our streets and tramps on our roads; and poverty enslaves men whom we boast are political sovereigns; and want breeds ignorance that our schools cannot enlighten; and citizens vote as their masters dictate; and the demagogue usurps the part of the statesman; and gold weighs in the scales of justice; and in high places sit those who do not pay to civic virtue even the compliment of hypocrisy; and the pillars of the republic that we thought so strong already bend under an increasing strain,” (George, 1879).

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4 | Exchange of Ideas



Purdue University is committed to freedom of speech and the free exchange of ideas. In honor of that spirit, our “Exchange of Ideas” section presents student work that takes differing stances on the same topic.

In this issue, we present two essays from Dr. Rhodes Pinto’s Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 class. In class, students were shown and given transcripts of two news stories about the sale of Maurizio Cattelan’s artwork, “Comedian”—better known as the banana duct-taped to a wall—for \$6.24 million to cryptocurrency exec Justin Sun. Students were then given the class session to brainstorm their main points for an essay on the topic: *“How would Plato and Adam Smith react to the story in these videos? Whose reaction is better, and why?”* The essays were subsequently completed outside of class.

You may view these news stories at the following links or by scanning the QR codes:

<https://tinyurl.com/CattelanCNN>



<https://tinyurl.com/CattelanCNBC>



First, we present Christian Bancroft’s essay. Christian is an Economics major in the Daniels School of Business. He is pictured on the left.

Second, we present Ben McPeck’s essay. Ben is a Business Analytics & Information Management major and Economics minor in the Daniels School of Business. He is pictured on the right.

Comedian: Adam Smith and Plato's Paradoxical Evaluation

Christian Bancroft

In the contemporary art world, few events have sparked as much controversy as the notorious sale of Maurizio Cattelan's artwork *Comedian* – a banana duct-taped to a wall – for a staggering \$6.24 million. Purchased by Chinese cryptocurrency billionaire Justin Sun, *Comedian* is touted as a challenge to the traditional notions of art, mocking the absurdity of the art world, consumerism, and the nature of value in art. If Plato and Adam Smith, two of history's most influential philosophers, were to analyze this transaction, they would reach differing conclusions: Plato would respond with scorn, while Adam Smith's reaction would be more ambivalent – initial disapproval followed by eventual acceptance. Plato, based on his experiences entailed in *Republic*, would criticize the purchase as an example of an unjust soul – one where irrational indulgence overpowers reason – while Adam Smith, as covered in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations*, would assert that *Comedian* economically benefits society while detracting from it morally. Ultimately, we should heed Adam Smith's reaction, as his perspective and subsequent commentary offers deeper and more applicable insight into a modern society like ours today.

In both the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith establishes the key principles to a successful society – one that thrives both intellectually and economically. With those beliefs in mind, in his role of *Comedian* evaluator, Smith's reaction would be twofold – initial disapproval, followed by acceptance – for several reasons. First, as expressed in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith would disapprove of the purchase, viewing it as an example of frivolous opulence. He critiques such spending, stating “how many people ruin themselves by laying out money on trinkets of frivolous utility” (Smith, 1759/1986, p. 119). In this context, the extravagant purchase of a banana, a perishable item, as a work of art, contradicts traditional economic rationality and instead serves as a provocative statement intended to garner social attention rather than genuine artistic appreciation. Furthermore, Smith warns against society's tendency to idolize wealth and power at the expense of moral integrity: “this disposition to admire, and almost worship, the rich and powerful, and to despise, or at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition [...] is [...] the most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments” (Smith, 1759/1986, p. 86). By purchasing *Comedian*, Sun seeks social power and public recognition – motivations Smith disapproves of, citing the degradation of societal moral standards this would cause.

Despite his initial disapproval, Smith would ultimately approve of the transaction due to its economic benefits. In the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith famously maintains that individuals pursuing their own self-interests unintentionally contribute to society, stating “he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention” (Smith, 1776/1986, p. 265). While Sun's purchase may be driven by vanity, it stimulates the art market, incentivizes artistic creation, and supports the broader market of society. Moreover, Sun's continued pursuit of wealth ensures his active engagement in the economy, reinforcing the very mechanisms Smith creates. Ultimately, while Smith's initial reaction would be one of skepticism and disapproval, he would begrudgingly acknowledge that *Comedian*'s purchase aligns with his broader economic

philosophy – demonstrating that even seemingly irrational transactions can contribute to a better society.

In *Republic*, Plato, like Adam Smith, establishes principles he believes essential to a successful and just society. Central to this is his tripartite theory of the soul, in which he states “these two elements [the rational and spirited] [...] will be put in charge of the appetitive element – the largest one in each person’s soul, and by nature, the most insatiable for money. They will watch over it to see that it does not get so filled with the so-called pleasures of the body that it becomes big and strong, and no longer does its own job but attempts to enslave and rule over the classes it is not fitted to rule, thereby overturning the whole life of anyone in whom it occurs” (Plato, ca. 380 B.C.E./2004, 442b). Through this lens, Plato views Sun’s purchase of *Comedian* as a clear example of an unjust soul – one in which the appetitive part dominates, suppressing the rational part which should lead and the spiritual part that should uphold virtue. Rather than seeking wisdom or contributing to the intellectual and moral enrichment of society, Sun indulges in fleeting material pleasure, allowing his unchecked desire to dictate his actions. For Plato, this is not merely an irrational decision, but a symptom of a deeper internal disorder – a soul where the appetitive part has usurped its rightful place, leading to not only personal imbalance, but also contributing to societal imbalance. A just person, he contends, achieves inner harmony by ensuring reason governs the soul, a principle that extends to the well-being of society. In failing to do so, Sun exemplifies the very instability and excess Plato warns against, reinforcing his argument that when desire overtakes reason, both individuals and society suffer.

While both Adam Smith and Plato acknowledge the societal impact of *Comedian*’s purchase, Smith’s reaction is ultimately more insightful and applicable to modern society. Plato’s framework, focused through his tripartite theory of the soul, critiques *Comedian*’s purchase as self-indulgence of the appetitive soul, overpowering the rational and spirited reasoning parts of the soul. He argues Sun’s decision to spend a fortune on a perishable art piece reflects a lack of self-control, reflecting an internal imbalance that undermines both Sun’s personal virtue and society’s harmony. However, Plato’s emphasis overlooks the complexities of economic structures and human behavior – particularly in a society where consumerism and self-interest drive progress and innovation. Smith, by contrast, offers a far more nuanced perspective that aligns with modern free-market capitalism. His shifting reaction – disapproval followed by gradual acceptance – captures the paradox of modern economies, where seemingly senseless spending drives economic growth. By recognizing that individual self-interest often leads to broader societal benefits, Smith embraces the realities of consumer culture and the unpredictable yet productive nature of market forces. Unlike Plato, who sees Sun’s purchase as evidence of moral failure, Smith acknowledges that even extravagant exchanges contribute to economic stimulation, artistic innovation, and wealth distribution.

In conclusion, Justin Sun’s purchase of *Comedian* exemplifies the paradox of modern economic and artistic values, straddling the line between ludicrousness and legitimacy. Plato views the transaction as evidence of an unjust soul, where unchecked appetite undermines rational and social balance. His critique extends beyond mere indulgence – it reflects a deeper philosophical concern that consumerism, when left unchecked, leads to disorder. By contrast,

Smith provides a more pragmatic, albeit conflicted, perspective. While he initially disproves of Sun's vanity driven extravagance, he ultimately acknowledges that even irrational spending fuels economic growth and innovation. At its core, Comedian challenges the very notion of art – mocking the art world's arbitrary pricing and the influence of social prestige. Plato and Smith's perspectives reveal two conflicting truths about such transactions: the instability of human desires and the mechanisms that allow society to function despite them. In an era where art, commerce, and status are deeply intertwined, this debate remains relevant, forcing us to question not only what we value, but why we value it at all.

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Wealth is Wasted on the Rich

Ben McPeck

All over the news there are stories of extravagant purchases, billionaires buying million-dollar cars that they will never drive, super mansions being built with more bedrooms and bathrooms than will ever be needed, or even super yachts that cost more money to operate in a year than most people will see in their lifetimes. These purchases are not practical, rather used as a status symbol, an attempt to show just how much wealth the wealthy have by throwing it away. This was the case when Chinese crypto-investor Justin Sun spent six million dollars purchasing a banana and a roll of duct tape. This “artwork”, titled *Comedian*, was created by artist Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan as an attempt to mock the wealthy’s perception of art, consisting of a banana duct taped to a wall. When Sun purchased this artwork, he received the banana and a roll of duct tape, as well as a deed certifying his ownership, and instructions to recreate the artwork after the banana goes bad. Had ancient Greek philosopher Plato, author of *Republic* (a work attempting to define justice), and economist and philosopher Adam Smith, author of *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (a work relating moral actions to social perceptions), heard about this purchase they would have both reacted very differently. Plato would praise Sun, claiming Sun has seen past the physical artwork and perceived the perfect form that the art represents. Meanwhile, Smith would have written this purchase off as another example of the wealthy purchasing goods not based on their physical utility but rather the status associated with the purchase. Ultimately, Smith’s reaction to this purchase is more fitting given these circumstances as he would see past any facade of wisdom Sun is attempting to construct and see right into the opulent nature of this purchase.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato would praise Sun for his purchase of *Comedian* believing Sun to be a wise philosopher like himself. In Plato’s work *Republic*, he describes a higher level of reality where “perfect forms” of every object and idea reside. In our reality we can only observe non-perfect replicas of these forms. *Republic* speaks on forms, saying:

just and unjust, good and bad, and all other forms: each of them is itself one thing, but because they appear all over the place in partnership with actions and bodies, and with another, each of them appears to be many things. (Plato, ca. 375 B.C.E./2004, 476a)

Every idea can have both a perfect form, an abstract understands of its true identity, and an imperfect physical manifestation of that form. Plato would argue that the beauty of this artwork does not come from its physical manifestation, rather from its interpretation of a perfect form. The purpose Cattelan intended with this work was to mock the art world and instead of focusing on the physical form, which is destined to be flawed, Cattelan created an idea that taped into a perfect form. The artwork *Comedian* is so much more than its physical attributes that exist in the perceivable reality, this can be seen with Sun’s purchase. When Sun ultimately purchased the work for six million dollars, the original banana and duct tape used by Cattelan had been replaced. Sun did not purchase the physical artwork, rather the abstract idea created by Cattelan. The artwork does have a physical representation, but its meaning is more than that, its meaning comes from the belief surrounding its message. Plato would say that this idea of the mockery of the artwork “would have the be called an object of belief, not an object of knowledge- a wandering, in-between of what their beliefs are about”

(Plato, ca. 375 B.C.E./ 2004, 479d). This artwork is more than the physical knowledge of its components, rather its value is in the belief in its message. This belief is not tangible but rather resides in-between the reality we perceive and the reality where the perfect forms reside. Plato would see this purchase by Justin Sun as a purchase of extraordinary wisdom, as Sun is perceiving the artwork not for as it physically is, but rather what the true work represents.

Smith, on the other hand, would write this purchase off as another example of the wealthy using their wealth to achieve status and superiority. Smith believes that the main force driving people to seek wealth is not the comfort or stability that comes with it, but rather the since of superiority and status. He claims “it is the vanity, not ease, or pleasure, which interests us. But vanity is always founded upon the belief of our being the object of attention and approbation” (Smith, 1759/ 1986, p. 79). People want to be wealthy not for the joys that come with it, but for their wealth to be coveted by others, for people to look up at them and wish they could be in their shoes. The purchase of the artwork *Comedian* pairs perfectly with Smith’s belief. Sun is not spending six million dollars because he likes the artwork, rather he is spending six million dollars so people will look at him and envy that fact that he has this much money to spend on something so meaningless. Smith would continue by referring to his example of the watches. Smith compares a cheaper watch that loses about two minutes a day to a more expensive watch that loses a minute every fortnight. He goes on to explain that “the person so nice with regard to this machine will not always be found either more scrupulously punctual than other men, or more anxiously concerned upon any other account, to know precisely what time of day it is” (Smith, 1759/ 1986, p. 119). Smith believe that the purchase of the more accurate, and more expensive, watch is not to serve some desire to be on time, or to know the exact time of day, rather it is the knowledge that one possesses the most expensive, and therefore best, watch possible. This same effect can be seen in Sun’s purchasing of this artwork. Sun could buy a banana and some duct tape from any local grocery store for easily less than ten dollars. However, he felt compelled to purchase the “best” banana and duct tape that he could find, not to serve any practical interests, rather just for this knowledge that he has the most expensive banana and duct tape. Smith believes that Sun’s purchase is not some representation of extraordinary knowledge, rather it is another pointless purchase made by the wealthy in an attempt to gain status.

Sun’s purchase of the artwork *Comedian* would lead to two distinct reactions from Plato and Smith. Plato believing that Smith is perceiving a high plane of reality, and Smith seeing Sun as another millionaire too concerned with what others think of him. However, Smith’s reaction to this purchase is ultimately better than Plato’s. When Sun purchased this work, he was not thinking about a higher plane of existence where this artwork of a banana and duct tape is actually a larger-than-life satirical piece mocking the modern art world. Rather, he saw this as an opportunity to flaunt his wealth, and an opportunity to throw away six million dollars to show the world that he has so much money he can afford to waste that much money on a purchase of little to no value. In Sun’s purchase he fell victim to the very irony of the artwork represented. It was a piece made to mock how millionaires would through away wealth on works that could barely be considered art. Whether Sun intentionally bought this piece fully understanding the irony he was participating in, or not, he made headlines and

ultimately increase his status in society through this purchase. This is exactly what Smith claims is that case not just with Sun, but all wealthy individuals.

All too often there are stories about the wealthy one percent spending considerable amounts of money on goods that are seemingly useless. Justin Sun's purchase of Maurizio Cattelan's artwork *Comedian*, which is a banana duct taped to a wall, is a prime example of this effect. Is it an interesting piece mocking the modern art world, yes. Is it worth six-million dollars? Absolutely not. Had ancient Greek philosopher Plato and economist and philosopher Adam Smith been exposed to this story both would have reacted differently. Plato would have praised Sun for his wise purchase of the artwork. While Smith would have discredited Sun as just another man whose wealth had been wasted on. Smith's viewpoint is ultimately the best as Sun is not some wise philosopher seeing deeper into this work of art than a mere common person could, rather Sun is someone with too much money on his hands who is willing to throw away six million dollars to increase his status in society. All too often wealth seems to be wasted on the rich, those who do not value the comfort and ease it grants them and their loved ones. Rather they see their wealth as an opportunity to increase their status in society. They want to be the object of aspiration of all those in society who are less fortunate, regardless of how much money they need to throw away to achieve this facade.

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5 | Cornerstone for Business Spring 2024 Contest

“The Future of Work”

Cornerstone for Business contests ask students to create original essays, short stories, poetry, artwork, or other creative content inspired by the transformative texts they read in SCLA 101 and 102 based on a different theme each semester. The contests are open to all students currently enrolled in SCLA 101 and 102 and are judged by a committee of Cornerstone faculty.

The theme of the Spring 2024 contest was “the future of work”: How do you see your work life going forward? Are we moving to a society wherein machines will do more of our work? Will our sense of self and how we make a living separate or become more closely aligned?”

AI - History to Headlines podcast

Camille Morin



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2024 Contest: “The Future of Work” — First Place

Camille Morin is a Construction Engineering and Management major in the College of Engineering. She took SCLA 102 with Dr. Daniel Schiff. Her podcast discusses the relationship between humans and technology, and how advancements in AI continue to further blur the line between humanity and technology.

Camille’s podcast may be listened to by following this link: <https://tinyurl.com/MorinC4B> or by scanning the following QR Code:



When Hands Become Binary and Brains Sing Code

Zeynep Venus Gulcek



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2024 Contest: “The Future of Work” — Second Place

Zeynep Gulcek is an Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. She took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. James Mollison. Her poem is set at a factory and depicts a future where workers are replaced with machines.

No calloused grip, just data streams in flight,
The factory floor, a symphony of binary light.
A symphony of efficiency, cold and precise,
But where's the spark, the fire in human eyes?

Will human minds, once guiding hammer's blow,
Now learn to sing the language machines bestow?
Weber's ghost whispers, a question in the air,
Can purpose bloom when sweat is no longer there?

Efficiency's siren song, a tempting lure,
More leisure, time, but is our essence secure?
Measured in lines of code, a number's cold decree,
Lost in algorithms, a forgotten memory.

But wait! A spark ignites, a fire yet unseen,
Nazım's spirit cries, a yearning for alliance!
Human and machine, a dance yet unseen,
A symphony composed, a collaborative dream.

Our minds, ablaze, can guide the metal's might,
Innovation's canvas, bathed in future's light.
The machine, a tool, not a master to hold,
Humanity's spirit, a story yet untold.

The clock may race, the landscape may bend,
But the fire within us, it will transcend.
Not just circuits humming, a soul in the code,
When hands become binary, a future yet unrolled.

Always a Reader

Abigail Snyder



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2024 Contest: “The Future of Work” — Honorable Mention

Abigail Snyder is a Biomedical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. She took Cornerstone SCLA 102 with Dr. Daniel Schiff. Her short story imagines a world perhaps disconcertingly similar to our own.

From a young age, she was always a reader. She was the girl who sat under her cover, the circular yellow glow of the flashlight emitting through her bedsheets. Her mother would come into her pastel pink room at 10 pm to find a new book spread across her face, light, long breaths coming from her slightly ajar mouth. Every night, her mother clicked the flashlight off, dog-eared the page her nose had marked, and placed both on her sunflower nightstand. She'd place a light kiss on her daughter's nose, admire her young sleeping face, and tighten the covers around her body.

Even as a teenager, the girl continued to find solace in the worlds of her favorite characters. She'd escape her dreaded algebra homework in a small town in Washington, take a trip to Hogsmeade instead of studying for her chemistry exam.

Her love for reading never wavered. Throughout high school, she made sure to spend fifteen minutes a day with her fictional friends. She was never one to binge-watch tv shows, she found much more satisfaction in finishing a new read. Even in college, her nose was always in a textbook. On warm days, she broke out her hammock and sprawled out in the sun, her favorite novel in hand.

She found herself often taking trips to the library, the scent of the old books a safe space away from the new computer lab her school had built. Her 2008 MacBook served her well enough; she didn't see the need for a huge setup that would break in four years. Her books were timeless, withered with old age, but serving the same purpose they had when they were written.

Sat behind the counter of her new school's library, she looked around waiting for the children to come up to her and ask her questions or tell her stories, just had she had done in her elementary school library decades prior. She spotted one kid in the corner, a chapter book clenched in his hands. His eyes darted back and forth, taking in as much information as he could, as fast as he could. Within ten minutes, he got up, scanned the book in the library's self checkout, and rushed out of the door.

He came back every day for the next three months. He had gotten speedier with his reading, almost two new books a week. After two weeks of watching him in the corner, he finally came up to her, asking her what she recommended her read. They discussed his favorite novels and characters, and he went home with three new books he was ecstatic to begin. The woman kept track of each book that she saw him pick up. Twice a week, from then on, she heard the beep of the self-checkout go off when he left. When she got home, after greeting her husband with a smile and a kiss, she curled up on the couch with the book she had just received from her mother for her birthday. Tracing over the traditional inscription her mother left on the first page, the beep of the scanner in the library repeated in her head. After reading for thirty minutes, she went and washed the remainder of the dishes in the sink and made her way up the stairs. After changing into her pajamas, she crawled into bed with her husband, the light from his phone emitting onto the ceiling, moving with the rise and fall of his chest as he lightly snored. She plugged it in, placed it on his nightstand, and shut off the lights.

The next week in the library, she noticed that the boy hadn't appeared for his new book yet. She figured he may be home sick, brushed it off and went about her day, reshelving and labeling the new books they had just gotten in stock. He had become accustomed to making conversation with her when he visited, and she missed the interaction fondly the day he was gone. When he didn't show all week, she began to get very nervous. She asked one of his teachers if he was well, and she said that he seemed perfectly fine, and had been present in class all week. With a puzzled look on her face, she packed up her things and went home for the weekend.

The next week, the boy started to appear in her library once more. This time, however, he didn't ask her for book recommendations or to talk about his favorite characters. He sat in his corner, tablet in hand, smile on his face, eyes darting back and forth, fingers tapping. Instead of checking out books, the beep of the scanner signified a new video game he was bringing home. None of the other students that ambled by struck up a conversation with her, and she longed for that curiosity that boy once had. Each student that came left with a short beep, not even looking her in the eye.

As the weeks passed, the beeping grew louder, and it rang through her ears at all hours of the day. The school was not ordering as many books as they previously had, and she sat at her desk the majority of the day, solving crosswords or with a book in hand. She had thought that by working here, she could share her love with others, bond with the students, and make her childhood fictional friends come to life through her work.

It was seven years later when the beeping finally stopped. The photo of her almost eight year old daughter and a beaten up copy of *Pride and Prejudice* that she kept on her desk sat at the top of a cardboard box. She handed her key to the lady at the front desk and walked through the school doors for the final time. With each step towards her car, she replayed her conversation with the principal. It was all a blur, him saying something about the irrelevance of her position at the school, especially with the new addition of e-readers the district had funded. They had no use for her anymore, nor the books that she protected.

That night, after she read, washed the dishes, climbed up the stairs, and changed into her pajamas, she once again plugged in her husband's phone, placed it on his nightstand, and shut off the light. After attempting to sleep for thirty minutes, she slid on her slippers and carefully tiptoed down the hallway to her daughters room. Just outside, she could see the glow of light coming through the crack of the door. Carefully twisting the handle, she gently nudged open the door. Moving with the rise and fall of her daughter's chest laid her tablet, a kids YouTube video playing in the background. The woman sighed, picked up the tablet, plugged it in on her daughter's desk, brushed back her hair, and gave her a kiss on the forehead. She tucked the blankets tightly around her daughter's body, and admired her sleeping face.

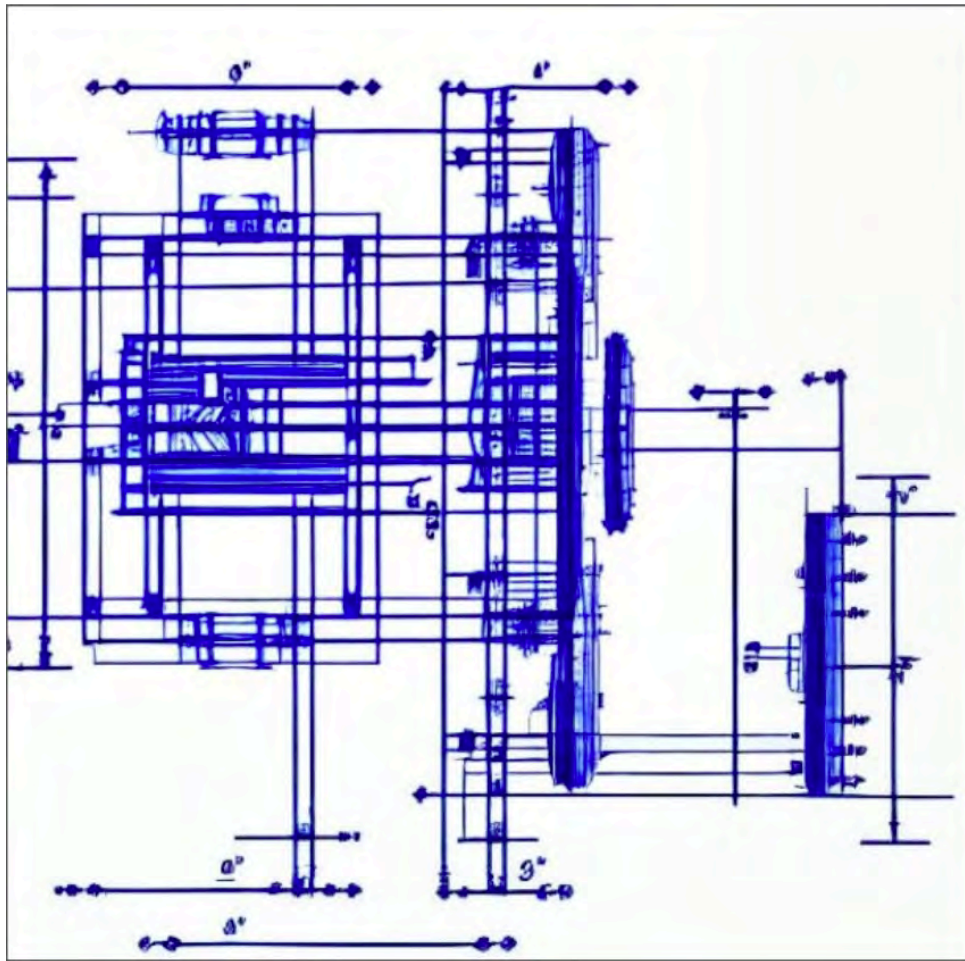
AI Blueprints

Anthony Sharonov



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2024 Contest: “The Future of Work” — Honorable Mention

Anthony Sharonov is a Computer Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. His work considers some limits of artificial intelligence and what makes work meaningful.



I asked AI to make “blueprint schematics for a nuclear powered engine” and it produced the image above. At least to me, this image means nothing. As an engineer, work life moving forward does not seem to change with AI. It cannot produce meaningful nor accurate information, but I can see a positive impact of using it for repetitive tasks such as data entry. We already live in a society where machines do more of our work, such as AI facial scanners in airports, but our sense of self will not separate from our way of living. I want to become an engineer because that is something that I feel is a part of me; I have a need to create things for the betterment of society. AI doing things for us will not stop separate our sense of selves, if anything, it will make us feel closer with what we do as we know there is a need to take pride in originality over having some machine accomplish tasks for us. Smith’s idea that self-interest has a positive impact on free markets (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 169) only becomes more clear with AI. It is out of our self interest to make a living doing the things we like, the things that we feel no AI can do. With more pride in our work, there is a higher sense of self-interest a better work is done.

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Future of Work

Ndanatsa Maduwura



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2024 Contest: “The Future of Work” — Honorable Mention

Ndanatsa Maduwura is studying Marketing and Finance at Boston University. She took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. Her poem considers the challenges that many now face in thinking about their own future at work.

Generations past and future
Work is ever changing
Work defines our days
Our social standings, And our ways
Identity woven into each task we undertake
In communities, our occupations did partake

Coming into a shift with industry's bold rise
Separation grew, to many's surprise
Mechanization's triumph, divisions keen blade,
Marx called it "alienation," a concept still holding weight

Labor today looks different
Machines have taken over
Another revolution upon us
In the age of AI
No longer being tied to traditional roles
Our future of work takes on diverse poles

What constitutes work in this digital time
Where programing is on the rise
And we let data decide
Amidst AI our roles subside

Technology moving rapidly
Workplace humanity continues to decline
What is work in this digital time
Replacing roles with those of AI

The future of work an ever evolving prance
Shall we embrace the shift
Or reject its stance
For in fusion of old and new
Lies the promise of work we all pursue

6 | Essays: Good Companies

At the end of each semester, all professors teaching Cornerstone for Business are asked to submit outstanding student work for inclusion in *The Exchange*. Here we present three outstanding student essays, all of which were written as the culminating, research paper in Dr. Rhodes Pinto's SCLA 101 course. The topic Dr. Pinto provides is:

“Select a company that you regard as a ‘good’ company. Your research paper must address all of the following:

- 1. Why is this company good?*
- 2. How could this company be made even better? Why would this/these be valuable area(s) of improvement?*
- 3. What would be most likely to cause this company to go out of business in the future? Given that cause, would it be a good thing or a bad thing?”*

Students are allowed to choose any current, for-profit company, and the topic is intentionally open-ended on what constitutes a “good” company.

These essays individually and together demonstrate not merely how companies can be, but how companies actually are positive forces in the world. They also showcase the development of students' business acumen, students' abilities in analyzing business fundamentals, and students' strategic thinking abilities.

As a bonus, this section also includes a PowerPoint presentation from an oral presentation assignment designed to work in complement with the above research paper, in which students research non-profits and employ the historical ethical, economic, and socio-political frameworks they have studied to argue to which charity \$100 of the professor's money should be donated.

Apple: Its Corporate Excellence, Potential, and Risk

Oscar Yu



Oscar Yu is an Economics major in the Daniels School of Business. For his research paper, he chose Apple as his “good” company.

Apple is a leading technology company offering a diverse range of products, including smartphones, computers, tablets, AR devices, and wearable technology. In modern corporate history, few companies have achieved the level of success and influence that Apple has achieved. The company was founded by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in a California garage. Now, it has become one of the world's most valuable companies with a market cap of \$3.673 Trillion (Bloomberg, 2024). Among the highly competitive tech companies, Apple consistently demonstrates its innovation and adaptability in the fast changing market. While critics have targeted heavily on Apple's controversial supply chain practices and its tight control over its ecosystem, this narrow focus has overlooked the significant aspects of the company's ethical conduct. This paper will demonstrate that, by examining Apple's commitment to accessibility for every user, environmental sustainability, and ethical business practices, Apple stands out to be a sophisticated model of a good company that successfully balances its profit goal and still aligns with both philosophical principles and modern ethical standards. This paper will examine Apple's status as a "good" company through the lens of classical philosophical thought and contemporary business ethics while exploring potential areas for improvement and analyzing possible failure that could affect its future.

Apple's organizational excellence and operational philosophy are aligned to the principles from both classical and modern ideas of what constitutes a "good" company. According to Plato's *Republic*, justice emerges when each part performs its proper function optimally (Plato, ca. 375 B.C.E./2004, *Republic*, 433a). Apple has demonstrated this quality through its perfectly structured organization where specialized teams work in coordination toward the same goal. According to Jenna Arocha's 2017 case study "Getting to the Core: A Case Study on the Company Culture of Apple Inc., Apple has evolved from "an *adhocractic* culture" to a balanced structure that takes "the strengths of each [culture type], while still trying to maintain a competitive edge". Apple had excellently pursued its market practices with an innovative culture, which allows them to maintain both operational discipline and creative development. Just as Plato envisioned a society where individuals contribute according to their natural abilities and "one being suited to one job", Apple's various divisions such as industrial design, engineering, operations, and retail team, all operate with clear purposes while maintaining unity in their overall mission (Plato, ca. 375 B.C.E./2004, *Republic*, 370b). Their approach also aligns with Adam Smith's concepts of division of labor and specialization from *The Wealth of Nations*, which states that workers will more "productive" and efficient at their specific tasks and time is saved by not switching between different types of work (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 161). This special organizational structure enables Apple to keep new advanced development within teams while encouraging efficient collaboration across units, which creates an organization that Smith would recognize as a highly productive system of specialized labor working toward collective prosperity. The NHK WORLD-JAPAN documentary further demonstrates this philosophical foundation by incorporating Japanese manufacturing principles, particularly the concepts of Kaizen (continuous improvement) and Monozukuri (the art of making things). The video described that Jobs was deeply influenced by Japanese corporate culture during his visits to Sony and other Japanese companies in the 1980s. In the following years, Apple has become famous for its precision, quality control, and attention to detail. This Japanese influence is deeply rooted in Apple's operational philosophy of pursuing perfection in every

aspect, from product development to packaging design. The influences from Platonic ideals of justice through proper function for everyone, Smith's economic principles of specialized labor, and Japanese manufacturing philosophy have created Apple's unique organizational DNA. Each team maintains extremely high standards while working toward common goals. This systematic approach, where each component functions optimally while contributing to the greater whole, has not only driven Apple's success but also established it as a model of corporate efficiency and purposeful innovation.

Apple's commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion further shows its alignment with classical philosophical principles of justice and human dignity. Apple started a campaign of "The Greatest" by posting a video on YouTube, which builds a story around the daily lives of those with disabilities and how they use their Apple products to pursue their careers (Cat-Wells, 2023). Each person uses their iPhone and Mac computers to perform different professions, interests, and abilities. Features like VoiceOver, which is a screen reader for blind users, and Switch Control, which allows those with limited mobility to control devices, had helped so many people for their digital needs. This approach deeply reflects Socrates' vision of societal harmony. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates describes justice as "harmonizing the citizens together through persuasion or compulsion," which enables them to share their strengths for the benefit of the community (Plato, ca. 375 B.C.E./2004, *Republic*, 520a). Apple's accessibility technologies followed this principle by creating tools that enable individuals with disabilities to fully demonstrate their skills and contribute to society, which ultimately expands the collective human experience. Adam Smith's economic philosophy provides another lens on explaining this initiative. As Smith argues in *The Wealth of Nations*, "No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable" (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 203). Apple's accessibility features directly address this concern by removing technological barriers that have marginalized individuals. The technologies from Apple had become a symbol of Smith's belief in creating opportunities for all members of society. In addition, according to Smith's perspective of "sympathy" in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which he suggests that "the imperatives of duty and the voice of conscience must be there from the start," Apple has demonstrated a profound understanding of considering every user's experiences and needs with a long history (Smith, 1759/1987, p. 203). The company has successfully transformed accessibility from a universal concern to a main selling point of its product features. This approach suggests that great innovation is not only about creating technology for the majority, but also designing solutions that empower those most often ignored. By doing this, Apple provides a powerful example that technological advancement must be inclusive, empathetic, and committed to every individual. Apple's accessibility initiatives represent more than a corporate strategy, it has embodied a profound philosophical commitment to every person's potential.

Apple's supply chain management continues to demonstrate how modern corporations can achieve profit-driven goals with philosophical principles of ethics and justice. The company has implemented comprehensive programs to protect both workers and the environment throughout its global supply (Apple, 2024b). In *The Republic*, Plato argues that "justice is doing one's work and not meddling with what isn't one's own", which suggests that true justice requires each part of a system to function ethically and efficiently (Plato, ca. 375

B.C.E./2004, *Republic*, 433b). Apple is suited for this philosophy through its supplier code of conduct, which mandates fair labor practices, safe working conditions, and environmental responsibility across its entire supply chain (Apple, 2024b). This also corresponds with Adam Smith's view of capitalism presented in both *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith argues that manufacturers "introduce order and good government" and that comes with "liberty and security of individuals" (Smith, 1759/1987, p. 253). Apple's supplier requirements such as zero tolerance for forced labor, strict environmental standards, and comprehensive worker protection programs have demonstrated what Smith would recognize as self-interest aligned with moral duty. The company's environmental goals provide solid evidence of this philosophical alignment. They've committed to achieve carbon neutrality across their entire supply chain by 2030 and require suppliers to transition to 100% renewable energy. In 2023, Apple's suppliers diverted over 2.5 million metric tons of waste from landfills and significantly reduced water usage through recycling programs (Apple, 2024b). These efforts directly address the industrial concerns that Charles Dickens raised in *Hard Times*. Unlike the polluted landscape of Coketown, Apple requires its suppliers to implement water conservation programs, reduce waste, and eliminate harmful chemicals from manufacturing processes. This integration of profit-driven operations with environmental and social responsibility reflects Smith's fundamental principle that self-interest when properly performed, can benefit the overall community. As Smith claimed, people serve society not through "benevolence," but through their "own interest" (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 169). Apple's supply chain performed this balance by sustaining long-term relationships with suppliers while maintaining strict environmental and labor standards. Their actions have proven that commercial success and ethical responsibility can exist for the same goal.

While Apple's supply chain accommodates many ethical principles, Apple faces critics concerning its labor conditions in Chinese supply chain and restrictive repair policies. According to the reports from labor rights organizations, many factories that manufacture Apple's products have performed excessive overtime, harsh working conditions, and mental health issues among the workers. Investigations have revealed evidence where Apple's suppliers prioritized production targets over the worker's well-being. In Foxconn's Zhengzhou plant, nicknamed "iPhone City," workers have reported intensive production schedules during new product launches (China Labor Watch, 2023). This is highly similar to how Dickens depicted the harsh realities of industrialization through the exploited workers of Coketown, where workers were reduced to "hands" who were supposed to have no character and no purpose (Dickens, 1854/2007). Thus, Apple must take action to address those concerns. They could improve this by diversifying its manufacturing across multiple countries to reduce pressure on a single plant. For example, they can establish smaller, more manageable production facilities rather than massive complexes like iPhone City. Another concern for Apple lies in its device repair policy. As Klosowski notes in the consumer rights study, Apple's restrictive repair policies not only increase consumer costs but also contribute to electronic waste by encouraging device replacement over repair (Klosowski, 2021). This criticism connects with Dickens' broader critique of industrial capitalism's tendency to prioritize efficiency and profit over human needs and environmental concerns. For this issue, Apple could expand repair rights and product repairability and develop more affordable product

lines for underserved markets. Such actions would demonstrate Apple's promise to environmental sustainability while addressing Dickens' concern about capitalism's impact on social welfare, which shows that technological advancement and consumer rights can coexist in a profitable business.

While these internal challenges present immediate concerns to Apple's ethical standing, the most significant threat to Apple's future lies in the technological advancements from other tech giants and regulatory intervention from many administrations. As AI emerges as the next technological breaker, Apple's traditional hardware-centric business model could become outdated. Companies like Microsoft, Tesla, and other emerging startups like OpenAI are rapidly advancing their AI capabilities, which could fundamentally change how people interact with technology such as smartphones and traditional computing devices. Many reports had shown Apple is behind in AI. Even Apple's internal studies acknowledge this disparity, their research has revealed that OpenAI's ChatGPT is "25% more accurate than Apple's Siri, and able to answer 30% more questions" (Gurman, 2024). This finding underscore the urgency for Apple to put more resources on AI development. At the same time, the global regulatory pressure particularly in China where much of Apple's products are made, and in the EU with its strict digital market laws, could force Apple to compromise its integrated ecosystem to the local regulations. The failure under these circumstances would likely be a disaster for global innovation and consumer privacy. It's evident that Apple has a leading role in user privacy protection and environmental sustainability, its collapse would create a market blank that may take years to fill. Moreover, the dissolution of a company that has achieved such efficient specialization and scale would likely result in a loss of expertise and resources that could slow future technological progress in future years. While such a failure might create opportunities for new startups and potentially trigger more competition, the loss of Apple's integrated approach to hardware, software, and services would likely result in a worse overall experience for consumers and a regression in industry standards for privacy, accessibility, and environmental responsibility.

After examining through both classical philosophical works and contemporary standards, Apple does represent a model of a good company that successfully balances its revenue goals while following the ethical principles. The company's organizational structure embodies Plato's vision of justice and Smith's economic moral theories, and the accessibility features built in its products reflect Socrates' ideal of social harmony. Furthermore, its supply chain management demonstrates how modern companies can achieve commercial success with environmental and social responsibility. However, like any big corporation, it faces criticisms concerning labor conditions, repair policies, and the increasing competition from emerging technologies like AI. It's crucial for Apple to address these challenges to sustain its leadership in the tech industry and maintain its ethical commitments.

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Patagonia, an Ethical Capitalist

Jake Schroeder



Jake Schroeder is a Civil Engineering Major in the College of Engineering and an Economics minor in the Daniels School of Business. For his research paper, he chose Patagonia as his “good” company.

When people think of Patagonia, they think about people like Yvon Chouinard, the company's founder, avid rock climber, and fervent environmentalist. From its origins, Patagonia has championed the sustainable clothing market, producing its first recycled products in 1993—nearly two decades before this practice became even relatively mainstream (Patagonia, 2023). Consumers from around the world have resonated with Patagonia's environmentalist niche in outdoor wear and message to “Buy Less, Demand More” (Patagonia, 2011). As such, Patagonia is arguably a moral, successful, and deeply green company: a role model and industry leader representing the triumphs of capitalism and market economy. Fitting with the merits of capitalism, Patagonia is an evolving business and has room for growth and maturity, at times facing concerns about greenwashing and product accessibility. While these concerns may seem trivial, the potential failure of this leading figure in the capitalist framework could have detrimental effects on society.

Firstly, it is necessary to determine what a good company is so Patagonia can be compared against that model. That determination should of course be guided by the most influential figures and practices in the modern world. Adam Smith argued that “the wise and virtuous...[are] at all times willing that [their] own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest” (Smith, 1759, p. 141). As Smith has defined, an especially important feature of good business is to provide for the commonwealth. Another contributing business philosophy comes from many longstanding, Japanese *shinise* companies, which outline that a company should create, “three forms of value: [for businesses], [for customers], and [for] the society at large” (NHK, 2016, 6:50). While reviewing Patagonia, it will be important to remember this model: a good company will provide value for the business, consumer, and the greater society.

What sets Patagonia apart from many of its competitors and makes it an industry leader is their core mission: “We’re in business to save our home planet” (Patagonia, 2023). Columbia, a competitor in the outdoor wear space has a different model: “At Columbia Sportswear Company, we're more than just a leader in the global active lifestyle apparel, footwear, accessories and equipment industry. We connect active people with their passions” (Columbia, 2023). Patagonia's mission is dramatically different from others in the outdoor wear industry; while other companies focus primarily on value for business and consumers, Patagonia looks to another additional facet: societal and environmental value. Patagonia and Columbia seem to have different goals, yet both companies are highly profitable. Ethos ESG, which assesses thousands of organizations and their accordance with UN sustainable development goals, placed Columbia in the lowest 25%. Patagonia meanwhile scored in the top 89% (Ethos ESG, 2023).

Patagonia likely did so because it contributes massive resources and focus to its environmental goals. Since 1985, Patagonia has contributed \$161,000,000 to supporting environmental work and continues to do so, contributing at least 1% of annual revenue to such work (Patagonia, 2022). A short trip through Patagonia's website introduces consumers to environmental activism globally and in their own communities. While doing research on Patagonia at home in Atlanta, Georgia, I was urged to six different environmental efforts from watershed to wildlife and biodiversity protection efforts in my local area. In FY 2021 alone, Patagonia funded 705 unique grants for environmental groups acting across the globe to protect lands, waters, and wildlife, improve soil health and promote good farming practices,

support environmentally marginalized communities, and fight climate change (Patagonia, 2023).

Patagonia's efforts to environmental wealth and sustainability go beyond charity and activism, it is an integral part of their products and selling model. From selling their first recycled materials products in 1993 to selling 91% recycled or preferred materials by weight in 2023, Patagonia continues to innovate and push the industry to create more sustainable materials (Patagonia, 2023). As other companies push consumers to buy more and more with each successive year, Patagonia takes radical steps to back down the wasteful fashion trends championed by other industry giants. Patagonia's website states: "In 2011, we placed a provocative ad in the New York Times on Black Friday" (Patagonia, 2023). The ad in question was a picture of one of Patagonia's best-selling jackets under the large, bold lettering, "DON'T BUY THIS JACKET" (Patagonia, 2011). When asked about the ad, Patagonia replied that

"Businesses need to make fewer things but of higher quality. Customers need to think twice before they buy...Black Friday...launches the retail holiday season. We should be the only retailer in the country asking people to buy less on Black Friday...it's folly to assume that a healthy economy can be based on buying and selling more and more things people don't need—and it's time for people who believe that's folly to say so" (Patagonia, 2023).

Patagonia does not want consumers to, "BUY THIS JACKET" because "[BUYING] THIS JACKET" (Patagonia, 2011) is likely unnecessary and environmentally destructive. Patagonia's website states, "For our 50th year, we're looking forward...Together, we can prioritize purpose over profit and protect this wondrous planet" (Patagonia, 2023). These are prime examples of how Patagonia often prioritizes its environmental mission over standard profit motives.

With all this subversive advertising, one might think that Patagonia is not a for-profit company, or at least, not a very profitable one. And yet, they would be seriously mistaken. According to IBISWorld, an industry report site, Patagonia grossed 394 billion USD in revenue in US markets alone (IBISWorld, 2023), amounting to around 100 million USD in profits (Gelles, 2022). While Patagonia's profits may not expressly be a priority, they are certainly a reality.

As proven, Patagonia does not simply aim to increase its profits; "Instead of 'going public', you could say [Patagonia is] 'going purpose'...Instead of extracting value from nature and transforming it into wealth for investors...Patagonia creates to protect the source of all wealth" (Patagonia 2021). While that often means protecting the earth, Patagonia also recognizes its responsibility to pay workers a livable wage. According to their website,

"As a founding member of the Fair Labor Association (FLA), [Patagonia has] embedded its living-wage standard requirements in [their] code of conduct and developed an approach to improving wages in [their] partner factories. As of 2021, 33 percent (10 out of 30) of [Patagonia's] apparel-assembly factories are paying their workers on a living wage" (Patagonia, 2023).

While that may not seem impressive to an outside observer, that is a stark and important contrast to other industry giants such as Columbia, “None [of whose] supply chain is certified by labor standards that ensure worker health and safety, living wages, or other labor rights” (Rauturier, 2021). While not perfect, Patagonia clearly outlines its efforts to create significant value, not just sustinment for employees, even for those in third-world countries where labor rights may not be protected.

Patagonia is highly regarded as an ethical company, ranking 1st as the most trusted company in America according to an Axios-Harris poll of 16,310 Americans (Stagwell, 2023). While high praise is vastly warranted, there are some issues Patagonia still faces. That said, especially Patagonia should be held to high standards. These concerns typically center around greenwashing and the high price tag of Patagonia’s products.

Greenwashing, defined by the UN as, “misleading the public to believe that a company or entity is doing more to protect the environment than it is...weak net-zero pledges,” (United Nations, 2022) is a problem that critics say Patagonia propagates. Such critics usually point to the fact that Patagonia produces their product with virgin polymers, unrecycled and adding to the worldwide heap of plastics. While Patagonia uses 91% recycled or preferred materials by weight, the argument goes that the last percentages are by no means small, and by no means ideal (Patagonia, 2023). While Patagonia pledges to eliminate virgin petroleum fiber in all of its products by 2025, the results are yet to be seen (Patagonia, 2023).

The reality is that Patagonia is most likely not greenwashing intentionally if at all. Few companies of comparable size are as environmentally engaged as Patagonia; Patagonia is the green standard. Patagonia could aim to improve by keeping the public informed with progress reports and installing charitable ramifications if their goals are not met. Because the crux of the issue seems to lie in public communication, Patagonia could improve its media output by assuring its authentic commitment to real, meaningful climate action through better visibility.

In the meantime, consumers currently face concerns about the accessibility and affordability of sustainable products for people earning lower incomes. A comparison of Patagonia’s “Synchilla Snap-T Fleece Pullover” (Patagonia, 2023) and Columbia’s “Steens Mountain Snap-T Fleece Pullover” (Columbia, 2023) reveals a price discrepancy of 85\$, over twice the price of the Columbia brand. While Patagonia’s product is arguably of higher quality and provides significant consumer benefits such as a lifetime repair policy, the 85\$ difference is likely not justifiable for a large swath of potential consumers. Indeed, research reveals that half of American families are ~500\$ in debt y-o-y (Blanchet et al., 2023). Put simply, when you’re struggling to keep a roof over your head and food on your table, you may not have the luxury of worrying about whether your clothes were made sustainably.

While price discrimination is technically illegal, it is a fact that businesses have been doing it indirectly for decades. While current Patagonia stores mostly exist in upscale areas, they could venture to open more in lower-income areas, lowering their prices where possible. It is also foreseeable that Patagonia could make deals with lawmakers to be able to provide their product at a lower cost by reducing business taxes at specific outlets. Not only that, but Patagonia could seek government grants that would, in a way, subsidize sustainable clothing for lower-income families, making their clothing more affordable and accessible to those who

cannot afford the high price tag. While these are minor issues Patagonia currently faces, it is important to consider how they could lead to its failure.

Patagonia seems to be entrenched in the industry, though, it is possible that a failure of public relations, product accessibility, and exogenous factors could lead to a shutdown. Despite the great trust and reputation Patagonia holds, there is potential for a polarization of public opinion. Were Patagonia's alleged greenwashing proven to be legitimate and intentional, many consumers may waver and choose to look elsewhere for sustainable clothing. Additionally, as inequality rampantly expands in America, there is potential for Patagonia's consumer base to diminish, given the fact that many wealthy Americans profit from environmental degradation. Such a failure of the company would have disastrous environmental consequences for society but may be a symptom of a larger, more endemic problem in American society.

There is, however, a more likely and more hopeful future as successive generations of Americans become increasingly aware and concerned about climate change and economic inequality. As America forges forward, companies like Patagonia may be harbingers of societal change and the evolving face of capitalism; one that begets a revival of values and mission in the hearts of businesses. With ethical centers like Patagonia leading the way, Marx may be wrong. The "Accumulation of wealth at one pole," may not necessarily mean "misery, agony of toil...[and] brutality...at the opposite pole" (Marx, 1867, p. 431). Patagonia stands as a bastion of ethical capitalism, promising a future that no longer necessitates the destruction of our fellow man or the home we call Earth. That seems like good company to me.

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Good Corporations: Do They Exist?

Shyam Kumar



Shyam Kumar is an Integrated Business & Engineering (IBE) major in the Daniels School of Business. For his research paper, he chose Tata Steel as his “good” company.

In today's world, large corporations are often associated with greed and rarely thought to be "good," but what exactly does it mean for a company to be "good"? After all, isn't their purpose to make more money? Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Cicero's *On Duties*, Plato's *Republic*, and Noddings' *Starting at Home* offer a framework for how we might judge if a company is "good." This is the framework that virtue is the only true "good" and that all else is indifferent. Tata Steel is a "good" company because they pursue core business virtues, the only true "good," but they have not become perfectly virtuous and could become an even better company by strengthening their core business virtues. Looking at Tata's future, they would most likely fail due to indifferents that do not pertain to virtue, but ultimately this is natural.

Virtue is the only true "good", and Tata Steel has proven itself to be a company that pursues the core business virtues in its operations. The Stoics describe "indifferents" as "things which contribute neither to happiness or unhappiness," stating, "as is the case with wealth, reputation, health, strength and the like." According to them, this is because "it is possible to be happy even without these, though the manner of using them is constitutive of happiness or unhappiness" (Diogenes Laertius, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p.6). Thus, whether a company is "good" should not be judged on any of the factors mentioned above and should be judged on the manner of how a company uses those factors. This can be judged by the quality of virtue, as it is what dictates how the company will use these factors. The Stoics back this up by explaining, "the doctrine that the wise man does everything well is a consequence of his accomplishing everything in accordance with right reason and in accordance with virtue, which is expertise concerned with the whole of life" (Stobaeus, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p.7). Similar to how a wise man does everything well due to virtue, a wise company that does everything well is also due to virtue. Thus, virtue is what dictates how a company uses its indifferents and hence whether a company is "good" or not.

Some may argue that it is difficult to measure virtue objectively and thus it cannot be used in determining whether a company is "good," but in modern times, measures of virtue in the corporate world have become increasingly standardized. Jensen in their *Value Maximization, Stakeholder Theory, and the Corporate Objective Function* is a primary proponent of the former view, stating, "Virtues like wisdom and courage are inherently subjective and difficult to measure, making them unsuitable metrics for corporate evaluation" (Jensen, 2002). Jensen believes that there is no way to measure virtues such as wisdom and courage and believes they are *inherently* subjective, however, we see that Jensen's argument is outdated. In today's world, there are standardized frameworks that translate these virtues into measurable indicators such as the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative). For example, they have translated the virtue of Justice into a variety of measurable indicators. One such is the following: "Organizations shall report the ratio of the basic salary and remuneration of women to men for each employee category" (GRI 405-2) (Global Reporting Initiative, 2023). This metric for non-discrimination shows how the GRI has clearly translated virtues such as Justice into measurable indicators and proves Jensen wrong that virtue cannot be measured for use of evaluation in the corporate world.

In the case of Tata Steel, they have proven themselves to act in accordance with the core business virtues. Tata Steel's long-term planning has exemplified they possess the virtue

of wisdom. For example, their Climate Action program has aimed for Carbon Neutrality by 2050 (Tata Steel, 2023). This shows that Tata possesses the virtue of wisdom due to their care for the environment they co-exist in and their awareness of the threat that global warming poses to all mankind. Plato explains the importance of wisdom stating, "So a just man will not differ at all from a just city with respect to the form of justice, but will be like it" (Plato, ca. 380 B.C.E/2004, 435b). Here, Plato is saying that similar to how in the city the philosopher-king rules, in a man, reason should rule. Similarly, wisdom is an important virtue in a company. Tata Steels' community relations have exemplified they also possess the virtue of justice. For example, their Rural Development Society reaches 500+ villages (Tata Steel, 2023a). Tata's initiative to help rural communities that are the backbone of India with their profits demonstrates they possess the virtue of justice. Cicero explains the importance of this virtue, describing, "for justice is the single virtue which is the sovereign mistress and queen of all the virtues" (Cicero, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p.11). Lastly, Tata Steel's commitment to ethical principles even when costly has exemplified they possess the virtue of courage. For example, they maintained employment during the 2008 financial crisis despite industry-wide layoffs (Harvard Business School, 2019). To maintain employment during the largest financial crisis of our time even when everyone else had mass lay-offs shows that Tata possesses the virtue of courage and is not afraid of losing profits in the short run. Noddings highlights the importance of courage explaining that when we care, we want to do our very best for the objects of our care (Noddings, 2002, p.67). Here, Noddings uses the term "care" in the context of caring for our fellow mankind and the world around us. This is no different from the Stoic idea of acting virtuous, but Noddings says that when we do this, we should do our very best even through difficulties for that which we care for. Courage is what allows one to persevere through those difficulties.

While Tata pursues virtue, they have not become perfectly virtuous and they could strengthen their core business virtues. On the virtue of wisdom, Tata could strengthen their corporate wisdom by being more ambitious about reducing their carbon emissions. They currently emit 2.4 tonnes of CO₂ per tonne of crude steel (Tata Steel, 2023). While this is below the industry average of 2.6, it doesn't live up to Tata's standards. Tata could do this by counterbalancing the carbon emissions with initiatives to decrease carbon in the atmosphere such as reforestation of Indian forests, as such initiatives are a natural strength for Tata. Cicero emphasizes the importance of this matter, explaining that it is virtuous to be in harmony with nature (Cicero, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p.6). Since it is virtue that dictates whether a company is good, it is important for Tata Steel to act virtuously by aligning themselves better with nature and polluting less. On the virtue of justice, Tata could expand their corporate justice by allowing for greater stakeholder participation in the governance of the company. One way they could do this is by establishing an independent ethics commission with stakeholder representation. This commission could have open positions for all stakeholders not on Tata's board and make decisions by voting. Plato explains how this would strengthen the virtue of justice, stating that the just man will not allow the three elements of his soul to meddle with each other's work (Plato, ca. 380 B.C.E/2004, 443a-b). Similar to how a just man does not allow the elements of his soul to meddle with each other's work, a just company does not allow the elements of the company to meddle with each other's work. Thus, Tata Steel should ensure

that they place individuals not directly involved with the company's operations to oversee the ethics of the company, such as stakeholders. Lastly, on the virtue of courage, Tata could develop their corporate courage by taking charge and leading the industry in ethical pricing. As a major player in the industry, Tata could lead an industry-wide coalition for responsible carbon pricing. Cicero again describes how this would make Tata more virtuous explaining that those who accomplish everything including that which is difficult in accordance with virtue, do everything well (Cicero, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p.6). Thus Tata should act virtuously and lead the steel industry in responsible pricing.

Tata Steel would be most likely to go out of business due to “indifferents” that do not pertain to virtue; however, this is ultimately natural. One such “indifferent” is the declining steel demand in developed markets (World Steel Association, 2023). This could lead to Tata's failure because developed markets are essential for Tata to maintain their profit margins and demand. In addition, these markets drive innovation in steel product. This threat, however, represents the natural economic cycle. The situation itself wouldn't be a “good” or “bad” thing, but how Tata responds to the threat could be deemed virtuous or unvirtuous. Noddings backs this up, explaining that what matters ethically is not just what we accomplish but how we respond to others in building and maintaining relations of care and trust (Noddings, 2002, p.177). Thus, the failure of Tata due to declining steel demand is only a “bad” thing if Tata were to abandon relations of care and trust. Another indifferent that could cause Tata's failure are the global price pressures due to Chinese overcapacity. Chinese producers have state subsidies that allow them to operate at extremely low costs, and they already produce over 50% of the world's steel output (Boston Consulting Group, 2024). Thus, it is impossible for other producers to price their products competitively compared to China. This threat again however is a fact of reality due to numerous factors and hence is a natural occurrence, and thus the situation itself wouldn't be a “good” or “bad” thing, but how Tata responds to the threat could be deemed virtuous or unvirtuous. Lastly, an indifferent that could cause Tata's failure is the replacement of steel. Composites have better strength-to-weight ratios that are advantageous for fuel efficiency (McKinsey & Company, 2023). In addition, many alternative alloys have better performance characteristics. In this case, if Tata were to go out of business, it would be a “good” thing because the replacement of steel with better materials would benefit the greater good. Noddings, explains this, stating, "Social policy should aim at creating and preserving the conditions that allow caring to flourish. When these conditions are threatened or break down, efforts must be made to restore them." (Noddings, 2002, p.249). Therefore, it is “good” if Tata goes out of business in lieu of caring for the greater good of humanity and allowing humanity to have access to better materials.

A “good” company should be judged based on its virtue as all else is indifferent and can be used in good or bad ways. Virtue dictates this matter. Tata Steel has proven itself to uphold core business virtues and hence they are a good company. Despite being a “good” company, Tata is by no means perfect and could become an even better company by enhancing those same core business virtues. While Tata is a “good” company, there are many indifferents that threaten to put Tata out of business. These indifferents are natural and if Tata were to go out of business due to them, whether it would be a good thing or bad thing is only dependent on whether Tata chooses to continue caring or abandon their principles. From examining what

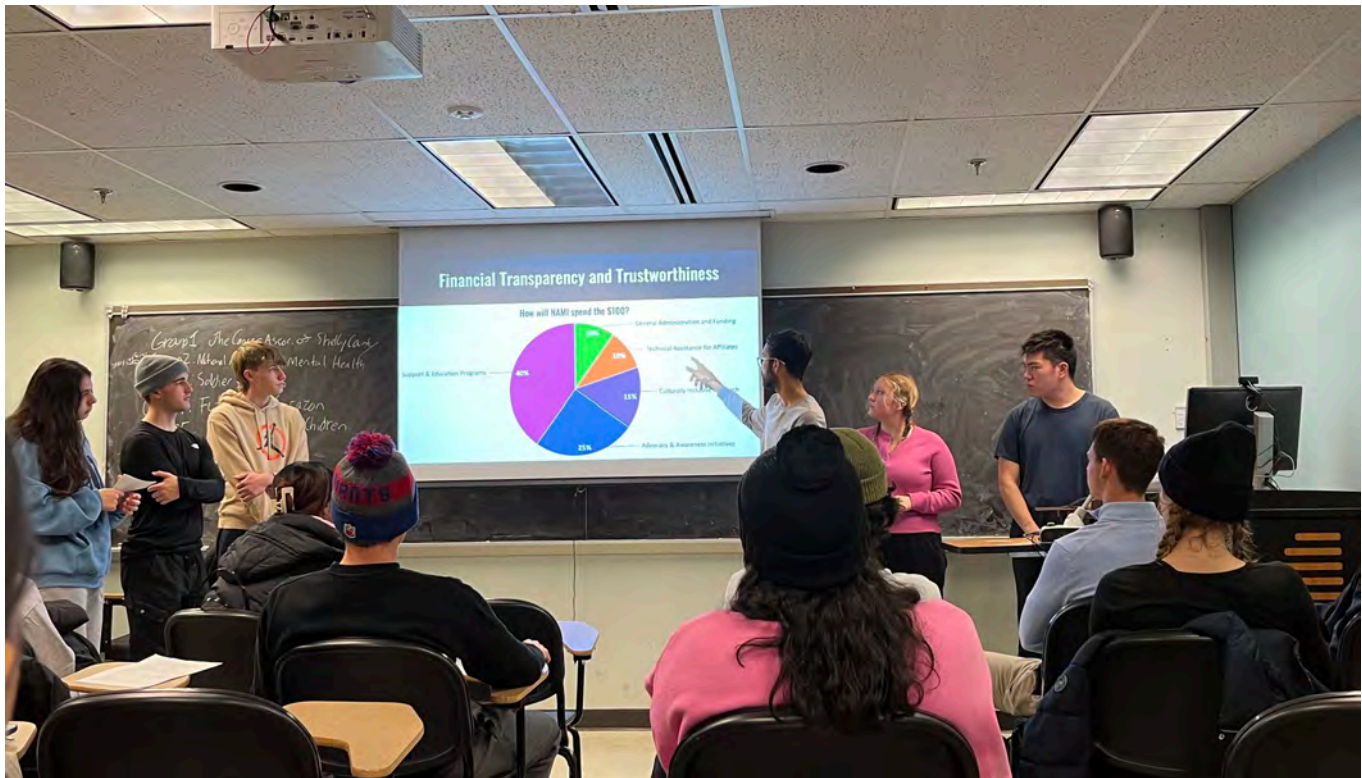
makes a good company, how good companies can become better, and their potential to fail, it is clear that virtue is the single criterion for whether a company is “good” and that all of us unknowingly judge a company by its virtue because it is what causes the actions we judge. Thus, there is always the possibility for a company to become better by becoming more virtuous. It is not always the case that good companies will perform well but if they do so go out of business, whether they were good or bad in the end will only be determined based on whether they chose to care.

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Empower Minds: NAMI

*Camila Del Rio, Ryan Lee, Derek Welsh, Pratham Motani,
Jess Reder, and Justin Wang*



As a compliment to the for-profit side, the oral presentations in Dr. Pinto's SCLA 101 course focus on the non-profit side. The class is divided into five groups, each of which selects a charitable organization and make a presentation to the class on why \$100 of Dr. Pinto's money should go to that charitable organization based both on their research into the charities aims and operations (such as looking at 990 filings) and on the variety of ethical frameworks studied over the semester. Presentations are ten minutes plus five minutes of Q&A, and the class votes for a winning team at the end.

What follows is the PowerPoint used by a team arguing for the money going to NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness). They are—pictured above from left to right while presenting—Camila Del Rio (management major), Ryan Lee (management major), Derek Welsh (management major), Pratham Motani (finance and economics major), Jess Reder (marketing major), and Justin Wang (integrated business & engineering major).

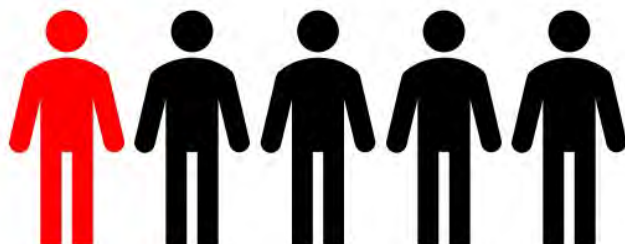
Empower Minds: NAMI

Why we chose **National Alliance on Mental Illness**

By: Group 2: Jess Reder, Justin Wang, Pratham Motani, Camila Del Rio, Ryan Lee, Derek Welsh

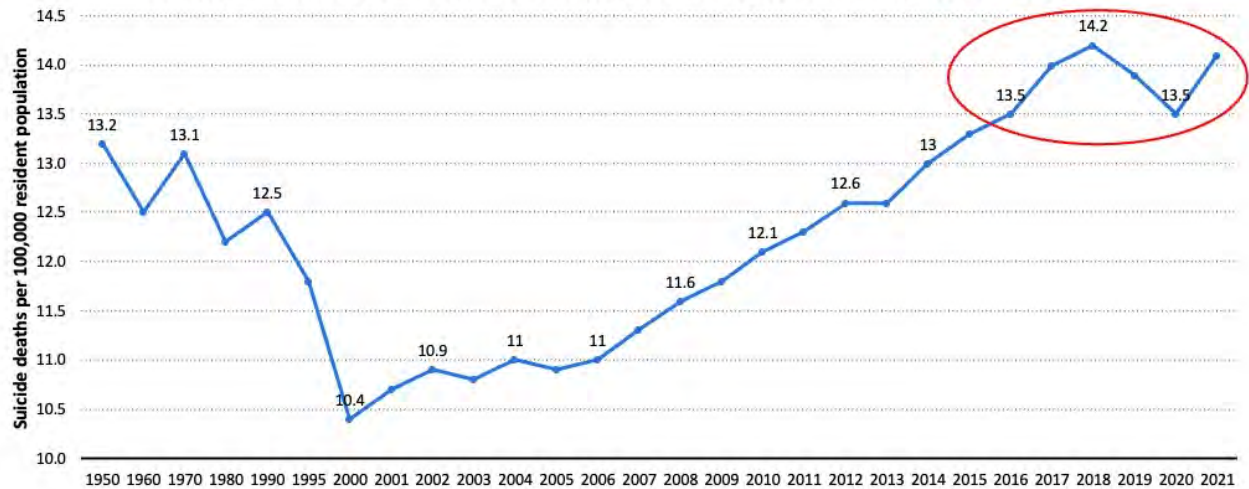
The Growing Mental Health Crisis

More than **1 in 5** U.S. adults experience mental illness



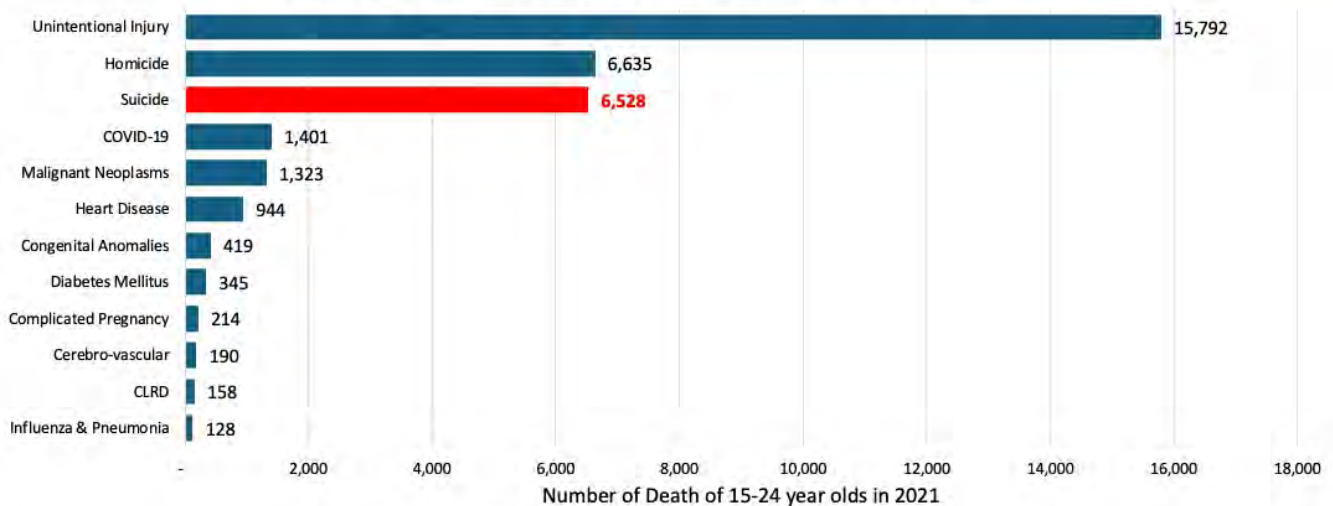
The Growing Mental Health Crisis

Deaths by suicide per 100,000 resident population in the U.S. from 1950 to 2021



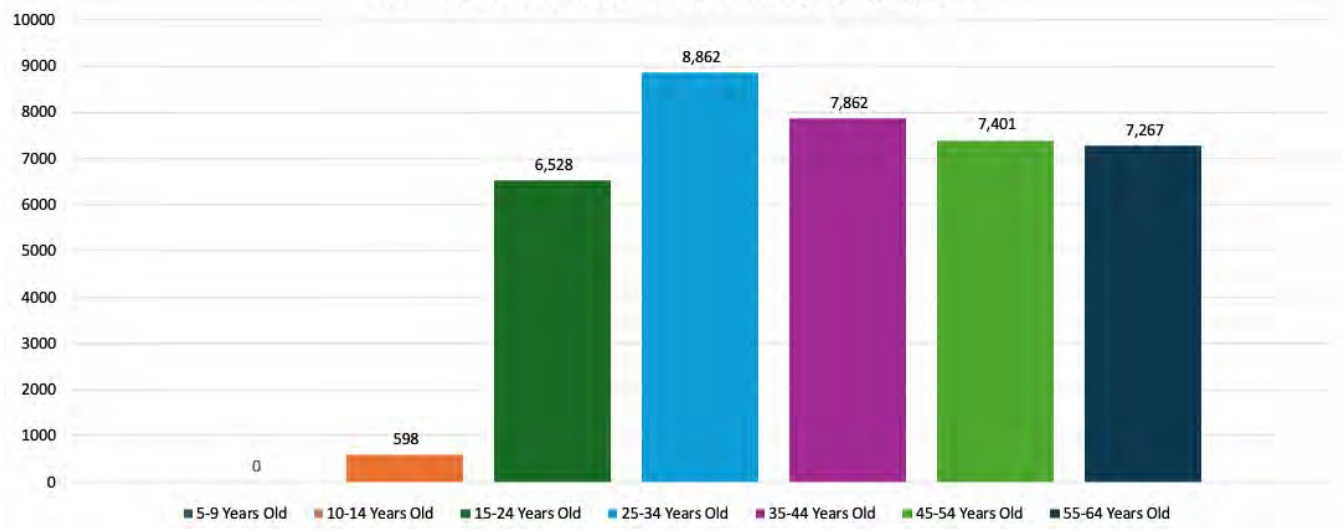
The Growing Mental Health Crisis

Leading Cause of Death in the United States for 15-24 Years Old



The Growing Mental Health Crisis

Number of Death caused by suicide, by age group



The Growing Mental Health Crisis

THE EXPONENT

CAMPUS CITY & STATE SPORTS INDIANAPOLIS OPINION MULTIMEDIA THE HUB CONTACT US

TOP STORY BREAKINGS

Purdue student reportedly died by suicide at gun range

STAFF REPORTS Nov 11, 2024 1 min to read



The Unfinished Block P displays photos of two students, one of which is Ernesto Tanquasi Lucio, who reportedly died Saturday from a self-inflicted gunshot wound at a gun range in Lafayette.
Victoria Madana / Art and Design Editor

What is NAMI?

- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- LARGEST grassroots mental health organization
- 5 Core Values:
 - Hope
 - Inclusion
 - Empowerment
 - Fairness
 - Compassion



Ignoring Mental Problems

Can lead to the following:

- Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Issues with work/school
- Loss of relationships
- Addictions such as gambling
- Hopelessness
- Self Harm



NAMI's Impact: Real Change for Mental Health



Zip Code: Distance:

Type	Name	City	State	Zip	
Local	NAMI West Central Indiana	Lafayette	IN	47904-3413	Details

Mental Health COST MONEY!

	Serious mental illness	Other mental illness	Children	Total
Direct non-healthcare costs				
Jail	\$ 3,291,954.63	\$ 2,116,642.39	\$ -	\$ 5,408,597.02
Prison	\$ 61,305,242.29	\$ 37,691,467.56	\$ 2,036,473.26	\$ 101,033,183.11
Homelessness	\$ 4,530,057.18	\$ 3,757,757.00	\$ -	\$ 8,287,814.18
Chronic Homelessness	\$ 904,993.82	\$ 750,707.27	\$ -	\$ 1,655,701.09
Indirect Costs				
Primary Education	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 760,348.70	\$ 760,348.70
Unemployment	\$ 235,812,941.10	\$ 171,057,553.42	\$ -	\$ 406,870,494.52
Absenteeism	\$ 32,092,960.13	\$ 102,476,353.06	\$ -	\$ 134,569,313.19
Presenteeism	\$ 152,393,517.28	\$ 597,778,726.16	\$ -	\$ 750,172,243.44
All-cause Mortality	\$ 563,690,748.00	\$ 403,756,056.00	\$ 27,599,654.88	\$ 995,046,458.88
Suicide	\$ 431,324,037.97	\$ -	\$ 40,446,696.00	\$ 471,770,733.97
Caregiving Productivity Loss	\$ 223,377,237.02	\$ 322,441,199.44	\$ -	\$ 545,818,436.46
Caregiving Direct Healthcare	\$ 7,811,747.31	\$ 12,688,326.43	\$ -	\$ 20,500,073.74
Direct health care costs				
Medicaid healthcare	\$ 56,086,373.04	\$ 59,400,366.69	\$ 26,020,848.91	\$ 141,507,588.64
Private healthcare	\$ 225,088,188.42	\$ 299,039,237.34	\$ 42,815,039.01	\$ 566,942,464.77
Total All Costs	\$ 1,997,709,998.19	\$ 2,012,954,392.76	\$139,679,060.76	\$ 4,150,343,451.71

NAMI's Impact: Real Change for Mental Health

2020

- Launched the **Accelerating Medicines Partnership for Schizophrenia** with FNIH.
- Transitioned **HelpLine and programs to virtual** during COVID-19.
- Advocated for the **National Suicide Hotline Designation Act**, creating the 988 Lifeline.

2021

- Introduced the **#ReimagineCrisis campaign** to improve community crisis response.

2022

- Published **You Are Not Alone**, a USA Today bestseller.
- Added **text function** to the HelpLine.
- Received a **\$30 million investment** from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.
- Launched **NAMI Next Gen**, recruiting young adult advisors annually.
- Advocated for a **5x funding increase for 988 Lifeline**, securing \$501.6M.

2023

- Advocated for **mental health parity** with President Biden, contributing 60% of public feedback.
- Took leadership of the **Community Health Equity Alliance (CHEA)** to support Black/African Ancestry adults.
- Launched the **Stigma Free Workplace Advisory Council** for workplace mental health.
- Introduced the HelpLine's **Teen and Young Adult line** with peer volunteers.
- Partnered with **Girl Scouts** on a Mental Wellness Patch Program.
- Recognized as a **top 30 Peer-to-Peer fundraising organization** (2020–2023).

2024

- Partnered with **happy coffee™**, gaining an equity stake.
- Set to release its second book, **You Are Not Alone: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers** (Sept. 2024).

What Makes a Good Charity?

❖ **Transparent** Financial Reporting

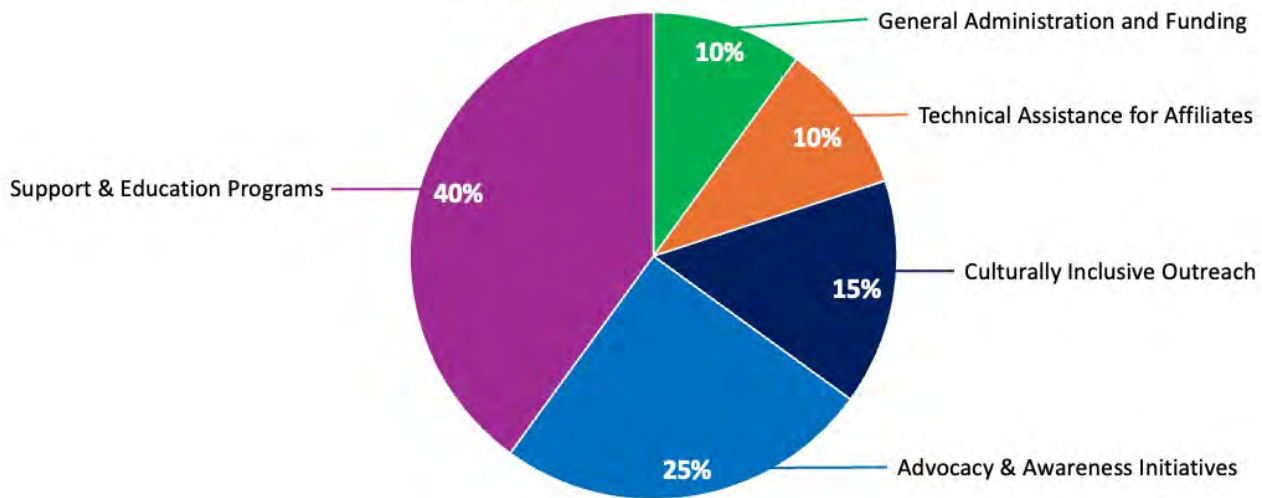
❖ **Efficient** Use of Donations

❖ Recognition for **Accountability**

❖ **Accessible** Financial Information

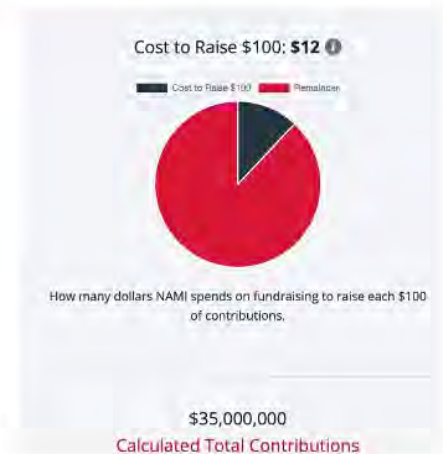
Financial Transparency and Trustworthiness

How will NAMI spend the \$100?



Why NAMI?

- Impacts everyone
 - More than 60% college students have at least one mental problem (increasing)
- Charity navigator 98/Charity Watch A
- NAMI Smarts for Advocacy
 - Modules, step by step tools
 - Strengthen advocacy in communities
- Efficiency
 - Huge impact and financial contributions to mental health programs
 - Expanding mental health coverage through legislation and directly with communities



Conclusion

- Mental Health's Prevalence
- NAMI's Mission
- NAMI's Support
- Why NAMI is the best choice



Need Help? Find Support Now!

Call: 1-800-950-6264

Text "helpline" to 62640

In a crisis? Call or Text 988 (24/7 service)

7 | Cornerstone for Business Fall 2024 Contest

“Who am I”

Cornerstone for Business contests ask students to create original essays, short stories, poetry, artwork, or other creative content inspired by the transformative texts they read in SCLA 101 and 102 based on a different theme each semester. The contests are open to all students currently enrolled in SCLA 101 and 102 and are judged by a committee of Cornerstone faculty.

The theme of the Fall 2024 contest was “Who am I”: Who am I? Who are you? When we introduce ourselves, we often rely on what it is we do to define ourselves: I am a college student, a future engineer, a market analyst, a manager, or a teacher. But are we simply what we do, what we produce for the marketplace of commodities and ideas? What about our inner life, our world within? Is it beyond the reach of external influences, or is it at the mercy of the expectations of others, popular culture, social media, and the forces of the economy? Inspired by your readings this semester – the ideas, concepts, characters, and their journeys - tell us who you are. The authentic you.

The Spirit of the Gig Economy

Matei Mocuta



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2024 Contest: “Who am I?” – First Place

Matei Mocuta is a Finance major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. James Mollison. His essay discusses the surge in providing services through digital platforms and the decrease in individual and unique job experiences.

In recent years, the gig economy has exploded in popularity, offering millions of people the opportunity to earn a living through flexible, on-demand work. Yet beneath the surface of its apparent freedom lies a profound transformation in how we understand and experience work. In this essay, I argue how the gig economy has led to a decrease in individuality. First I will explore what the gig economy is and the allure it has for modern workers. Second, I will explain how rationalization and losing your calling leads to a decrease in individualization. Finally, I will analyze the structural and psychological barriers making leaving gig work difficult for those who work full time. But first, let us define individuality, I believe it to be anything that differentiates you from others. Whether it's hobbies, passions, or the work you do. Through a combination of economic necessity and manipulative algorithms, gig workers find themselves in a cycle of endless repetitive work that does not allow for differentiation, which turns their work into a series of disconnected tasks rather than the expression of someone's unique skills.

First, it's important to distinguish what the gig economy is. It is a labor market where people earn money by providing services, goods, or on-demand work, often through a digital platform. Obvious examples are ride-sharing platforms like Uber or Lyft, or food delivery services like DoorDash or Postmates. The allure becomes apparent early on: These platforms allow workers to pick their own hours, and cash out their money instantly, all while not having a boss. The success of these companies is unprecedented, Uber, a company that was founded only 15 years ago, has a market cap of 153 billion dollars, making it more valuable than companies like Boeing and Nike. As of 2024, 36% of the workforce is represented by gig workers, and over 76.4 million people are estimated to be freelancers. However, algorithmic pricing and inconsistent pay often lead these workers to need to work very long hours at inconvenient times. Graveyard shifts and late nights during weekends are the highest paying, so for a worker to make a living, their schedule is often much less flexible than a traditional 9-5.

Max Weber was a 19th-century sociologist and economist who wrote *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*. In this book, he analyzes how the meaning of work has shifted from a religious obligation to an impersonal, efficiency-driven activity. Weber introduces the idea of a *calling* – a task set by god. He explains that Protestants, specifically Calvinists and Puritans, viewed hard work and asceticism as a sign of God's grace. However, Weber noticed that capitalism had become more rational and secular over time. He believed that we were organizing our economy in a way that prioritized efficiency and productivity. Ultimately he noted that because of this rationalization, we have shifted the way in how we view our work. In essence, we have lost our calling, and instead of using money as a means to an end, we view work as an end in itself. This shift leads to a loss of self-expression and individuality in our work, as people are alienated from their unique values. This is clear in the gig economy as workers are completely disconnected from their unique values. The mere idea of working a gig – a temporary job, shows how the nature of the gig economy is not to enjoy your work, but to complete your task, thus you lose your calling. But you may be wondering how this is different than any other capitalist company. Is filling out spreadsheets supposed to be enjoyable? Does sitting in front of a screen all day award you with satisfaction? The answer to this question lies in the structure and psychological effects the gig economy has on workers.

First, workers under companies like Uber, Doordash, etc, are not employees, they are *independent contractors*. This means that companies do not have to provide them with traditional benefits like healthcare. Additionally, because these workers are paid by the gig, they do not receive vacation days and other benefits like 401k match. All these issues compound into independent contractors needing to work much longer hours to sustain their lives. Additionally, in a traditional 9-5 you have the possibility for work to be the means to an end, many software engineers, for example, work and save with the goal of retiring early, sometimes in their 40s. Most people who work 9-5 jobs have a clear distinction between their professional and personal lives once their shifts are over. They can go home and disconnect from their work and focus on hobbies and family, contributing to their individuality and self-identity. However, in the gig economy, this is simply not possible. Due to surge pricing, the most profitable hours are late at night or during weekends. Additionally, during regular work hours, the demand for gigs is diminished as most people are at their jobs. This creates a situation where gig workers must work long, inconvenient hours, and without the benefits of traditional employment, they are unable to save enough for retirement, effectively making work an end in itself. You may also now be wondering, why don't they quit and get a new job? This is explained through their routing algorithms and the nature of these gigs themselves. Uber gives their drivers the option to start new trips before they finish the one they are even on. Doordash allows dashers to pick up and drop off multiple orders at the same time. This leads to the *goal gradient effect* –the tendency for people to work harder as they get closer to their goal (in this case the end of each ride). As the goal gradient effect kicks in towards the end of their ride, starting another ride maintains this momentum, making drivers more likely to accept the next ride and thus continue to work long hours. Moreover, the nature of gig work itself makes it difficult for workers to find new stable jobs. Gig work often lacks the structure and skill-building opportunities that traditional jobs have, which can make it difficult to build the necessary qualifications for other career paths. This leads to the *sunken cost fallacy*, the longer gig workers work, the more compelled they will be to stick to the industry because they have already invested considerable time into their current work.

Although companies like Uber may attract many workers because of its flexible hours, the ability to cash out at any time, and the independence it offers. The gig economy has led to a decrease in individuality. The rationalization of work and workers losing their calling, and the structural and psychological barriers that make leaving gig work difficult for those who work full time, end up trapping them in an endless cycle of low-skilled, low pay repetitive work that consumes their time and energy, which leads to them not being able to distinguish themselves, and thus decreasing their individuality.

Who am I

Clark Schwartz

Cornerstone for Business Fall 2024 Contest: “Who am I?” – Second Place

Clark Schwartz is a Business Analytics & Information major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. James Mollison. His poem focuses on how a person’s life choices make up who they later become.

I am a thread, winding through the places I've been,
A voice that questions, a silence that listens.
I am neither a name nor merely a title,
But an amalgam of the decisions I have made and unmade.
I am the questions that are asked of me,
The answers I hold.
I hold pieces of everywhere I've been
Every word I've spoken, and every silence I've kept.
I am the truth I live when no one is there to see,
The help I offer when no one asks.
I am the mixture of laughter and loss,
And the resilience of the things I have learned.
I am the hunger of meaning,
And the ache of what I do not know.
I am more than my flaws, more than my strengths, and more that is outside my range,
I am myself.
And I will truly never change.

Who am I

Mauricio Tovar



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2024 Contest: “Who am I?” – Honorable Mention

Mauricio Tovar is a Business Analytics and Information major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. His short story narrates a young man’s encounter with some mysterious creatures who unlock the secrets of the self.

Kevin had just finished a nice dinner with his family, unaware that his life was about to change forever. He lived with them in a two-story mountain cabin with a stunning view of the ocean, where the weather and surroundings were breathtaking. His family loved him deeply, as freely and naturally as a seagull soaring in the open sky. Yet, despite the beauty around him, Kevin felt a lingering emptiness. He seemed to enjoy his life, but true happiness was missing from him. “What is Kevin missing?” his parents wonder daily.

After dinner, Kevin headed upstairs to his room. “Kevin, did you forget to take out the trash?” his mother called, looking down at the overflowing garbage bag in the kitchen. With a sigh, Kevin went down the stairs, grabbed the bag, and stepped out of the cabin toward the outside bin. As he lifted the lid to toss the garbage bag inside, a shadow caught its eye. He froze. Standing nearby was a massive shadowy creature with what appeared to have numerous eyes. Kevin’s soul jumped out of him in fright. The creature seemed to move closer, and Kevin’s heartbeat quickened with each step it took toward him. He was too petrified to move.

As the creature came closer, Kevin finally got a clear look at it. To his surprise, it was not as frightening as he had first thought. For it was a mother raccoon carrying its offspring. Four baby raccoons, alongside the mother, created the illusion of a big creature with multiple eyes. Somehow, Kevin felt a strange understanding between them, so he opened the garbage bag and held it gently. The raccoons quickly tore into the bag and looked for food.

A few seconds later, Kevin was back with some bread. He tore the bread into five pieces and tossed it near the raccoons. The mother raccoon looked straight into Kevin’s eyes, and Kevin looked back. With a locked eye contact, the mother raccoon spoke in a melancholic voice, “Thank you.”

Kevin instantly gasped, feeling as if his entire life flashed before his eyes. “How could this raccoon talk? How can I understand her?” he wondered. Kevin began taking steps backward in disbelief. As he retreated, a strange sensation washed over him, and his mind was flooded with a series of visions. He saw himself as different people and creatures across times and places. In one of his visions, he saw himself as a Mayan in a jungle civilization. In another, he was a shark devouring a crab in the ocean. With each step backward, he found himself in another life. In this one, he was a military strategist in Europe with a nameplate reading “Napoleon Bonaparte.” Each step took him deeper into numerous past lives until he tripped over a rock and landed butt back in the present.

Kevin sat on the ground, dumbfounded. He could not make sense of what had just happened to him. He wondered how he could understand the raccoon’s words and why these memories had appeared. Still in disbelief, Kevin went back to his room. He splashed some water on his face and experienced yet another vision. This time, it was different. He was a raccoon searching for food in a neighborhood dumpster, wishing for a better life. When he, as a raccoon, died, he chose to be reborn as a human. To live in a shelter surrounded by walls and a roof over his head, with warmth and a family.

Slowly, it came to Kevin. All of these visions were memories of his past lives. He had been all those beings he saw: a Mayan, a conqueror, a shark, a raccoon, and more. He realized that he chose all of these lives after the deaths of his prior. He figured that the ability to understand

the raccoon's words was the result of having once lived that life himself. And in his new life, all his past wishes had become true. As a raccoon, he wished to have a better place to live and better food. So, as a raccoon, when he died, he chose to be Kevin. His wish, then, became granted in this present life. Kevin now has a family and a home and is no longer in the constant search for food. At that realization, gratitude filled his heart.

This realization transformed Kevin. He became driven to live with purpose and to make a difference. Now, as a big cardiologist, he dedicates his life to helping others with heart conditions, pursuing himself in his work with a sense of meaning. No longer in his life, he feels dissatisfaction; he has fulfilled his mission of making a positive impact on the world.

I believe we are all a little like Kevin. We often take our lives for granted, unaware that many would wish to be in our shoes. In our rush to achieve something, we sometimes forget to appreciate the simple, meaningful moments along the way. I know this because, like Kevin, I remember my past lives. I have been in good and bad circumstances, and I have lived countless lives. Only have I, in this life, come to understand the power of gratitude and purpose. I have let go of empty desires and embraced the joy of everyday contentment and the pursuit of self-improvement. Every day is a new day to make something of yourself, to make better decisions, and to make smart choices in countless situations that arise throughout the day. In this life, my goal is to be the best version of myself, as I have never been quite healthy in previous lifetimes. My goal is also to build a loving family, where my wife and I can diligently watch our children grow, and live simply and meaningfully in a two-story mountain cabin with an ocean view too.

Who am I? I am the sum of my choices, my purpose, and my journey toward fulfillment. I see myself as a journey, from my prior lives to this one, where I strive to fulfill a deeper purpose. I am the product of what I leave behind and of the goals I set for myself in this life. I am committed to living a life aligned with my purpose and goals and grateful for every step along the way. We are our journey, and the choices we make along the way define us.

Who am I

Philip Chun



Cornerstone for Business Fall 2024 Contest: “Who am I?” – Honorable Mention

Philip Chun is a Finance and Accounting major in the Daniels School of Business. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. His essay considers the limitations of transactional relationships.

Not too long ago, my approach to life could best be described as transactional. I assessed each relationship through a lens of economic value, constantly asking myself a multitude of questions like, “What can this individual provide for me? Could this connection help me land a job?” With every new encounter, I measured potential gains, focusing on how the relationship could compound to benefit me in the future. This mindset is not far-fetched for many people and, in many ways, practical—after all, our society, especially in business related fields, often stresses the importance of strategic networking as essential to career progression. Slowly but surely, I’ve come to realize, there’s an emptiness and incompleteness in living life purely for future benefits and gain. I have shifted my goals ever so slightly, and now, rather than quantifying relationships based on personal gain, I find joy in providing for others and being the positive influence I seek in others.

My initial motive for my way of thinking was driven by a deep desire for financial security and future stability. Not because my family or I ever came across financial difficulty. Strictly because I am a fearful person. Fearful of a future hardship, if I could get one aspect of my life correct, it would be my finances. With money not being an issue, I can allocate time and focus towards other important aspects that are equally important. This short list would include my family and my faith. My main aspiration in life is to be a provider for myself and others. Not only ensuring my own comfort in retirement, but also copiously caring for my future children and setting them up for any opportunity they want to pursue. While the intent behind my thinking is honorable, I now see how this focus on economic gain, even in relationships, gradually distanced me from an equally important goal of the pursuit of moral integrity.

I am a deeply reflective person who seeks daily improvement. I believe there is a perfect equilibrium between my striving for my professional aspirations and a desire for moral integrity and character. I desire to live in a world where my title renders respect but does not define me. I must make sure to not be confused and mix up a desire for success and selfishness. I still aspire to achieve and make an impact in my career, but I no longer believe that my worth is defined by a title or a salary. Instead, I am searching for a balanced life where I can pursue professional aspirations without sacrificing any relationships or anything I hold dear to me. Respect and valor are still paramount for me, but I’d rather they come as secondary results of who I am, not merely the title I hold.

Over time, I’ve realized the importance of cultivating relationships based on respect and appreciation for others’ character, not just their utility. Rather than constantly searching for ways others might serve my goals, I’ve begun to look oppositely, asking myself how I can be a source of support for those around me. This mental shift has transformed how I connect with people. Instead of viewing a relationship as a tool for career advancement, I see each person as a unique entity, someone to appreciate their peculiarity.

This subtle alteration in lifestyle has slowly compounded to build character and an appreciation for others. Instead of spending money on investments or the stock market, I utilize my funds for menial and small acts of kindness like buying food for roommates. These small gestures of helping friends without considering what I might get in return, though they may seem financially irresponsible, are investments in something far more valuable. My

journey from a transactional mindset to a focus on meaningful connection has opened my eyes to the richness of human relationships. I understand now that the most valuable connections in life are those rooted in genuine care. This shift has helped me grow into someone who values character over convenience, integrity over influence, and generosity over gain. As I continue down this path, I find myself becoming a person who is not only striving for professional success but is also deeply committed to becoming a person of virtue—someone who respects others for who they are, not for what they can provide.

8 | Essays: Engaging with the Past and Future

At the end of each semester, all professors teaching Cornerstone for Business are asked to submit outstanding student work for inclusion in *The Exchange*. Here we present three outstanding student essays from Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101. The 101 course lets students experience and confront transformative texts from the ancient world through to the early modern period. Students study these profound works not only to expand their horizons by encountering the past but also to guide their own futures through absorbing some of the greatest ideas ever presented and the most profound considerations of human nature.

The first two essays engage with transformative texts of the past. The third essay presents considerations of our economic future informed by a semester of studying these transformative texts.

Creon's Dilemma

Hamza Qaiser



Hamza Qaiser is a Mechanical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He wrote this essay for Dr. Rhodes Pinto's Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 class. Students read Cicero's *De Officiis* (*On Duties*), Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Sophocles' *Antigone* before being asked to write an essay on the topic: "Cicero and Machiavelli visit Creon to advise him after Antigone has been caught. What advice do they give him? Whose advice should Creon take—why?" Hamza's essay vividly depicts the advice of these two great figures and engagingly argues that Creon should follow Machiavelli's advice.

The clash between divine law and human authority, fate versus free will, and the role of women in society is evident in the conflict that unfolds in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Creon is an obstinate ruler, obsessively focused on power and control; he makes decisions that align with his duty to the state. Cicero and Machiavelli offer conflicting advice at a critical moment after Antigone's capture: Cicero emphasizes justice, mercy, and forgiveness, whilst Machiavelli advises Creon to keep his word by prioritizing the stability of the state above everything else, even if it means resorting to cruelty. Upon closer scrutiny, it is evident that Creon has already been ruling Thebes as if he has read *The Prince* cover to cover, making it inevitable that he chooses Machiavelli's advice: to maintain order through fear and punish anyone who defies the law; his focus on controlling unrest and ensuring unity is perfectly aligned with one of Machiavelli's most stringent pillars of leadership.

Machiavelli adopts a strict, adamant, and direct approach. He argues confidently that it is acceptable for a ruler to be cruel if it means restoring order and keeping the state united. He provides Creon with examples of past rulers who have successfully used cruelty to secure power and stability, stating that "Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; nonetheless, this cruelty of his brought order to Romagna" (Machiavelli, 1532/2008, p. 57). This is a convincing argument since history proves that calculated harshness has been an effective tool in governance. Moreover, he also argues that new princes cannot avoid a reputation for cruelty, "Of all the types of princes, the new prince cannot escape the reputation for cruelty, since new states are full of danger" (Machiavelli, 1532/2008, p. 57). Thus, Creon should not feel guilty, since punishing Antigone means he is looking at the bigger picture. Machiavelli further asserts that when faced with the choice of being feared or loved, it is far safer to be feared: "But since it is difficult to be both together, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved when one of the two must be lacking" (Machiavelli, 1532/2008, p. 58). This choice is due to the inability of both qualities to coexist most of the time. Mercy risks state instability; fear is the more reliable tool to maintain order. This fear ensures that no one dares to break the law, as Antigone has. Creon's choice isn't just stubbornness, rather it's a calculated move to secure power, proving that in leadership, order must come before morality.

Creon listens closely to Machiavelli's suggestions and concurs, recognizing the logic behind them; the principles align with his own beliefs about governance "But if someone breaks rank and spurns the laws... he won't earn my praise. Whatever leader the city appoints has to be obeyed in matters big or small, just or unjust" (Sophocles, ca 442 B.C.E./2023, lines 667–669). If Creon were to revoke his decision to punish Antigone- especially after she committed the extraordinary act of defying his orders publicly- and remain silent, people would see him as a weak ruler, leading to future disobedience and chaos. Hence, Machiavelli urges Creon to remain composed, feign no fear, and be firm in punishing Antigone for her defiance, as backing down would threaten his credibility and control over Thebes.

While Creon stands resolute in his rigid, unyielding stance, Cicero steps in; he is calm, yet full of authority. His approach completely contradicts that of Machiavelli's; he appeals not to power but to humanity. Cicero urges Creon to appreciate that individuals should partake in the general goodwill, striving for personal and societal betterment. He states that true leadership lies in uplifting people rather than ruling through fear "... we are not born for ourselves alone, but our country has a claim in a share of ourselves... we ought to follow

nature as our guide: to contribute to the general good..." (Cicero, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p. 9). Cicero fantasizes about a society where justice and morality guide every decision- a near-utopian haven built on trust, cooperation, and ethical governance. Cicero warns against deception and brute force, unlike Machiavelli who sees power as a game of manipulation. He refers to the same fox and lion analogy that Machiavelli uses to justify ruling cunningly. Machiavelli previously stated: "It is therefore necessary to be a fox, in order to recognize the traps, and a lion, in order to frighten the wolves" (Machiavelli, 1532/2008, p. 60). However, Cicero's interpretation is the polar opposite: "Deceit is the way of the little fox, force that of the lion. Both are wholly unworthy of man, but deceit is the more detestable." (Cicero, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p. 9). He rejects both qualities and insists that justice cannot be upheld through trickery or terror. Instead, he urges Creon to choose mercy, calling on him to respect the sacred funeral rites and grant Polynices the burial he deserves- just like any other human- rather than twisting divine law. Notably, Machiavelli argues that being a lion is the greater flaw in the same passage, whereas Cicero believes that being cunning like a fox is the worse of the two traits. This contrast highlights their fundamentally different views on leadership. Using this ideology, Cicero warns Creon that a ruler who governs through manipulation breeds suspicion among his people- making true loyalty impossible. Creon displays traits of both the lion and the fox in his treatment of Antigone; he rules with brute force, like the lion yet cunningly sidesteps divine law, like the fox. Cicero argues that both approaches are flawed, urging Creon to choose mercy and justice. However, the real battleground between Cicero and Machiavelli lies in their views on fear and love. Where Machiavelli champions fear as a ruler's strongest asset, Cicero scoffs at such a notion: "...who wish to be feared must inevitably be afraid of those whom they intimidate...no high office wields power so great that it can continue for long under the weight of fear". (Cicero, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p. 10). By executing Antigone, Creon would not only take an innocent life but also rob Thebes of a citizen whose strength and conviction could have been channeled for the good of society. To solidify his case, Cicero invokes the wisdom of Antipater, reminding Creon of a leader's fundamental duty "It is your duty to consider the interests of your fellowmen and to serve society." (Cicero, as cited in Pinto, 2025, p. 13). Cicero pleads with Creon to rule with wisdom, to be a leader who embraces his people, not one who is shackled by rigid, inanimate laws that serve no one but his own ego.

Creon should follow Machiavelli's advice because he is already operating within its framework. He rules with absolute authority, perceives mercy as a weakness, and prioritizes order over personal sentiment. A sudden shift toward Cicero's principles (justice, goodwill, and leniency) would undermine his authority and destabilize Thebes. The city has just emerged from civil war; maintaining control is paramount. A ruler in such circumstances cannot afford to appear indecisive or overly compassionate. Creon's own words reinforce this. "I will show them now that I wasn't joking: I'll have her killed" (Sophocles, ca. 442 B.C.E./2023, lines 657-659). This is not the statement of a ruler weighing ethical dilemmas, rather it is a declaration of unwavering authority. Machiavelli argues that fear is a more reliable tool than love, as it prevents disorder and ensures compliance. If Creon were to pardon Antigone, he would set a precedent for defiance, inviting further challenges to his rule. Governance demands stability, and stability often requires difficult decisions. In the grand chess game of

power, Cicero wants Creon to play the benevolent king, but Thebes is no utopia, and Creon is no philosopher-ruler. He's already moved his pieces according to Machiavelli's playbook: ruling with an iron grip, sacrificing sentiment for stability, and ensuring that fear keeps his kingdom in line. A city fresh from civil war demands order, not idealism; Creon understands that leadership is not about pleasing the people but preserving the state. Mercy may be noble, but control is necessary. Thus, with unwavering resolve, he makes his move- not as a tyrant, but as a ruler who knows that in matters of power, hesitation is the first step toward defeat.

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Critiquing Dickens' Critiques: Why Dickens' Hard Times Is Unjust Toward Adam Smith

LiLi Alderink



LiLi Alderink is a Business Analytics & Information Management major in the Daniels School of Business. She wrote this essay for Dr. Rhodes Pinto's Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 class. Students read Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*, as well as selections from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, before being asked to write an essay on the topic: "Does Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* provide a fair critique of the thought of Adam Smith? Why or why not?" LiLi's essay provides a nuanced and attentive reading of both of Smith's works to argue that Dickens does not provide a fair critique.

Before delving into the works of Charles Dickens or Adam Smith, my understanding of Smith was limited to concepts like the invisible hand and self-interest. Dickens challenges both themes in his *Hard Times*, and I agreed with those evaluations at first. However, a re-examination of *Hard Times* after reading Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* changed my opinion of Dickens' novel and Smith's philosophy completely. While Smith is in favor of self-interest in *Wealth of Nations*, his earlier work provides contrasting views on morals and human action and even brings in religion. With Dickens' failure to acknowledge Smith's broader ideology, particularly in oversimplifying Smith's beliefs merely centered around "Fact," I argue that Dickens' representation of Adam Smith in *Hard Times* does not offer a fair critique of Smith's philosophy. While Dickens depicts Smith as a strong advocate for self-interest, primarily drawing from *Wealth of Nations*, he overlooks Smith's sympathetic perspective on self-interest and nuanced portrayal of the invisible hand as demonstrated in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Dickens' portrayal of Adam Smith in *Hard Times* exemplifies a narrow understanding rooted primarily in Smith's *Wealth of Nations*; however, Dickens' critiques gain credibility when viewed solely through this lens. When people think of *Wealth of Nations*, they are most likely thinking of Smith's perspective of self-interest, which says that "by pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it" (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 265), and this includes Dickens. Here, Smith argues that the pursuit of self-interest within a competitive market system can lead to positive outcomes for society, more so than when an individual actively tries to better society. In addition to Smith's perspective on self-interest, another notable aspect of his philosophy in *Wealth of Nations* is his belief in the role of competition in promoting economic prosperity, which can be done through self-interest. As Smith argues, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest" (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 169). Smith emphasizes that individuals pursuing their self-interest in a competitive market environment contribute to the greater good of society. In the context of this quote, we get our dinner not because the butcher, baker, or brewer are kind and want to make it for us, but because they each are pursuing their interests in their respective fields. *Wealth of Nations* repeatedly reinforces the fact that self-interest motivates and keeps society running, so, the system of "Fact" describes Smith perfectly.

In his work, Dickens structures society around "Fact" and "Fancy," with Fact representing Smith's dedication to self-interest and lack of individuality, and Fancy representing compassion, creativity, and sympathy. He introduces this system at the beginning of *Hard Times*, describing the necessity of Fact by emphasizing, "You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them" (Dickens, 1854/2016, p. 7). Quite obviously, Dickens voices his disdain for people solely focused on self-interest by exaggerating this selfish way of living, which he thinks Smith follows. Comparing the philosophy of Fact to Smith's view of self-interest from *Wealth of Nations*, Dickens not only disagrees that self-interest will benefit society but claims that knowing and understanding Fact alone will enable a person to act in self-interest. This is Dickens' main critique – a life of self-interest stems from a life of Fact, or a life devoid of individuality, emotions, or thought. Dickens even suggests wisdom beyond rationality and factual

knowledge as seen in Mr. Gradgrind's hesitant response, "Some persons hold,' [Mr. Gradgrind] pursued, still hesitating, 'that there is wisdom of the Head, and that there is a wisdom of the Heart... I have supposed the Head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient..." (Dickens, 1854/2016, p. 179). Dickens suggests that a life of both Fancy (Heart) and Fact (Head) is how one should live, not just through Fact, which brings misfortune upon each character that follows it. However, this criticism is drawn solely from Smith's thought of self-interest in *Wealth of Nations* and fails to acknowledge Smith's ideas from *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Despite Dickens' critiques in *Hard Times*, a deeper analysis reveals that his argument lacks justification when considering Smith's earlier work, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In this text, Smith articulates a moral philosophy emphasizing selflessness, as seen in his claim that "The wise and virtuous man is at all times willing that his own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order or society" (Smith, 1759/1987, p. 141). This sentiment sharply contrasts Smith's portrayal of self-interest in *Wealth of Nations* and aligns closely with Dickens' critiques. Here, Smith highlights the moral duty to prioritize the collective good over personal gain, opposing the notion of acting solely out of self-interest. Additionally, Dickens' argument that people are inherently inclined to act with sympathy agrees with Smith's view that "However selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him..." (Smith, 1759/1987, p. 65). Smith argues for the existence of innate sympathy, or fellow feeling, which supports Dickens' contention that compassion is inherent in individuals (or Fancy). We see Dickens explore this in Louisa Gradgrind's breakdown upon realization of her innate Fancy. Even in this situation, Dickens and Smith agree that people have this natural sympathy for others regardless of their upbringing. Dickens' arguments against Smith's self-interest are sensible, but they are unjustified as Dickens failed to acknowledge *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and most of his critiques align with Smith's beliefs.

While Dickens predominately engages with ideas from *Wealth of Nations*, a thorough and justified critique of Smith's beliefs requires examining both *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *Wealth of Nations* to encompass the full spectrum of his philosophy. Dickens portrays Smith as a morally grey, selfish figure only focused on promoting self-interest, but both of Smith's works promote sympathy and humanity. *Wealth of Nations* is often interpreted to be centered around self-interest and the invisible hand. Yet, there are many examples of Smith's moral philosophy, such as "No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable" (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 203). Smith further agrees with Dickens that we need sympathy for the poor and to care about others, but this time in *Wealth of Nations*. Some might argue that Smith is contrasting himself with all these different values of self-interest and sympathy in the same book, but I think that each quote is part of a bigger picture. Indeed, Smith said that acting in self-interest would better society, but he does not necessarily mean selfishness. In *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he claims that "The most sacred laws of justice, therefore... are the laws which guard the life and person of our neighbor... and last of all come those which guard what are called his personal rights" (Smith, 1759/1987, p. 94). Smith says we should act in self-interest to better society within reason – he did not condone murder or theft of any kind, and he certainly would not approve of someone

taking advantage of their neighbor. So, while Smith advocated for self-interest as humanity's main motivation, he acknowledged that there are limits to self-interest before it reaches selfishness.

Finally, the concept of the invisible hand, which appears in both of Smith's works, describes the unseen forces of self-interest that drive the market, which many interpret to be consumerism and selfishness. However, Smith's understanding of this concept extends beyond mere economic transactions. In *Wealth of Nations* Smith articulates how individuals, driven by self-interest, unintentionally benefit society: "and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention" (Smith, 1776/1987, p. 265). This interpretation stresses the role of self-interest in fostering societal prosperity. Again, many people, especially Dickens, might mistake this concept of self-interest driving the market as selfishness. Surprisingly, Smith interprets the invisible hand with a more religious significance: "They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessities of life... When Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to be left out in the partition" (Smith, 1759/1987, p. 123). Here, Smith hints that the invisible hand is Providence, implying a divine plan and making a more religious connection. It is entirely possible that Smith also thought of the invisible hand to be the hand of God or something else divine, especially since he thinks "God himself is the administrator and director" of "all sensible and intelligent things" (Smith, 1759/1987, p. 141). In *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith implies that we act in self-interest, which God gives to us. This religious perspective adds depth to Smith's concept of the invisible hand and self-interest, which Dickens does not consider in *Hard Times*.

Dickens' critique of Adam Smith in *Hard Times* initially appears compelling, but a deeper analysis reveals its inadequacy in capturing the completeness of Smith's philosophy. By solely focusing on Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Dickens disregards the morals presented in Smith's earlier work, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This oversight leads to an oversimplified portrayal of Smith as just an advocate for self-interest, which neglects his emphasis on virtues such as compassion and selflessness and instead focuses his philosophy on selfishness rather than self-interest. It is evident that Smith's philosophy transcends to more than self-interest when analyzing both of his works, and instead embraces ethics, emotions, and even religious undertones as reflected in the concept of the invisible hand. At first, Smith's claims about self-interest appear to align with Dickens' "Fact" based society, but *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and even some aspects of *Wealth of Nations* contradict the emotionless, rigorous culture Dickens describes. To completely understand and critique Smith's philosophy, a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of both of his works is needed, which Dickens failed to provide in *Hard Times*.

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Universal Basic Income and Enhanced Unemployment Benefits: Impacts on Productivity and Socioeconomic Inequality

Harish Venkatasubramanian



Harish Venkatasubramanian is a Mechanical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He took Dr. David Riesbeck's Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 class, in which students complete a research paper on a contemporary question or problem of interest to them that is subject to debate among scholars. His essay examines Universal Basic Income and robust unemployment benefit programs as a means of addressing economic inequality and insecurity. Considering arguments for and against these programs, Harish's essay reaches nuanced conclusions that encourage further investigation and careful attention to the details of implementation.

Introduction

In recent decades, economic inequality has grown substantially across developed nations, prompting renewed interest in benefit programs designed to provide financial security to citizens regardless of employment status. As automation, technology, and rising market tensions of various forms transform labor markets and income inequality rises in many developed nations, policymakers and economists increasingly consider various approaches to economic security. Universal Basic Income (UBI) and enhanced unemployment benefits represent two prominent policies that have garnered significant attention in recent years. UBI typically provides regular cash payments to all citizens or residents regardless of employment status (Peters), while unemployment benefits offer more generous temporary support to those between jobs. Both approaches raise important questions about their effects on productivity and socioeconomic equality whilst attempting to keep citizens financially afloat.

This paper examines whether benefit programs such as Universal Basic Income and heightened unemployment benefits help or harm productivity and socioeconomic equality. Drawing on scholarly research from economics, philosophy, and policy studies, I will analyze competing perspectives on this complex question that has infungible aspects to evaluate. By examining empirical evidence and theoretical arguments from multiple viewpoints, this analysis aims to provide a balanced assessment of how unconditional cash transfers might affect both economic outcomes and broader social well-being.

Theoretical Frameworks and Evidence

Economic Liberty and Productivity Arguments

One theoretical framework supporting unconditional cash transfers emphasizes their potential to enhance economic liberty and, consequently, productivity. Philippe Van Parijs argues in his work that providing a basic income enhances individual freedom, allowing people to pursue more meaningful and productive work. This perspective suggests that UBI could eliminate poverty traps created by means-tested benefits that effectively tax additional earnings at high rates, potentially increasing rather than reducing economic contribution.

van Parijs and Vanderborght write that basic income “avoids or at least softens considerably... deep poverty trap” (van Parijs and Vanderborght 165). This framework posits that when individuals have economic security, they may make better long-term decisions about education, entrepreneurship, and career development—investments that could enhance overall productivity despite possible short-term reductions in labor supply.

However, critics question whether greater economic liberty necessarily translates to improved productivity. Charles Murray, while supporting concepts à la UBI, acknowledges the possibility that “people who know that a net is below them do reckless things that they wouldn’t do otherwise” (Murray 108). This highlights a fundamental tension in evaluating these programs: they may simultaneously liberate some individuals to be more productive while enabling others to reduce their economic contributions.

The theoretical debate thus centers not only on whether people will work less under unconditional benefits, but whether the nature and quality of work might fundamentally change—potentially for better or worse depending on one's perspective on what constitutes a valuable contribution to society.

Empirical Evidence on Labor Market Effects

Empirical research on how unconditional cash transfers affect productivity provides mixed results. Marinescu's comprehensive review of unconditional cash transfer programs in the United States found little to no reductions in labor supply, with recipients primarily taking up more part-time work (Marinescu 18). This suggests that UBI might lead to a reallocation of time rather than labor market exit, with Marinescu's research pointing to the same.

The Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, which provides annual payments to all residents, offers valuable insights as one of the longest-running programs resembling UBI. Jones and Marinescu found that while employment remained stable following dividend payments, there was an increase in part-time employment, suggesting complex effects on labor markets rather than simple reductions in work effort (Jones and Marinescu 328).

Studies of increased unemployment benefits present similarly nuanced findings. Card and Levine found that a 13-week extension of unemployment benefits in New Jersey led to an increase in average unemployment duration as more people took advantage of extended regular benefits, with “the percentage of respondents that exhausted their regular benefits climbed 0.8 points in response to NJEB” (Card and Levine 124). This suggests some effect on work incentives, though relatively modest compared to theoretical predictions of significant labor supply reductions.

A more recent analysis by Farber and Valletta indicates that unemployment benefit extensions primarily affect the long-term unemployed and operate through reducing labor force exits rather than reducing job finding rates (Farber and Valletta 16). This nuanced finding suggests that higher benefits may provide crucial support for vulnerable workers without substantially reducing overall labor market efficiency.

Implementation Challenges and Fiscal Considerations

Research by Flassbeck and colleagues highlights practical implementation challenges that might affect how these programs influence productivity and equality. Their analysis emphasizes fiscal sustainability concerns, noting that universal programs at meaningful benefit levels would require substantial tax increases or spending reductions in other areas and that “basic incomes would be insufficient for a decent living” (Flassbeck et al.). These fiscal pressures could potentially generate economic inefficiencies that offset productivity gains from increasing citizens' economic security.

The authors note from their analysis of Finland's implementation efforts that there are “winners and the losers in these models”, with heightened effects on low income groups and

participation of vulnerable groups such as single parents when switching from the current participation tax model (Flassbeck et al.). This redistribution might actually increase inequality if universal benefits prove less generous than current targeted support for the most vulnerable populations. Their analysis suggests that financing mechanisms significantly influence whether these programs enhance or diminish socioeconomic equality.

Perspectives on Socioeconomic Equality and Behavior

Distributional Effects and Poverty

One clear potential benefit of both UBI and enhanced unemployment benefits is their ability to reduce poverty by providing income floors below which no individual can fall. Research by Banerjee and colleagues analyzing evidence from cash transfer programs across multiple countries found consistent reductions in poverty metrics following implementation (Banerjee et al.). This effect appears robust across various program designs and economic contexts.

These poverty reduction effects could have broader implications for productivity through what economists call "scarcity mindsets". Mullainathan and Shafir demonstrate how financial insecurity itself impairs cognitive function by consuming mental bandwidth with immediate survival concerns (Mullainathan and Shafir 123). By alleviating this cognitive burden, unconditional benefits might improve decision-making quality and future orientation even if they modestly reduce work hours in some contexts.

The impact of unconditional cash transfers on broader inequality measures depends significantly on program design and financing mechanisms. van Parijs and Vanderborght argue that progressively funded UBI programs could substantially reduce wealth inequality by redistributing from the highest earners to provide universal benefits (van Parijs and Vanderborght 243).

However, Flassbeck cautions that UBI programs funded through regressive means or that replace other targeted social programs could potentially exacerbate inequality (Flassbeck). This highlights the importance of considering both the benefit and financing sides of such programs when evaluating their impact on socioeconomic equality.

Research by Gentilini and colleagues for the World Bank presents evidence that universal programs often benefit middle-income groups more than the poorest segments of society, potentially limiting their effectiveness at reducing inequality compared to well-designed targeted programs (Gentilini et al. 12). This suggests that universality alone does not guarantee greater equality; program specifics matter significantly.

Behavior Insights and Work Motivation

Traditional economic analyses often assume that humans respond predictably to financial incentives, reducing work as non-wage income increases. However, research in behavioral economics and psychology reveals more complex patterns in how economic security affects human behavior and decision-making.

Self-determination theory, as explained by psychologists Deci and Ryan, distinguishes between extrinsic motivation (working for external rewards or to avoid punishment) and intrinsic motivation (working because the activity itself is meaningful or satisfying) (Deci and Ryan 233). Their research demonstrates that intrinsic motivation typically produces higher quality work, greater persistence, and more creativity than extrinsic pressure.

This framework suggests that by reducing economic coercion, unconditional benefits might actually enhance the quality of work motivation even if they modestly reduce quantity in some contexts. The Finnish UBI experiment provides some support for this perspective, with recipients reporting improved well-being and reduced stress while maintaining similar employment levels to the control group (Kangas et al. 156). However, it is important to note that cultural norms and values regarding work and contribution significantly influence how individuals respond to economic security. The effects of unconditional benefits on work behavior might evolve over time as social norms adapt to new economic arrangements.

Critical Analysis and Evaluation

The evidence and theoretical perspectives reviewed above reveal that unconditional cash transfers have complex and sometimes counterintuitive effects on productivity and socioeconomic equality. Rather than uniformly helping or harming these outcomes, their impacts depend significantly on specific program designs, implementation contexts, and the metrics used to evaluate success.

Regarding productivity effects, the empirical evidence suggests more modest impacts on labor supply than either strong proponents or critics typically claim. While some reduction in work hours appears possible, there is little evidence of widespread withdrawal from productive activity. Moreover, these direct labor supply effects may be offset by improvements in job matching, human capital development, and reduced economic distress—factors that potentially enhance productivity through channels not captured by simple hours-worked metrics.

The relationship between unconditional cash transfers and socioeconomic equality appears more straightforward but still depends critically on program specifics. When adequately funded and designed to complement rather than replace targeted supports for the most vulnerable, these programs can effectively reduce poverty and compress income distributions. However, poorly designed implementations could exacerbate inequality by diverting resources from those with the greatest needs or creating regressive financing burdens. The tension between universality and targeting represents a central tradeoff in program design. Universal programs avoid stigma and bureaucratic complexity while ensuring complete coverage, but may provide less assistance to those most in need compared to well-targeted alternatives.

Perhaps most importantly, the research reveals that evaluating these programs requires clarifying which forms of productivity and equality we value most. If productivity is defined narrowly as market labor supply, unconditional benefits may indeed show modest negative effects. However, if we include human capital development, caregiving, community service,

and other forms of social contribution in our conception of productivity, the calculus changes substantially.

Conclusion

This examination of Universal Basic Income and enhanced unemployment benefits reveals that their relationship to productivity and socioeconomic equality is nuanced and context-dependent. The empirical evidence suggests that unconditional cash transfers can effectively reduce poverty and provide economic security without generating the large-scale work disincentives that critics fear. At the same time, their effects fall short of the transformative predictions made by their strongest advocates.

The most reasonable conclusion is that these programs represent potentially valuable tools within broader policy frameworks rather than simple solutions to complex socioeconomic challenges. Their effectiveness depends critically on specific design features, including benefit levels, financing mechanisms, and integration with existing social and economic systems.

As societies continue to face disruptions from technological change, globalization, and economic shocks, unconditional income support merits serious consideration as one approach to balancing economic dynamism with social solidarity. However, implementation should proceed with careful attention to empirical evidence, recognition of contextual factors, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that these programs achieve their intended goals without generating unintended consequences for either productivity or equality.

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9 | Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest

“Prosperity”

Cornerstone for Business contests ask students to create original essays, short stories, poetry, artwork, or other creative content inspired by the transformative texts they read in SCLA 101 and 102 based on a different theme each semester. The contests are open to all students currently enrolled in SCLA 101 and 102 and are judged by a committee of Cornerstone faculty.

The theme of the Spring 2025 contest was “prosperity”: Everyone wants prosperity, but what does it look like? What does prosperity mean for an individual, a community, a business, a nation, or the world? How can we put ourselves in the best position to prosper? What does our own prosperity have to do with others’ prosperity? Do we operate with mistaken assumptions about prosperity? Are there barriers to prosperity that people fail to appreciate or keys to prosperity that we should appreciate more? Why, ultimately, does prosperity matter?

Note that the artworks of our two second place winners for this contest, Abhipsa Prajapati and Ayush Singh, respectively grace the front and rear covers of this issue.

Short Film on Prosperity

Annelise Hiner



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest: “Prosperity” – First Place

Annelise Hiner is a double major in Aviation Management (Polytechnic Institute) and Finance (Daniels School of Business). She took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 102 with Dr. Troy Seagraves. Her short film relates prosperity to peace, with contributions from Marx, Weber, Kafka, and Keynes.

Annelise’s film may be viewed by following this link: <https://tinyurl.com/HinerC4B>
or by scanning the following QR Code:



What is Prosperity but a Balance, Unseen

Hamza Qaiser



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest: “Prosperity” – Honorable Mention

Hamza Qaiser is a Mechanical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. His poem, inspired by Plato’s *Republic*, is a provocative footnote to Plato.

What is prosperity but a balance, unseen,
A dance of justice, where all must convene?
Plato spoke of a city, so pure, so just,
Where each man's work was his noble trust.
To prosper, he said, is not to rise high,
But to live true to the work you define.

For prosperity's roots are not in gold,
But in knowing your place, in a story untold.
It's the weaver who weaves, and the builder who builds,
In doing one's work, the soul is fulfilled.
So why do we chase what others have sought?
When prosperity is found in the work we've been taught?

But we are blinded, often, by wealth's gleam,
Mistaking it for what we've been taught to deem.
Yet prosperity lives in the work we embrace,
In giving, in building, in finding our space.
For when one prospers alone, others may fall,
But true prosperity is in justice for all.

The Value of a Move

Maina Yedla



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest: “Prosperity” – Honorable Mention

Maina Yedla is a Finance major in the Daniels School of Business. She took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Zachary Goldsmith. Her short story recounts an illuminating game of chess.

Every morning, as dawn broke over a slowly waking New York City, he was already there. Shops were still flipping their 'Open' signs, and pigeons strutted around like they paid rent, claiming every empty bench. A worn wool coat, a cane that clicked in perfect rhythm, each step like clockwork, and an intricate black leather chess set tucked under his left arm.

His name remained a mystery. Some called him "Mr. T", others just "Chessman". But his presence was a constant at the south end of Central Park, where the chess tables stood like silent invitations. By 7 a.m., he had positioned the pieces where they belong, ready to begin, even with no opponent in sight.

To most he was nothing more than a ghost of a time long past. But if you happened to sit across from him and glance up long enough to meet his eyes, something shifted. He had a way of talking between moves—questions, anecdotes, riddles—all wrapped in the language of bishops and knights. Chess was just the starting point to segue into something more introspective, though never entirely defined.

One gloomy Thursday, a young student named Iris sat down across from him. She looked tense, unsure of why she'd even stopped. Worn down by responsibility, the weight of tuition, and the anxiety of a struggling economy.

He moved a pawn two squares forward and said, "Everybody wants to win. But most don't even know what game they're playing."

Iris, caught off guard by this statement expresses her worries, "I just want to make enough money to live."

"That's fair," he said quietly, making his next move. "But 'enough'—is that a number, or a feeling?"

She didn't know how to answer.

In the weeks that followed, Iris kept coming back to that board. And she wasn't the only one. He played with everyone, from school kids and retired professors to the unemployed and CEOs. And with each game, he offered a different idea of prosperity.

To the single mother, he said: "Your strength is prosperity. Raising someone who feels safe and heard—that is real wealth."

To the teenage boy who confessed to stealing lunch: "Hunger isn't always about food. Sometimes it's the emptiness that comes from feeling like you don't belong."

To the business executive: "A business doesn't grow by taking. It grows when it gives others a reason to grow with it."

And always, between checkmates and quiet laughter, he returned to the same reminder: "Prosperity isn't a reward. It's a shared flow. It's a pattern that unfolds over time. Like chess, what's the point of a great move if your opponent has no pieces left?"

The city moved on around him. Towers rose, shops closed, protests filled the streets, and then emptied. But Mr. T remained.

One day, the regulars noticed he hadn't shown up. The next day, still nothing. A week passed, still nothing.

Then someone found an envelope beneath the table where he always played. Inside was a letter.

"To those who've spent hours playing and listening:

You've already begun to see it. Prosperity isn't about keeping. It's about sharing. It's not measured in money, but in the well-being of you and those around you. A community thrives when we recognize that we are all connected, not separate.

The barriers? Greed. Fear. The lie that success is a solo mission. The answer? Curiosity. Empathy. Collaboration.

Why does prosperity matter?

Because without it, we're merely surviving, rather than living. But with it, even sitting on a rainy park bench feels like something special.

Now, go make your next move count."

Iris folded the letter with a smile. Around her, people began setting up chess boards. Soon, the park filled with laughter, conversation, and stories traded across tables.

Prosperity had never left. It had simply taken a new form.

Luminous Beings, Are We

Harish Venkatasubramanian



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest: “Prosperity” – Editors’ Choice

Harish Venkatasubramanian is a Mechanical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. David Riesbeck. His poem powerfully weaves the bucolic together with science fiction.

Live long.

The crossroads of want and having,
The weight of contemplation,
Full against the shadow of absence

Prosperity,
The gleam of gold?
Or a quality more elusive?

The oak grows tall
Not through hoarding sunlight.
Transformation, creating shelter for countless smaller lives.
Wisdom in quiet generosity,
This willingness to become a world for others.

Prosperity hides in unexpected corners.
In the patient hands of the gardener
Tending soil that will outlive her,
In the scholar's patient pursuit of questions
That may never yield answers.

Time renders our monuments to wealth as dust.
Sometimes, we pick up the pickaxe ourselves.
The grandest palaces crumble,
The largest sculptures are prone to erosion.

Ideas persist.
True abundance lies not in accumulation.
It is imbued in the resilience of what we've scattered,
Seeds carried by winds we'll never witness.

Water, held with greed, slinks away;
Channelized, nourishes everything in its path.

Open your eyes,
Gaze up and around, observing keenly.

Economies,
Not of wealth, but of humanity.
Bonds that are worth their weight
In a material more luminous than any discovered.

A prosperous mind reaches beyond the immediate,
Sees itself as a moment in a longer story.
Not the harvester alone, but also the planter
The preserver of possibility for those whose faces we will never see.

The sun sets every day,
Just as one day, it sets on us, abruptly or as gradual as ripples on a pond.
Life is a Hydra, fickle, wondrous, weird, gorgeous, and ugly concurrently.

When the final accounting comes,
Will we measure our prosperity by what we've gathered or by what we've given?
By how much we've changed or by how much we've allowed others to transform?

The Will and the Word are not just sorcery.
They are manifestations of your desire,
Your drive creating the very fabric of fate.

The power vested in you is immortal.
Your actions survive well beyond your physical body,
Blending into the tapestry of history.

The truest wealth may be this moment of awareness:
Standing at the edge of all we do not know,
Gazing into the vastness of what might be,
Still finding the courage to plant something beautiful.

Nature, humanity, and its machinations,
The beauty of the mortals and our ideations.
Enrich the world's wonder,
Make it a little more picturesque.

Prosper.

Raising Cities on Flimsy Grounds

Ria Singh



Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest: “Prosperity” – Editors’ Choice

Ria Singh is Business Analytics & Information Management major in the Daniels School of Business. She took Cornerstone for Business SCLA 101 with Dr. Rhodes Pinto. Her poem explores the dynamics of prosperity and progress through the image of the city.

Always reaching beyond our means
hoping to one day reach the sky
as the ground below us shakes in fear
breaking, dividing, collapsing

Our wealth and prosperity pile up high
but the burden of them weakens the earth
making it harder for those below us to stand
making it harder to see our damage

The ones in the towers reach higher
while the ones on the streets grow bitter
lifeless eyes staring up at the sky
forgotten, ignored under the lights

A city posing greatness and prosperity to all
relying on an unstable foundation
every step of progress is a risk
that someone else will fall under

So we just build and build
not noticing our ground slowly caving in
until our towers start to sink under
and our bright ideas fade to dust

Prosper (Rear Cover Artwork and Poem)

Ayush Singh

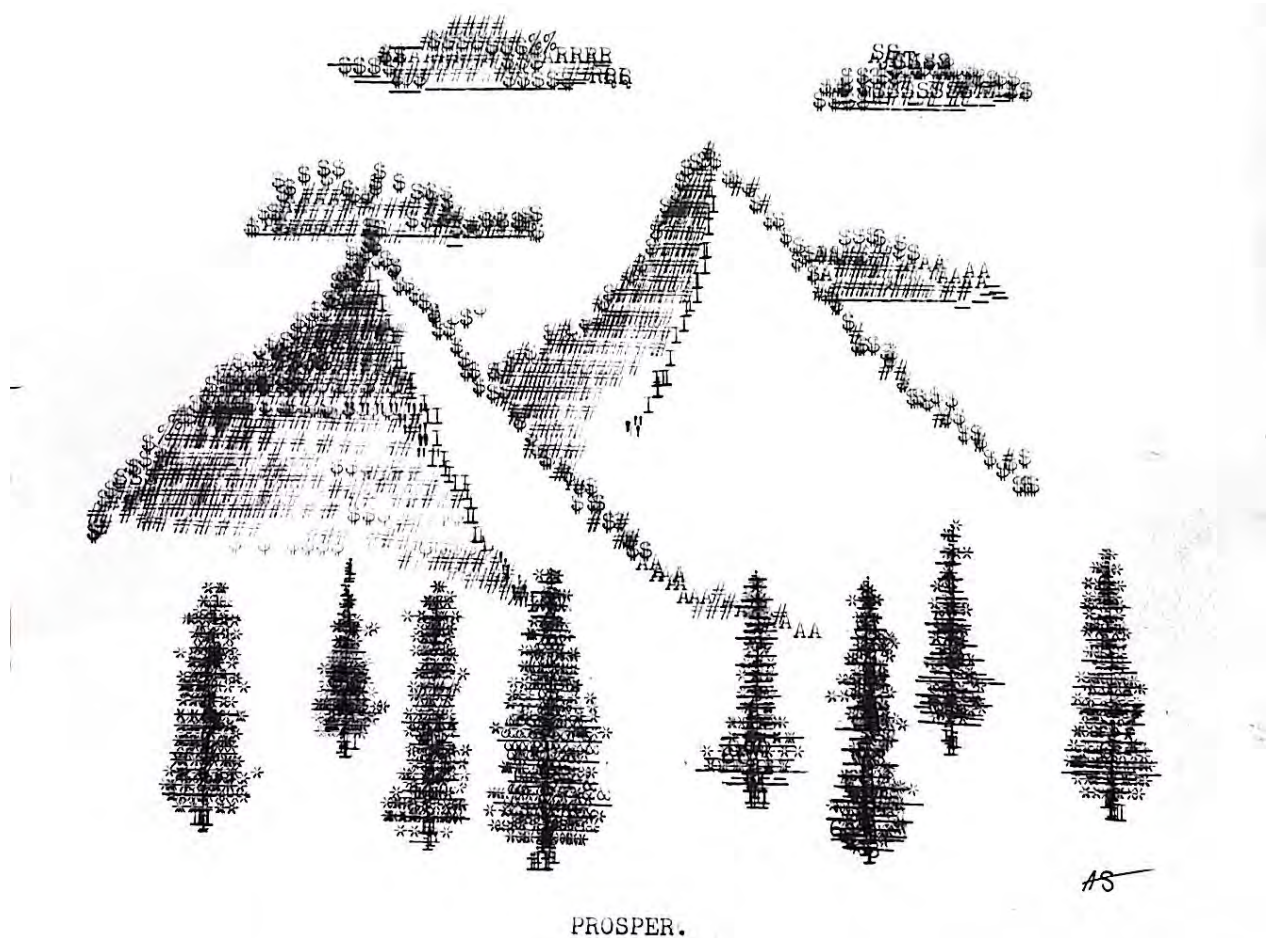


Cornerstone for Business Spring 2025 Contest: “Prosperity” – Second Place

Gracing the rear cover is an artwork and poem by Ayush Singh, a Mechanical Engineering major in the College of Engineering. He took Cornerstone SCLA 101 with Dr. Brandon Rdzak. His image, using a once cutting edge but now obsolete typewriter, is a testament to human innovation and progress.

On his creation, he writes: “Creating this piece, I drew inspiration from the two images of prosperity that I found existed in my mind. I drew a typical natural landscape through the use of a typewriter to embed this vision of nature with the presence of technology. There is a conventional definition of prosperity that I see closely associated with a flourishing, natural state of being. But there is also prosperity tied with progress and wealth. These two definitions are akin to the two cities envisioned by Plato, and I wanted to create a piece that put them both together. I typed this image on an 85 year old Remington Noiseless, a piece of machinery that has now outlived its designers and most of its users. It is a representation of the human spirit, and perhaps of our conquest over nature. By making something natural using a machine that is a testament to human innovation and progress – and perhaps a symbol of the disaster our prosperity has brought – I hoped that these two views would be juxtaposed and call into question the definition and consequences of prosperity.”

The Exchange: *Art, Business, & Literature*



PROSPER.

Show me these mountains, this air, the dirt, the breeze,
Wish me my tainted flesh, my ignorant penance,
Grant me a visage of embers and tongue of steel,

Mar mothers face with these words,
From here we came
From her, we will *prosper*.

CORNERSTONE
INTEGRATED LIBERAL ARTS