

AN EXAMINATION OF THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF MEANINGFUL WORK:
MORAL CARTOONISTS, PUBLIC MERCY AND JIHADIST TERRORISM

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Meaningful Work as a Requirement for a Well Lived Life: a Thematic introduction

Humans' relationship with work is complicated, to put it mildly. People being overworked in jobs they loathe has become the reality for far too many. Consequently, it should not be surprising that according to Kieran Allen, senior lecturer of Sociology at the University College of Dublin, “Americans are between three and ten times more likely to suffer from depression today than in the 1950’s.”¹ It goes without saying that the reasons for this increase in depression are multifaceted, but our relationship with work plays a major role in this reality. If work is viewed as a chore, as dreadful, as mundane and something completely outside our control, it will without a doubt have a negative impact on our mental health. Adina Schwartz writes in *Meaningful Work* that, “mental health is poorer among factory workers as we move from skilled, responsible, varied types of work to jobs lower in those respects.’ By far the most influential attribute is the opportunity the work offers-or fails to offer- for use of the worker’s abilities.”² Simply put, the less meaning workers see in their work, the larger the negative effect on the worker.

This concept is nothing new, but is certainly worth revisiting as our working relationships are constantly evolving. Aristotle devoted a great deal of contemplation to our relationship with work and according to David Charles and Dominic Scott Aristotle, “states that the human good (or human well-being) is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. . . . the human good is the activity of the soul in accordance with the best and most goal-like of them. He says in N.E.X. [*Nicomachean Ethics*] that the best of our virtues is that exercised when we contemplate.”³ Aristotle makes the connection early that meaningful work is a virtue. Contemplation,

¹ Allen, *Marx: The Alternative to Capitalism*, 35.

² Schwartz, *Meaningful Work*, 638.

³ David Charles “Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation,” 205.

intellectual investment and engagement and overall well-being are connected to his idea of meaningful work. Humans all need this feeling of being valued, both internally and externally. The idea of “meaningfulness is a fundamental human need because it identifies and satisfies what is of profound importance for living a human kind of life.”⁴ This need must be addressed by the work that humans freely enter into. Our lives have as much meaning as we create. Meaning is not given, nor found. It is innate, it is developed and cultivated through our very human experience. Therefore, without meaning in our lives we are lacking a very fundamental human need. One of the most common ways to create meaning is through the work that we do. We must embrace the idea that work is something significantly more important than just *work*.

“Sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues distinguished three conceptions of work-as a job, a career, and a calling.”⁵ For the purposes of this discourse we will strive to understand that there are significant distinctions between a job, a career and a calling. A calling meets the criteria for meaningful work. The career may check some of the boxes for meaningful work, but a job will undoubtedly fall short. A job frankly only serves as a means to make financial gains. A career may involve some upward movement and fulfillment but ultimately is not truly part of someone’s inner most identity. Meaningful work is necessary for true human flourishing. In order to fully understand this concept, we must address the critical components of meaningful work, what fails to be meaningful work and the ultimate benefits of engaging in meaningful work.

To debate the merits of meaningful work's impact on our lives it is extremely important to fully understand the concept of meaningful work. It is imperative to recognize that meaningful work differs greatly between individuals. Some may find the work of a police officer to be completely rewarding and meaningful, yet others may feel constrained by the bureaucratic

⁴ Yeoman, “Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need,” 241.

⁵ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 24.

influence and growing tensions within the profession. The same can be said for education, middle management and even laborious jobs. Ron Beadle and Kelvin Knight note in *Virtue and Meaningful Work* that workers even differ greatly in their responses to intrinsic versus extrinsic goods derived from “meaningful work.”⁶ Some people may respond well to the financial reward of work, whereas others are more motivated by the sheer interval value of doing a good job. Regardless of this distinction it is important to recognize that work is a uniquely human experience. Ruth Yeoman explains the complicated juxtaposition that work creates for humans well, “Working is about the search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.”⁷ What we as humans gain from work is complex. Most of us need financial rewards to survive in a capitalist society, but there is so much more to our relationship with work than cashing a check on a Friday afternoon. Instead of thinking of work as something we have to do, we should start thinking of it as a concept, as something that is central to who we are and how we flourish.

A critic may attempt to argue that beasts of burden engage in work on a daily basis, however they do not have the same cognitive abilities as humans do. For humans there is a much greater variety of meaning for work than simply engaging in physical labor. “Work has a range of possible meanings. For Aristotelians, it can equate to Aristotle’s *ergon*, or the function, task or work of a human. If so, work should be inherently meaningful because it is a characteristically human activity in which human beings can find fulfillment and completion.”⁸ The key component of this understanding of work is the sense of fulfillment and completion. The added

⁶ Beadle, “Virtue and Meaningful Work,” 433.

⁷ Yeoman, “Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need,” 235.

⁸ Beadle, “Virtue and Meaningful Work,” 434.

sense of purpose to work makes it meaningful and essential for flourishing. However, this cannot simply just be work for the sake of work. According to Aristotle there must be an element of contemplation. He has argued that the perfect human good is intellectual contemplation.⁹ For work to be meaningful we must thus be intellectually engaged. Whether that is because of the process or the purpose, there must be a level of intellectual engagement to fulfill the idea that specific work is meaningful. Aristotle's appreciation for this intellectual engagement has been summarized as, "Intellectual contemplation is so far better than any other activity that even the most insignificant amount of contemplation is always better than the greatest acts of all other kinds of virtue."¹⁰ Aristotle focused on what it would mean to live a life well lived. Therefore, we can deduce that without work full of intellectual contemplation, one cannot live in the most excellent way. Contemporary philosopher Daniel Haybron argues that when we fulfill our potential we experience pleasure and if we are not doing that then we are not truly flourishing.¹¹ Without a sense of accomplishment from work, very few individuals are able to find that sense of accomplishment and therefore not able to flourish. The key takeaway from the Aristotelian viewpoint is not of the emphasis on being virtue, but the means in which that virtuous work leads to *ergon*. Without meaningful work we cannot truly be flourishing. Sure, we may be able to have enjoyment, bouts of happiness and several other virtues. But to lead a life well lived and truly flourish, humans must have autonomous, complex, dignifying work to elevate their selfhood and their reputation.

Many philosophers have defined meaningful work in their own ways. Throughout the literature there are countless definitions to help attempt to understand exactly what meaningful

⁹ Charles, "Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation," 207.

¹⁰ Charles, "Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation," 219.

¹¹ Lobel, *Philosophies of Happiness: A Comparative Introduction to the Flourishing Life*, 13.

work is in order to get closer to achieving it. Yeoman has developed a great definition of meaningful work in that it, “is a fundamental human need because it satisfies our inescapable interest in being able to experience the constitutive values of autonomy, freedom and dignity.”¹²

Norman Bowie, takes a more Kantian approach in his *A Kantian Theory of Meaningful Work*, where he claims that

Meaningful work is work that is freely entered into, that allows the worker to exercise her autonomy and independence, that enables the worker to develop her rational capacities, that provides a wage sufficient for physical welfare, that supports the moral development of employees and that is not paternalistic in the sense of interfering with the worker’s conception of how she wishes to obtain happiness.¹³

While both Bowie and Yeoman do a good job of creating serviceable definitions of meaningful work, neither definition truly addresses the holistic nature of meaningful work thus for the purposes of this argument meaningful work should be defined as follows. Meaningful work is work that fulfills three major components of worker autonomy, has an element of complexity and instills a sense of pride or dignity from completing the work.

The first major factor of meaningful work is worker autonomy. This does not mean that workers get to make every decision that pertains to their work. Instead it means that workers must be free to make independent decisions that influence their work. Autonomy involves the “ability to form one's own plans and purposes and . . . exercise those capacities throughout all aspects of one's own life.”¹⁴ The same decision-making processes that are used at work carry over to the leisure activities humans engage in as well. The element of autonomy within meaningful work has become even more significant in a post industrialized society. The idea that the assembly line worker engages in meaningful work is just simply incorrect. Even Marx

¹² Yeoman, “Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need,” 236.

¹³ Bowie, “A Kantian Theory of Meaningful Work,” 1087.

¹⁴ Yeoman, “Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need,” 238.

advocates for the workers to break free from their chains and revolt to earn autonomy and a say in the production process. Again Kieran Allen adds valuable insight into the problems with the Marxist view of labor.

This leads to the crux of Marx's understanding of the human species. In order to be fully human, we need to participate in a free and active way in changing the world around us. We need to recognize ourselves in the world we have made, and come to know ourselves through the eyes of other human beings with whom we cooperate. This imperative is barely captured by the word 'production' because this has been so distorted by our experiences under capitalism. A claim that 'production' is central to humanity will sound as if you are advocating a labour camp with the worlds 'Work will set you free' emblazoned over the entrance's gates.¹⁵

Allen's words highlight the extreme importance of autonomy. Humans must be free to engage in the world around them and value what they are producing, without that factor work may resemble the horrors of a prison labor camp. Marx's beliefs on the influence of capitalism on work alienation are critical to understanding the consequences of not having meaningful work. He argues that having a commodified system promotes the idea that we are only working our labor. We lose sight of ourselves in the production and the products. This became abundantly clear with the work of the industrial revolution and Marx lacks the second critical component of meaningful work; complexity.

Complexity is a pillar of meaningful work as it requires the full engagement of the worker, thus making the work that is being done purposeful. This does not mean that the work is specifically hard, but instead that it allows the worker a sense of accomplishment due to the work having "substance, requiring thought and independent judgement."¹⁶ When first considering the complexity of work it is easy to think of an extremely difficult product to build, problem to solve or manage the issue at hand. And although the type of work is vastly different in the 21st century compared to the 18th or 19th, the element of craftsmanship and pride in one's work has been

¹⁵ Allen, *Marx: The Alternative to Capitalism*, 42.

¹⁶ Yeoman, "Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need," 239.

consistent throughout. Rousseau advocated “in his book *Emile*, which is a kind of handbook on how to educate youth for the world he foresaw as imminent, Rousseau warns that one ought not count on any favored status in society because all this may change. Everyone, accordingly, even those in the aristocracy, ought to learn a craft.”¹⁷ The act of creating something whether it be an elegant piece of prose, legal manuscript, historical lesson or even building a house gives the worker a sense of personal fulfillment from the act of creation. It is not easy to do any of those things well. Consequently meaningful work must have an element of complexity to it. Granted as one engages in the same type of complex work over an extended period of time, that work will become less and less complex. Meaningful work should have an element of growth and innovation to it. What was once complex will not always be. The work must provide new challenges, whether it be from the drive of the individual or the demands of the field. Consider a teacher who is willing to try new instructional strategies in her twenty-fifth year of teaching, or the coach that is willing to rewrite his entire offense because of the types of players on his team that year. The element of complexity must evolve with the work. Thus, meaningful work is a part of a long complex process that delivers the worker a feeling of accomplishment, pride and a life well lived.

Drawing from personal experience, when my job became more complex, it became significantly more rewarding. Simply teaching the same class and subject matter all day was painstakingly repetitive. However now teaching four different subjects throughout the day delivers an experience of autonomous decision making on a daily basis from subject to subject while allowing myself to intellectually engage in a variety of different topics and tasks throughout the day. Therefore, my current job is checking two of the three major components of

¹⁷ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 73.

meaningful work. The final requirement of meaningful work is the sense of pride or dignity one derives from the work itself.

Skeptics may point out that as workers become more familiar with their professions the work may deliver diminishing returns of pride. While this point may have some truth and merit, meaningful work does not have to give the worker pride and dignity every time they engage in the work. However, as a whole the worker should be proud to be doing the work. Just as doctors are proud of the lifesaving or healing work they are doing, it is not every day that a doctor saves a life or makes a major breakthrough, but every day is part of the process to get to those points. On the same scale it is not every day that a teacher hears about the difference they have made in a student's life or even that they are able to witness tangible growth. But on a larger scale, the moments of producing dignity and pride are present and significantly matter to leading a well lived life. This concept seems to be a bit lost on the managerial side of this equation. Bosses and managers tend to overlook the importance of pride from the craftsmanship of the work that their workers engage in. "Yet in a survey reported by David J. Cherrington 86.6% of respondents identified the most desirable work outcome to be "feeling pride and craftsmanship in your work."¹⁸ The concept of having your workers engage in meaningful work not only brings positive results in the work that they produce, but also for their mental health in the long run.

Management must place a greater emphasis on their conscious effort to consider whether their workers find the work they are doing to be truly meaningful. Since the 16th century, many western nations have in many ways relied on the protestant work ethic to promote a steadfast devotion to one's work, even if it was not the most meaningful. However, that reality is shifting, "unbounded dedication to one's job, once taken for granted, is now likely to be thought of not as

¹⁸ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 71.

a virtue but as a disease called workaholism. So workaholic excess is becoming more difficult to require of people.”¹⁹ For evidence of this change look no further than this graduate program which offered a course on the relationship between work and leisure of Americans that focused primarily on how overworked the majority of us are. One logical conclusion for this shift could be the increasing education levels of our current workforce. The novel idea of showing up every day at the factory to punch your time card is becoming a thing of the past in developed countries. As tasks become more complex, employers are beginning to notice the importance of having an educated workforce capable of completing the meaningful work required of them.

An increasing number of employers are beginning to recognize the extreme importance of developing and maintaining an educated workforce capable of assuming responsibility for the workplace tasks that will need to be done: reading and writing for starters. . . . Thus at least to a degree meaningful work is becoming indistinguishable from the kind of work that more and more companies will need if they are to prosper.²⁰

Both workers and management benefits from providing meaningful work for their employees. Creating a work environment that gives workers autonomy, the ability to complete complex tasks that they are proud of not only benefits themselves professionally and personally, but also will lead to increased success for their companies. Meaningful work is a win-win.

The three components of meaningful work, function together to create the experience of meaningful work. The development of pride and dignity comes from the element of complexity and feeling of worker autonomy within the work. At the same time, one does not truly have the opportunity to engage in complex work if they do not have autonomy at work. Few engage in complex work and do not do so in an independent manner that they are proud of. These three elements form the foundation of meaningful work. They are in a codependent relationship with

¹⁹ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 118.

²⁰ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 204.

one another. For someone who is looking for meaningful work, they need to consider how to find all three of these elements in tandem rather than consider them as independent entities of work.

The clarification needs to be made that just because a job is lucrative does not mean that it is meaningful. Many would argue that if you make enough money the meaning of the work is irrelevant, it's all about the paycheck. This is simply nonsense. Yes, there are many that keep unsatisfying jobs for economic reasons, and people often leave satisfying jobs because of economic reasons.²¹ But that does not mean they are flourishing. How many corporate lawyers complain constantly about their job? How many people leave their lucrative corporate job to become teachers or first responders? It is safe to say almost everyone knows someone this has happened to or without a doubt experiences someone complaining about their highly paying, but boring unfulfilling fulfilling job. Non-meaningful work does not leave the worker feeling proud or valued. A 1970's Hungarian poet who ran two milling machines at a tractor factory summarized how little his value was worth when he reflected on how he earned money.

They give me money in exchange for my work, but . . . I have to go through all the sums they have done to arrive at my pay . . . I have to add up the value of months, days and hours on the basis of what minutes are worth, and I can hardly afford to be generous. They have already calculated each minute into so much for so much. . . they have converted my minutes into jobs done, and my output into piece-rates.²²

His literal existence at his factory job is reduced to minutes and moments, not quality. There is no complexity, no autonomy and certainly no pride. Everything about his job is the opposite of a meaningful work experience. His sentiments are not unique, millions of people have experiences similar to his. To fully understand why meaningful work is a requirement for a life well lived, we must understand exactly what is not meaningful work and the consequences of it.

²¹ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 115.

²² Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 198.

Many of the most successful entrepreneurs in history have benefited from implementing repetitive work. However, even they acknowledged that it was less than an ideal situation. Henry Ford, the pioneer behind the assembly line benefited greatly from the implementation of the assembly line. It is worth noting that at least in the beginning his workers could afford to purchase the Model T, so they may have seen themselves in their work slightly. Nevertheless he commented on repetitive work,

Ford argued that workers were naturally stupid and so fitted for his systems: Repetitive Labor . . . is a terrifying prospect to a certain kind of mind. It is terrifying to me. I could not possibly do the same thing day in and day out, but to other minds, perhaps I might say to the majority of minds it holds no terror. In fact to some kinds of minds thought is absolutely appalling . . . the average worker, I am sorry to say, wants a job in which he does not have to think.²³

As the industrial revolution dragged on and mechanization became the norm for many jobs, the lack of complexity within a worker's day became a major problem. Now with the implementation of machine tools, humans basically are left monitoring and feeding information rather than engaging in meaningful work.²⁴ The idea of working at the same station, engaging in the same task all day long, day after day is dull, boring and frankly a recipe for alienated workers. This actually has proven to have drastic effects on the personal side of worker's lives. Adina Schwartz noted, "When persons work for considerable lengths of time at jobs that involve mainly mechanical activity, they tend to be made less capable of and less interested in rationally framing, pursuing, and adjusting their own plans during the rest of their time. They are thereby caused to lead less autonomous lives on the whole."²⁵ This feeling of being undervalued and merely a pawn in the system directly hinders the personal lives of workers. The consequences of engaging in non-meaningful work truly show that there is no such thing as work life separation.

²³ Allen, *Marx: The Alternative to Capitalism*, 45.

²⁴ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 188.

²⁵ Schwartz, "Meaningful Work," 637.

There has been a great deal of historical thought put into the idea of alienated labor and the shifting view of work post industrialization. Edmund Byrne summed up this development quite well, “For in the history of the human race there has been no shortage of drudgery, peonage, slavery, and just plain unpleasant endeavors . . . Nonetheless, appeals for meaningful work commonly assume that it was the rule until capitalism came along to upset the good old ways, deskill self-actualizing craftsperson’s, and reduce the workforce to cogs in the wheel.”²⁶ While he makes a valid point that before industrialization there were still problems with missing meaningful work, but the realization of those problems was revitalized with enlightenment philosophy and the idea of questioning the status quo as well as your overall place in society. Yet despite this notion, the driving greed of capitalism paved the way for a system that undervalued and even distrusted workers. Scottish industrial Andrew Ure advocated for how much factory owners could gain by implementing machinery. Even when he was probed about workers being misplaced, “Ure was ecstatic about this eventuality. For he considered all human workers to be potential troublemakers.”²⁷ With such thoughts originating from industrialization, it really is no wonder why there would constantly be clashes between disenfranchised workers and management. Unfortunately, the reality of this type of work has not gone away, it has merely shifted to lesser developed countries. Consider “a toy factory worker in Thailand might produce for the global market but be unable to give her own children toys. No matter how desperate their needs, workers no longer had a right to use what they made. Workers have no control of what becomes of their produce - it becomes entirely alien.”²⁸ They are entirely separate from their

²⁶ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 113.

²⁷ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 192.

²⁸ Allen, *Marx: The Alternative to Capitalism*, 47.

work. There is no complexity, no autonomy and absolutely no dignity. Everything about their experience lacks meaning thus creating an alienated workforce just as Marx had warned against.

How did this reality become so acceptable? How did this type of work become so dehumanizing? Again Byrne's thoughts are noteworthy, "the work ethic was an invention of the post-Reformation intellectuals who wanted to pull the world out of its papist doldrums with the help of some tough-minded individualism. . . they took the position that the poor, like everyone else, are responsible for their condition in the world."²⁹ The idea that if you simply work hard one can rise out of poverty and live a fulfilling life regardless of the work they do is the exception, not the rule. Even the father of capitalism, Adam Smith, acknowledges the consequences of not having meaningful work.

The understandings of the greater part of men," he claimed, "are necessarily formed by their ordinary employment. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations . . . has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients from removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion . . . His dexterity at his own particular trade seems . . . to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual virtues."³⁰

Without meaningful work we lose what leads to human flourishing. Most people reach their potential through meaningful work. As children we do well on tests, sports or other hobbies. But as we age, work becomes the one outlet where those fulfillment opportunities can be achieved. Therefore, engaging in meaningful work is a requirement for a life well lived and human flourishing.

The notion that humans lead separate professional and personal lives does not hold much water. Christopher Michaelson in *Meaningful Work and Moral Worth* discusses this concept asserting, "The perception that work institutions, and the institution of work, are in conflict with

²⁹ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 62.

³⁰ Schwartz, "Meaningful Work," 637.

working individuals is a common theme in discussions of work-life balance. This dichotomy implies that work and life are separate, not that work is a part of life in which one works and that work enables the sustainability of life.”³¹ He makes a valid point. When one is struggling outside of work, those struggles don’t simply vanish at the door. That physical or emotional stress carries over to the workplace, just as the habits and ideas formed at work transfer to personal lives as well. Aristotle characterized good as the “actualization of excellence,” which as previously stated mostly happens through one’s work.³² The actualization of excellence through work carries over into the other aspects of life. How common is it to see someone who not only excels at their career, but also seems to be successful at just about everything else they do? Excellence is a habit. A habit that is developed through meaningful work. Kant builds on the value of meaningful work and asserts that autonomy through work is also connected to autonomy outside of work, “Kant argues that work is necessary for the development of self-hood understood as the development of one’s ability to act autonomously and the ability to live independently.”³³ It is also important to recognize the significant improvement in one’s self confidence when they engage in meaningful work. Again, Edmund Byrne provides keen insight into the impact of meaningful work, “the desire for ‘the reputation which attends upon superior excellence’ manifested in the profession. By “reputation” he means honor, respect, and fame, although perhaps he also intends the deserved recognition because of one’s admirable character manifested in work.”³⁴ The self-worth gained from the process of meaningful work is incredibly significant. Sure, the financial incentives are helpful, but the power of feeling valued, honored and respected because of the work you do is something money can never buy. In fact, the

³¹ Michaelson, “Meaningful Work and Moral Worth,” 32.

³² Lobel, *Philosophies of Happiness: A Comparative Introduction to the Flourishing Life*, 32.

³³ Bowie, “A Kantian Theory of Meaningful Work,” 1084.

³⁴ Byrne, *Work, Inc: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 13.

ultimate goal of meaningful work may perhaps be that work is the end, rather than a means to an end. When we get to the point of celebrating the work itself, and being so invested in the process that the rewards become less important, then we are truly thriving.

In many cases the admiration gained from meaningful work goes far beyond any sense of financial gain. That admiration can be both internal as well as public. Throughout history individuals are celebrated who engaged in purposeful progress for the sheer goodness of life.

Diana Lobel, associate professor of religion at Boston University, writes in *Philosophies of Happiness*,

Aristotle thus asserts that while living is good and pleasant in itself, those who feel good about their activities are most in a position to appreciate the fundamental goodness of life. Just as we take appreciation in a beautiful life well lived- that of a Rose Parks who stands up for justice, a Mother Theresa who cares for the sick and unfortunate, immigrant parents who make sacrifices for their children- we can also appreciate the very gift of life, of perceiving and thinking, that we enjoy within ourselves.³⁵

The significance of appreciating the goodness of life because of our purposeful work cannot be overstated. All three examples Lobel uses directly prove the point that working towards a purpose is a requirement for a life well lived. Only a fool would argue that the three examples did not flourish because of the choices they made. This sense of satisfaction and pride is truly a human characteristic. Pleasure, pride and meaning are not something that “we can pursue in the abstract. It is only by whole-hearted participation in activity that we experience pleasure; pleasure is the by-product of an engaged life.”³⁶ Therefore the main way humans can experience meaningful whole-hearted pleasure is through meaningful work. Meaningful work leads to an engaged and fulfilling life. Without meaningful work one cannot truly thrive. Humans must have autonomy, develop dignity and engage in complex thought processes through their work to be

³⁵ Lobel, *Philosophies of Happiness: A Comparative Introduction to the Flourishing Life*, 32.

³⁶ Lobel, *Philosophies of Happiness: A Comparative Introduction to the Flourishing Life*, 31.

able to translate those skills and habits into every other aspect of life. It may be possible to live a simple happy life without meaningful work, but it will lack needed human qualities. Animals or pets may lead well lived lives without meaningful work, but they are missing the innately human qualities that meaningful work requires. Humans must engage in meaningful work to flourish.

Thomas Nast: The Power and Influence of Art in 19th Century American Politics

Thomas Nast's political cartoons in the Reconstruction era really highlighted the ethical and moral appeal of meaningful work. His cartoons held the southern states to a moral standard through the end of the Civil War and throughout Reconstruction as they struggled to mend the racist views that their society has been built upon. It was clear that Nast used his pencil as a weapon for moral good through truly meaningful work that was autonomous, developed his noteworthy reputation and gave himself a sense of pride and dignity in his accomplishments as can be noted by his personal journals. Nast enjoyed a great amount of autonomy with his position at *Harper's Weekly*. He was able to engage in meaningful work that was complex and evolving as the issues from the Civil War through Reconstruction were constantly changing in the former confederate states.

To find a great example of the power and influence of art in politics, one may look no further than Thomas Nast. As the son of a German immigrant, Nast would use his pencil to work his way up to notoriety in American art, political and historical societies because of his political cartoons from the Civil War through the Gilded Age. He is most well-known for his work creating the donkey and elephant that represent the Republican and Democratic parties, and taking down Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall. However, his work supporting the Radical Republican cause during Reconstruction is equally as noteworthy and made a tremendous impact during the decade that followed the American Civil War. His steadfast zeal for Republican ideas during the reconstruction of the southern states is powerfully displayed throughout his many cartoons in *Harper's Weekly*. Despite the fact that these ideas were later abandoned by the Republican party, Nast deserves considerable credit for sticking to his morals and influencing a large majority of the country during this time. Nast should be remembered as an artist who used

his morality to attempt to make the United States a less divided society, both politically and socially. Nast's work is a clear example of the power of art and cartoons in the 19th century. Nast was willing to pursue a noble and morally just cause because of his meaningful connection to doing what was right. His stance did not make him the most popular, but he knew he was sticking to a virtuous ground. Diana Lobel comments on the life of political activity, "The life of political activity, whose goal is honor. He points out that those who strive for honor ultimately want to be honored for virtue."³⁷ It is clear Nast is choosing honor, after all because of his work he received countless death threats. He probably would not have survived a trip to the southern states because of the power of his cartoons.

Political cartoons have proved to be an incredibly useful and often overlooked source for understanding culture through art. The immense popularity they gained throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries illustrates the power and influence of art, especially in politics. These images often help audiences develop a mental image of real-life figures and ideas. At times they can be over exaggerated or overly opinionated. Often the more exaggerated or overly opinionated the more effective the cartoon is because they then hold the power to make the viewer remember them and start to formulate opinions about the subject matter. Thomas Nast is a great example of the power and influence of this medium.

The political cartoon has had an immense impact on the American political scene. John Vinson in "Thomas Nast and the American Political Scene," stated that Thomas Nast is regarded as the "Greatest Master of American political cartooning."³⁸ Nast's work had a considerable impact during his time, however his images do not necessarily stand alone. Political cartoons often utilize creative labeling and other assistance to be sure their point is adequately expressed.

³⁷ Lobel, *Philosophies of Happiness*, 14.

³⁸ Vinson, "Thomas Nast and the American Political Scene," 338.

“These kinds of images can readily be used as evidence of social changes in attitudes and politics; they are embedded in texts, often with explanatory captions, and lend themselves to the same kinds of scrutiny as the written words that accompany them.”³⁹ Due to the multidisciplinary nature of political cartoons, they have existed in somewhat of a void of scholarship. W. A. Coup noted in “Observations on a Theory of Political Caricature” that “even in the age of the mass-produced Ph. D., the academic study of caricature and political cartooning has suffered from considerable neglect, partly no doubt because it lies in a peculiar no-man’s land where several disciplines meet, and so tends to be scorned by the purists.”⁴⁰ In order to utilize the effect of political cartooning one must have a wide array of tools in their toolbox to draw from. The political cartoon does not instantly come out and divulge information the way a journal or article would.

Instead, scholars must read between the lines to fully utilize the source. Through examining these cartoons the historian can better understand public opinion and attitudes surrounding a topic. In the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Thomas Kemnitz, explains the cartoon as a historical source, “cartoons provide insight into the depth of emotion surrounding attitudes, but also into the assumptions and illusions on which opinions are formed. They remind the historian of the importance contemporaries placed on seemingly insignificant events and of the relation between these occurrences, popular attitudes, and public opinion.”⁴¹ Through Nast’s cartoons during the Reconstruction period, scholars and ordinary viewers can understand the popular attitudes and public opinion surrounding events during that era. Unfortunately for this period the content of most of these cartoons pointed out the drastic lack of support for freed

³⁹ Hills, "Brickbats in Tandem: An Art Historian's Response," 10.

⁴⁰ Coupe, "Observations on a Theory of Political Caricature," 79.

⁴¹ Kemnitz, "The Cartoon as a Historical Source." 86.

African Americans in the former Confederate States of America despite the passing of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth Amendments. Coupe also noted that in many cases, “the cartoonist’s function is often, literally, to enable us to ‘grin and bear it’: the cartoonist breaks the tension of serious political debate by interposing a joke and so to a certain extent enables the debate to proceed in a relaxed and civilized fashion.”⁴² However, for Nast, he was not attempting to joke in a serious political debate. He was interjecting his informed opinion on a national scene during a time when most politicians were still attempting to understand the current climate of the country during Reconstruction.

Throughout Nast’s entire career his cartoons served to “shape political opinion by unmasking the lies and hollow rhetoric that beleaguered the nation’s public life. Nast’s political cartoons operated in the gap between the nation’s ideals and its behavior.”⁴³ Nast truly believed that society could be improved after the Civil War. However, when the reality turned out to be opposite of what he was hoping for, his work became more frustrated with the “stubborn social realities” of the time.⁴⁴ Nast’s work is a great example that pictures do matter and hold immense power, especially in a society that is not overly literate. “Pictures do matter . . . They help to solidify or replace the mental images formed in individual consciousness that assist each of us to comprehend the world and act in it. Pictures do matter to historians, who learn, through such images, of the attitudes of Thomas Nast, his audience.”⁴⁵ It is no coincidence that much of what Nast drew in his cartoons, would eventually happen. He was monumental in taking down President Andrew Johnson, getting Grant elected, bringing down Tammany Hall and more. The honor and pride he derived from the work is significant to considering the positive impact of

⁴² Coupe, "Observations on a Theory of Political Caricature," 90.

⁴³ Miller, *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*. 282.

⁴⁴ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, viii.

⁴⁵ Hills, "Brickbats in Tandem: An Art Historian's Response," 12.

meaningful work. It is clear by his actions that he valued the work, rather than the end goal. Just because Nast was not successful with his campaign against the Southern States does not mean that he doesn't deserve a place in the history of Reconstruction. Nast had a massive influence around the country and deserves his place in history.

Numerous historians claim that "Thomas Nast wielded more influence than any other artist of the nineteenth century."⁴⁶ If art and influence are measured according to reaction, then Nast was immensely successful. "His fame spread throughout the South, bringing him a host of threatening letters. One of his friends declared that Nast would have been burned at the stake had he ever fallen into the hands of the Confederates."⁴⁷ He was loathed in the Southern States because he was not afraid to point out the flaws of their institutions. However, being hated was not the only evidence of Nast's influence. Even President Grant took notice of the power of Nast's pen. After his Presidential victory in 1868 Grant said, "Two things elected me: the sword of Sheridan [a reference to Federal troops in the South that ensured Negro voting] and the pencil of Nast."⁴⁸ His power and influence then only grew in D.C. during the Grant years.

He became an ever more respected- and feared- figure in a political environment where the ability to lampoon the opposition, to stir the emotions of the party faithful, was an important talent. Nast visited Washington in early 1872, and half the heady pleasure of being the lion of the season. He told his wife of a party given "for the Great men of Washington to meet me, and I can tell you they came, with a vengeance. . . . the power I have is terrible."⁴⁹

In another correspondence to his wife, Nast continued to comment on the power he held claiming, "I see the President nearly every day, and he is always very much pleased to see me. It's funny how all the Senators are in a flutter about my being here and are all afraid that I will do them up."⁵⁰ It is not a stretch to say that his cartoons were a driving policy maker of the time.

⁴⁶ Boime, "Thomas Nast and French Art." 43.

⁴⁷ Vinson, *Thomas Nast, Political Cartoonist*, 25.

⁴⁸ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 45.

⁴⁹ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 76.

⁵⁰ Reaves, "Thomas Nast and the President." 63.

After his fall from power Boss Tweed commented on Nast, “even if his supporters could not read, they could all ‘look at damn pictures.’”⁵¹ Nast made it simple. His cartoons were clear and showed his point well. Hence why he had so much success. If you wanted to effectively spread an idea, his cartoons were a good place to start considering the literacy rate in Virginia at the beginning of his career was only 9.1%.⁵² His work was imperative to spreading a moral message to continue to fight against racism in the southern states despite the fact that the majority of the country wanted to move past the horrors of the Civil War.

In order to fully understand the power and influence of Thomas Nast, it is imperative to understand how he came into his role at *Harper’s Weekly* as well as the climate that he was drawing in. Nast, the son of a German immigrant, arrived in the United States at age six. By age fifteen he had taken his first job as a paid artist.⁵³ After several successful stints at various papers, Nast landed a full-time position at *Harper’s Weekly* in 1862.⁵⁴ Throughout the national conflict he would cover the war and the politics related to it. Due to the popularity of his drawings, he would earn a great deal of money and influence from *Harper’s* and by the late 1860’s he was essentially able to draw as he pleased.⁵⁵ It is fair to say that if Nast were to have been in a different geographic location he would have had a much more difficult time gaining the influence that he did. However, *Harper’s Weekly*, would prove to be the ideal placement for Nast. “Harper’s was distinctly middle class, as befitted its New York location. The clearest expression of that orientation was its dependence on illustrations, which, when combined with its antislavery Republican orientation, made it the ideal medium for Nast.”⁵⁶ Nast enjoyed the

⁵¹ Coupe, "Observations on a Theory of Political Caricature," 84.

⁵² Pyne, "A Humanities Approach for Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom," 483.

⁵³ Justice, "Thomas Nast and the Public School of the 1870s." 174.

⁵⁴ Justice, "Thomas Nast and the Public School of the 1870s." 174.

⁵⁵ Justice, "Thomas Nast and the Public School of the 1870s." 174.

⁵⁶ Keller. "The World of Thomas Nast". <https://library.osu.edu/site/thomasnast/world-of-nast/>.

freedom of expression in America's most diverse city as well as the freedom to be away from many of the subjects that he would negatively affect throughout his career. Nast, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was able to safely criticize the southern states and southern democrats from the safety of New York City. Nast fully utilized this freedom and would become one of the most influential artists in American history. "Because of his popularity . . . Nast has loomed large in historical scholarship. Scholars of politics, art, and the media have returned again and again to Nast as an avatar of American political cartooning, and he has been a central figure in the debate over the "power of the press."⁵⁷ At a time when the literacy rate was nothing to brag about, Nast used his pen as a weapon that would directly impact American policy and political outcomes.

One of the reasons why Nast has enjoyed so much notoriety and influence is due to the subject matter that he tackled. Nast did not shy away from the pressing issues of the day. Whether it was slavery, Reconstruction policies, corrupt New York City politicians or even public schools, Nast made his feelings known. John Chalmers Vinson of the University of Georgia explained a sense of purpose well when he wrote, "A natural soldier whose battle-axe was the pen, he gloried in fierce conflict, for he was "primarily and before all a moralist." Nast's best work was filled with 'a flaming sense of righteousness."⁵⁸ It is clear that Nast was first and foremost a moralist with his work. His success is certainly reinforced by the financial success he enjoyed as a cartoonist in the 19th century. "The young man who had begun married life in 1862 with 1.50 in cash, and \$350 in debts, had amassed a fortune of \$125,000. His annual retainer from *Harper's Weekly* paid whether he drew a single cartoon or not, was \$5,000 and his annual

⁵⁷ Justice, "Thomas Nast and the Public School of the 1870s." 171.

⁵⁸ Vinson, "Thomas Nast, Political Cartoonist : Political Cartoonist," 20.

income averaged around \$20,000.”⁵⁹ However it is worth noting that he was passionate about this work much before he had realized it could be lucrative. This was not a means to get rich, that was merely a by-product of the work he engaged in. He also made the active choice to stay at *Harpers* long after he had gained notoriety. The choice to stay in his long-standing role certainly reflects how he felt about the work he was doing there. By the end of his career, Nast had certainly made his mark on the American political scene. To fully understand how Nast became such an influential figure, it is important to understand the medium in which he spread his message.

Before analyzing Nast’s literal art work, one should address the complexity of a cartoonist. All artists engage in complex techniques, whether it is in the fine detail of a Renaissance painting or the nuisance of a symphony. Still a cartoonist must combine a level of common knowledge, a consistent theme that the public will easily recognize with a level of irony and hypocrisy that will clearly display the problem with the intended scene. Routinely Nast would use historical references, creative labeling and multiple scenes to display the sheer level of Southern injustice towards African Americans.

To fully understand the impact that Thomas Nast’s work had during Reconstruction, one simply has to analyze his work. One of the first political figures to become a victim of Nast’s pen was President Andrew Johnson. Nast did not hold back in criticizing how Johnson attempted to handle Reconstruction in the South. On July 30, 1866, dozens of participants in a Radical Republican constitutional convention in New Orleans (most of them Negroes) were slaughtered by the city’s white police. In his powerful commentary “Amphitheatre Johnsonian,” (Figure 1) Nast portrayed the President as a bloodthirsty Roman emperor, his coadjutors (Secretary of State

⁵⁹ Vinson, "Thomas Nast and the American Political Scene," 340.

Williams H. Seward, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles) behind him.”⁶⁰ Nast is making this violence seem as if it is only a game to the politicians of the era, especially Johnson.

Published on October 3rd, 1868 in *Harper's Weekly*, “The Modern Samson” (Figure 2) Samson, is another example of Nast supporting African American suffrage. According to the Old Testament, Samson had superhuman strength but loses it when his lover cuts part of his hair. This imaginary produced the same metaphor, where the Southern African American voter was now having his power completely ripped away from them. In the background we see a group of Democratic politicians and Ku Klux Klan members, including Democratic presidential candidate Horatio Seymour cheering. The background also includes carving in graves claiming to “exterminate the whole race” and to “denounce the loyal league of every occasion and organize a Ku Klux Klan.” Nast is clearly taking a side, showing the hypocrisy of passing Amendments to guarantee African American voting rights, then allowing the power to be ripped away in the Southern States. This cartoon not only showed Nast’s support for African American voting rights by comparing them to the heroic figure of Samson, but also helped Ulysses Grant win the 1868 Presidential election over Seymour. However, Nast did not start his campaign against racial democratic policies during the 1868 election.

In 1866 he penned two other cartoons in support of African Americans, “Which is More Illegal?”(Figure 3) and “Slavery is Dead (?)” (Figure 4) In both of these cartoons Nast is supporting the radical Republican cause that African Americans should be enfranchised in Southern States and the rebellion should be punished.⁶¹ In “Which is More Illegal” Nast uses two contrasting images to point out the misconception surrounding African American voting. On the left he has drawn a political convention, seemingly showing how capable and deserving African

⁶⁰ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 44.

⁶¹ Vinson, *Thomas Nast, Political Cartoonist*, 25.

Americans were of suffrage. However, on the right, he has drawn a massacre referencing the massacre that took place in New Orleans in July of 1866. The juxtaposition between an orderly convention and murder is striking powerful and allowed Nast to point out of the flaws of many Southern States. In “Slavery is Dead (?)” Nast points out the hypocrisy of African American treatment in the South. While using two contrasting images again, he notes on the left how slaves were sold as punishment for a crime before the Emancipation Proclamation. Then on the right, he has drawn an African American being whipped as punishment for a crime. Nast has done a brilliant job at noting the sad irony of the treatment of freed slaves in the South after the Civil War. In addition, he also includes quotes ironically pointing out that American is “Home of the Brave” and “Land of the Free” yet this type of behavior is still occurring daily. To further illustrate the country’s attempt at hiding from this issue, Nast has blindfolded Lady Liberty on the right because in that picture slavery was supposed to be outlawed.

Nast did not shy away from emphasizing the violence that was taking place against African Americans in the South. In his cartoon, “Southern Justice” (Figure 5) Nast cites numerous examples of the horrors of being African American in the former Confederate States. He specifically notes the reality of hypocritical punishments being made for African Americans. On the right he has drawn a Black man hung with the caption “If he is a union man, or a freedman. Verdict, Hang the D- Yankee and N***r.” However, all around the outside of the drawing, Nast has cited incidents of violence and murder in the South against Blacks. He has noted the murder of Senator Case in Tennessee, driving workers off plantations without wages and shooting at them in Virginia, police committing more murders in Georgia and another hanging in Kentucky. He certainly was consistent with his moral approach to this issues as his

tactics and types of cartoons were consistent, especially comparing “Southern Justice” , “Slavery is Dead (?)” and “Which is More Illegal?”

Nast gained more influence with the 1868 Presidential campaign. He both skillfully supported Grant without leaving his moral war with the Southern States behind. Benjamin Justice claimed examined Nast’s “All the Difference in the World” (Figure 6) Published in 1868 again supporting African American rights

“All the Difference in the World” (1868) laid out the logic of Nast’s racial caricatures of Blacks in two panels, each depicting African Americans in northern and southern contexts. At the top, in his support of Republicans, a northern freedman exemplifies nobility and hard work-tilling a field and hailing a distant Republican rally outside a public school. His facial characteristics are unmistakably African, but without exaggeration, and his clothing and general bearing are simple and straightforward. The signs displayed in the rally read, “Equal Rights to All,” “Malice Toward None,” “Lets Us Have Peace,” and, of course, “Grant and Colfax.”⁶²

Again Nast is fighting a moral crusade against Southern treatment of Blacks. He is noting what happens when African Americans are given their deserved opportunities in the North, but not in the South. Despite the plethora of evidence that Nast was a major figure in supporting the Republicans and African Americans during Reconstruction, he is not often mentioned enough in reference to Reconstruction. That may have something to do with the lack of skill required to correctly interpret political cartoons and the impact of Nast’s work.

Thomas Nast deserves a much larger role in the understanding of the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. Politicians and, frankly, the rest of the union were at a minimum confused and at a maximum baffled as to how to attempt to readmit the southern states back into the union while essentially remaking the whole society socially, politically and economically.⁶³ To fully comprehend Nast’s proper place in this narrative, it is important to understand what happened during the decade after the Civil War. One of the complex problems to solve was the

⁶² Justice, "Thomas Nast and the Public School of the 1870s." 178.

⁶³ Winders, "Imperfectly Imperial: Northern Travel Writers in the Postbellum U.S. South, 1865-1880," 395.

fact that just because the war ended did not mean that the feelings that led to it went away. “The division within American society that had sustained so bloody a civil war did not disappear in April 1865. It is true that the Confederate South no longer existed as a political entity. But the political ideas that gave birth to it survived- and not in the South alone.”⁶⁴ The fact that racial division persisted outside the former Confederate States of America is key to Nast’s role during Reconstruction. His impressive commitment to his morals and the suffrage of African American voters helped to continue to spread those ideas throughout the North because of his position at *Harper’s Weekly* in New York City. One of the major reasons why Nast had developed such a key role in the history of Reconstruction is the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln had a clear idea as to how to readmit the southern states into the Union. However, when his Vice President, democrat Andrew Johnson, the only southern senator to remain loyal to the union, took over the presidency the process became much more complicated.

When Johnson took over the presidency, many Republicans assumed that he would impose a hard and unforgiving tax on the south.⁶⁵ Yet, in a political decision, “Johnson ultimately chose to march to the beat of a different drum. He quickly brought the rebel states back into full political participation in the Union. Pleading states’ rights and white supremacy, he made it clear that he was ready to abandon the freedmen to their former masters.”⁶⁶ Although legislatively it appeared that the United States was supporting African Americans with the passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments that authorized Congress to protect African American voting everywhere, the reality was that once the Republican policies would be abandoned, so too would the support of the federal government for protecting African

⁶⁴ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 39.

⁶⁵ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 43.

⁶⁶ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 43.

Americans. Even when politicians were willing to abandon African Americans for slight political gains from southern politicians, Nast refused. "In the South, moreover, Nast enjoyed a special form of notoriety; . . . Nast and his employer *Harper's Weekly* were partisans of Radical Republicanism, and had launched a broad front against the Democrat's Negrophobia and the KKK's anti-Negro violence, insisting on the Black man's voting rights and civil rights legislation to enforce them."⁶⁷ First and foremost, Nast was a moralist. He was a man glued to his virtues. While it was easy for many to dismiss the Radical Republican cause of equality and help for African Americans after the Civil War, Nast held firm.

It is impossible to know what would have happened if Nast were never to have the role he had. It is clear that when the Republican cause was abandoned, the consequences were horrendous. "Human life and civil rights went unprotected, however. Almost two thousand Black people were lynched in the late 1880's, yet no courts or troops moved to protect them."⁶⁸ Still Nast's commitment to the Radical Republican cause was admirable. He was a moralist and he represented those values throughout Reconstruction. It is easy to understand his popularity and influence when one considers how large of an audience *Harper's Weekly* had and the popularity Nast held, considering the immense amount of space *Harper's* left for him.

What made Thomas Nast such a force during the decade following the Civil War was his willingness to stick to his cause. The moral issues that he felt so strongly about were only political issues to many of the decision makers at the time. The Democrats and Republicans represented not only political opposites, but also the differing "governmental and societal ideologies" of the War itself.⁶⁹ John Pyne and Gloria Sesso in "A Humanities Approach for

⁶⁷ Boime, "Thomas Nast and French Art," 60.

⁶⁸ Gladstone, John. "Social Realism in American Art: The Generation of 1876," 115.

⁶⁹ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 40.

Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom" explained the importance of Nast's representation of the Radical Republican cause best when they claimed,

Another useful source for reviewing popular stereotypes of African Americans during Reconstruction is to analyze the cartoons of Thomas Nast (1840-1902). Beginning in 1862 and throughout the remainder of the Civil War and Reconstruction years, Nast drew cartoons and illustrations for *Harper's Weekly*. He is one of the best known cartoonists in our history, creating the modern versions . . . Although his cartoons were creative and stylistically proficient, they also exhibit Nast's penchant for drawing his caricatures in a way to stir the emotions and to shape the opinions of his readers. Some questions students might be asked about Nast's cartoons, particularly one from 1874 depicting Black legislators in a reconstructed state. . . . Yet, a study of Nast's cartoons during Reconstruction provides an excellent means of analyzing changing northern opinions about Reconstruction, as well as changing perceptions of African Americans' fitness for voting and engaging in political activities.⁷⁰

What would prove to be the major issues of this time would be the lure of African American votes. Southern Democrats, the party that attempted to keep African Americans disenfranchised wanted to do everything possible to prevent them from voting. Yet the potential power of African American votes in the South and lower north proved to be enough to motivate Republicans to call for "negro suffrage."⁷¹ For Nast, it was about more than just political power. Displayed from his political cartoons, Nast was adamant about African American suffrage because he truly believed it was deserved, not just for political gain. Again it is clear that this work had deep meaning for him. This was not a means to check. It was not simply just another story or another bit of subject matter. It wasn't just something else he could draw or create. The moral connection to freely doing what he thought was right elevated his cartoons and his ability to a level worth appreciating.

It is abundantly clear that Nast held a great deal of power and influence in nineteenth century America. He wielded his pen on moral issues and deserves significantly more attention in reference to his work on Reconstruction. He was well known for taking down Tammany Hall

⁷⁰ Pyne, "A Humanities Approach for Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom," 483.

⁷¹ Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, 105.

and creating the Democratic Donkey and Republican Elephant. However, he should be praised for the moral standards he upheld with his cartoons during the last 1860's to attempt to better the lives of African Americans. In a radically and racially divided time, Nast was able to stand his ground and make an immeasurable impact on United States History.

Mercy: the Call for Public Virtue

At first glance working in the legal field may throw several red flags for work that is anything but meaningful. We must consider the long hours of paper work, arguing for causes that are not your own and the sometimes restrictive and frustrating structure of firms that reward partners for the work of those below them. However, this paper considers applying the virtue of mercy more readily within the legal field. This concept not only leads to better rehabilitation for the charged, but also a more meaningful work experience for all throughout the process. Judges who have the ability to use flexibility and mercy in their judgement can ultimately make more meaningful decisions about the punishments and charges for those before them. Lawyers can work with more autonomy and complexity if they realize that there are a wider number of possible outcomes for their clients rather than just jail time, probation, fines or any combination of the three. Applying the virtue of mercy within the context of meaningful work would alleviate many of the frustrations of workers within the legal profession that only stick around for the lucrative pay outs. Additionally, more individualized sentencing will lead to a more meaningful rehabilitation process for the guilty party. All and all, applying mercy in a meaningful way to the work within the legal system will lead to a larger number of people flourishing.

When society considers virtues that are critical to flourishing, mercy tends to be an afterthought. The opportunity to be merciful usually only presents itself when an agent or society has been wronged and they have the choice of how to act toward the wrongdoer. Due to this mercy is not often at the forefront of goodness. Often mercy is only considered within the legal system or interpersonal relationships. However, when considering whether or not mercy is important for society, it is necessary to consider just how many situations where mercy can be beneficial. Andrew Brien, a philosophy professor at the Australian National University and

Charles Sturt University, wrote a remarkably thought-provoking piece titled “Mercy Within Legal Justice” that displayed the many instances where mercy can be applied in society. He writes, “All sorts of things may be described as merciful: gods, people, actions, the elements, the sea, fate, and nature.”⁷² Due to the complexity of humanity it is beneficial to have a society that is merciful. Whether that be in their actions, legal system, or overall conduct toward reconciliation, mercy contributes to living in harmony. However, scholars and legal experts have disagreed with this claim. Many believe that to be merciful is to punish someone less than they deserve, thus acting against true justice. If justice is undermined then what will our societies really be built on? If we are to accept this notion as true, then it could be believed that mercy is actually a societal vice rather than a virtue. This paper will set out to show that mercy is in fact a public virtue that contributes to a flourishing society. To begin it will define mercy, then address the counterargument that mercy may be a societal vice. From there it will provide analysis as to why mercy is actually a virtue and how it leads to societal flourishing. Due to length restrictions this paper will not address mercy on an interpersonal level and will primarily focus on the legal system. Other topics such as mercy rules in sports, mercy within the educational system and even mercy killing should be considered when discussing societal mercy, but will not be covered in this paper. It will focus on the impact that mercy has within communities in relation to legal systems. Specifically, it will examine western societies.

It is worth reemphasizing that engaging in meaningful work can allow for a more authentic and genuine legal process for all parties. Meaningful work ensures that the worker is able to engage in complex, autonomic work that gives the worker dignity. Judges, jurors, and lawyers who are able to consider more complex solutions to problems and rehabilitation without

⁷² Brien, "Mercy within Legal Justice." 84.

as many restrictions from the state would only improve the legal system. When all parties are limited with their actions and outcomes the entire legal system is hindered and not all possibilities are considered. The work becomes routine, rather than complex and engaging. What would deliver more pride than being able to craft meaningful sentences that truly lead to rehabilitation rather than simply sitting in a jail cell only to become a statistic of someone who is more likely to return to prison?

In order to consider the role of mercy in society, it is important to understand exactly what mercy is. To formulate a working definition of mercy let us consider several examples from scholarly works. In 'Forgiveness and Mercy,' Lucy Allais claims, "Mercy involves leniency in the infliction of punishment that is due in accordance with justice . . . Mercy involves punishing less severely than justice requires."⁷³ Allais continues by adding that "Mercy is leniency in punishing on grounds of compassion. . . Mercy alleviates suffering that is in some sense deserved, or which others are entitled to impose."⁷⁴ According to Allais, mercy involves compassion from the party who has been harmed. She believes that a situation only qualifies as having the opportunity for mercy if the punishment is deserved, and the harmed party chooses to punish less than is traditionally required or expected. Brien adds that by claiming that mercy is "stopping short of what might have been deserving imposed."⁷⁵ It is clear that mercy is a harmed party or part of a community choosing to punish someone less than would be deserved. For our purposes we will consider an act of mercy in accordance with Allais and Brien. Mercy is a wronged party choosing to punish someone less than they deserve despite the fact that it is clear they have been harmed. Although mercy is traditionally viewed as an act, it is important to

⁷³ Allais, "Forgiveness and Mercy," 1.

⁷⁴ Allais, "Forgiveness and Mercy," 3.

⁷⁵ Brien, "Mercy within Legal Justice." 84.

consider why someone would choose to act mercifully. It is critical to understand the reasoning for mercy to understand how it contributes to society flourishing.

Glen Ishoy wrote “Reassessing the Purpose of Punishment” in the journal of *Criminal Justice Ethics* in 2014, where he considered if our current judicial system is successful in accomplishing its goals. Currently an assistant professor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Ishoy claims that, “The exercise of mercy may be motivated by pity or compassion for another person, but mercy is more closely associated with actions rather than feelings.”⁷⁶ Action is the direct result of autonomy from individuals. He argues that mercy strictly involves an action. If there is no action then we merely have empathy or sympathy for a situation. However, once we act we can then have mercy. His distinction between action and feeling is important when considering why mercy contributes to a flourishing society. Without action, a society would be timid and passive. Acting mercifully allows for something to be done, something that may help alleviate potential suffering. In many ways it is in a sense paying it forward. Consider the wronged who chooses to have grace on the culprit who simply made a mistake, rather than was a repeat offender. That single act of mercy could be so much more meaningful than any act of vengeance. Ultimately, we learn more when we act with virtue than when we engage in vices.

Still despite these claims, many disagree with the notion that mercy benefits society. The most notable critic, Jeffrie Murphy, claims that mercy acts against justice and therefore tears apart the framework of a just society. To fully understand why mercy is beneficial, it is important to consider those claims and examine why they are mistaken.

Jeffrie Murphy is one of the fundamental scholars to really examine mercy, especially societal mercy. His work with Jean Elizabeth Hampton, “Forgiveness and Mercy” has become

⁷⁶ Ishoy "Reassessing the Purpose of Punishment: The Roles of Mercy and Victim-Involvement in Criminal Proceedings." 45.

the cornerstone of mercy studies. He argues that “If mercy requires a tempering of justice, then there is a sense in which mercy may require a departure from justice. Thus, to be merciful is perhaps to be unjust. But it is a vice, not a virtue, to manifest injustice. Thus, mercy must be, not a virtue, but a vice.”⁷⁷ Murphy would argue that if a society is merciful then it acts against justice. If two people commit the same crime, but are punished differently, Murphy would argue that that is unjust. Therefore, mercy is a vice and causes inconsistency within society. While he may have a point that society and laws are built on the principles of justice, it would be a grave mistake to not consider the role of mercy within that structure. Consider the act of murder. It is clearly illegal in just about every society in the world. However, shouldn’t there be a distinction between someone who kills in self-defense compared to serial killers? Murphy does not address this level of complexity. Instead he claims that “There thus simply is no room for mercy as an autonomous virtue with which [the] justice [of judges and prosecutors and parole boards] should be tempered. Let them keep their sentimentality to themselves for use in their private lives with their families and pets.”⁷⁸ Murphy acts in agreement with some aspects of Aristotle's teachings. Aristotle at times argued that there is little room for mercy in society. “For people who do not get retributive anger at those at whom they should look like fools.... For they seem to have no perception and no feeling of pain ... and to allow oneself and one's loved ones to be kicked around, and overlook it, is slavish”⁷⁹ Here Aristotle makes the argument that when society is merciful and is not consistent with justice, it makes themselves look like fools and appear that both victims and society are being taken advantage of. While these are fair points, they fail to address the complexity of humanity. They tend to look at actions as Black and white, right or

⁷⁷ Steiker, "Murphy on Mercy: A Prudential Reconsideration," 45.

⁷⁸ Steiker, "Murphy on Mercy: A Prudential Reconsideration," 46.

⁷⁹ Nussbaum, "Equity and Mercy." 97.

wrong, when in reality they are far from that. When we embrace the nuances of human existence, only then can we get closer to the concept of truly flourishing as Aristotle envisioned.

To continue to examine the argument that mercy is actually a societal vice instead of virtue should analyze the role mercy plays within the legal system. To begin it is necessary to note the concept of proportionality which is present within all western legal systems. The principle of proportionality is that the punishment of the offender should be determined by the seriousness of the crime.⁸⁰ It should be progressive in nature meaning the worse the crime, the worse the punishment. Hence in progressive western societies you do not see the death penalty issues for someone stealing a pack of gum. However, when a serious crime is committed, it is fundamental that in a just society a fitting and serious punishment is doled out. If it is not, then the legal system is not acting in accordance with justice. Much of this belief stems from Christianity and the Bible and the concept of an eye for an eye that was fundamental in many early Christian societies. However, it is worth noting that much of this concept has been forgotten as the majority of the punishment that is issued in western society deals with fines or jail time. Although that may be a just punishment, it deviates from the concept of doing what the offender did back to the offender. Many legal and ethical systems were built on the concept of an eye for an eye, however our current legal system has abandoned that concept. Imagine instead of punishing someone who commits financial fraud with an additional fine, they have to complete copious hours of community service at homeless shelters to learn about the integrity of service? Obviously, the work would be more meaningful for all parties.

One of the major arguments for mercy within the legal system deals with what Christopher Bennett defines as one's development story.⁸¹ Essentially, he is questioning if our

⁸⁰ Bennett, "The Limits of Mercy," 1.

⁸¹ Bennett, "The Limits of Mercy," 5.

upbringing and surroundings can be reason to grant mercy within the legal system. For example, a parent who uses abusive practices to discipline a child because that's how they were raised, thus the only thing they know. Bennett ultimately concludes that that is not an excuse and should not be grounds for mercy. "Granting Mercy on the ground of unfortunate personal history in clear and uncontroversial cases of moral wrongdoing fails to respect the wrong doer's moral agency. Regardless of the agent's Development Story, there are good moral reasons to think that we ought to hold them fully responsible."⁸² However, noteworthy philosopher Martha Nussbaum disagrees with this sentiment in her piece, "Equity and Mercy" where she claims that legal solutions should bend around to fit the situation, thus making the development story relevant to the legal solution applied. She is not advocating for no punishment, but perhaps a different type of punishment or less severe. Nussbaum is right. The law needs to be flexible to address each specific situation. A merciful act could be one of the tools within that toolbox. Still her claims have not been enough to persuade other scholars to change their tone.

Glen Ishoy points out that judges, the major decision makers within most western legal systems, should avoid mercy. "The systematic application of mercy by a judge would be inconsistent with traditional conceptions of justice and would also fail to reassert the equal standing of victims as members of the community."⁸³ Ishoy considers the cornerstone of mercy studies, Jeffrie Murphy, when he states that "Murphy closes his argument rather boldly by asserting that there is no place for mercy in sentencing and that judges should 'keep their sentimentality to themselves,' primarily due to their obligation to uphold the law and promote

⁸² Bennett, "The Limits of Mercy," 5.

⁸³ Ishoy, "Reassessing the Purpose of Punishment: The Roles of Mercy and Victim-Involvement in Criminal Proceedings," 41.

justice.”⁸⁴ It seems that the essential question is can a judge consider acts of mercy while still upholding the law and promoting justice? Again, it appears that this issue is being looked at as a black or white topic, when the reality of human complexity makes it far from being that simple. Many of the critics of mercy as a public virtue claim that merciful acts are unjust and act against societal expectations. They believe that if we do not punish the exactness of the law every time that we are not holding the offenders accountable or as equal agents within the society. They also believe it does a disservice to the victim. In a sense they can see the victim as being harmed twice because they do not get the justice that is deserved after they have been harmed. However, I disagree with this mindset. Mercy allows for flexibility and complexity to be addressed within society.

Mercy is and should be considered a public virtue. Acts of mercy and being merciful address the complexity of human existence. Humans are flawed. They make mistakes. Sometimes they may be cruel on purpose but in many cases, mistakes are from an honest mistake or problem outside of the agent’s control. Lucy Allais lays out a strong case for the reasons that a society should be merciful. We cannot control our upbringing. You do not choose who your parents are, where you live or many of the fundamental aspects of one's childhood. Allais points out that we should consider “the formidable obstacles the offender may have encountered to forming a decent, law abiding character.” If anger and violence is all someone has ever known, does it benefit them to be thrown in jail? What could be a more meaningful approach to changing their norms? Consequently, society has to consider the purpose of punishment and decide how to act. Allais also points out that society should consider mercy if “The wrongdoing occurs in a context that poses unusually severe obstacles to acting rightly. If the offender is already suffering

⁸⁴ Ishoy, “Reassessing the Purpose of Punishment: The Roles of Mercy and Victim-Involvement in Criminal Proceedings,” 45.

some grave misfortune. Or if the offender is sincere and manifests repentances and reparations.”⁸⁵ In other words Allais gives us the reasoning for why mercy should be applied in a public setting. To be clear, I am not advocating that those that deserve swift justice should be let off the hook. Rapists, murderers and the like should receive full deserving punishments. However, judges and jurors should consider the background of the case before determining a blanket judgement. Martha Nussbaum’s analysis of Aristotle supports this by claiming that “he is prepared to let people off the hook if it can be shown that their wrongdoing is unintentional, or to judge them more lightly if it is a result of something less than fully deliberate badness.”⁸⁶ Again, the punisher or party with power should consider the entire situation. Murder in self-defense should have a different consideration than murder because of vengeance. The latter would be considered deliberate badness, whereas the primary could be considered unintentional. As Allais points out, self-defense provides a situation that is a severe obstacle to acting rightly.

Carol Steiker analyzed much of Murphy’s works with relation to our current legal system. Her claims clearly show a need for mercy within our current system. She noted, “our present administration of criminal justice is likely to systematically overshoot the mark of deserved punishment. . . Mercy in this conception neither competes with justice nor tempers it; rather it prevents us from doing injustice in the name of justice.”⁸⁷ The idea that judges and jurors are limited that way they avoid creating injustices against people is completely counterproductive to the entire process. Allowing mercy and promoting a more meaningful work experience would create a fair and effective way to improve our criminal justice system. She

⁸⁵ Allais, "Forgiveness and Mercy," 5.

⁸⁶ Nussbaum, "Equity and Mercy," 97.

⁸⁷ Steiker, "Murphy on Mercy: A Prudential Reconsideration," 48.

continues by showing how our current system is not working, thus the implication of mercy as a public virtue would improve our criminal justice system.

The number of inmates in state and federal prisons has increased more than seven-fold, from less than 200,000 in 1970 to more than 1.5 million by the end of 2006. An additional almost 800,000 persons are held in local jails, for a total of close to 2.3 incarcerated. The United States imprisons more of its population, per capita and even in absolute numbers, than any other country in the world (we imprison considerably more people than does vastly larger China- or, at least, than China reports that it does). When those who are under the supervision of the criminal justice system (on probation or parole) are added to figures, the total reaches 7.2 million, an increase of several hundred percent over the past few decades.⁸⁸

She continues by claiming that “contemporary criminal law (at least in America) tends toward radical overcriminalization-punishing many offenses with absurd excess.”⁸⁹ What is the point of sentencing someone to hundreds of years in prison? What does that accomplish? With the ballooning prison population, and the repeat offender rate rising, perhaps it is a time to consider mercy and the purpose of punishment within the legal system as a way to improve the results of the criminal justice system. Has our legal system fulfilled their potential and duty? Are these are the continued results?

While there is some evidence that mercy is considered by judges, they do not enjoy the freedom necessary to really make impactful change within the system. “In determining punishments that should be pronounced for any particular offender, most judges consider a wide variety of factors that may be broadly categorized as either legal factors or extralegal factors.”⁹⁰ By considering multiple factors, judges are able to act mercifully. When a judge considers whether the offender is the primary caregiver or dependent children or if they are a repeat offender, the judge is considering “appropriate justice.” In other words, the judge is using mercy while still sticking to their obligation to uphold the law. These are cases of considerations for

⁸⁸ Steiker, "Murphy on Mercy: A Prudential Reconsideration," 48.

⁸⁹ Steiker, "Murphy on Mercy: A Prudential Reconsideration," 52.

⁹⁰ Ishoy, "Reassessing the Purpose of Punishment: The Roles of Mercy and Victim-Involvement in Criminal Proceedings," 44.

mercy, rather than tempering justice. When it is appropriate to act mercifully, as Allais outlined, it should be done. In this case the children and first offender deserve consideration for more mercy than the repeat offender. Again, the point of punishment is not to over populate prisons, and fine members of society, but to attempt to alleviate and reconcile differences and problems within society. The current decisions within the criminal justice system do not lend themselves to creating citizens that truly change their ways once they have completed their punishment, nor does it lead to creating a more harmonious society. Without mercy there is the creation of a society of haves and have nots, punishers and punished. The implication of mercy is one way to attempt to move society closer to flourishing.

To settle the debate, mercy is a public virtue. Mercy contributes to communal flourishing. When communities choose to act with mercy, reconciliation is more likely to occur. However, if communities act with justice, or in most cases injustice and over-punishment, then there evolves the desire for revenge. The cycle will just continue, leading to societies that are bitter with revenge and punishment. Despite your view on mercy, it is clear that revenge is not a virtue that leads towards flourishing and without mercy, we are certainly likely to have more revenge throughout society. Afterall an eye for an eye would make the whole world blind.

There will always be the case to attempt to balance justice and mercy, but Louis Newman makes an interesting point about that relationship.

Offenders must be made to pay their moral debts, both because the offended party is entitled to some “compensation,” and because the social order depends on condemning moral transgressions. . . . The focus here is not on what the offender has earned, but rather on what all of us need in order to survive in a world where we inevitably both hurt others and are hurt by them.⁹¹

⁹¹ Newman, "Balancing Justice and Mercy: Reflections on Forgiveness in Judaism," 451.

Having a merciful society considers the fact that humans are flawed. At some point we will harm one another, and setting the precedent of acting mercifully pays it forward in the regard that when we are the wrongdoer, we too will get the consideration of mercy. Many of the scholars who believe mercy is a vice forget to consider the human impact of not acting with mercy. By over-punishing someone in the legal system we are not only harming them, but also their families, friends and perhaps ruining another person's developmental story causing the cycle to continue. Yes, the harmed need to see that a punishment is applied, but it should consider mercy for the sake of a harmonious society. Ishoy and Brien agree with this sentiment when Ishoy points out that Brien, "only partly clarifies what is meant by differentiating moral outcomes from moral justice. The argument is in favor of mercy on the grounds that it will promote harmony and reconciliation within our communities."⁹² Brien believes that moral justice does not address the feelings associated with the harmed, and only moral outcomes can do that. Fixing those feelings allows for the community to continue to grow, thus leading to flourishing. Therefore, having mercy in our communities is a virtue because it contributes to communal flourishing. Brien was clear on why mercy truly benefits society as a whole.

This gentle virtue promotes a humanizing and civilizing effect in a world in which the inhabitants are almost continually surrounded by violence and gratuitous displays of power and domination. Mercy reminds each of us that we are vulnerable to the power of others, and it sensitizes us to the vulnerability of others who stand within our own power. Being in this way aware of their vulnerability serves as another protection for them against our own power and our sometimes limited sympathies. Furthermore, this virtue brings into the world those sorts of actions that break the cycle of revenge and retribution into which actors and even whole communities can so easily fall. It promotes harmony in the community, reconciliation, and flourishing.⁹³

While acting mercifully does not fit every situation, it should be considered a public virtue due to the positive implications it can have on the community as a whole.

⁹² Ishoy, "Reassessing the Purpose of Punishment: The Roles of Mercy and Victim-Involvement in Criminal Proceedings," 48.

⁹³ Brien, "Mercy within Legal Justice," 107.

Due to length restraints of the paper, examples of mercy outside the criminal justice system were not addressed. Considering mercy rules in sports, mercy killing or euthanasia or even the implication of mercy within the educational system should certainly be considered in regards to the role that mercy plays within our communities. Still, it is clear that mercy within the criminal justice system contributes to flourishing. First mercy was defined as a wronged party choosing to punish someone less than they deserve despite the fact that it is clear they have been harmed. Then mercy was analyzed and this paper disproved the notion that mercy is a public vice because it acts against justice. Finally, this paper looked at the reasoning for considerations of mercy within the legal system and why it ultimately leads to a society that reconciles differences better and is harmonious, thus mercy is a public virtue.

America: Correlation but not Causation for the Growth of Al-Qaeda

Examining the meaning of Osama Bin Laden and his jihadist crusade against the west, mainly the United States may not be viewed as noble or honorable from our view point, but to himself and his terrorist organization, they were engaging in meaningful work in their twisted attempt to improve the lives of Muslims worldwide. Terrorism actually proves to be a great example of meaningful work, as terrorists are typically willing to endure horrendous conditions to participate in the work that they find meaningful. One of the key components of meaningful work is that it is subjective. One is meaningful to one actor, is not to the other, thus someone committing their life to terrorism can fall under the scope of meaningful work. Ruth Yeoman makes an interesting observation about how meaningful work is perceived from the internal point of view, “Our interest in living a meaningful life is not an interest in a life *feeling* a certain way, but rather an interest that it *be* a certain way, specifically, that it be one that can be appropriately appreciated, admired, or valued by others; that it be a life that contributes to or realized or connects in some positive way with independent value.”⁹⁴ The desire for life to be a certain way is clearly evident from the commitment of a terrorist to endure awful conditions in the hope that one day their actions will lead to the ideal result for them. They have associated independent value to their cause in the hope that if they are successful they will be appreciated and admired by others. In the case of Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden, the hope that their anti-western capitalist jihad would result in more autonomy in controlling the Middle East would prove to be strong enough to justify his terrorist actions. From most people's point of view, their actions were unjustified horror, but from the terrorist mindset, it is a purposeful commitment to their work. Christopher Michaelson is in complete agreement with these ideas when he wrote, “Workers

⁹⁴ Yeoman, “Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need,” 243.

seem to be willing to give up the objective element of meaningful work and other forms of material compensation in pursuit of subjectively valuable interest. Terrorism, to anyone but a terrorist, is a worthless endeavor. But terrorism has so much subjective value to a terrorist that he is willing to tolerate working and living in conditions that many people would consider uninhabitable.”⁹⁵ Thus the topic of terrorism fits well into the overall theme of meaningful work.

If you were to ask any American older than twenty where they were and how they felt on September 11th, 2001 they will have an instant answer. Al-Qaeda, the international terrorist organization led by Osama Bin Laden, successfully attacked the American homeland. “Al Qaeda shattered the collective safety of Americans, who helplessly watched the collapse of the Twin Towers live on their television screens.”⁹⁶ The attack killed over 3000 people and made Americans question their safety. Hijacked jets crashed into the Pentagon and the Twin Towers. After the attacks many Americans wanted revenge. However, because of this desire for revenge, a narrative about the power and growth of al-Qaeda emerged that is over exaggerated and inaccurate. Due to American support of Afghanistan during the Soviet Union’s invasion in the 1980’s many believe that America and the CIA largely contributed to the growth of al-Qaeda. Through this connection, the misconception that CIA funding during the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan led to the growth of al-Qaeda emerged. While American actions did not slow the growth of al-Qaeda throughout the 1990’s, to say that they drastically increased the growth would be untrue.

The topic of al-Qaeda’s place in the global terror network has been debated by scholars for almost two decades. There was an explosion of al-Qaeda and terrorism related research after the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. Scholars and national governments examined the

⁹⁵ Michaelson, “Meaningful Work and Moral Worth,” 39.

⁹⁶ Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 27.

rise of the group and attempted to pinpoint how they grew to have enough power to attack the United States in such a manner. Journalists also contributed serious scholarship on the topic. With them being all over the world and discussing issues with people on a daily basis, they had a unique opportunity to research the growth of the group first hand. Jason Burke, a well-known British Journalist, published *Al-Qaeda Casting a Shadow of Terror* in 2003. Although the text drew from many viable sources, it was problematic because it was too close to the September 11th attacks. Many of the sources still had lingering bias about the power and scope of al-Qaeda due to one extremely successful attack. He provided a valuable perspective on the topic, but missed the mark. Another noteworthy bit of scholarship on the topic is *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden: Global Terrorism and the Bin Laden Brotherhood* by Roland Jacquard. The book was published in 2001. The publication date is significant here as most of the research was done prior to the September 11th attacks. It does a great job avoiding bias and portraying the rise of bin Laden's to international terrorism heights. Yet because of the overwhelming focus on bin Laden, too much credit is given to him. The text is written as if bin Laden was a puppet master, which is not entirely accurate. To Jacquard's credit, he does an excellent job addressing the motivations for the formation of al-Qaeda.

Two of the most significant pieces of scholarship on the growth of al-Qaeda were created by the United States government and a professor at Oxford University. In reaction to the terrorist attacks on September 11th, the United States created the *National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. Traditionally government documents can be partisan and subjected to pressure from the public to write exactly what they would like to hear. The commission did not fall into this trap. The commission drew on a wide variety of experts from both sides of the aisle and were diligent in creating a lengthy release on the history and impact of

terrorist attacks upon the United States. In regards to al-Qaeda and bin Laden, the commission did not make the same mistakes as Burke or Jacquard. The commission looked at issues within the Middle East that would help from the desire to form such a group as al-Qaeda and the United States relationship to those issues. The commission claimed that there were issues such as unemployment and a general lack of connection between the cultures of America and the Middle East that hindered the relationship. It is clear after reading the commission that the individuals involved believed their research to be meaningful and substantial as they did an extremely thorough job. Based on the objective nature of the project it is far to say that the researchers enjoyed a high level of autonomy to create a meaningful piece of work. One major takeaway from the commission was that al-Qaeda did not start to directly plan or execute terrorist attacks until 1998. Prior to then, they merely supported other groups' actions.⁹⁷ This claim is different from that of Burke and Jacquard. Overall the commission takes an objective stance, but ultimately fails to truly address a singular claim for growth. Fawaz Gerges, a political science professor at Oxford University, has done the best job addressing the growth of al-Qaeda in his 2011 book *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*. Throughout his text he does an excellent job debunking many of the common myths about al-Qaeda such as the belief that they have been operational for two decades or that they have other cells waiting to attack the United States.⁹⁸ In reality the current threat level from al-Qaeda is low. Still, Gerges likes to point out that that does not mean that the threat from terrorism does not exist. He maintains the belief that terrorism cannot be beaten with drone strikes or military occupation because it is an ideal that is purposeful to fanatics. The military presence is a strong reminder of the reasons why there is anti-western

⁹⁷ Kean, *The 9/11 Commission report: final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, Section 2.5. <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/index.htm>.

⁹⁸ Gerges, "The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda: Debunking the Terrorism Narrative." https://www.huffingtonpost.com/fawaz-gerges/the-rise-and-fall-of-alqa_b_1182003.html.

resentment in the Middle East.⁹⁹ Gerges makes great points, but does not go far enough in associating Saudi Arabia with the majority of the blame for the growth of al-Qaeda.

What does most of the western world believe about al-Qaeda? Even some well-informed policy makers, counter terrorism experts and academics will comment that al-Qaeda is “a terrorist organization founded more than a decade ago by a hugely wealthy Saudi Arabian religious fanatic that has grown into a fantastically powerful network, comprising thousands of trained and motivated men, watching and waiting in every city, in every country, on every continent, ready to carry out the orders of their leader, Osama bin Laden.”¹⁰⁰ While parts of that idea may be true, as a whole it is fictitious. This quote from Jason Burke’s book, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow on Terror*, was written in 2003. At the time al-Qaeda as a functional international terrorist organization was only eight years old. To consider al-Qaeda to have “thousands of trained and motivated men” is misleading. Bin Laden has been responsible for training thousands of potential terrorists. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks estimate the number trained in his camps between 10,000 and 20,000.¹⁰¹ However, most do not swear the deep loyalty to him that is necessary to carry out orders for al-Qaeda. Most of the recruits were more focused on their own agenda and returned to their homeland after attending his camps. This reiterates the idea that terrorism for the most part is an individual calling. Individuals look for their own subjective purpose rather than typically wholeheartedly buying into the group message. Finally, while members of the group can and have been in cities all over the world, to say they are “watching and waiting” would be an exaggeration. A more accurate statement

⁹⁹ Gerges, "The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda: Debunking the Terrorism Narrative." https://www.huffingtonpost.com/fawaz-gerges/the-rise-and-fall-of-alqa_b_1182003.html.

¹⁰⁰ Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Kean, *The 9/11 Commission report: final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, Section 2.5. <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/index.htm>.

would be that al-Qaeda is made up of roughly a hundred people loyal to bin Laden, hoping to commit actions that will address grievances held against the west, mainly the United States, but also Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaeda is not an omnipresent force watching at any moment to kill thousands of innocent people. That was one attack, that was much more successful than they had ever dreamed it would be.¹⁰² After the attacks on September 11th 2001, many Americans assumed that the entire Muslim world was aligned with al-Qaeda and hated the United States.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, many Americans questioned why al-Qaeda hated us, assuming that al-Qaeda's actions were reflective of a large percentage of the Muslim world. In reality, this was the action of a fringe group that struggles because it is not reflective of a wide social base. Gerges claims that, "Al Qaeda's core ideology is incompatible with the universal aspiration of the Arabs. Arabs and Muslims do not hate America and the West but rather admire their democratic institutions, including free elections, peaceful transition of leadership, and separation of powers."¹⁰³ Yet, despite the fact that experts understand this, most of the United States population does not. This common misconception about the perception of America as well as the origins of al-Qaeda must be more clearly understood.

To attempt to define when al-Qaeda was created is a cloudy issue that has complicated the view of the organization and its relationship with the United States. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in an attempt to keep a communist government in power. Throughout the Muslim world, this was seen as a direct attack on Islam. As a result, thousands of Arabs from all over the Middle East flocked to Afghanistan to defend Islam from the communist empire because they felt it was their moral call to do so. At the same time the United States saw this as an opportunity to harm the Soviet Union during the Cold War. With the memory of

¹⁰² Wedgwood, "Al Qaeda, Terrorism, and Military Commissions," 329.

¹⁰³ Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 5.

Vietnam still fresh in the American psyche, the United States government saw a way to create the Soviet Union's own 'Vietnam.'¹⁰⁴ The United States had the chance to further a seemingly never ending and unpopular war for the Soviet Union. As a result, the United States funneled large amounts of financial and military assistance to the mujahideen fighting the Soviet Union. Osama bin Laden had been part of the fight against the Soviets since 1983 when he left Saudi Arabia to go to Afghanistan. Through this connection, the misconception that CIA funding during the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan led to the growth of al-Qaeda emerged. Many believe that because of American funding bin Laden was able to actively organize and create al Qaeda during the conflict in Afghanistan. Therefore, the United States would have been a factor in the growth of al Qaeda. Not only is that untrue, it was virtually impossible for bin Laden and his associates to directly benefit from American funding.

One condition of American funding for the conflict was that all the assistance flow through Pakistani military. This condition was established by General Zia ul-Haq, who had taken control of Pakistan in 1977. As a result, all the American funding would go directly to the "Afghan bureau of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the military spy agency. The American funding went exclusively to the Afghan mujahideen group and not the 'Arab Volunteers.'"¹⁰⁵ The distinction between the Afghan mujahideen and the Arab volunteers is key. The Afghan mujahideen were already in Afghanistan, whereas the Arab volunteers and bin Laden came to assist the conflict. The Arab volunteers had an entirely different support network. The volunteers were supplemented by Saudi government money and huge funds raised from mosques, non-governmental charitable institutions and private donors throughout the Islamic world. . . In fact,

¹⁰⁴ Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, 57.

as little as 25 percent of the money for the Afghan jihad was actually supplied directly by states.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore American financial assistance did not come into contact with bin Laden.

By 1987 the United States was giving 630 million dollars annually in aid through Pakistan to fight the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷ Only as the conflict dragged on did the United States increase their aid. From 1984 to 1987 aid increased because President Reagan had finally told his advisors “to do what is necessary to win.”¹⁰⁸ Throughout the whole conflict the United States and bin Laden were allied. They had the mutual goal of crushing the Soviet Union. Bin Laden and the United States were allies in the conflict and without United States aid, the conflict may have gone differently. Many that try to claim that al-Qaeda is decades old or even came into existence in 1979 such as “Yaroslav Trofimov author of *The Siege of Mecca*, he traces the rise of al-Qaeda to an uprising in 1979.”¹⁰⁹ That is simply wrong. In fact, when the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan ended in 1989, bin Laden had not yet begun to develop anti-American sentiments.¹¹⁰ That would only be created through jealousy in bin Laden’s homeland of Saudi Arabia over military decisions related to the Persian Gulf War.

Osama bin Laden was born on March 10, 1957 in Saudi Arabia. He was the 17th of 57 children to construction magnate Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden.¹¹¹ Although he was never close to his father, he was always very passionate about his homeland. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and held a special place in bin Laden’s heart. He felt that it was his duty to protect Islam and Saudi Arabia and in 1990 both came under fire. However, it wasn’t the Soviet Union or the United States doing the attacking. Instead, it was the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

¹⁰⁶ Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, 57.

¹⁰⁷ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776*, 883.

¹⁰⁸ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776*, 883.

¹⁰⁹ Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 47.

¹¹⁰ Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 47.

¹¹¹ Kean, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, Section 2.3.

“On August 2 Saddam’s army invaded and occupied Kuwait. Osama’s embarrassing warnings about Saddam’s designs had come true. No one else had called it right, not in Washington, London, Paris, Riyadh, Beijing, Moscow or, of course, Kuwait itself.”¹¹² With Hussein seeking Kuwaiti oil, the next logical step would be to attempt to seize the rich oil fields of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom was clearly threatened.

Bin Laden saw this as his time to shine. He had gained war experience in Afghanistan and had an army of mujahideen ready to defend Islam at his disposal. Bin Laden went to the prince of Saudi Arabia to propose his men protect the kingdom.

The Kingdom did not need to rely on the Americans to defend itself and liberate Kuwait. He, Osama, would do the job with his former comrades-in-arms. For the occasion he said they numbered 100,000 men, a vast exaggeration even if every jihadi “tourist” were counted. His Afghan veterans would train other Saudis. The Prince was suitably polite. Osama, after all, was a bin Laden and a popular hero to boot. Osama kept piling on details, explaining how his family construction firm could dig sand traps and trenches, much as it had built mountain tunnels and defenses in the Afghan conflict.¹¹³

Yet despite bin Laden’s enthusiasm, passion and plan for defense, the Saudi King ultimately decided that the United States would protect the Kingdom. On August 6th, Dick Cheney, then Secretary of Defense, presented a proposal from President Bush to King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz and the senior Saudi princes for defending the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The message closed with, “If you ask us to come we will come. We seek no permanent bases. And when you ask us to leave, we will go home.”¹¹⁴ Fahd accepted and forever changed the perspective of Osama Bin Laden. He felt betrayed and would develop harsh grievances against Saudi Arabia and later the United States. This decision would prove to be the turning point for bin Laden in his quest for international jihadism. “He viewed actions in the Gulf War and afterward as part of an American conspiracy to establish military bases and dominate Muslim lands and siphon their oil resources.

¹¹² Randal, *Osama: the Making of a Terrorist*, 104.

¹¹³ Randal, *Osama: the Making of a Terrorist*, 105.

¹¹⁴ Randal, *Osama: the Making of a Terrorist*, 105.

Bin Laden also resented Saudi rulers for disregarding his proposal to mobilize a mujahideen force to confront the army of Saddam Hussein.”¹¹⁵ Shortly after the American army arrived, Bin Laden started to publicly denounce the decision. He was then exiled then exiled and moved to Sudan where he would start the foundation for al-Qaeda.¹¹⁶ After the Persian Gulf War and throughout the 1990s bin Laden would further his grievances against Saudi Arabia and eventually what he would define as the “head of the snake,” the United States. Retrospectively it is clear that this problem was complex to both sides. Bin Laden had clear purpose and investment in his off Retrospectively it is clear that the King did not recognize the depth of Bin Laden's passion and Bin Laden did not recognize the complexity of the issue. It would have been unbelievably difficult to provide the same protection as the most powerful military in the world at the time.

Bin Laden spent the majority of the early 1990's in Sudan. Having to establish new networks, new sources of income and new bases, bin Laden and al-Qaeda were relatively inactive in terrorist plots throughout the time period. Bin Laden did his best to declare his support for any attacks that took place, but actually carrying them out was not happening yet.. While in Sudan he did increase his anti-Saudi and anti-American rhetoric. To fully understand why this transition occurs it is important to evaluate the past of the top two in command of al-Qaeda, bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. They wanted to control and purify their respective countries of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. However, because of their radical ideas and failure to “reform or topple their governments at home” they became anti-American.¹¹⁷ Both men came to view American support for their home governments as the reason why they were unsuccessful in

¹¹⁵ Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 49.

¹¹⁶ Kean, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, Section 2.3.

¹¹⁷ Doran, "The Pragmatic Fanaticism of al Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle Eastern Politics," 182.

their regional jihadist quests for power. While they blamed their homelands, much of their hatred and responsibility in their minds shifted towards the United States.

Prior to 1995, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri had mainly been focused on regional jihad and had not endorsed the idea of violence towards the west or innocent civilians. During 1995 that would all change. Bin Laden would start to address his grievances with the west and call for drastic action against Americans. He saw this “transnational jihad” as the only way to “stem the tide of the American offensive and force it either to retreat from Arab and Muslim territories or fight on multiple fronts.”¹¹⁸ He would issue two fatwas that justified the killing of American troops as well as the murder of innocent civilians.¹¹⁹ By the end of 1995 bin Laden was strongly anti-American. The growth of al-Qaeda had started, largely because of a decision by the Saudi government, rather than the United States. The Saudi government chose the American military instead of bin Laden. They chose the infidels rather than bin Laden’s trained mujahideen. That choice provided the motivation to drive bin Laden to his calling of international jihadism that he is known

Throughout 1995 and 1996, bin Laden would escalate his hatred toward the west, but he was still focused on Saudi Arabia. This is evident from his August 3, 1995 open letter to King Fahd concerning his latest cabinet shuffle. Bin Laden addresses issues from a religious context, but they are centered around political policies that Saudi Arabia had been conducting for decades.

You have given millions and millions of dollars to the infidel Syria, to reward it for having slaughtered thousands of Muslims in Hama in 1982. . . . Your regime supported the Maronites of the Kataeb in Lebanon. You support the despotic regime that is crushing Islam and Muslims in Algeria. You support, with weapons and money, the Christian insurgents of southern Sudan. . . . You financially support Arafat so that he can impose what the Jewish occupiers have not

¹¹⁸ Gerjes, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 55.

¹¹⁹ Gerjes, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 55.

succeeded in doing . . . your Kingdom is nothing but an American protectorate, and you are under Washington's heel."¹²⁰

It is also clear that bin Laden is associating much of the cause of these actions with the Americans. Whether that is justifiable is debatable, but in his mind, he had firmly moved into the anti-American camp. So much so that by 1996 with his August 23rd fatwa he identified himself as a terrorist and there is no turning back. He claims, "The walls of oppression and humiliation can be torn down only by a hail of bullets."¹²¹ He was now officially advocating for attacks against the United States, his one time ally in the Soviet Afghan war.

Bin Laden and the leaders of al-Qaeda developed many grievances from actions that the United States was taking throughout the Middle East. They saw these actions as a direct attack on Islam and the Holy Lands. They also viewed them as propping up regimes that bin Laden and al-Qaeda deemed unworthy of ruling. The first grievance that al-Qaeda voiced is shared among much of the Muslim population of the Middle East. The constant American support for Israel is unpopular. It is far worse in the eyes of al-Qaeda because that support allows the Jewish Israeli population to control the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.¹²² Al-Aqsa is the third holiest site in Islam, only behind Mecca and Medina. In addition to problems with the United States supporting Israel, al-Qaeda believes by the United States stationing troops in the Middle East, it allows them to steal their wealth and support corrupt rulers. Bin Laden and his World Islamic Front issued a fatwa on August 12, 1998 stating, "The Americans are eating away our wealth and humiliating our peoples . . . The Americans believed the lies of the Jews to the extent of bringing about war between the mujahideen and the American occupiers. . . They have supported the

¹²⁰ Bin Laden, Communique no. 17 August 3, 1995, *Open letter from Osama bin Laden to King Fahd Concerning the Latest Cabinet Shuffle* in Jacquard, Roland. *In the Name of Osama bin Laden: Global Terrorism & the bin Laden Brotherhood*, 172-174.

¹²¹ Roland, *In the Name of Osama bin Laden: Global Terrorism & the bin Laden Brotherhood*, 73.

¹²² Bin Laden, "Open Letter from the Islamic Liberation Army to the people of Kenya" in Roland, 224.

corrupt rulers of the region. The coming days will prove that America will share the fate of the USSR.”¹²³ Earlier in 1998, al-Qaeda's rhetoric had crossed the bridge of no return and finally had become similar to what the west considers the overarching goal of the group. On February 23rd bin Laden and the World Islamic Front issued a fatwa called *Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders*.

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies-civilians and military- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the Al Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God, ‘and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together,’ and ‘fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God.’¹²⁴

Only after this statement did al-Qaeda start putting actions with their words.

Throughout the 1990’s, there had been numerous terrorist actions throughout the Middle East and Africa. Even though al-Qaeda showed support for these attacks and at times claimed loose responsibility, there is very little evidence that bin Laden or al-Qaeda had any involvement or planning of these attacks until 1998.¹²⁵ Prior to August of 1998, plans for acts of “spectacular martyrdom” against the “head of the snake” had been devised to attempt to draw the United States out of its “hole” and “provoke a violent and irrational reaction.”¹²⁶ However, none of these spectacular plans came to fruition until August of 1998 when al-Qaeda “carried out the twin bombings of the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar Salaam Tanzania, in which 291 people were killed and approximately 5,000 wounded.”¹²⁷ Only then was al-Qaeda active in carrying out attacks against the United States. Again in 2000 al-Qaeda attacked the United States with the bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole* in a Yemeni harbor killing 17 and wounding another

¹²³ Bin Laden, “Communique no. 4, August 12, 1998, of the World Islamic Front *against Jews and Crusaders*” in Roland, 228.

¹²⁴ Williams, *Al Qaeda: Brotherhood of Terror*, 51.

¹²⁵ Kean, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, Section 2.5

¹²⁶ Gerjes, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 67.

¹²⁷ Gerjes, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 67.

38 American sailors.¹²⁸ But what was America's role in all of this? Was the United States the misunderstood victim? Was al-Qaeda an irrational actor seeking the spotlight? How did American actions throughout the 1980's and 1990's lead to this and eventually the horrific attacks of September 11th 2001?

After examining bin Laden's fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the late 1980s, through his exile from Saudi Arabia, to his anti-American transnational jihadism, it is necessary to analyze where the United States fits in over the course of the narrative. It is worth noting that while bin Laden was in Afghanistan, he and his "Arab Afghans", had their own source of funding apart from the United States. Nonetheless, the United States and bin Laden were on the same side in the conflict. While America was taking action in the conflict as part of the Cold War, it by no means encouraged the growth of al-Qaeda. "William Casey, Reagan's head of the CIA, to his colleagues. "Usually it looks like the big bad Americans are beating up on the natives. Afghanistan is just the reverse. The Russians are beating up on the little guys. . . . The Mujahedeen have all the motivation they need. All we have to do is to give them help."¹²⁹ Leaving the Afghan conflict, none of the future leaders of al-Qaeda, "neither Azzam, Fadl, Zawahiri, or bin Laden called for targeting the United States."¹³⁰ They were in the same trenches fighting as bin Laden.¹³¹ Therefore at the early stages of al-Qaeda there is no causation between growth and the United States.

As bin Laden returned home to Saudi Arabia he offered his help to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in defense against the potential invasion of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army. Ultimately, the king decided to rely on the United States for defense. Here it should be underscored that thirty

¹²⁸ Roland, *In the Name of Osama bin Laden: Global Terrorism & the bin Laden Brotherhood*, 83.

¹²⁹ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776*, 498.

¹³⁰ Geroges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 46.

¹³¹ Geroges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 46.

four other nations assisted the United States during the Persian Gulf war. Also the tactics that bin Laden approached the king with were geared more towards a conflict in a mountainous region of Afghanistan versus the openness of the Middle East. It was a logical decision to turn towards the United States military, rather than a relatively new group led by bin Laden. The Saudi rejection would fuel large bin Laden's resentment for the United States, but also for Saudi Arabia. In fact in the beginning the hatred was geared more directly at the Saudi Kingdom than the United States. This decision King Fahd made led to the growth of al-Qaeda. The United States was involved in this decision, but it would be far reaching to say that the United States directly caused this growth. This was mainly at the hands of the King Fahd.

The United States constant support of Israel and the existence of an Israeli state has led to the growth of al-Qaeda. American support for Israel is unpopular throughout the Middle East and that fact is recognized in the *National Commission for Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. "It is simply a fact that American policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American actions in Iraq are dominant staples of popular commentary across the Muslim world. That does not mean U.S. choices have been wrong. It means those choices must be integrated with America's message" to the Muslim world.¹³² This support has been a major motivating factor for al-Qaeda, largely because of the al-Aqsa Mosque. "Time and again, bin Laden and Zawahiri stressed that the expulsion of Americans and Israeli occupiers from Islam's holy sites remains their top priority."¹³³ They truly saw expelling American influence as their top priority for their work. Whether America's decision for support is right or wrong is not the issue. What is

¹³²Mednioff, "Compromising toward Confusion: The 9/11 Commission Report and American Policy in the Middle East," 110.

¹³³ Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 77-78.

more important is that the United States must recognize that their policies have consequences. In this instance American action has a correlation for growth.

Another major grievance of al-Qaeda has been the American “invasion” of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. The American military presence throughout the Middle East is obvious. Those actions are going to have consequences as well. However, that is not to say that America or Americans are disliked in the Middle East. “There is resounding evidence that major aspects of American policy in the Middle East, but not Americans or American values, were broadly disliked throughout Muslim and many other societies.”¹³⁴ This is a clear indicator that the United States may have to reexamine their policies to better promote a “moral leadership” in that area of the world and to build a more mutual relationship with the area.¹³⁵ Political scientist Stephen Walt noted that at the end of the Cold War the nation “responded with uncertainty” and had no real “blueprint” for action throughout the Middle East. That lack of details may have contributed to the regional problems of the area. Still it would be far reaching to say that a direct America policy led to the growth of al-Qaeda. Moreover it seems as though bin Laden has responded to regional problems by attempted to make the United States the scapegoat in the region, much like the Soviet Union was in Afghanistan. With this he attempted to unite the region in an anti American crusade. However, his attempt never gained a popular foothold in the region. American policies may have loosely contributed to the growth of al-Qaeda, but definitely not as directly as Saudi Arabian actions.

While America is not totally innocent in this narrative, they could have heeded earlier warnings and not let al-Qaeda grow in the manner that it did. Throughout the Clinton

¹³⁴ Mednioff, "Compromising toward Confusion: The 9/11 Commission Report and American Policy in the Middle East," 111.

¹³⁵ Medinoff, "Compromising toward Confusion: The 9/11 Commission Report and American Policy in the Middle East," 107-108.

administration, the United States did not place a major importance on slowing bin Laden, despite the fact that terrorist attacks on places such as Los Angeles had to be spoiled with the assistance of other governments.¹³⁶ The Clinton administration knew about the potential of a major problem, but lacked urgency. Richard Clark, coordinator of counterterrorism operation, commented “What’s it gonna take, Dick? . . . Does al Qaeda have to attack the Pentagon to get their attention?”¹³⁷ The reference is quite chilling now for most Americans. While American actions did not slow the growth of al-Qaeda or address their grievances, to say that they drastically increased the growth would be untrue and lack supportive evidence.

While addressing the concept of meaningful work and terrorism, it would be a missed opportunity to not discuss the meaningful work that victims and bystanders engage in as they react to a terrorist attack. While the attacks on September 11th, 2001 were horrifying, they also showed some of the best examples of the human spirit. The call to action to help their fellow man was truly inspiring and for many the realization that they needed to have more meaningful work in their lives.

Lutnick’s reaction to news of the attacks was to “run towards danger.” Within hours of the Twin Towers’ fall, hundreds of civil servants, victims’ family members, victims’ colleagues, and ordinary citizens and strangers had formed the beginnings of long-term rescue and recovery Ground Zero work force—for many of them, contractors or volunteers, “the peak experience of their lives”(This sentiment was later complicated by health problems and legal action that resulted from the dangerous working conditions at Ground Zero) In the weeks and months after September 11, many working Americans quit their jobs in search of more “meaningful work” or altered their lives to work less, work differently, or retire. The unplanned, unplan-able decision by *The New York Times* to publish brief ‘portraits’ of victims not only memorialized many of the nearly 3,000 attack victims’ lives by also reflected cultural values at a point in time and explained what most of the victims were doing at the attack sites- in most cases, working. As a result of the attacks, the meaning of work for many people has changed while personal, cultural, and work values have evolved. The instinct of some individuals to “run toward danger,” and in general, the

¹³⁶ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776*, 936-937.

¹³⁷ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776*, 936-937.

willingness of many workers and volunteers to seek work that served valuable social aims, has intuitive moral worth.¹³⁸

The reaction to the attacks have shown many the true meaning of the concept of a calling, “Many of the firefighters who died went to the World Trade Center because, even though they were off-duty, being a firefighter was perceived to be a moral duty one does not relinquish at the end of a shift.”¹³⁹ Even though it may have meant risking or losing their lives, the work was the end result. They valued the work, their sense of calling, their opportunity to do what mattered most to them when it matters most.

¹³⁸ Michaelson, "Meaningful Work and Moral Worth," 28.

¹³⁹ Michaelson, "Meaningful Work and Moral Worth," 42.

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Figure 1- Amphitheatrum Johnsonianum- Massacre of the Innocents

Source "Amphitheatrum Johnsonianum." From the Collection: Pocahontas. Accessed December 02, 2018. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.87.83.

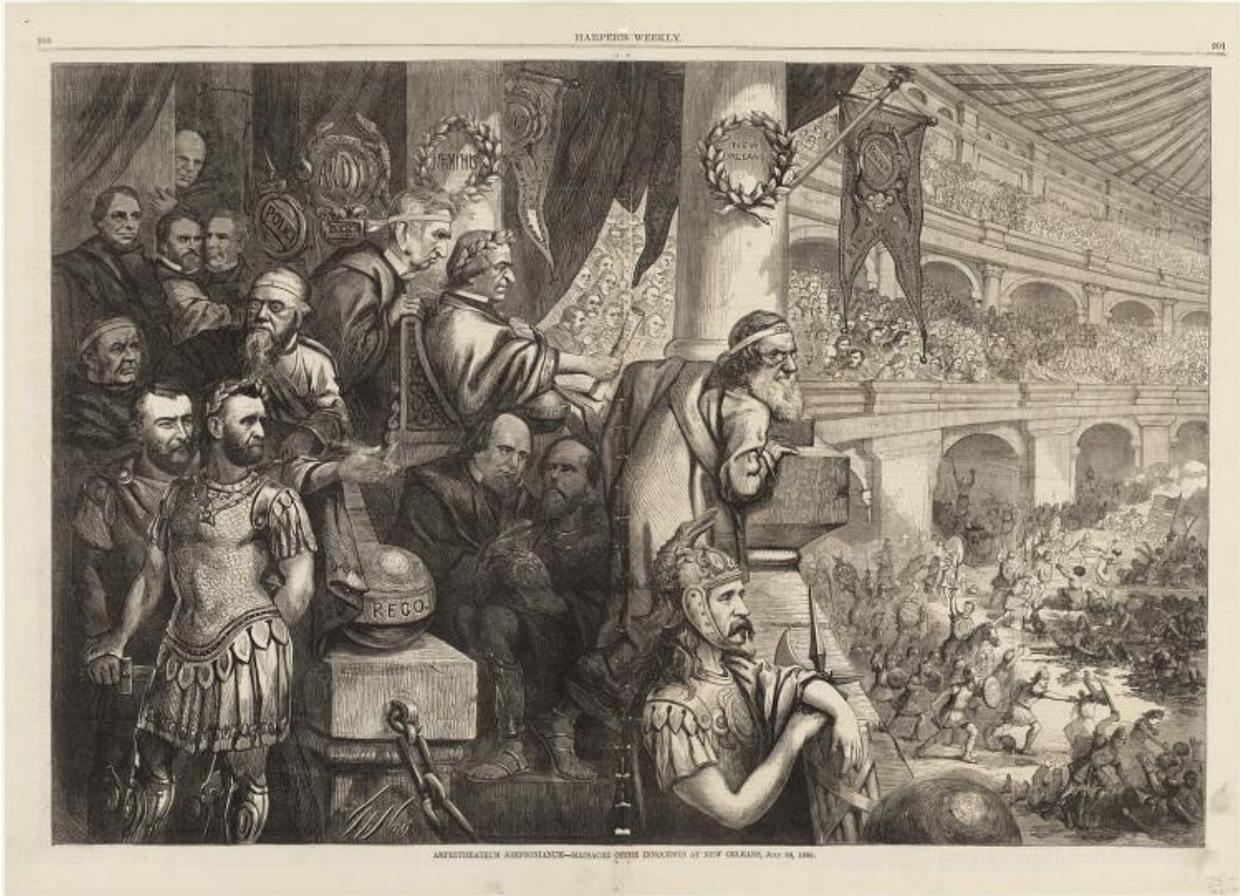


Figure 2- "The Modern Samson"

Source- Paintings and Photos of Manifest Destiny. Accessed December 02, 2018.
<https://www.csub.edu/~gsantos/img0054.html>.



Figure 3- Which is More Illegal?

Source- ""Which Is the More Illegal"." Omeka RSS. Accessed December 02, 2018.
<http://susannalee.org/sources/exhibits/show/cw-cartoons/post-cw/harpers-illegal>.

Figure 4- Slavery is Dead

Source- "Thomas Nast Cartoon Slavery Is Dead." Eon Images. Accessed December 02, 2018.
<http://www.eonimages.com/media/0fc5c90e-3e15-11e0-9537-795079daab47-thomas-nast-cartoon-slavery-is-dead>.

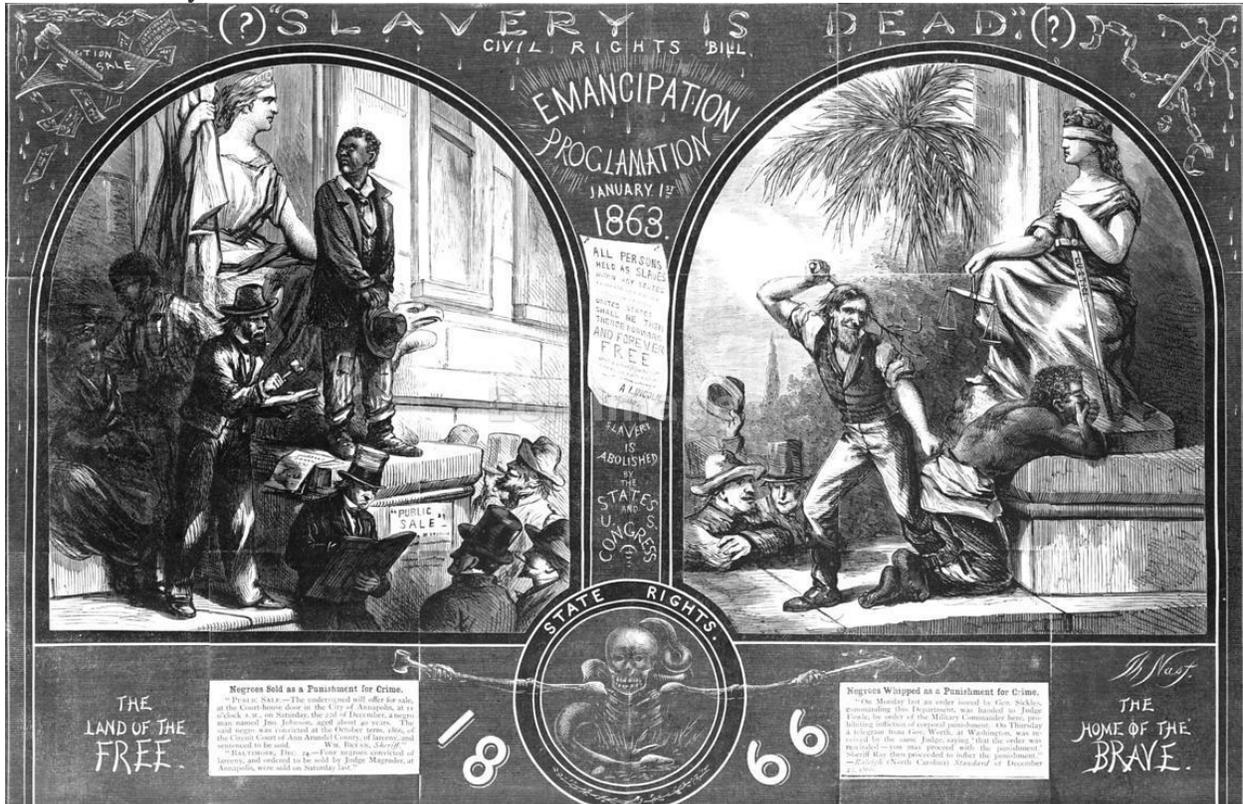


Figure 5- Southern Justice

Source "Murder of a Tennessee Unionist." Blue Gray Review. Accessed December 02, 2018. <http://www.bluegrayreview.com/2017/01/14/murder-of-a-tennessee-unionist/>.

