

COMMUNITIES, ADVERTISING, AND DEMOCRACY: MORAL EDUCATION
FOR REASONABLE SOCIAL COOPERATION

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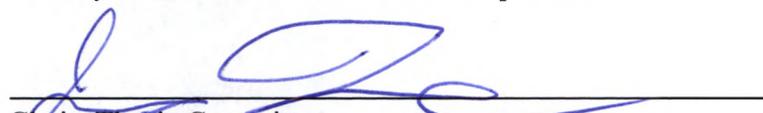
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COMMUNITIES, ADVERTISING, AND DEMOCRACY: MORAL EDUCATION
FOR REASONABLE SOCIAL COOPERATION

Eric Harrison Paul
San Francisco, California
2019

According to John Rawls, a well-ordered liberal democratic society requires citizens to possess the virtue of reasonableness, regarding fellow citizens as standing in a relationship of reciprocity among equals. To maintain a stable overlapping consensus of reasonable cooperation, citizens need to wholeheartedly endorse a reasonable political conception of justice by accepting it as a part or module of their own comprehensive doctrines. The failure of political cooperation in contemporary liberal societies suggests the failure of some of these conditions. I argue that due to the influence of pervasive persuasive advertising, citizens are socialized into the unreasonable comprehensive doctrine of consumerism, and that in conjunction with conditions of inadequate moral education in their comprehensive doctrines and in a reasonable political conception of justice, they are committing reasonableness *akrasia* as they fail to consistently act from moral considerations they would endorse upon reflection at both the comprehensive moral and political levels. To solve this problem, I argue that societies must provide opportunities for comprehensive moral education in the home and community as well as citizenship moral education in public schools according to principles of liberal neutrality.

I certify that the abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



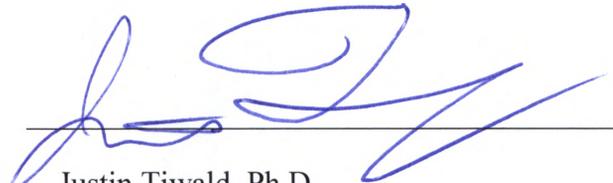
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Communities, Advertising, and Democracy: Moral Education for Reasonable Social Cooperation* by Eric Harrison Paul, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in Philosophy at San Francisco State University.



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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife Monica for encouraging me to pursue philosophy, for supporting me in this project, and for embodying and teaching me to live by many of the virtues of the good life and the good citizen. I would also like to thank my parents for always encouraging my learning.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	1
II. Rawls's account of reasonable democratic participation.....	9
III. Advertising and propaganda-like media in democratic societies	27
IV. The consumer way of life as a comprehensive doctrine and reasonableness <i>akrasia</i> through "incontinence".....	41
V. Evidence for the influence of unreasonable doctrines and unreasonable affirmation: Political consumerism and political "communities"	68
VI. Legal solutions	98
VII. Educational solutions and liberal neutrality.....	108
VIII. Reclaiming liberal neutrality in education.....	130
IX. The roles of teachers, schools, families, and communities	138
X. Conclusion	142
References	145

“Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? That question I think I can answer.”

-Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, I.1.1

I. Introduction

Rousseau argues in *The Social Contract* that the fundamental problem of human political society is that it subjugates the will of some to the will of others, and in the process makes them all unfree and unable to cooperate to achieve the common good. This is because they deny their innate fellow feelings of humanity toward others, compete with them for social status to obtain privileged positions, and act out of their own narrow interests rather than coordinating to meet the interests of all. Rousseau’s aim is described succinctly by one scholar as follows:

to justify terms of association (“principles of political right”), to show that a certain form of political association is legitimate by showing that individuals would themselves agree to that form, where those individuals are understood to be interdependent, aware of their interdependence, endowed with the capacity to distinguish just from unjust arrangements, and endowed with a capacity for freedom. (Cohen, 2010, p. 24)

His solution is to create “a form of association that will defend and protect the person and goods of each associate with the full common force, and by means of which each, uniting with all, nevertheless obey only himself and remain as free as before” (Rousseau, 2014, I.6.4). Rousseau’s solution involves developing in citizens responsiveness and care for others as free and equal citizens as well as identifying “norms of social cooperation” given these conditions and the human capacity for freedom (Cohen, 2010, p. 27). In Rousseau’s view, a legitimate political order makes decisions on the basis of the “general will” rather than the sum of individual wills, such that citizens understand the common good; reflect an equal concern for the good of others, jointly settle on communal laws based in such principles, and freely commit to collective governance on these terms (Cohen, 2010, p. 15). This allows citizens to not only provide for their personal needs such as protection and effective social coordination, but also retain and exercise their full freedom as human beings.

We see echoes of Rousseau’s project in the political philosophy of John Rawls, applied to a liberal political order that assumes a plurality of moral views and the possibility of reasonable unity on the fundamentals of political governance.¹ Rawls’s (2001) vision of justice as fairness in a democratic society “regards citizens as engaged in social cooperation, and hence as fully capable of doing so, and this over a complete life” (p. 18). He stipulates that in order to engage in social cooperation as free and equal citizens, they must possess two moral powers: the “capacity to understand, apply, and

¹ According to Joshua Cohen (2010), Rawls “once said in passing that his two principles of justice could be understood as an effort to spell out the content of the general will” (p. 2).

act...from principles of political justice that specify the fair terms of social cooperation” or a political conception of justice and “a capacity for a conception of the good” or a set of ordered aims and ends that specifies the definition of a good life (pp. 18–19). Rawls (2005) refers to this as a comprehensive moral conception or doctrine (see p. 13). From these two moral powers, persons derive their rational interests and their ability to act reasonably in political society. In order to socially cooperate in a pluralist liberal society, a citizen needs to develop a reasonable political conception of justice, which is only possible if she first affirms a reasonable comprehensive or partially comprehensive doctrine, one that allows her to seek her ultimate ends of a good life in a way that will be respectful to liberal democratic principles of equality of persons and fairness in political life. As such, while the political conception of justice forms the basis of relationships of social cooperation, citizens develop and remain wholeheartedly committed to this conception from within their own comprehensive moral frameworks, and societies cannot rely wholly on political values to develop in citizens a sense of justice (see Rawls, 2005, pp. 140–150).

I believe that Rousseau’s characterization of a society unable to cooperate and divided by social status holds true to ours today, and that his and Rawls’s views provide a foundation on which to build our solutions. I argue that contemporary conditions of pervasive persuasive advertising and a culture that saturates citizens’ minds with persuasive propaganda-like media undermine citizens’ social cooperation with others as free and equal citizens in liberal pluralist societies. They do so in two ways: by subverting citizens’ use of reasonable comprehensive doctrines in considerations of

political justice, thus making their political priorities and methods unreasonable as well, and by transforming the democratic deliberation process into an advertising campaign guided by advertising strategies and undemocratic principles that violate Rawls's criteria for public reason and reasonableness in social cooperation. Richard Lippke (1989) argues that pervasive persuasive advertising forcibly socializes citizens of modern capitalist democracies into the shallow "consumer lifestyle" (p. 38), and that this "suppresses autonomy by discouraging the emergence [sic] of its constitutive skills, knowledge, attitudes, and motivations" (p. 43). They do this by immersing citizens in the implicit content of the consumer lifestyle that encourages, among other things, that purchasing products will solve any of their problems, that advertisers should be the ones to tell them how to live a good life, and that they should be passive recipients rather than active participants in ideological messages (we see echoes of Rousseau's criticism of a status-seeking society here as well). It also threatens democratic participation, as it allows certain parties to dominate those who do not develop autonomy, and does not encourage reflection on or change to the status quo, as it regards "consumption-as-the-good-life as the standard against which to measure political and economic systems" (p. 52). While persuasive advertising alone does not pose this kind of threat, certain social conditions, such as workplaces that do not encourage autonomous thought, lack of education about advertisements or about living a good life, business incentives to promote shallow consumer culture through advertisements as a way to maintain profits, and the influence of money in political campaigns, contribute to an environment that discourages the development of citizens' autonomy.

I will argue that in addition to Lippke's concerns about advertising, the propaganda-like and pervasive character of media today pose a significant threat to democratic cooperation and civility, which suggests a strong need for states to take action to counteract it. In particular, the role of advertising in political campaigns, in a context where citizens have been socialized into the shallow culture of consumerism and acceptance of propaganda as valid sources of information for decisions about a good life and a just state, interferes with citizens' ability to adhere to and act on the basis of reasonable comprehensive doctrines that they can use to wholeheartedly² develop a reasonable political conception of justice. I will first describe Rawls's conception of political liberalism and why social cooperation requires citizens to hold reasonable comprehensive doctrines in order to enter public discussions with a reasonable political conception of justice. I will then describe Lippke's and others' views on advertising and argue that the consumer lifestyle may be considered an unreasonable partially comprehensive doctrine according to Rawls's criteria. I will also invoke Aristotle's account of virtue and continence to demonstrate how the comprehensive doctrine of consumerism or other unreasonable variants of our comprehensive doctrines can replace reasonable doctrines in an individual's deliberation and how this threatens public reason in political liberalism. In addition, I will argue that the mingling of pervasive advertising with political participation reframes political issues as consumer goods and politicians as

² My arguments for wholeheartedness owe much to Rawls's (2005) views on stability as well as those of the Neo-Confucians (see Angle & Tiwald, 2017). If citizens are unable to wholeheartedly or sincerely hold reasonable views based in their own moral doctrine, it seems reasonable to believe that they are unlikely to sustain cooperation over time.

producers who promise voters to deliver a product rather than representatives who advocate for their interests in a deliberative political process. This also takes the form of unreasonable moral appeals that cast the issues as struggles of good versus evil and politicians as defenders of a comprehensive doctrine rather than representatives of a political conception of justice. In other words, I will argue that the pervasive influence of advertising and for consumer goods, as well as other propaganda-like media associated with entertainment and inappropriately moral(ized) viewpoints, not only interferes with citizens' ability to act from the considerations of a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, but also threatens democratic participation by supplanting considerations of justice with unreasonable expectations that stifle the compromise necessary for democratic institutions in a pluralist society.

Lippke (1989) considers several solutions to the problem of pervasive persuasive advertising. I will outline a framework for two types of solutions, one that relies on policy changes and another that involves changes to the education system. While I consider the first set promising to address some aspects of the issue or after the second set have been implemented, I consider the second more promising and also more plausible and practical given the current realities that the advertising culture of morality and politics has precipitated. I will consider how to encourage citizens to develop a conception of the good life through moral education, and will argue that a moral education sufficient to offset the influence of media bombardment with the artificial communication of consumer propaganda requires certain social conditions to be met. Comprehensive doctrines sufficient to counter propaganda-like media must meet Rawls's

criteria for reasonableness, create a conversation about the ultimate ends of a good human life using shared assumptions and values, connect the individual with a community to reinforce values, and derive at least in part from a systematic ethical tradition, and I will connect this with Rousseau's seemingly contradictory philosophical liberalism and sociological communitarianism (see Cohen, 2010, p. 22). I will also show how this supports Lippke's view that consumer culture which derives from advertising cannot be considered a view of the good life from which a person can develop autonomy.

Rawls's difference principle to counteract the impact of wealth distribution schemes (for example, capitalism) on political relations between citizens in a democracy represents what he sees as a necessary countermeasure to allow for reasonable social cooperation given society's decision to use these means to allocate wealth and status, or a "principle of reciprocity" (see Rawls, 2001, p. 64). I argue that while contemporary liberalism appropriately focuses on the economic disparities that may arise from a capitalist system, and proposes methods to counteract them, it does not adequately address the moral disparities that arise from it, considered from each citizen's individual perspective. If a citizen considers herself to affirm a certain set of moral ideals but lacks the capacity to develop character and adhere to them, due to factors inherent in the contemporary neoliberal global capitalist system, the liberal state has a similar obligation to provide her the opportunity to live according to her self-affirmed comprehensive doctrine.³ Addressing these moral disparities involves ensuring that citizens develop a

³ While I do not have the space for this argument here, I believe that addressing this moral disparity represents a significant human rights concern as well, allowing all citizens equitable opportunities to

robust conception of the good life through a self-chosen moral community, and that they have sufficient moral education to counteract the influence of pervasive persuasive advertising and other propaganda-like media.⁴ Rawls (2005) makes reference to such an idea when he says that variations in moral capacities should not disadvantage citizens from being free and equal because of “the social practices of qualifying for positions and free competition against the background of fair equality of opportunity, including fair equality of opportunity in education” (p. 184).

Finally, although the liberal state must remain neutral as to conceptions of the good life, and while this rules out teaching a state-endorsed conception of the good (see Ebels-Duggan, 2013), the state may—indeed, when necessary, must—support citizens in their efforts to develop personally chosen moral views that do not conflict with the basic Rawlsian political conception of justice or break what Robert Kane calls the “moral sphere” where citizens can respect one another as ends (see Kane, 2010). I will draw upon work from Kane, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, Owen Flanagan, and others, and also suggest my own additions to their solutions that include parent education, incorporating ethical discussions and homework into Social Emotional Learning curricula, and adopting a home-centered, school-supported moral education paradigm. In the process, I will also diagnose a current confusion in the public school system that contributes to political

develop a self-affirmed conception of the good life (a similar argument is found in Tessman, 2005). I focus primarily on the political aspect of this moral disparity in this paper and how it impacts social cooperation, but I believe states have a moral responsibility to address it for the sake of allowing citizens a minimally decent life, and not only to secure social cooperation.

⁴ I believe that these conditions must exist to allow reasonable cooperation between citizens who view one another as equals, just as egalitarian liberals such as Rawls and Dworkin argue that a social minimum is necessary for citizens to regard one another as equals (see White, 2015).

polarization and obstructs effective moral education, that of the distinction between comprehensive nonpolitical moral views and political moral views, and suggest that solving this problem and training teachers as exemplars of reasonableness would make schools effective places for the kind of moral and citizenship education that contributes to social cooperation among reasonable parties.

To put it plainly, my argument is: if a necessary condition of a well-ordered liberal political society is that its citizens can cooperate with one another, if cooperation requires reasonableness, and if reasonableness is a moral virtue for the political sphere, then lack of cooperation indicates moral vice in a liberal political society. As such, the problem of an uncooperative society is that its members are insufficiently morally upright, construed from the narrow perspective of political morality. While the purpose and nature of the liberal state complicates the question and solution to the issue of moral uprightness, I will argue that it is precisely in citizens' moral vice—from their own comprehensive doctrines and from a reasonable political conception of justice compatible with the commitments of the liberal state—that we must improve in order to create and maintain a well-ordered political society.⁵

II. Rawls's account of reasonable democratic participation

⁵ I also believe that societies have the moral obligation to promote or at least enable their citizens' pursuit of the good life, and that an essential constituent of the good life is a comprehensive doctrine and moral community. However, as this is not the subject of this paper, I defer this discussion for another time.

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls (2005) argues that his ideal of justice as fairness “takes as its fundamental idea that of society as a fair system of cooperation over time, from one generation to the next” (p. 14). To specify the duties of and toward individuals and the way to measure a society’s achievement of justice, he introduces the “idea of citizens (those engaged in cooperation) as free and equal persons” and “the idea of a well-ordered society as a society effectively regulated by a political conception of justice” (p. 14). In this section, I will explain how Rawls defines several terms in his theory of political liberalism, emphasizing the roles that reasonableness, comprehensive doctrines, and political conceptions of justice play in securing fair social cooperation and political deliberation among an inevitably pluralist democratic populace.

In a liberal political society, persons are conceived not as metaphysical entities dependent on a given comprehensive doctrine that not all members share, but as citizens, the functional units of a society with certain rights and responsibilities necessary to a well-ordered society. He describes citizens in this political conception as “free and equal persons in virtue of their possessing to the requisite degree the two powers of moral personality, namely, the capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity for a conception of the good” (Rawls, 2005, p. 34). Citizens must possess these two moral powers in order to be “fully cooperating members of society” (Rawls, 2005, p. 19) because they allow them to deliberate about how to meet standards of fairness in political interactions and about their own plans on how to achieve a good life. In Rawls’s (2005) words, “[a] sense of justice is a capacity to understand, to apply, and to act from the public conception of justice which characterizes the fair terms of social cooperation” while “the

capacity for a conception of the good is the capacity to form, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of one's rational advantage or good" (p. 19). While a citizen's commitments to a given sense of justice or conception of the good may change over her lifetime, she remains the same person, with the same rights and responsibilities as a free and equal citizen. But these commitments are a core component of one's moral identity and "give shape to a person's way of life, what one sees oneself as doing and trying to accomplish in the social world" (Rawls, 2005, p. 31). Rawls (2005) also notes that "if we suddenly lost [these commitments], we would be disoriented and unable to carry on" or perhaps would think there was "no point in carrying on" (p. 31). In other words, these two powers are significant because they ground "two main elements of the idea of cooperation, the idea of the fair terms of cooperation and the idea of each participant's rational advantage, or good" (Rawls, 2005, p. 34). We need a sense of justice to know how to judge fair cooperation, and we need a conception of the good (similar to Rousseau's self-love) to judge our personal pursuit of flourishing.

Rawls (2005) defines a conception of the good by stating that it normally consists of a more or less determinate scheme of final ends, that is, ends we want to realize for their own sake, as well as attachments to other persons and loyalties to various groups and associations...We also connect with such a conception a view of our relation to the world—religious, philosophical, and moral—by reference to which the value and significance of our ends and attachments are understood. (pp. 19–20)

A conception of the good provides final ends for what we consider to be human flourishing, as well as a framework in which to situate our pursuits in terms of their ultimate meaning. From their conception of the good, citizens develop a moral conception or doctrine, a set of values about the good life which contain at least some nonpolitical values that not all reasonable persons in a pluralist society must agree to in order to politically cooperate. A moral doctrine can be comprehensive or partially comprehensive, which Rawls (2005) describes as follows:

It is comprehensive when it includes conceptions of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole...fully comprehensive if it covers all recognized values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated system: whereas a conception is only partially comprehensive when it comprises a number of, but by no means all, nonpolitical values and virtues and is rather loosely articulated. (p. 13)

Either a comprehensive or partially comprehensive doctrine guides a person's life plan and determines what the person believes constitutes a good life and a good person.

Because a person can change comprehensive doctrines in his lifetime, the doctrine itself is not constitutive of his (politically defined) identity⁶ but it does give him ideals and aspirations that need not be shared by all other members of a society in order to achieve social cooperation. Rawls (2005) considers these within "the culture of the social, not of

⁶ This is in response to charges from, for example, Michael Sandel (1998), that Rawls's conception of personhood must make non-neutral metaphysical assumptions about the value of individuality. See Rawls 2005.

the political” or the “background culture” of society (p. 14), and assumes that “all citizens affirm a comprehensive doctrine to which the political conception they accept is in some way related” (p. 12). Thus a comprehensive doctrine surrounding a conception of the good dictates a person’s overall final ends, and these include how she views political society and the purpose of political deliberations, so we can say that her political conception of justice emerges as an essential feature of her sincerely held comprehensive doctrine.

From his capacity for a sense of justice, a person develops a political conception of justice, “a moral conception...for political, social, and economic institutions” that underlies the basic structure of society, justified to citizens by its appeal to aspects of their own moral beliefs, and based on shared ideas and principles from the society’s institutions (Rawls, 2005, p. 11). In Rawls’s (2005) view, a political conception of justice is a “freestanding view” of justice not dependent on any given comprehensive doctrine that treats all persons as free and equal citizens committed to social cooperation (p. 10). It is a “module, an essential constituent part [of the comprehensive doctrine], that in different ways fits into and can be supported by various reasonable comprehensive doctrines that endure in the society regulated by it” (Rawls, 2005, p. 145). Also, “its content is expressed in terms of certain fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society” (Rawls 2005, p. 13). As such, a political conception of justice is neutral or impartial in that it takes strictly political stances on issues and does not undertake to describe the good life or ethical duties from a

comprehensive perspective. Rather, a political conception of justice prescribes the conditions and virtues of a good citizen in a just liberal democratic regime governed by the idea of “society as a fair system of cooperation over time” (Rawls, 2005, p. 14). In other words, a political conception of justice is a moral conception specifically created and endorsed for the purpose of maintaining a liberal society and its basic institutions.

Rawls sees it as necessary to separate citizens’ individual comprehensive⁷ doctrines from conceptions of justice they appeal to in the sphere of public reason because of the fact of reasonable pluralism: that not all citizens willing to reciprocally engage in social cooperation will endorse the same comprehensive doctrine. Rawls argues that we can assume the fact of reasonable pluralism in a liberal society as a natural consequence of assuring freedom of conscience: “the diversity of reasonable comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines found in modern democratic societies is not a mere historical condition that may soon pass away; it is a permanent feature of the public culture of democracy” (p. 36). In addition, “among the views that develop” under conditions of freedom “are a diversity of reasonable comprehensive doctrines...they are in part the work of free practical reason within the framework of free institutions” (pp. 36–37). The only way to prevent citizens from affirming different comprehensive doctrines would be to use state power to oppressively compel some of them to affirm a single comprehensive doctrine, which Rawls (borrowing a term from Sanford Shieh) calls “the fact of oppression” (Rawls, 2005, p. 37). As such, reasonable

⁷ Unless otherwise specified, I will describe all comprehensive and partially comprehensive doctrines as “comprehensive doctrines” to differentiate them from political conceptions of justice, as the former contain at least some nonpolitical values while the latter do not.

citizens will agree to a political conception of justice that allows for a plurality of views and which requires the state to only use coercive power in a manner that all reasonable citizens could agree with. Rawls claims that in a well-ordered society, there will need to be an “overlapping consensus” among citizens to ensure that society remains a fair system of cooperation to all who affirm reasonable comprehensive doctrines. He describes the overlapping consensus as

all the reasonable opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines likely to persist over generations and to gain a sizable body of adherents in a more or less just constitutional regime, a regime in which the criterion of justice is that political conception itself. (Rawls, 2005, p. 15)

An overlapping consensus is necessary to democratically enact and enforce a political conception of justice consistent with a fair liberal society, and requires the possibility of reasonable pluralism—that is, that a substantial majority of the citizens hold a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, even if they differ greatly as to their account of the good life.

While a political conception of justice is normative, its moral claims on citizens consist in reasonableness—treating fellow citizens as standing in an equal and reciprocal relationship with oneself—and it relies on values that all reasonable citizens of the society can endorse as part of their own comprehensive views. Rawls uses the term “reasonable” to describe a necessary quality that a citizen must have in order to cooperate in a just pluralist society: “[p]ersons are reasonable in one basic aspect when, among equals say, they are ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms of cooperation

and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will likewise do so”

(Rawls, 2005, p. 49). It contains the idea of reciprocity, which

lies between the idea of impartiality, which is altruistic (as moved by the general good), and the idea of mutual advantage understood as everyone’s being advantaged with respect to one’s present or elected situation as things are.

Reasonable persons, we say, are not moved by the general good as such but desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept. They insist that reciprocity should hold within that world so that each benefits along with the others. (p. 50)

We might consider this similar to Rousseau’s sensitivity to the general will, but transformed through concessions to a liberal, pluralistic political order into a reciprocal concern for others’ and our own interests to be met through coordinated social action. In addition, Rawls (2005) argues that “[r]easonable persons will think it unreasonable to use political power, should they possess it, to repress comprehensive views that are not unreasonable, though different from their own” (p. 60) and “[r]easonable persons see that the burdens of judgment set limits on what can be reasonably justified to others, and so they endorse some form of liberty of conscience and freedom of thought” (p. 61). In the sense that Rawls uses it, ‘reasonable’ means willing to act in a reciprocal relationship with other citizens to preserve society as a system of fair social cooperation and to uphold standards of political action and judgment that all others can agree with, provided that they also are willing to abide by these agreements of fairness and reciprocity. In Rawls’s

view, this promotes tolerance of different views and allows citizens to pursue their own life plans, while also giving them a standard on which to unite on deliberations pertaining to the liberal state. In contrast, Rawls (2005) claims that

people are unreasonable in the same basic aspect when they plan to engage in cooperative schemes but are unwilling to honor, or even to propose, except as a necessary public pretense, any general principles or standards for specifying fair terms of cooperation. They are ready to violate such terms as suits their interests when circumstances allow. (p. 50)

This is similar to “moral sphere-breaking behavior” in Kane’s (2010) Moral Sphere Theory, or behavior that treats another citizen as a mere means or seeks to impose a view of the good life on another.⁸ As such, we may describe the quality of reasonableness as a virtue of democratic citizenship which tends to enable bearers to attempt, in good faith, social cooperation with others through civility and reciprocal regard as equal citizens whose interests are worthy of equal regard with one’s own.

With this definition of reasonableness, we can describe a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, or the kind of comprehensive doctrine that would motivate a citizen to pursue a conception of the good and interact in political society in a way that he could affirm a reasonable political conception of justice. Rawls sometimes describes a reasonable comprehensive doctrine simply as a doctrine that a reasonable person (as

⁸ In fact, I consider Kane’s Moral Sphere Theory based on a Dimensional Theory of Value as a philosophical justification for a political morality such as that Rawls presents as political liberalism. See Kane, 2010.

described above) endorses. However, he also provides a more rigorous account, saying it is

an exercise of theoretical reason: it covers the major religious, philosophical, and moral aspects of human life in a more or less consistent and coherent manner. It organizes and characterizes recognized values so that they are compatible with one another and express an intelligible view of the world...[by weighing value considerations this] is also an exercise of practical reason...while a reasonable comprehensive view is not necessarily fixed and unchanging, it normally belongs to, or draws upon, a tradition of thought and doctrine. Although stable over time, and not subject to sudden and unexplained changes, it tends to evolve slowly in the light of what, from its point of view, it sees as good and sufficient reasons.

(Rawls, 2005, p. 59)

Martha Nussbaum (2011) argues that Rawls posits two standards for reasonableness here: one is that a person must be reasonable and then we can consider her comprehensive doctrine to be reasonable; another is that the comprehensive doctrine must meet certain theoretical requirements like being more or less fully articulated, tending to evolve slowly, and normally belonging to a tradition of thought and doctrine. She accepts the first and argues that since Rawls says elsewhere that it is good for people to have only partially comprehensive doctrines because the less systematic versions can allow them to accept a liberal political conception of justice, Rawls must lean in this direction too.

But while it is plausible that Rawls might think that any comprehensive doctrine is reasonable by definition so long as a reasonable person (i.e., any person willing to be fair) holds it, it seems that Rawls is onto something when he suggests that such doctrines are typically also structured and well-articulated. Note that he is not saying this is a necessary condition of a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, only that they “normally” have these qualities. Rawls (2005) gives an example of someone with a reasonable partially comprehensive doctrine, whose view is “not systematically unified” and “includes a large family of nonpolitical values...a pluralist view...leaving all values to be balanced against one another, either in groups or singly, in particular kinds of cases” (p. 145). This view “holds, with political liberalism, that under reasonably favorable conditions that make democracy possible, political values normally outweigh whatever nonpolitical values conflict with them” (Rawls, 2005, p. 146). As such, even partially comprehensive doctrines must have a minimal degree of cohesion and organization to warrant giving reasons why political values would prevail in these cases. In addition, Rawls (2005) discusses the value of “slippage” in comprehensive doctrines that citizens hold, or how there are “many ways for liberal principles of justice to cohere loosely with those (partially) comprehensive views” and that citizens may come to adjust over time as they see the value in living in a liberal society to being able to freely practice their way of life (p. 160). This could be why Nussbaum believes that Rawls endorses a looser account of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Even so, a certain minimum degree of theoretical cohesion is necessary to determine whether one’s comprehensive views fit liberalism, or how to incorporate liberalism into one’s comprehensive views if it

initially does not. Perhaps Rawls is, similar to Lippke (1989), referring to conditions that people need in order to make autonomous decisions based on their comprehensive doctrines. Perhaps they need rigorous frameworks, consistency, communities, and discourses that check their biases, help them reach reflective equilibrium, and help them not become unreasonable. This also echoes Rousseau's communitarian elements that seem to conflict with a strictly liberal reading of his philosophy. We will revisit this point later in this paper, but for now let us accept that a reasonable comprehensive doctrine is at least a comprehensive doctrine that a reasonable person can affirm.

Citizens must also hold a reasonable political conception of justice in order to cooperate with fellow citizens in a liberal society. While Rawls initially seems to claim in *Political Liberalism* that citizens must come to the same political conception of justice, he revises this view in later works (see Rawls, 1997/1999) to include a family of reasonable conceptions of political justice that can all view one another as mutually reasonable. As McMahon (2014) points out, this seems like it would be inconsistent with the definition of reasonable, if we mean reasonable in the sense of skillfully determining what is just. However, according to McMahon (2014), what Rawls actually seems to mean here is that citizens of a polity are reasonable when they accept political cooperation that does not drift too far from the ideal of reasonableness. In other words, any conception other than their own will seem unreasonable in some ways, but it would be unreasonable for them to refuse to cooperate on such terms as to only accept their own view; a reasonable person will judge that there is an appropriate degree of concession to

accepting unreasonable views and a process to decide which view to accept on a given issue, and will accept such concessions. As McMahon (2014) summarizes:

The reasonableness of political cooperation can still be understood in terms of appropriate concession, but this will be the second-order concession that I have described. Opposing political conceptions –opposing conceptions of appropriate concession – will be seen as unreasonable to a certain degree. So the selection for implementation of a particular conception will require some members of the polity to make concessions at a higher level. But when these higher-level concessions are imposed by a decision procedure that can be viewed as providing a reasonable way of resolving political disagreements, the reasonable members of the polity will be able to accept them. (p. 22)

In other words, a reasonable political conception of justice will be one held by a citizen who holds a reasonable comprehensive doctrine and incorporates the ideal of reasonableness as she understands it, and who is willing to accept a reasonable deviation from the ideal to accept a process of resolving disagreements. Reasonable citizens hold to reasonable comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions that accept the need for compromise with others who do not share their exact opinions, but only when in service of “a decision procedure that can be viewed as providing a reasonable way of resolving political disagreements” (McMahon, 2014, p. 22). In this way, we can describe reasonable citizens as those who hold reasonable comprehensive doctrines and who hold reasonable political conceptions of justice, those that endorse decision procedures that meet a standard of fairness and reciprocity that all who endorse reasonable

comprehensive doctrines can agree to. These would be citizens who earnestly seek social cooperation and are willing to uphold standards of fairness and reciprocity among political equals.

Such a decision-making procedure would rely on the discourse of public reason in order to function. For Rawls (2005), public reason refers to “citizens’ reasoning in the public forum about constitutional essentials and basic questions of justice” and it is “best guided by a political conception the principles and values of which all citizens can endorse” (p. 10). Public reason in a democratic society specifically applies to reasoning among “equal citizens who, as a collective body, exercise final political and coercive power over one another” (Rawls, 2005, p. 214). This closely relates to citizens’ duty of civility, or showing respect for others’ comprehensive doctrines and appealing to principles that all can endorse. According to Rawls (2005), “citizens share in political power as free and equal, and [as] reasonable and rational they have a duty of civility to appeal to public reason, yet we differ as to which principles are the most reasonable basis of public justification” and as such there is still room for discussion on a given decision (p. 226).

Rawls also describes the role of comprehensive doctrines in public reason:

reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines

introduced are said to support. (Rawls, 1997/1999, p. 152, as cited in Nussbaum, 2011, p. 17)

In other words, we may invoke our comprehensive doctrines to indicate our ultimate justification for a given course of action, but we must eventually tie these reasons to political values that all reasonable citizens can agree with, even if they disagree about whether the reasoning is sound. Nussbaum (2011) further clarifies that public reason applies to the context of public decision-making, not conversations in the background culture between citizens that may be entirely grounded in a comprehensive doctrine (p. 17). We can converse with others and make personal decisions on the basis of our own comprehensive doctrines when these decisions are not about essential constitutional features and questions of justice that affect fundamental rights. But when these decisions involve issues that pertain to public reason, even a private vote is only justly cast if we appeal within ourselves to principles of public reason that all reasonable citizens could endorse. While certainly not enforceable by law, this guideline marks an important civic duty of a citizen, and one that the state can and should teach in public settings such as schools.

Under conditions where reasonable citizens deliberate with one another on fundamental political questions using public reason and a sufficient number of citizens join the overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, we can achieve social cooperation in a well-ordered society. This requires a unified political conception of justice or at least a united group of citizens with political conceptions of justice that can cooperate together. As Rawls (2005) describes it,

[c]ooperation is guided by publicly recognized rules and procedures that those cooperating accept and regard as properly regulating their conduct. Cooperation involves the idea of fair terms of cooperation: these are terms that each participant may reasonably accept, provided that everyone else likewise accepts them...[or in other words,] reciprocity. (p. 16)

These produce conditions of realism and stability. A society is considered well-ordered by a political conception of justice if “[c]itizens who affirm reasonable but opposing comprehensive doctrines belong to an overlapping consensus: that is, they generally endorse that conception of justice as giving the content of their political judgments on basic institutions” (Rawls, 2005, p. 39). In order for this to occur, “unreasonable comprehensive doctrines (these, we assume, always exist) do not gain enough currency to undermine society’s essential justice” (Rawls, 2005, p. 39).

As an additional note on Rawls’s terminology, a political society is not the same as a community. According to Rawls (2005), a community is “a society governed by a shared comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine” (p. 42). We may describe this community as having political authority (such as an illiberal state with a state-sponsored comprehensive doctrine) or merely as a group of believers from a given comprehensive doctrine who function within a political society. The impact that membership in such a community has on adhering to reasonable comprehensive doctrines will be discussed later in this paper.

Finally, Rawls's ideal of autonomy that all reasonable citizens can accept is seen as political, not ethical in a comprehensive sense. For full autonomy, the qualifications are that "in their conduct citizens not only comply with the principles of justice, but they also act from these principles as just" (Rawls, 2005, p. 77). This sets a lower standard than Mill, Kant, Joseph Raz, or others who argue that autonomy entails certain comprehensive ideals, and thus is compatible with all reasonable comprehensive doctrines, and a wider range of possible ways of life in a liberal state than perfectionist liberals. In this regard, Lippke's (1989) characterization of the autonomy that pervasive advertising threatens may go too far. However, Rawls's political autonomy still requires citizens to act from and comply with principles of justice, meaning that they must not have their decisions determined by unreasonable commitments. For example, if a person acted from an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine, acted unreasonably in that he did not deliberate or acted on a whim in making an important decision, or acted on reasons that are not "public" and based on principles that all reasonable citizens could endorse, it seems that he did not act in compliance with the principles of justice. If a person was prevented from learning how to or being able to deliberate and act in compliance with principles of justice, we could argue that this person lacked political autonomy, which is precisely what Lippke argues about citizens' autonomy in general. In addition, a person needs to adhere to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine in order to develop a reasonable political conception of justice, and if she cannot consistently affirm this or another reasonable comprehensive doctrine, she cannot be reasonable. Thus the idea of autonomy that Lippke worries about—making our own decisions, reflecting on evidence,

and making deliberations—seems to apply to Rawls as well, regardless of whether we describe it as a political or ethical autonomy. Either way, citizens need to adhere to and maintain adherence to reasonable comprehensive doctrines, and this requires at least a minimum degree of autonomy. Citizens may switch between them, but they must be able to deliberate enough and have sufficient autonomy to adhere to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine even when enticed to do otherwise. The only difference seems to be that political autonomy does not require the citizen to exercise autonomy based on rationality or an ethical individualism, even while it requires citizens to remain firm enough in their convictions that they remain reasonable.

In conclusion, in a cooperative, well-ordered society characterized by an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, citizens reason with one another according to publicly known and followed standards of fairness and reciprocity. This allows them to make political decisions based on reasoning that all reasonable citizens can accept, even if they have differing views on whether that reasoning is sound. We derive the criteria of reasonableness from the need for citizens to give one another due respect as citizens; ‘reasonable’ means willing to treat other persons as citizens, equals in a society of reciprocal trust and cooperation who deserve fair consideration of their freely chosen fundamental interests. In order to achieve this, however, citizens must possess and exercise the two moral powers of citizenship: the capacity for a conception of the good, exercised in adhering to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, and a capacity for a sense of justice, exercised by adhering to a reasonable political conception of justice. For a political conception of justice to be reasonable, it must be attached to a

reasonable comprehensive doctrine; if comprehensive doctrines are unreasonable, then their adherents are not going to promote social cooperation since they will advocate unreasonable political conceptions of justice, and if a majority of citizens advocate unreasonable views, then a just, cooperative society cannot function, and citizens will coerce rather than reason with one another on terms that not all can agree to. This causes social instability and a state of disharmony where political decisions are made that not all can reasonably agree to. On the other hand, under conditions where an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines obtains, citizens can create a well-ordered society through agreed-upon adherence to a liberal political conception of justice justified to each citizen by its sincere attachment to his own comprehensive doctrine, rather than a mere *modus vivendi* to keep the peace.

III. Advertising and propaganda-like media in democratic societies

Given the requirements of social cooperation and stability in a well-ordered Rawlsian liberal society, the state⁹ has a critical interest in enabling citizens to meet the qualifications of reasonableness as described above. I argue that contemporary conditions of mass media, including amount of exposure, kind of media, and preparation to manage media exposure, pose a significant threat to citizen reasonableness and must be addressed to allow for reasonable social cooperation.

⁹ I assume for purposes of this paper that a society requires a state of some sort in order to fulfill the requirements of Rawlsian liberalism.

To begin, Richard Lippke (1989) argues that pervasive persuasive advertisements in contemporary liberal societies pose a serious threat to citizen autonomy and therefore democratic governance. They do so by “suppressing [citizens’] capacities to make rational choices about the implicit content of ads” where this implicit content “consists of messages about, broadly speaking, the consumer lifestyle...a set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, expectations, and aspirations” which discourages the development of “skills, knowledge, attitudes, and motivations” required to develop autonomy (pp. 38–39, 43). The implicit content of advertising, or the consumer lifestyle it advocates and glamorizes, “is a function of both the methods of conveying messages in ads and the messages conveyed” (Lippke, 1989, p. 44). In other words, aside from the actual messages contained within advertisements, advocating the consumer lifestyle seems to be a necessary component of advertising in a competitive market for consumers’ time, money, and attention. Barbara Phillips (1997) also argues that it is not the fault of advertising that it uses these tactics, but that they are a product of the underlying values of capitalism. Christa Wichterich (2015) characterizes these values as the “market rationale of efficiency, competition and accumulation of material wealth” (p. 69) which derive from an “androcentric’ market logic” (p. 79) that sidelines other values such as “sustainability, social rights, care, and gender justice” (p. 79). In her view, public goods such as the environment, social relations, and social reproduction have been economized and commodified due to a vision of globalization based on growth-focused “neoliberal economics and dominance- and extractivism-driven society-nature relations” that theoretically assume unlimited growth according to capitalist values (p. 67). As such,

we cannot blame a particular corporation or individual for the problematic implicit content of advertisements, but must accept that the entire free market capitalist economy, with this set of capitalist values, drives the use of this implicit content in advertising. Thus, if we agree with Philips and Wichterich, or if Lippke's account is persuasive, we may argue that the very structure of the contemporary neoliberal economic system is incompatible with liberal democratic political systems that depend upon citizens' autonomy or that these systems require some influence to mitigate this problematic phenomenon.

To ground our discussion of autonomy, Andrew Sneddon (2001) argues that we may conceive of two kinds of autonomy: "making autonomous choices/decisions" and "being an autonomous person" (p. 16). The former constitutes the shallow end of autonomy while the latter comprises the deep end. He invokes Harry Frankfurt's view of 1st and 2nd order desires, that our 1st order desires are desires about things in the world and 2nd order desires are desires about which of these 1st order desires we desire to be our will, and breaks deep autonomy into two categories: "assessing what our values are and whether our 1st order desires are consistent with these" and "assessing whether our values themselves are desirable" (p. 18). Sneddon (2001) notes that in order to accomplish the most demanding tasks, or those comprising our deepest autonomy, those that most deeply constitute our self-identity, we must not only understand our own system of values but undertake "the assessment of the structure of one's life against the background of other actual and possible ways of living" (pp. 18–19). He ties this to Charles Taylor's (1989) account of "strong evaluation" of one's moral commitments, or the evaluation of whether

one's way of life is worthy of living and whether and how to change. In Taylor's (1989) view, this is unavoidable, since we must choose a conception of the good life through which to order our lives, although we can perform this either well or poorly, based on our rational capacities. Taylor (1985) argues that "characteristics of full, rational human existence can only be developed within a social context" (pp. 206–207, as cited in Sneddon, 2001, p. 20), as our "horizons of significance" (Taylor, 1991, as cited in Sneddon, 2001, p. 21), or conceptions of possible ways of living, require communication about moral matters. As Sneddon (2001) explains,

the source of our horizons of significance is the other people with whom we live.

The conversation and interaction which characterize both our adult behavior and our on-going moral education give us both the roots of and the opportunity to develop further our notions of value. In short, our horizons of significance are rooted in our social context(s). (p. 21; referencing Taylor 1991)

Sneddon (2001) agrees with Lippke that advertising suppresses autonomy, but he claims that advertising does so by suppressing knowledge of other values and possibilities through encouraging homogenizing and "sneer group pressure" conformity (in John Waide's words; see Sneddon, 2001, p. 23); the willingness of a person to examine his life and background of possibilities; and knowledge of the existence of other horizons of being (p. 22). It also causes people to view themselves as consumers as their primary self-identity and threatens "the conceptual resources necessary for the process of strong evaluation that is directly involved in our pursuit of the good life" (Sneddon, 2001, p. 25).

Lippke argues that pervasive persuasive advertisements serve as such a social context that suppresses the development of autonomy through their problematic implicit content. First, advertisements “subtly encourage the propensity to accept emotional appeals, oversimplification, superficiality, and shoddy standards of proof for claims” (Lippke, 1989, p. 45). They also “encourage the belief that important information about our lives must be entertainingly purveyed and such that it can be passively absorbed” (p. 45). In addition, advertising contains meta-messages

about how to approach claims made by others...that evidence contrary to one’s claims may be ignored, and that words can mean what anyone wants them to mean...that success in communication is a matter of persuading others *no matter how it is done*. (Lippke, 1989, p. 45)

Advertising also encourages ease and gratification, the view that persuasive advertisers should be the ones informing people about the good life, that it is boring or requires justification for someone to want something other than the consumer lifestyle, and that citizens should be fearful and insecure about not having the best products, to the point that social relationships are seen as competitions for prestige, status, and material goods (Lippke, 1989, p. 45). The consumer lifestyle promotes the idea that a person can obtain goods that will satisfy their most important desires, what Waide calls “non-market goods,” or those seen to have intrinsic value, through consumer purchases (as cited in Lippke, 1989, pp. 46–47). Advertisements either distract people from the important questions in their lives, such as “why they lack self-esteem, or why they feel powerless,

or why their friendships or marriages are unsatisfactory,” or they “fill individuals’ minds with pseudo-truths or pseudo-values bearing on issues of central significance in their lives” (p. 47). As Sneddon (2001) also points out, “[p]art of the ideology of advertising is the notion, deeply embedded so that it is hard for us to articulate, that whenever we want something or feel some dissatisfaction, the market can satisfy our desires” (p. 23). Thus the values that the implicit content of advertising promotes conflict with standards of deliberation, judgment, and reciprocal consideration necessary for autonomous citizenship.

Even if many or most advertisements do promote the consumer lifestyle, this does not mean that all citizens will necessarily receive such strong influence from them or that this influence will overcome other influences and considerations; after all, “[w]hile advertising is sometimes deceptive and often manipulative, and in some ways akin to brainwashing, its overall character is not easily assimilable to any of these” (Lippke, 1989, p. 43). However, Lippke (1989) argues, advertising does exert such an influence due to its pervasive character; we cannot reasonably escape advertisements, and there is also an “absence of views that challenge or reject their implicit content” (p. 43). He explains his concerns by saying:

The quantity of ads and their near-inescapability are such that even the most diligent will be hard-pressed to avoid absorbing some of their implicit content. Many television shows and magazines [and today we might add websites, YouTube videos, Netflix programs, apps, and social media posts] feature or cater

to the consumer lifestyle and this reinforces the implicit content. (Lippke, 1989, p. 43)

Note also that, as previously mentioned, promoting the consumer lifestyle may be necessary for competitively marketing a product, service, viewpoint, or media message. But this pervasiveness and lack of substantial challenges to the implicit content in the mass media sets it up as the dominant and default ideology of our social relationships, which is problematic not only because it tends to discourage the skills and attitudes necessary for autonomy, but also that lack of censorship implies a state-sponsored or at least state-approved conception of the good. We might, with Philips (1997), argue that an advertisement can “present different social meanings based on its sponsor,” such as television ads she cites produced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that seek to “promote family relationships based on religious values and non-consumption based activities” (p. 115). But as Sneddon (2001) points out, the “very small fraction” of ads that fall into the category of public service announcements or those that “encourage the satisfaction of desires through non-market methods” means that advertisements still overwhelmingly promote Lippke’s implicit content (p. 23). In addition, encounters with advertising, unlike other social interactions, are not voluntarily sought or maintained, do not (like family relationships) constitute a significant part or function of the individual’s life, and the terms of which cannot be altered when one participant finds them unsatisfactory (see Lippke, 1989, p. 49). Sneddon (2001) also argues that the amount of exposure we have to persuasive advertisements compromises our ability to imagine outside of the narrow confines of the consumer way of life, and as such suppresses our

ability to choose our own moral commitments: “[w]herever people are exposed to representations of one kind of living in gross disproportion to others, it is difficult to imagine that they will be in a position to exercise self-rule” (p. 24). As such, advertising presents an involuntary, unavoidable interaction that does not constitute a significant part of the individual’s way of life or comprehensive doctrine, it does so virtually unrestrained by governments despite its implicit messages—likely as it is seen as a necessity in market economies—and as such wields a powerful shaping effect on individuals’ values and goals.

The implicit content of advertisements also threatens autonomy through its early and lasting impact on children. With children in mind in particular, the American Psychological Association (see Kramer, 2006) has criticized current consumerist practices and psychologists who consult with businesses that market to children. They argue that children are easily manipulated into adopting lifestyles based on aggressive, persuasive, and pervasive marketing practices, and that businesses have an unequal advantage against them; as such, psychologists should refuse for professional ethical reasons to work for businesses that use psychological techniques to advertise to children, particularly advertising food. Yvonne Raley (2006) also argues that

the ‘arguments’ these food advertisements present to children undermine the development of one of the necessary conditions for autonomy, or self-governance: the capacity to make well-considered, rational choices. This is because of the poor reasoning that such advertisements (some of which pretend to be educational)

contain, reasoning which adversely affects the development of critical thinking skills that children need in order to become fully autonomous adults. (p. 67)

She objects in particular to the use of “educational” content provided to schools that contains subtle messages encouraging consumption, school partnerships with food companies like Coca-Cola, and the pervasiveness of advertisements in children’s lives (Raley, 2006).

She argues that this environment tends to erode a necessary condition for autonomy: the competence criterion of being able to evaluate choices rationally (Raley, 2006, p. 70–71). Raley (2006) first claims that due to the structure of our educational system, “autonomy is regarded as a fundamental moral value, a value that ought to be both developed and preserved” (p. 71). However, she claims that current advertising practices toward children have resulted in a situation where adults, at least on the matter of food choices, do not reflect the competence necessary to be considered autonomous, as

the food choices of many adults appear to be quite automatic and unreflective.

Quite possibly, this is because of the ads, and consequently the foods, they were exposed to as children. These adults may have become *addicted* to foods that are high in sugar and refined carbohydrates, as well as fats. But if autonomy requires freedom from internal compulsions, are those choices really autonomous? Perhaps not, for it may be the case that the choices these adults make are in fact driven by the subconscious desire to eat certain things. Healthy foods may no longer even taste good. The analogy to the cigarette addict is not far fetched. Many addicts say

that cigarettes taste good to them. Some even maintain that they are choosing to smoke. (p. 71)

While this specifically relates to addictions to unhealthy foods, I argue that advertisements likewise condition children into an addictive consumer way of life, and at a time when they have insufficient cognitive resources to resist it. If this is true and advertisements erode autonomy by conditioning children so they will be consumers as adults, it seems that we must either shield children from advertisements, prevent businesses from using these advertising strategies, train children to resist them, rehabilitate adults to develop autonomy, or some combination all of these.

In addition, in Aldous Huxley's view, advertising threatens democracy because it prevents citizens from gaining the skills necessary to make rational deliberations, and

[a]dvertising does this by discouraging self-rule. Democracy is self-rule writ large. People who are capable of assessing the structure of their lives against a background of possible ways of living can really take control of the way their society works. People incapable or unwilling to determine their lives are likewise unable to participate in democracy in its fullest sense. (as cited in Sneddon, 2001, p. 25–26)

As such, if democracy requires a certain threshold of deliberation, and if advertising compromises this deliberation, it prevents citizens from using their judgment and creativity to appraise social conditions and propose what to change and what to maintain. They will not be able to provide informed perspectives on how to judge a well-ordered

society. Lippke (1989) also mentions a political function of advertisements and the consumer lifestyle they promote. The

portrayal of consumption as the good life...provides individuals with standards and expectations against which to judge...the institutions that shape and mold their lives. Consumption is presented as the reward for 'making it,' and as a way of ameliorating, if not curing, boredom, powerlessness, lack of self-esteem, etc. Political and economic institutions then come to be measured by the extent to which they provide individuals access to consumer goods. (p. 47)

Yet following Rawls's framework, political institutions are to be judged on the basis of their achieving justice as fairness, and Kane's (2010) Moral Sphere Theory (MST) argues that political institutions are to be judged by their ability to preserve a moral sphere in which all can pursue their own view of the good life. In either case, it seems that political and economic institutions in a liberal pluralist society should be judged by whether they provide people the capacity to pursue their own comprehensive doctrines that does not prevent others from doing likewise. But in a pluralist society, any vision of the good life—even consumer culture—cannot be taken as the standard, lest we violate neutrality. We must use a neutral metric, one that all could in principle reasonably agree to and which can be justified by an appeal to promoting all forms of life freely chosen by the citizens. In short, pervasive advertising promotes a consumer lifestyle that conflicts with the neutrality of the liberal state and socializes citizens into a shallow, unreflective ideology that undermines their ability to commit themselves to an autonomously chosen way of life and to judge political institutions according to their promotion of a reasonable

political conception of justice that could obtain an overlapping consensus. While we have not yet fully responded to the criticism that citizens will not necessarily act according to the consumer way of life, even if its influence is powerful and unavoidable, it is clear that there are good reasons for thinking that many will have trouble acting autonomously under these conditions.

But it is not only advertising of consumer goods that socializes citizens into the implicit content that Lippke describes as promoting the consumer way of life. Under the conditions of 21st century media saturation, anyone with a message to convey must adapt to these same tactics, lest they be ignored (see Kelly, 2017). Media messages in general must be shallow, flattering, and entertaining in order to catch the valuable commodity of viewer attention, whether the goal of the message is to sell a product, to persuade for or against a viewpoint, or to garner attention for the message's producer. YouTube channels run by amateurs simply interested in gathering a following of loyal viewers are incentivized on this model to use the same tactics as advertisers, and this environment encourages them to create niche content for their target audience that will capture their attention. To do this, they must resort to familiar tactics described by Lippke: telling their target audience what they want to hear, encouraging them to devalue alternative views, and urging them to act without forethought.

In other words, I argue that they must resort to propaganda to successfully convey their messages, or at least that in the competitive media environment of 21st century capitalism, they believe—and for good reasons—that this is necessary. Randal Marlin (2002/2013) defines propaganda as “the organized attempt, through communication, to

affect belief or action or inculcate attitudes in a large audience in ways that circumvent an individual's adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment" (p. 22). He also considers advertising as a kind of propaganda. We might modify Marlin's definition in this case to describe the problem of attention-seeking media today to add that the attempt need not be organized, but could originate from an individual, whether knowingly or not, as individuals may simply be mimicking successful media advertising or promotion strategies they have come into contact with. Such media rely on consumers making unreflective decisions based on impulse, peer pressure, emotional weakness, or other reasons, and following Lippke, I argue that this contributes to socializing citizens into the expectation that they can and even should act non-autonomously. Advocates of advertising and other media could point out that people are not so naive as this, or so susceptible to influence. It appears that some people do resist the influence of advertisements and can form and adhere to an autonomously chosen comprehensive doctrine. However, as Lippke explains, developing autonomy requires other social conditions, such as education, an autonomy-friendly workplace, and a well-formed mind. Many adults do not meet these conditions, and certainly few if any children do.

I find the influence of advertising and other propaganda-like media injurious to autonomy precisely because it undermines the ability to form a well-defined conception of the good life and adhere to it despite temptations to act against our values and deepest commitments, which Eamonn Callan (1988) argues is a necessary condition for moral virtue in any significant sense (see pp. 36, 46). In this sense, Lippke's arguments about the impact of pervasive persuasive advertising apply equally to forming a conception of

the good, one of Rawls's criteria for being able to develop a political conception of justice. But Rawls's conception of political autonomy only requires the citizen to act according to the principles of justice, and does not have the high bar of Mill's autonomy, which involves non-neutral assumptions about the goodness of individualistic, reason-based decision-making. A good citizen could, we may imagine, unreflectively adhere to her native comprehensive doctrine—perhaps a traditionalist religious way of life that does not encourage doctrinal questioning in its members—but still act out of a concern for justice, as long as she and her comprehensive doctrine meet the criteria for reasonableness. And it would be difficult to imagine an individual who derived every aspect of his conception of the good from the consumer way of life, so that even if this consumerist value system pervaded his life and made him unable to act with individualist autonomy, he might still be able to act justly.

We might say that the aforementioned criticisms of advertising certainly challenge the assertion that current conditions of media exposure allow citizens to develop autonomy. But we might argue that citizens do not need complete autonomy to choose to be reasonable, nor do they need wide exposure to other ways of life to at least understand that others' interests are worthy of consideration, even if they themselves do not question their deepest moral commitments. Citizens with strong convictions founded in reasonable comprehensive doctrines might develop robust enough skills of discernment to offset the influence of advertisements. And citizens without these skills of autonomy might simply trust those who adhere to their comprehensive doctrine and disbelieve or avoid advertisements, or make their decisions on the basis of exemplars in

their community without compromising their ability to act reasonably. How, and under what conditions, do propaganda-like media and exposure to the consumer lifestyle prevent citizens from developing or acting according to a reasonable political conception of justice? The consumer lifestyle has final ends, and we can imagine consumers using their desires for consumer goods as a bridge to understand how to negotiate their interests with those of others. In addition, we can imagine that not all consumers are not so easily influenced that the propaganda-like character of media will wholly envelop their lives, to the point that they would be unable to think for themselves, aside from children as mentioned above—unless we are to argue that all citizens are under this condition due to their upbringing in such a society. In the next section, I will describe the consumer way of life in Rawlsian terms, as well as argue why it poses a danger to social cooperation in a pluralist liberal state: because it tends to replace our deeply held comprehensive moral values with consumer concerns or other concerns that are not adequately grounded in a reasonable comprehensive doctrine.

IV. The consumer way of life as a comprehensive doctrine and reasonableness *akrasia* through “incontinence”

Decisions in the political sphere should rely on moral judgments to guide them, but due to the criteria for public reason, they must be ultimately grounded in a moral conception particular to the creation and maintenance of a liberal political society: a political conception of justice. While still normative, these political moral considerations

have a strictly defined scope and are not comprehensive or general moral values. Decisions in the nonpolitical sphere rely on comprehensive moral judgments to guide them. Whenever we make such a moral judgment, we rely on, in Rawls's terms, a comprehensive or partially comprehensive doctrine. This seems to be the case, because what could be the alternative? If nonpolitical values are only contained within a comprehensive doctrine of some sort, then if we make nonpolitical moral judgments they must be derived from one or another comprehensive doctrine. The only other option seems to be if we make decisions based on something other than moral judgments, or judgments about what makes a good life. The only candidates seem to be those that require us to not act from reasoned thought or deliberation, such as caprice, impulse, social pressure, anger, or fear. These may be based in environmental factors and previous choices that have shaped our character and immediate reactions, which may reflect adherence to or at least acceptance of a comprehensive doctrine. I will begin this section discussing nonpolitical ethical judgments made from comprehensive doctrines and then discuss those made without deliberation that may be considered unrelated or not directly related to a comprehensive doctrine, even if they are products of an environment influenced by a comprehensive doctrine.

As noted above, according to Rawls (2005), a comprehensive doctrine is a set of values about the good life which contain at least some nonpolitical values that not all reasonable persons in a pluralist society must agree to in order to politically cooperate. A comprehensive moral doctrine covers all significant aspects of a person's life and tends to be systematic and well-articulated, while a partially comprehensive moral doctrine is a

set of values that contains some nonpolitical values and is more loosely articulated (Rawls, 2005, p. 13). On this taxonomy, we might argue that the consumer way of life that serves as the implicit content for advertisements at least qualifies as a partially comprehensive doctrine. It contains final ends portrayed as having intrinsic value—high-quality material goods, social status, luxury, ease, and pleasure—and articulates at least a partial vision of what constitutes a good life; if it did not, then it would likely not succeed in persuading consumers. What makes the consumer way of life a strange comprehensive doctrine is that it seems like a doctrine that no one promoting it could sincerely affirm. While we might claim that some advocates of some comprehensive doctrines are insincere at times, such as predatory evangelizers of certain religious or otherwise ideological groups, the role of advertising in capitalist society is to compete for attention and to use the most effective methods for doing so—which, as I have argued, involve using propaganda-like tactics to circumvent reasoned deliberation in persuading others. The person doing the advertising would not endorse the consumer way of life in her own reflective, deliberative moments, so while we may consider it a partially comprehensive doctrine, it lacks certain features that other comprehensive doctrines have, such as those associated with traditions. This is one way in which Lippke's characterization of the consumer way of life as a threat to autonomy makes sense; it is not based on a tradition of seeking after the good life, and those advocating it, even implicitly, do not completely buy into it.

Let us assume, however, for the sake of argument, that someone—perhaps a media personality such as Kim Kardashian or Donald Trump, or a person who idolizes

their way of life—sincerely affirmed the consumer way of life as her comprehensive doctrine and saw the good life as focused purely around material gain, beauty, fame, and/or social status.¹⁰ Would she be reasonable? Considering Rawls's more exacting definition of reasonable comprehensive doctrines as those with certain theoretical constraints and usually being attached to a tradition, in addition to being compatible with reciprocal regard for others as equals worthy of equal respect, I argue that the consumer lifestyle would not qualify as reasonable, even though it qualifies as partially comprehensive. One reason is that it lacks the conceptual resources associated with a tradition, and would likely not be ordered well enough in the individual's mind to be able to make relevant deliberations about whether a course of action is in her rational interest, or which aspects of the comprehensive doctrine support or could incorporate a sincere affirmation of a reasonable political conception of justice. If the consumer way of life encourages, as Lippke argues, views such as that social relationships are competitions for status, that the purpose of communication is persuasion regardless of the means or adherence to truth, and that it is permissible to distract others from long-term solutions to their problems so they will give you attention, money, or power even when you have no legitimate reason to believe your product will actually improve their lives, this seems incompatible with viewing fellow citizens in a reciprocal relationship of equal respect, and I argue that this makes the implicit content of advertising an unreasonable (at least partially) comprehensive doctrine. The consumer way of life is also unreasonable in that

¹⁰ I would like to thank Shelley Wilcox, Alan Moore, and Justin Tiwald for raising this objection and for their contributions to working through it as well.

it does not have a basis for reasoning to achieve goals—it merely uses rhetoric to persuade. For Rawls (2005), “a way of reasoning... must incorporate the fundamental concepts and principles of reason, and include standards of correctness and criteria for justification” (p. 220). Inasmuch as the consumer way of life lacks these, its discourse is merely “rhetoric or means of persuasion” (Rawls 2005, p. 220) and this supports Lippke’s view that it does not conduce to developing autonomy.¹¹

It seems unlikely that anyone, even an advertiser, adopts the consumer way of life as the primary basis for his conception of the good, or at least does not do so over the entire course of his life. If we assume that all citizens, including advertisers, do not completely order their lives according to the consumer way of life, they must have a deeper and likely more fundamental comprehensive doctrine, even if it is only a partially comprehensive set of general values such as the intrinsic value of friendship or family ties that guides their ethical decisions in everyday matters, such as which career to choose, who to enter and maintain relationships with, and which personal sacrifices are necessary to pursue the best kind of personal and communal life. It seems impossible for someone, even pervasively influenced from birth by attention-seeking, propaganda-like advertisements and other media, to completely lack any non-consumer comprehensive doctrine from which to derive meaning in life, even if the consumer way of life accounts for most of her values. In addition, as the individual has lived among citizens in a liberal

¹¹ Note that I distinguish between the nonpublic reason of businesses that use rhetoric to persuade consumers to buy their products and the discourse of the implicit content of persuasive advertising. The former would meet Rawls’s criteria of nonpublic reason, as its members may use profits or sales as the criteria of justifying certain advertising strategies and there are standards of correctness such as numerical statistics. The latter would not, as its pure intent is to persuade. See Rawls, 2005, p. 220 and Lippke, 1989, p. 45.

pluralist society, she has likely absorbed some elements of reciprocity, civility, and mutual respect into her comprehensive doctrine, partially comprehensive or loosely-held though it may be. I argue that these may be considered the individual's higher ideals and a comprehensive doctrine that she would affirm if possible, and which is likely (or at least more likely) to be reasonable than the consumer way of life. Yet evidence from the current political situation, where there is much resistance to social cooperation, clearly indicates that citizens hold or at least act from unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, or according to unreasonable political conceptions of justice. I will now explore a possible interpretation for why this happens.

Matt Duncan (2015) argues that the consumer way of life is unnatural in an Aristotelian sense, and I argue that this gives us some understanding as to why it is problematic for humans seeking to live a good life, regardless of their comprehensive doctrines. Duncan characterizes the consumer way of life, or consumerism, as encouraging consumption beyond that required to sustain life, repetitive consumption, and consumption of commodities that are not only material goods but also "services, advertising, media, ideas, time, and attention" that can be consumed (Duncan, 2015, pp. 250–251). He turns to Aristotle's account of flourishing to find a view of what it means for a human to live a good life, "that one properly engage in the activities that are characteristic of one's kind" (Duncan, 2015, p. 254). He argues that

what this must mean is that anything that discourages or prevents a thing from properly engaging in the activities that are characteristic of its kind will also threaten its ability to flourish as a member of that kind, and indeed, will threaten

its very identity as a member of that kind. So if consumerism, for instance, discourages or prevents humans from properly engaging in humanlike activities (whatever those are), then on the present picture, consumerism threatens the identities of humans, and thus, their ability to flourish as humans. (Duncan, 2015, p. 254)

Duncan (2015) continues by arguing that from Aristotle's account, this characteristic human function is contemplative reasoning. In addition, he suggests that consumerism discourages one from properly engaging in contemplative reasoning by "(i) demanding a great deal of one's time, energy, and attention, (ii) reshaping one's desires, and (iii) changing the nature of one's social relationships" (Duncan, 2015, p. 259). First, consumerism takes time and attention away from our self-defined pursuit of the good life. In addition, given Aristotle's claim that the starting point of choice is desire for some end,

in order for a human to realize her ergon [characteristic function] by engaging in the activities that are characteristic of humans, she must first desire to engage in those activities. So, for Aristotle, if a human does not desire to contemplate, she will not regularly (and properly) contemplate. Thus, if desires to engage in consumerism inhibits or replaces one's desire to engage in contemplative reasoning, then Aristotle would see consumerist desires as a barrier to engaging in contemplative reasoning. (Duncan, 2015, p. 261)

Thus, to the extent that consumerism “inhibits or replaces one’s desire” to engage with those activities that we see as central to our comprehensive doctrines, whether Aristotelian or otherwise, it can be said to distract from our flourishing.

Duncan also quotes Alasdair MacIntyre (1999) on the importance of social relationships to the exercise of contemplative reasoning:

What we need from others, if we are not only to exercise our initial animal capacities, but also to develop the capacities of independent practical reasoners, are those relationships necessary for fostering the ability to evaluate, modify, or reject our own practical judgments, to ask, that is, whether what we take to be good reasons for action really are sufficiently good reasons, and the ability to imagine realistically alternative possible futures, so as to be able to make rational choices between them, and the ability to stand back from our desires, so as to be able to enquire rationally what the pursuit of our good here and now requires and how our desires must be directed and, if necessary, reeducated, if we are to attain it. (p. 83, as cited in Duncan, 2015, p. 263)

Duncan (2015) continues: “[w]hat these reflections suggest is that, in addition to time, energy, attention, and the right desires, proper contemplative reasoning requires continued interaction with other people...[and] a preoccupation with consumer activities can diminish certain forms of interaction with other people” (p. 263). Note that social interaction may not be required in a given comprehensive doctrine, but it seems that sincere social interaction with those who associate with us for non-consumer reasons is

likely to be one factor in offsetting the influence of consumerism. Others can help correct us when we act on the basis of narrow consumer interests. They can also encourage our developing autonomy by giving us a space to reflect and deliberate about our thoughts and challenging our assumptions and biases with their own opinions. We may worry about echo chambers (see Sunstein, 2009) developing even in personal relationships, but I will argue in a later section that members of a moral community who socially engage to converse about topics related to the pursuit of the good within a comprehensive doctrine are less likely to be susceptible to this. Essentially, on Duncan's view, consumerism distracts from our characteristically human activities by reshaping our desires, priorities, and social relationships, and the more we are engaged with consumerism, the less we can focus on those practices that will lead us to flourishing.

We need not adopt an Aristotelian framework to critique consumerism's effect on us. It can also replace other comprehensive doctrines. One way to see the reasons for this is to adopt MacIntyre's account of practices and traditions, and his classification of goods into those that are internal and external to practices. According to MacIntyre (1981), a practice is "a socially established...human activity" through which we strive to realize goods by achieving "standards of excellence appropriate to that activity" (as cited in Kane, 2010, p. 86). Practices may include architecture, politics, law, football, teaching, and the making and sustaining of family life (Kane, 2010, p. 86). When we evaluate our lives according to practices, we make what Charles Taylor (1982) calls "strong evaluations," or those that evaluate our ideals rather than merely our interests. MacIntyre also distinguishes between two kinds of goods: those internal to practices and

those external from practices. Internal goods are specific to a practice and rely on our developing virtues or excellences specific to that practice. External goods are instrumental in achieving goods in practices but not intrinsically good for practices; they allow us to acquire the means to our ends of seeking the good but do not promote the good in themselves. External goods include power, wealth, capital, and social status. This also seems to be the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental goods: we affirm intrinsic goods as good in themselves, like goods internal to practices, assuming that we regard the practices as good, and to the extent which we consider them significant to a good life; we likewise affirm instrumental goods, like external goods, as only good insofar as they allow us to pursue and procure internal/intrinsic goods. Thus, according to Kane, MacIntyre, and Taylor, we can develop an idea of a practice as a social human activity that strives toward a conception of the good, which seeks to produce goods internal to those practices that are supposed to promote the good life, the virtues of achieving excellence according to those practices.

As Kane (2010) points out: “When the pursuits of human goods in practices extend through many generations, they become traditions and cultures” (p. 87). He also mentions that religions, at least those that represent “entire forms of life with ritual practices, observances, and ideals of spirituality and sainthood” also count as traditions (Kane, 2010, p. 87). Invoking MacIntyre, Kane (2010) claims that “practices, traditions, and forms of life provide the contexts in which excellences have meaning” and that a tradition contains “a continuing argument about what is worth pursuing” that are “goods for an entire community or form of life with which one identifies” and “thereby invest

one's activities with greater significance" (pp. 89–90). Within traditions we have a conversation about the good life, as individuals across time contribute to the socially understood excellences of that practice and how they create good human lives. Traditions also describe an ideal that, according to Elizabeth Anderson, "consists in a conception of qualities of character, or characteristics of a community, which the holders regard as excellent and as central to their identities... [for example,] a U.S. marine is supposed to be patriotic" (Kane, 2010, p. 91). Thus we derive our deepest sense of identity from achieving excellence in practices and traditions that we participate in, as they give us characteristic virtues to strive for and we feel that we are achieving an aspect of the good life through these virtues.

From here, we can return to our critique of consumerism. On MacIntyre's account, we may argue that the reason that consumerism threatens other comprehensive doctrines is that it places people's focus or emphasis on external or instrumental goods over internal or intrinsic ones. In fact, consumerism seems to value as internal goods those that are only valued as external goods from the perspective of other comprehensive doctrines—power, wealth, capital, convenience, and social status—as well as value some goods as internal which may be shared by other comprehensive doctrines, such as pleasure, ease, and desire satisfaction. Still, as we explored above, consumerism seems to promote the view that the way to achieve internal goods of all kinds—non-market goods—is through market-based means, and not through developing excellences in accordance with practices, as is the case in other comprehensive doctrines (perhaps all other comprehensive doctrines). Once again, we need not agree with MacIntyre or

Aristotle on which practices are valuable for a good life to make this critique; as long as the consumer way of life socializes us into pursuing instrumental goods rather than intrinsic goods (according to our comprehensive doctrines), or encourages us to believe we can achieve intrinsic goods (such as friendship, love, and acceptance) through acquisition of instrumental market goods or unreflectively following what advertisements tell us, then we can still say that advertising threatens our adherence to our higher moral ideals, whatever these may be. Any comprehensive doctrine a person endorses in reflective, deliberative moments will have its own internal goods, and while consumer goods can provide the goods that are instrumental to living a good life on most comprehensive doctrines, they are insufficient by themselves. However, the “shallow” character of advertisements suggests to the recipient that such needs can be fulfilled, and that we can achieve these internal goods simply by purchasing more, by paying attention to the right people, or by aligning ourselves with the right social groups. As such, the partially comprehensive doctrine of consumerism, or that view which constitutes the implicit content of advertisements and other propaganda-like media, can replace our deeper and more practice- or tradition-based comprehensive doctrines. When this occurs, we make moral decisions on the basis of a comprehensive doctrine that does not encourage autonomous decision-making and discourages us from seeking goods that comprehensive doctrines aside from consumerism would endorse as internal or intrinsic.

If we intend to affirm a different comprehensive doctrine, then following consumerism is self-defeating; however, what if we intend to affirm consumerism as our comprehensive doctrine? This seems implausible, a kind of Millian “experiment in

living” that would surely fail to produce people who sincerely held that they were living a good human life and more likely to create a sobering moral lesson for their associates, but in the interest of remaining neutral and impartial to comprehensive doctrines, we may consider that individuals could make this choice. In the unlikely event that a person sincerely and autonomously held in self-reflective moments that consumerism was the comprehensive basis for his conception of the good, then while we might, with Joseph Heath (2001), argue that his way of life is self-defeating in another way due to the escalation effect of consumer status-seeking, at very least we could say that this person was unreasonable and unable to affirm a reasonable political conception of justice in a liberal society, for his comprehensive doctrine is unreasonable. If this places consumerism beyond the range of comprehensive doctrines acceptable in a liberal political society, then this is a necessary exclusion in order to uphold a well-ordered liberal society.

Indeed, while this critique seems to indicate that advertisements and other propaganda-like media pose a threat to the flourishing of citizens in a liberal state, I argue that—more importantly for my particular line of argument—it also indicates why such media prevents social cooperation: because the consumer way of life is an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine and when it replaces a person’s reasonable comprehensive doctrine, that person makes unreasonable political decisions and cannot hold a reasonable political conception of justice. The consumer way of life implied in advertisements and other propaganda-like media promotes certain assumptions in its subtext, that the consumer is the center of attention and value, that he should allow others—especially

flattering, persuasive others—to dictate his view of the good life, and that he need not critically reflect on evidence or analyze others' claims, but should choose based on what presents itself as most entertaining and pleasing to him. At first glance, we can already see that this kind of attitude is not conducive to reciprocity and the kind of mutual civility, consideration of others' perspectives, and compromise necessary for reasonable political cooperation.

It also fails to meet Rawls's standards for reasonable comprehensive doctrines, as noted above. To say that a doctrine is reasonable for Rawls may simply mean that a reasonable person can sincerely and knowingly affirm it and remain reasonable, as Nussbaum (2011) suggests. Rawls (2005) states that "persons are reasonable in one basic aspect when, among equals say, they are ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will likewise do so" (p. 49). Is the way of thinking that advertisements promote "reasonable" in this respect? I argue it is not. For example, the implicit comprehensive doctrine of the consumer lifestyle, according to Lippke (1989), encourages acceptance of shoddy standards of proof, the view that contrary evidence can be ignored, believing that communication succeeds when it is persuasive regardless of whether it is true, accepting emotional appeals as sound arguments, and believing that words can mean whatever anyone wants them to mean to achieve their ends. Fair terms of cooperation would seem to entail that there are standards of proof everyone can reasonably agree to, that communication is meant to reason and reach agreements that everyone can reasonably accept, that emotional appeals are meant to be expressive but not decisive, and that words

mean what we can fairly agree to accept they mean. Advertising socializes us into a consumer way of life that relies on implicit deception and manipulation, whereas reasonable comprehensive doctrines seek to pursue discourse that is fair and encourages wholehearted cooperation, as per the requirements of being part of an overlapping consensus.

In addition, Rawls (2005) also seems to suggest that a reasonable comprehensive doctrine normally covers religious, philosophical, and moral aspects of human life in a more or less consistent and coherent manner, draws from a doctrinal tradition, and is an exercise in practical reason (p. 59). Consumerism, by contrast, does not seek to provide a full account of values and let its adherents exercise practical reason, since the whole point of advertising is to persuade targets against thinking critically, and to believe that advertisers are the ones who should tell them what to think and feel; it is also not attached to a tradition that has an ongoing conversation about the good life with terms and ideas developed and honed through centuries of discussion. Nussbaum (2011) argues that the “theoretical” criteria should not be attached to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, since someone could have New Age or vague notions of an ultimate end but still act reasonably (p. 6–7). She also adds that elsewhere, Rawls seems to suggest that someone who is just reasonable, and who has a loosely articulated comprehensive doctrine, could be said to have a reasonable comprehensive doctrine (Rawls, 2005, pp. 36, 159–160). In this case, why does Rawls even mention that reasonable comprehensive doctrines “normally” have these features?

First, it seems that when Rawls discusses a reasonable comprehensive doctrine as simply that doctrine which a reasonable person could affirm or a kind of doctrine with certain reasonable features, he does not strive to provide a “full definition” (Rawls 2001, p. 191). Rather, he discusses this in order to illustrate other points, such as that a reasonable comprehensive doctrine is different from that which is rational; while it would be rational to seek one’s own interests, even if they were unreasonable, reasonable comprehensive doctrines are those that teach against denying “persons’ fundamental interests in developing and exercising their moral powers and in pursuing their particular (permissible) conceptions of the good...[and that teach] that all have an equal liberty of conscience” (Rawls, 2001, p. 192). Also, in the passages Nussbaum points out (see Rawls, 2005, pp. 36, 159–160), Rawls is discussing other points related to reasonableness, such as a well-ordered society and how an overlapping consensus comes about; in the first, he seems to mention reasonable citizens as those who affirm a reasonable comprehensive doctrine as a shorthand, assuming they meet the criteria he later describes (Rawls, 2005, pp. 58–59), while in the second, he uses the idea of “slippage” or lack of comprehensiveness to describe how people’s comprehensive doctrines change over time as they recognize the benefits of a liberal society and their comprehensive doctrines come to reflect this. This second point seems akin to Flanagan’s (2017) views about moral possibilities, and how people (in particular, Westerners) can learn from other cultures and adopt portions of their moral views on topics such as anger and the self; for Rawls, it seems to be a way of discussing how people come to see the benefits of liberal principles on their own, as long as they are not

incompatible with their comprehensive views, and adopt them or modify their comprehensive views if there is conflict. In other words, Rawls may not be omitting the “theoretical” criteria here at all; either he is refraining from providing a definition in the context because he is discussing something else or he is, contra to Nussbaum’s interpretation, merely arguing how those who do not see their comprehensive views as fully comprehensive could gradually incorporate a reasonable liberal political conception of justice into their comprehensive doctrines. While people may only hold a partially comprehensive doctrine, it seems consistent to claim that this doctrine, if it is to be reasonable, still derives from a tradition, initiates them into a conversation about the good life, and is “not subject to sudden and unexplained changes, [though] it tends to evolve slowly in the light of what, from its point of view, it sees as good and sufficient reasons” (Rawls, 2005, p. 59). Rawls (2005) keeps this account “deliberately loose” (p. 59), so it seems that he acknowledges here that, despite his theoretical criteria, he does not consider it exclusive or perfectionist, only “more or less consistent and coherent” as to the “major religious, philosophical, and moral aspects of human life” (p. 59).

If we are to posit, then, that Rawls means to assert that reasonable comprehensive doctrines normally have these theoretical criteria, and we charitably assume that “an element of perfectionism” or exclusivity has not entered his thought here, as Nussbaum (2011) speculates, what are we to draw from this (p. 7)? First, as I argued above, it could be that Rawls believes that a minimum degree of theoretical grounding is needed to allow a comprehensive doctrine to order its values sufficiently to determine how it is compatible with and supportive of a liberal political conception of justice and how

political values can usually override nonpolitical ones in a political context. Another possibility is that in setting certain theoretical criteria as the norm (though not as absolutely required), including that reasonable comprehensive doctrines usually derive from a tradition, he is invoking an idea similar to those of MacIntyre and the Neo-Aristotelians and communitarians who argue about the importance of a moral community to keep us from drifting into unreasonable directions in political society, or in unreasonable nonpolitical moral directions by our own whim and impulse. I argue that this also applies to the influence that advertisements and other propaganda-like media may assert over us. Recall that for Rawls (2005), a community is “a society governed by a shared comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine” (p. 42). We may thus argue that there is an important social component in reasonableness: while Duncan and MacIntyre make this claim about virtue and flourishing, Rawls may be suggesting that a person’s comprehensive doctrine is more likely to be reasonable if it involves discussion with others about the nature of the good life. When discussions among those with whom we agree can sometimes become radicalizing echo chambers, I argue that this is more likely to happen when those present are united in seeking external goods (power, wealth, capital, or status) and less likely to happen when they are seeking internal goods (excellences, meaning, improved social relationships). In the latter case, the goals are internal to the practice/tradition, and we may reasonably suspect there is less of a sense of competition or tribalism. With fellow seekers of a good life within a community dedicated to a tradition, we are more likely to not only develop relationships that help us find internal goods and resist the allure of advertisements, but also search for things of

ultimate value, and resist advertisements inasmuch as they detract from this, similar to Duncan's Aristotelian view.

We are also more likely to engage in relationships of reciprocity since we are united in seeking ultimate value, which encourages us to be reasonable in our political interactions. This point is important as well to realize where we typically learn the virtues of reciprocity and reasonableness: in the home and in the community. Confucian and some Christian views, for example, emphasize the family as the first and best environment for moral development, as possible.¹² In environments such as family and community, where we are united or at least "stuck together" in a significant sense and thus have vested interests in maintaining relationships and seeking one another's welfare, we must be reasonable with one another in order to do so. Thus the more time we spend interacting with and seeking and discussing the good life among our closest associates, those we do not choose (family) and those we only choose to some extent because of our convictions about the good life (community), the more likely we are to learn reasonableness and learn the need for compromise and reciprocity required in political interactions. Even with a tradition far removed from the governing political doctrine of a liberal pluralist state, such as in a hierarchical religious community, the need for reciprocity in relationships seems like a key factor in creating a reasonable comprehensive doctrine. And given the practical reality that these traditions have needed, at least in historically pluralist states such as the United States, to adapt to

¹² See, for instance, Cline (2015) and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1992/2006, 1995/2008).

conditions of pluralism and compromise among other comprehensive doctrines (see Rawls, 2005, p. 156–160), membership in a community dedicated to a tradition seeking the good life would seem to make a person more likely to see the need for compromise and concession in the political system. It is when we leave our communities and seek the good life among political doctrines united in seeking primarily external goods or at least when we mingle the pursuit of external goods with internal ones that we seem to go astray into tribalism and other unreasonableness, a point I will further explain in a later section.

In addition, I argue that the consumer way of life is not only an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine but is affirmed unreasonably. According to Rawls (2005),

in a particular case someone may, of course, affirm a reasonable doctrine in an unreasonable way, for example, blindly or capriciously. That does not make the doctrine as such unreasonable. A reasonable doctrine is one that can be affirmed in a reasonable way. (p. 60, n14)

When we affirm that the consumer way of life is how we make decisions, we are acting “blindly or capriciously” or without reflection or forethought on our ultimate values. We get caught up in the rat race of status, as Heath (2001) observes, since our efforts to consume for the sake of status become self-defeating, since we lose what to us is more important (such as leisure time) simply to maintain our status (which does not improve, only remains stable). If we had thought better about our overall aims, we would not have made these choices or would not allow our sense of self-worth to be dictated in such a

way. Because it does not seem that the consumer way of life can be reasonably affirmed, then this is more evidence to suggest that it is an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine.

Yet are we to say that all media that influences us through the emotions, as per Marlin's definition of propaganda, cause us to be unreasonable? This seems to suggest that all art that conveys a moral message is suspect, as works of art such as music, novels, film, and visual art can convey moral messages and can, to cite Plato's famous criticism in the *Republic*, bypass reason and affect the emotions. I believe we can respond to this objection by appealing to Lippke's view of the social conditions of autonomy and make similar claims about the social conditions of the kind of autonomous functioning necessary to affirm a reasonable comprehensive doctrine when we are induced by media and other forces to affirm unreasonable ones. These conditions include education, opportunities to exercise autonomy, and I would argue a community one can turn to in discussing and holding to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine and robust conception of the good life. In this regard, Lippke (1989) asks,

What is the importance of noting the numerous social conditions of autonomy in the context of an analysis of persuasive mass-advertising? Very simply that advertising, as a possible threat to autonomy, does not exist in a social vacuum. We cannot assume that individuals encounter mass-advertising with already finely-honed skills of critical competence. The extent to which they do so is a function of the distribution of other social conditions of autonomy. The absence

of social conditions of autonomy in one area will often reinforce or exacerbate the effects of their absence in other areas. (p. 41)

In short, we can manage not only art but any media and its non-rational messages¹³ with sufficient conditions of autonomy that allow us to choose to be reasonable. Even if Rawls does not want to make Millian autonomy necessary to affirm a reasonable political conception of justice, it seems that we cannot escape the need for at least a certain degree of autonomy in a consumer society with pervasive persuasive advertisements and other propaganda-like media, even if it comes from a strong adherence to a collectivist community dedicated to a comprehensive doctrine and not the individual's deliberative reasoning.

I have argued to this point that in order to affirm a reasonable comprehensive doctrine when bombarded by unreasonable comprehensive doctrines such as the consumer way of life, a citizen requires certain conditions similar to the conditions of

¹³ We might argue, with Kierkegaard, that any faith-based view is inherently non-rational, and as such could be suspect as propaganda. I believe that we can consider such non-rational views in a different category from human-made propaganda-like media, as from the believer's perspective, her views derive from spiritual experiences, direct encounters with the divine, rather than from other humans, even if the teachings that lead to the believer having these experiences do come to the believer from other humans. In addition, since some aspects of our lives, such as which conception of the good to choose, may be beyond the capacity of empirical means to decide, we might follow William James in arguing that some decisions (with multiple live, forced, and momentous options) are subject to a Will to Believe, but we can use rational means to determine which ones require this initial reliance on non-rational faculties such as emotion or spiritual impressions. While the believer's ultimate purpose in life may be decided by faith, she will still need to make many decisions on the basis of reason. Because Rawls clearly states that he intends his definition of reasonableness to apply to comprehensive doctrines based in faith-based religious traditions, and thus that religious believers can exercise political autonomy for the sake of their engagement with political institutions and affirming a reasonable political conception of justice, he does not seem to consider it propaganda, whereas Marlin (2002/2013) would consider advertising a type of propaganda. I believe that the attitudes of those who preach reasonable faith-based comprehensive doctrines will not seek to bypass reason in the same way that propaganda does, even if they appeal to emotions at times, because they do not intend to circumvent the individual's best efforts to come to personally affirm the faith through informed reflection and judgment.

autonomy that Lippke mentions. At minimum, I believe these consist in education, opportunities to exercise autonomy, and a community to bolster one's commitment to a self-chosen comprehensive doctrine, using "autonomy" and "self-chosen" in the most neutral sense possible in a liberal pluralist state. When these conditions are not met, what exactly happens? I argue that when we do not live up to our ideals of reasonableness, or succumb to the temptation of acting according to unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, we fall into a kind of moral failure or *akrasia*, which we may describe according to Aristotle's model of virtue and incontinence.

The virtue in question is justice, a virtue of a citizen in Rawls's (2005) democratic regime (see p. 14). We do not need to affirm a certain comprehensive doctrine to value this virtue of justice, since it is part of the political conception of the person and is valuable only insofar as it allows society as a fair system of cooperation to continue. To adopt Aristotle's model in describing this (see *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII), the virtuously just citizen acts according to the disposition to act out of considerations from a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, and therefore a reasonable political conception of justice. The virtuous citizen has developed this disposition through concerted effort until she can identify and feel the appropriate action without the need for immediate deliberation, or at least be moved to use a method to decide which is requisite with political reasonableness. The vicious citizen, by contrast, has the disposition to react unreasonably and to be moved by unreasonable considerations, essentially without the thought that she is acting unreasonably.

Likewise with the continent and the incontinent. The continent citizen finds himself drawn to both reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines or aspects of comprehensive doctrines, or to affirm comprehensive doctrines reasonably or unreasonably, but chooses on the basis of conscious effort to act according to that which is reasonable. The incontinent citizen faces the same dilemma, but he chooses to act according to the unreasonable comprehensive doctrine or aspect of it, or in an unreasonable way, “dragged about” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII, section 3) as it were by his desires and temporarily forgetting his ideals of reasonableness. We may say that at that moment, he forgets how important his true and authentic view of himself holds his commitments to reasonableness to be and is tempted away by the thought that the unreasonable course is better, even though in reflective moments he would not endorse this course of action. Traditional Christianity records Jesus as saying that we cannot “serve two masters, for either [we] will love the one and hate the other or [we] will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon [the world]” (Matthew 6:22, New Testament, KJV). This emphasizes the difference between holding to a set of higher ideals and a set of more self-centered values, and can be analogized as representing reasonableness and unreasonableness in the comprehensive doctrines we draw from when acting politically: we can either choose to act from a reasonable comprehensive doctrine and act reasonably or we can choose to act from an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine and act unreasonably, but we cannot do both at once. Likewise with Aristotle’s model of virtue: we can either hit the mean or we can miss it, but we cannot do both. This phenomenon of moral failure due to weakness of will is often called

akrasia, and I will adopt this idea in discussing how we can fail to live up to our moral commitments, including reasonableness.

Eamonn Callan (1988) describes autonomy as the regulation of the will, and his account of how we exercise autonomy is instructive in understanding how we can succeed or fail to live up to our deepest moral commitments. Callan (1988) differentiates two ways in which we regulate our will: by “giving shape to one’s motivational structure, and [by controlling] occurrent desires generated by that structure as one makes particular choices” (p. 35). First, in an Aristotelian sense, we decide which of our natural or learned propensities are worthy of developing and developing them through repeated action: “it is through the disciplined choosing of certain things rather than others that we strengthen some propensities and weaken or preclude the development of others” (Callan, 1988, p. 26). We can see certain activities as interests that we desire to act upon and others as temptations that we may desire but are morally committed to avoiding. In the process of autonomously choosing our motivational structure, Callan (1988) remarks that “[we] can passively indulge longings for what [we] have realized to be evil, unworthy, or futile, or else [we] can channel [our] energies and attention on other directions; and to the extent that a sense of personal fulfilment [sic] is thereby achieved, the pull of [our] previous interests will correspondingly diminish” (Callan, 1988, p. 32). As such, as we make value judgments about certain inclinations we have, we can choose to act on and think about some rather than others. This will either eliminate or cause us to forget inclinations that do not conduce to our moral best selves or, alternately, erode our moral impediments

to entertaining courses of action previously considered immoral such that we no longer regard them as temptations.

In addition, weakness of will always seems to involve “something at least closely akin to self-deception,” as we must deceive ourselves about the value of our moral commitments to disregard them against our otherwise moral knowledge (Callan, 1988, p. 36). On the one hand, our motivational structure itself could contain elements that we would not wholeheartedly endorse should we confront them, and this can be a source of moral failure. On the other hand, even an authentically created motivational structure “will include proclivities – propensities one sees as persistent sources of temptation” (Callan, 1988, p. 35). Callan (1988) remarks that “[a]n illuminating way of describing the experience of succumbing to temptation is to say that we lost sight of what we truly valued” (p. 35). Also,

one cannot help feeling attracted sometimes to what is evil or imprudent, say, but one can normally prevent the disregard of moral and prudential concerns to which these feelings often lead. Indeed...one can allow a state of mind to come into being in which what one wills is what one feels tempted to do. The struggle of resisting temptation is simply the attempt to prevent this mental state from arising by focusing attention upon those interests to which it runs counter. (Callan, 1988, p. 36)

In order to live true to our sincere, reflectively endorsed moral convictions, Callan (1988) argues that we must develop “a sort of mental discipline, an orientation of the mind

towards the objects of our deeper aspirations which does not always come easily to us” (p. 36). When we do morally fail, similar to Aristotle’s view of incontinence, we

elect to “forget” about genuine and deep interests under the pull of opposing inclinations. When we do, it is not just a kind of self-deception or something closely resembling it. The meaning of our lives is also marred because we have betrayed what gives them their significance. (Callan, 1988, p. 36)

In other words, our deepest moral commitments can be said to give our lives the greatest meaning, but when we allow other interests to draw us away from them, we no longer function authentically, our lives have less meaning—regardless of our particular comprehensive doctrine—and cannot be said to be fully autonomous, in Callan’s view. Maintaining our moral commitments requires mental discipline, and this discipline can be seen as an aspect of autonomy.

As such, to summarize Callan’s view, autonomy involves regulating the will to avoid self-deception and choose what is in line with an individual’s deepest commitments, as well as creating one’s deepest commitments in the first place, relying on a process similar to Taylor’s strong evaluation or Rawls’s (1971) reflective equilibrium. When a person self-deceives, is untrue to her self-endorsed ideals, forgets her ideals in a moment of temptation, or focuses on interests that occupy her mind even contrary to her moral commitments, she acts non-autonomously. This is similar to reasonableness *akrasia* as I have described it. As such, it seems that simply to be a good citizen of a liberal pluralist society, a person will need some degree of deep autonomy (see Sneddon,

2001), the ability to choose and remain true to one's moral commitments (at least the reasonable ones). As such, he will require the conditions necessary to promote his reliably choosing to not only act in reasonable ways in line with his highest ideals but reliably choosing to think and view the world in such terms. This suggests that one such condition includes the pervasive influence of reasonableness and moral encouragement sufficient to counter the influence of advertisements and other propaganda-like media as well as other interests or temptations that may lead him to unreasonableness.

We can adopt this as a pragmatic model to show how (political) persons develop political virtues such as justice; we can also argue that persons need to be taught and trained in political virtues either at home or by the state, and that the state not only has the justification but the mandate to ensure that citizens develop this virtue of justice, being able to filter out and act according to a political conception of justice using what Rawls (2005) calls "full autonomy" (p. 77), which means acting out of considerations of a reasonable political conception of justice (rather than "ethical autonomy" which entails specific comprehensive commitments).

V. Evidence for the influence of unreasonable doctrines and unreasonable affirmation: Political consumerism and political "communities"

In the contemporary political climate in Western democracies, of which I take the United States to be a representative example, we can see the product of unreasonableness in political deliberations and political advertising, and I argue that it is precisely due to

what I will term “reasonableness *akrasia*” that we have such difficulties in social cooperation. In this section I will explain the reasons for this and also argue that treating political engagement as a consumer practice, and treating political positions and legislation as consumer goods through political advertising and other politically-charged, propaganda-like media, as well as seeking the ties and moral support of a community through the illiberal and unreasonable practice of moralizing political parties, results in a phenomenon of political consumerism and the creation of politically-charged communities which stifles reasonableness and thus stymies social cooperation in a liberal pluralist society.

Political campaigns in the United States rely heavily on advertisements and rhetoric that contains the same implicit messages as advertisements for consumer products, as this is a necessary adaptation to the capitalist system that operates according to the values of competition, efficiency, and material accumulation. As such, political campaigns use political positions and candidates’ loyalty to those positions as consumer goods that they advertise to voters. These conditions provide some explanation for the success of Donald Trump’s candidacy in the 2016 Republican primary and general elections, as his tactics perfectly suit a consumer political system (see also Watts, 2018). Regardless of a citizen’s opinion on Trump as a person, citizen, or politician, the kind of candidate that thrives on garnering attention through shallow appeals meant to cause a strong emotional reaction does not conduce a liberal political society toward civility or reasonableness. Instead, such political strategies and their success inspire politicians to

treat their campaigns like advertising, which encourages citizens to treat their representation not as advocacy for reasonable views and interests, but as consumer goods.

In other words, if we are induced to purchase a candidate's advocacy with our vote through consumer practices, we will plausibly come to expect that the candidate will provide what that candidate promised, regardless of whether it is possible or reasonable. For this reason, the wide-scale adoption of advertising and other propaganda-like media tactics in politics tends to produce unreasonable citizens who will vote for candidates with unreasonable platforms who will in turn feel pressured to act unreasonably to fulfill their unreasonable campaign promises. When citizens see elections as consumer transactions rather than political participation, even at an unconscious level, they no longer see other positions as representing others' interests and therefore recognize the need to negotiate to produce a compromise; instead, they will come to see others' positions as rivals to be overcome to create the outcomes they were promised.

We may argue that the primary problem of political polarization and our inability to cooperate derives from a kind of tribalist mentality of seeking only the good of our in-group, as "morality [within a social group] binds and blinds" (Haidt, 2013, p. 217). I believe that, to the extent that this is true, it is fueled and exacerbated by a consumer mentality that suppresses the development of reasonableness and encourages us to ignore considerations of others' views and interests. After all, Rawls (2005) argues that we learn the value of supporting a reasonable political conception of justice either by recognizing it within our own comprehensive doctrines or by interacting with others in the framework of liberal institutions (p. 160). We come to "appreciate the good those

principles accomplish” for ourselves and others, even if we do not initially recognize them as part of our comprehensive doctrines, and are likely to modify our comprehensive doctrines if we see conflict between them and a reasonable political conception of justice rather than giving up the principles of political justice (p. 160). As such, I believe that if we act against these principles of justice and in favor of unreasonable tribalist concerns, something must have persuaded us away from the reasonableness we have come to value or prevented a sufficient commitment to reasonableness from taking root in our moral lives, and I argue that the pervasive influence of consumerism is at least a significant factor in this process.¹⁴

As a practice, which by definition involves social agreement (see MacIntyre, 1981; also Kane, 2010, p. 86), politics is also highly sensitive to social pressure, and democratic politics which counts voters equally and encourages an appeal to the masses is particularly sensitive to social trends. For this reason, if political campaign rhetoric relies on advertising or other propaganda-like approaches, it becomes difficult for even virtuously reasonable or continentally reasonable citizens to change the conversation in a reasonable direction. We might ask whether campaign rhetoric produces unreasonable citizens or whether it is simply an effective strategy to attract the votes of citizens who are already unreasonable. As mentioned above, we have reason to believe that all citizens are socialized in an environment where they are exposed to both reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions of justice. This means that even those heavily influenced by unreasonableness will at least have some

¹⁴ I am indebted to Justin Tiwald and Alan Moore for raising versions of this objection.

reasonable moral views and/or contexts in which they can appreciate the virtue of reasonableness. As mentioned above, Rawls (2005) argues that many citizens will first come to affirm a liberal political conception of justice by growing up among liberal institutions and appreciating the value of liberal principles for themselves and for society (p. 160). Also, if we are to accept Rawls's (2005) model of liberal pluralism, we must believe that there can be an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines to sustain a well-ordered liberal state against the pull of unreasonable comprehensive doctrines (p. 39). As such, I argue that achieving an overlapping consensus as a majority is possible, so long as citizens choose to act from reasonable comprehensive doctrines.¹⁵

But because political advertising socializes citizens into believing that they should use unreasonable methods and expect unreasonable results, they are more likely to be pressured into acting and expecting unreasonably. Richard Walker (2006) argues that while the American public is not as polarized as the political class and those heavily involved in politics, recent media trends, such as contentious and entertaining-because-contentious political news media, have increased polarized feelings. Polarization exists more in media-made perceptions than in fact, but this polarizes viewers' attitudes because

¹⁵ The only other alternative, if we believe that an overlapping consensus is impossible, seems to be to split the state into smaller states of citizens that can engage in reciprocal social cooperation from comprehensive doctrines that can be reasonable toward one another. For example, the United States could split into the Democratic States and the Republican States and organize a two-party system within each of these states that consists of groups of citizens who can view one another as equal citizens and engage with them in relations of reciprocity and cooperation while advocating for their own broad coalition of interests united under a party structure. Whether this is advised or would solve any of the problems of reasonableness I defer to another discussion, as it is beyond the scope of this paper, although because I see the core problem to be one of citizens' choosing unreasonableness due to their lack of sufficient moral resources to counter the influence of propaganda-like media and unreasonable mindsets, I suspect that the improvement brought by such an arrangement, if any, would be modest unless this deeper problem was addressed.

media outlets need to make a typically technical and uninteresting subject interesting—and, I would add, because citizens tend to spend more of their time and effort consuming media than reflecting on the good life. Walker references the arguments of Diana C. Mutz, in her article in *Red and Blue Nation?*, who argues that the media contributes to political polarization: media consumers often choose those news sources that “reinforce and intensify their preexisting views” and less politically-interested moderate citizens “abandon news for entertainment programming” and “disengage from learning about issues that might motivate them to take part in the political process,” thus causing “the electorate that does go to the polls [to be] more polarized in its views” (as cited in Walker, 2006, p. 6). Mutz also notes that media must focus on tantalizing aspects of the political process, such as “suspense and speculation about likely winners and losers” and also “relying on a more polarized group of political elites as official sources” who have divergent and more polarized views (as cited in Walker, 2006, p. 6). Finally, Mutz argues that the “popularity of the ‘televised incivility’ displayed on political talk shows such as *The O’Reilly Factor*, *Hardball*, and *Hannity & Colmes*” causes “partisan viewers’ ‘attitudes toward the “other side” [to become] much more intensely negative...[and encourage] a more black-and-white view of the world”” (as cited in Walker, 2006, pp. 6–7). As such, political media encourage and normalize an environment of unreasonableness.

Recall the model of reasonableness *akrasia* that I proposed in the previous section. I assume that being socialized into a liberal pluralist society will give a person exposure to at least one reasonable comprehensive doctrine as well as one or more

unreasonable comprehensive doctrines. When we are socialized through the propaganda-like nature of consumer media into the unreflective view that we should turn to media for answers to our problems, then we become more likely to make decisions based on that media. And since media influences must rely on propaganda-like rhetoric to attract our attention, most of the media we consume will lead us toward unreasonable comprehensive doctrines. In politics, for example, we have commercial political news and websites and other media that adopt similar marketing strategies to target viewers with certain political views and entice them into continuing to view. Sensation, controversy, and fear make them more likely to keep viewing. Hence, barring social or legal sanction, they will use these tactics on viewers, who will continue to become immersed in these kinds of messages. A citizen in this situation seems likely to have great difficulty overcoming reasonableness *akrasia* and choosing a reasonable comprehensive doctrine to act from in political matters when the acceptable norm is unreasonableness, and when he has little reason to believe (from the media he consumes) that the other side will reciprocate reasonableness.¹⁶ As such, he is likely to retreat into tribalism.

Political activism has also followed this model, and as such it sometimes contributes to an unreasonable political environment. One problematic aspect of activism in this age of propaganda-like media is that activists who advocate for a particular political position run the risk of appealing to citizens as consumers in the same way as

¹⁶ See Watts, 2018 for a proposed mechanism on how social media and “fake news” can be part of this phenomenon.

commercial political news companies or influence-seeking political websites. When activist campaigns give citizens an easy, convenient way to contribute to a cause, such as clicking a button to donate money, signing a petition, or posting an article on social media, this kind of approach is eerily similar to the unreflective consumerism we have been speaking of. A citizen can contribute and feel a part of the movement without reflectively making a choice, and many activists also use propaganda-like methods such as peer pressure, moral condemnation, and emotional appeals such as emotionally provocative images and stories to persuade citizens to support their causes and vote for their preferred candidates. Not only does this further entrench them in a shallow, unreflective mindset of political participation, but it encourages the kinds of unreasonable consumer appeals of politicians. We expect politicians to do exactly as we ask because they present themselves or their positions as consumer goods. We expect our political rivals to oppress us because this is how media present our opponents and their positions. We refuse to listen to opposing arguments because this is what the implicit content of advertisements (including political advertisements) suggests. We do not attempt to develop our own original political views because advertisements suggest we let advertisers think for us. Finally, we are afraid to voice divergent opinions from those that our immediate associates consider “politically correct” because the Manichean character of political advertisements encourages the belief that disagreement aligns us with the evil, ignorant, or otherwise normatively problematic “other side.” As such, according to my interpretation, even those who use propaganda-like methods to promote beneficial causes only exacerbate the problem of unreasonableness in political discourse.

This condition presents a challenge for public reason and engaging with those of other views to create reasonable dialogue and compromise in a manner conducive to social cooperation in a liberal pluralist state. As mentioned above, Rawls (2005) notes that public reason constitutes “citizens’ reasoning in the public forum about constitutional essentials and basic questions of justice” and is “best guided by a political conception the principles and values of which all citizens can endorse” (p. 10). In order to show the civility needed to engage in public reason, we as citizens must be able to respect others’ comprehensive doctrines and conceptions of justice, and be able to show reciprocity and give reasonable concessions to others’ solutions to political challenges, even if we see them as still somewhat lacking in accurately assessing the situation, as long as the reasonable, agreed-upon procedures have been followed, which presumably include giving our views equal consideration (see McMahon, 2014). Political consumerism complicates citizens’ ability to engage with those of other views. When I act from an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine or act from a comprehensive doctrine unreasonably when interacting with someone with different views, I do not want to hear their side, critically evaluate my own perspective, or communicate to reach understanding or truth. Instead, I want to express my (uncritically accepted) views, not question my (media-inculcated) beliefs, and communicate purely to persuade them of the wrongfulness of their ways.

This attitude is not particular to the 21st century,¹⁷ but it is particularly problematic now for two reasons: because we have more pervasive and scientifically persuasive advertising for goods, services, and ideas, thus attracting citizens' attention to unreasonable notions in media more effectively; and because citizens are less likely to have significant contact with a reasonable comprehensive doctrine or an environment where they can learn to displace the shallow consumer/propaganda mindset and its unreasonable political counterpart. For justification of the first reason, refer to my arguments on pervasive persuasive advertising and the capitalist system in Section III (see Lippke, 1989; also Philips, 1997).

To explain the second reason, I will argue that moral development and autonomy require an environment in which those who accept the same comprehensive doctrines can reinforce and instruct one another and can have frequent conversations about the good life, and that this environment is what Rawls calls a community, but which I will term a moral community to emphasize its members' unity on a shared comprehensive doctrine (see Rawls, 2005, pp. 40, 42). Recent thinkers sometimes termed "communitarian" have

¹⁷ In fact, we may question whether there ever was a time in American history or in the entire history of human culture when a Rawlsian-style liberal pluralist society existed with reasonably just conditions and institutions. Regardless, I have decided to target my critique to the problems that I consider most relevant to the current era and our sources of unreasonableness. We may argue that, in some ways, citizens of liberal societies have improved in our personal and institutional commitment to liberalism, such as in laws guaranteeing individual rights and those that provide basic goods such as housing, health care, and education to those unable to obtain them otherwise. Yet we have fallen behind in other areas, such as the cohesion of our moral communities and our commitments to the comprehensive doctrines of these communities. Past societies could cooperate under different conditions in part due to shared moral commitments, a condition not shared by liberal societies today. Even if we were to look at moral communities of the past and critique them for being unreasonable because illiberal, in spite of their social capital and the benefits they provided to the moral character of individuals and families within their community, I believe that today's moral communities, perhaps due to their immersion in and appreciation of a liberal society as Rawls posits, do not typically suffer from this defect (from a liberal perspective), and can be valuable resources for developing citizens' reasonableness on a national scale.

argued that in order to achieve unity and fellow feeling among citizens, including their full moral development, states must promote a unified conception of the good life, or at least be cognizant of the impact of the community upon the individual.¹⁸ This was Aristotle's view, as in his time, politics was merely an extension of ethics, and these communitarians emphasize, in one way or another, the need for humans to live in moral communities. I argue that while this kind of Neo-Aristotelian communitarianism presents problematic political views for a liberal state, the state can still respond to communitarian concerns through ensuring that citizens each belong to a moral community. This may be part of why Rousseau, for instance, exhibits a desire for national unity as a precondition to create feelings of oneness with our fellow citizens; due to human nature, "absent pervasive ethno-national devotions, he suggests, we will be psychologically unable to sustain the free community of equals that is authorized by the social compact" (as cited in Cohen, 2010, p. 22). In other words, voluntary and sustainable social cohesion of the kind that Rawls envisions requires a certain degree of moral development and moral unity among citizens, but simply sharing a desire for justice seems insufficient to overcome the powerful emotional influences that comprehensive doctrines exert over us. While I argue that political liberalism improves upon the forced ideological unity of past social arrangements, it has brought with it this challenge of achieving unity to reach a well-ordered condition of fair and stable social cooperation while allowing diverse comprehensive doctrines. I argue that we can achieve a stable overlapping consensus of

¹⁸ See MacIntyre, 1981; Sandel, 1998; Taylor, 1989; and Walzer, 1983, although all have distanced themselves in some respects from the simple communitarian idea that the state must promote a unified view of the good life.

reasonable comprehensive doctrines only if citizens of liberal political societies have sufficient opportunity to reinforce their deeply held reasonable comprehensive views and develop social bonds and a sense of moral belonging within a moral community. As Mark Shields has commented, “in a secular democracy, the closest to a public sacrament is a national election,” and I believe that only through cultivating a sense of the sacred and things of ultimate value can we be prepared to reject the influence of an advertising mentality and treat our political moral commitments and practices as appropriately sacred as well (PBS Newshour, 2019).

For decades, researchers have commented on the decline of community life among Americans and have drawn attention to the benefits of communities and civic participation, and I argue that strengthening our commitment to promoting engagement with a moral community as a virtue of citizenship will promote the kind of offsetting needed to balance the influence of consumer media. In Tocqueville’s view, American democracy flourished because of participation in civic associations, and Robert Putnam (2000) argues that declining community participation has been associated with negative health and social outcomes. These trends continue today. For example, according to PEW Research Center (2015), Americans are growing up in increasingly less religious households, and those who affirm a religious belief are less likely to be associated with a religious institution. While religious institutions are not the only ones that connect citizens to moral communities, they represent the majority of comprehensive doctrines that citizens claim to believe in (PEW, 2015; also PEW, 2018), so their decline is alarming for this reason, as the less a person engages with those of her own

comprehensive doctrine, the more likely it seems that she will engage with and accept the comprehensive doctrines of propaganda-like media. PEW (2018) shows that, according to survey data, only 17% of Americans fit into the category they label “Sunday Stalwarts”: those who believe in a comprehensive religious doctrine and regularly attend and are involved with their religious moral community. As reported, 23% of Americans attend religious services weekly, while another 26% attend monthly or yearly, and only 23% read from a holy book at least weekly, while 68% seldom or never do so and 72% seldom or never consume religious media. Given these statistics, we could hypothesize that Americans see little value in religious moral communities. Yet 49% say that they believe religious institutions unite society (as opposed to dividing or making little difference), while 71% say it is important to belong to a community of people who share your values and beliefs (only 29% said it was unimportant). With only 19% who report being actively involved in a church community and vanishingly small numbers involved with other civic groups, this seems incongruous with those who believe moral communities are important. It seems that there is another kind of *akrasia* happening here: people affirm that being part of a community is important but they do not do it.

We could argue that the non-religious or those inactive in religious communities find other civic venues for engagement, and perhaps this is the case for some. But the results of PEW (2019) show that those active in religious communities are also those more likely to be involved in civic organizations as well, while inactive believers and nonbelievers are less likely; those active in religious communities also report higher levels of happiness. In the words of PEW (2019):

While in many countries religious activity seems to be connected with certain benefits, such as higher levels of happiness, it is unclear whether there is a direct, causal connection and, if so, exactly how it works. Prior research suggests that one factor may be particularly important: The social connections that come with regular participation in group events, such as weekly worship services, Bible study groups, Sabbath dinners and Ramadan iftars...[researchers found that] religious participation had a strong impact on happiness among highly religious people with many friends in their congregations, but not among those with few friends in their congregations. The friendship networks fostered by religious communities create an asset that Putnam and other scholars call “social capital” – which not only makes people happier by giving them a sense of purpose and belonging, but also makes it easier for them to find jobs and build wealth...[also,] social support is pivotal to other aspects of well-being. For instance, one study found that religion indirectly boosts self-reported health because highly religious people had more social capital...research that examines the association between religion and mortality points to religious service participation as the key aspect of religion that promotes longevity....while strength of religious affiliation, prayer, and religious beliefs have no effect...[In addition,] virtues promoted by religion, such as compassion, forgiveness and helping others, may improve happiness and even physical health if they are practiced by parishioners. Religion may benefit psychological well-being because it encourages supernatural beliefs that can help people deal with stress...religion can more directly lead to better health by

proscribing risky behaviors and promoting healthy ones... While it may be the case that happier and healthier people tend to be more involved in social groups of all kinds – secular as well as religious – it may also be true that individuals reap well-being benefits from the social connections they build in religious congregations and other aspects of religious involvement. (Social activity, religion and the happiness dividend, para. 1–8)

In short, participating in religious communities brings individuals higher social capital, a sense of purpose and belonging, and social resources for mutual support. For our purposes, I will also highlight that promoting and reinforcing certain virtues and lifestyles associated with a robust conception of the good life and a continuing conversation about this conception helps active members in religious communities to remain true to their commitments, stay autonomous, and resist the temptation of other lifestyles, notably the consumer way of life. Research also suggests that youth in adverse environments have higher social and health outcomes and significantly reduced crime due to religiosity and parental involvement (see Pearce et al., 2003), and that teens with intrinsic religious beliefs and practices rather than merely extrinsic ones have many advantages in health, wellness, and lifestyle outcomes (see Fagan, 2006). In addition, the latter study also notes that regular religious practice is also associated with stronger relationships between parents and children, reduced divorce rates, reduced adolescent delinquency, and higher levels of coping and self-management skills (see Fagan, 2006). Involvement in religious communities, especially that which involves the entire family and brings them together in

a unified commitment to a comprehensive doctrine, is associated with improved outcomes and better decision-making, from both adolescents and adults.

In fact, it is involvement in a religious community and serious explanations of doctrine often at odds with the mainstream consumer way of life that is correlated with positive outcomes for youth, and not merely a community that occasionally involves individuals or that individuals occasionally involve themselves with. The moral community must actually stand for something and have a substantive doctrine to teach and structures that maintain this community, or else, as PEW (2019) notes above, claiming to affirm a religious belief may not have any positive consequences in social and other outcomes. Daniel Peterson (2010) describes the view of Kenda Creasy Dean, a Methodist minister, who argues in *Almost Christian* that

The religious faith of most American adolescents is inarticulate and shallow...[It places] emphasis on “a do-good, feel-good spirituality” at the expense of real discipleship — she calls it “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” — [and] may lead to the loss of the next generation. “American young people,” she says, “are, theoretically, fine with religious faith — but it does not concern them very much, and it is not durable enough to survive long after they graduate from high school.” She condemns what she terms a “Christian-ish” pseudo-faith, “the Cult of Nice,” a “diner theology,” “a bargain religion, cheap but satisfying, whose gods require little in the way of fidelity or sacrifice [and within which] teenagers tend to view God as either a butler or a therapist...someone who meets their needs when

summoned ('a cosmic lifeguard,' as one youth minister put it) or who listens nonjudgmentally and helps youth feel good about themselves ('kind of like my guidance counselor,' a ninth grader told me)...The problem...does not seem to be that churches are teaching young people badly, but that we are doing an exceedingly good job of teaching youth what we really believe: namely, that Christianity is not a big deal, that God requires little...[Perhaps] the blasé religiosity of most American teenagers is not the result of poor communication but the result of excellent communication of a watered-down gospel. (as cited in Peterson, 2010, para. 2–5)

In Dean's role studying religious attitudes and practices of youth at the National Study of Youth and Religion, she has found that Latter-day Saint restored Christians have the highest outcomes:

[Latter-day Saint] teenagers attach the most importance to faith and are most likely to fall in the category of highly devoted youth. ... In nearly every area, using a variety of measures, [Latter-day Saint] teenagers showed the highest levels of religious understanding, vitality, and congruence between religious belief and practiced faith; they were the least likely to engage in high-risk behavior and consistently were the most positive, healthy, hopeful, and self-aware teenagers in the interviews. (as cited in Peterson, 2010, para. 8)

Why the difference? I argue it is precisely because the restored Christian (Latter-day Saint) community encourages such a demanding and involved religious life for youth,

such as early-morning religious instruction in high school, weekly worship services, callings to serve in the church, youth ordination to priesthood service (at age 11 or 12 for young men), missionary service away from home that often extends to two years, and frequent family involvement in religious life (see Stier, 2013; also Howland, n.d.). While no moral community is without challenges, the Latter-day Saint community and its institutions could provide a model for creating communities where youth and others receive moral instruction, social support, loving guidance, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life, not only in their own endeavors, but in their feelings of belonging and contribution as they engage in service to others (see also Smith & Denton, 2005; also Weaver, 2005).

Just as many liberals argue that economic inequalities cause exploitation within the political system, I argue that moral inequalities cause exploitation within the political system, as those who are less trained in their own moral commitments and cut off from the moral community they would choose if given the opportunity are easily swayed by advertising and other propaganda-like media. Without the strengthening influence of a moral community and instruction within a self-chosen comprehensive doctrine, citizens are liable to be manipulated—in fact, they are being manipulated—by those who use moral(ized) arguments for strategic political purposes. Promoting equality of persons in receiving an adequate and equitable moral education would, like promoting economic equality, allow citizens to meet one another as political equals and contribute to reasonable cooperation and discourse.

In addition, living in moral communities could also improve learning how to be reasonable among those who are quite different from ourselves. David Mills (2017) describes how membership in the Catholic Church allows individuals to come into contact with those different from themselves except for religious commitment, and constitutes one of the last social connections that is not determined by preferences like a social network. Mills (2017) references sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's observation that while social networks allow us to control our environment through our preferences, moral communities do not merely let people see "reflections of their own face," as they are not ours to control. We must meet people different than ourselves in many ways in a moral community, and this bonding with those very different and only united in our pursuit of the good through a comprehensive doctrine not only reinforces that pursuit, which seems most important, but also encourages reasonableness.

While current research seems to validate the value of cohesive religious moral communities, this may be applied to non-religious communities united in a comprehensive doctrine as well, such as ethnic communities that share a common comprehensive doctrine as well as ethnic heritage. Nothing in the research I have encountered suggests that secular or non-religious communities that are organized in the same manner to promote social connectedness and moral support would be less successful, although it may be that, aside from ethnic communities, no such organizations currently exist.¹⁹ In this case, it would be imperative for those who adhere to a non-

¹⁹ The Unitarian Universalist Church may count as one example; see Unitarian Universalist Association, 2019a; also Unitarian Universalist Association, 2019b.

religious comprehensive doctrine or whose comprehensive doctrine lacks a community that they could join create or join such a community. While it is possible that some individuals may be able to train themselves to reliably act from a reasonable comprehensive doctrine without such support, I still believe and the data strongly suggest that any citizen could benefit from joining a moral community, even one whose comprehensive doctrine she only partially agrees with. In this case, she would have a personally tailored comprehensive doctrine but would still benefit from having some of her deepest values reinforced by the community she has joined; she can also support that community's values for others (who may be in her same situation but have slightly different values).

Additionally, we may ask what sort of institution qualifies as a moral community. We may count most churches, but what of, for instance, scientific societies, non-profit service organizations, or philosophical clubs? I will not provide a detailed account here, except to say that if the institution in question fails to provide the kind of social support, moral instruction and reinforcement, and conversations primarily about the good life rather than attaining external goods that are sufficient to provide a sense of communal belonging and offset the influence of propaganda-like media, it is unlikely that it would qualify. As Rawls (2005) mentions, a reasonable comprehensive doctrine "normally belongs to, or draws upon, a tradition of thought and doctrine" (p. 59), even if we may suppose that it has split away from other versions of the tradition; I believe this is because this allows the moral community surrounding the doctrine to draw upon resources in that tradition that have created a consistent or at least coherent view of the good life that has

been sustained and confirmed in practice in human life over a substantial period of time, likely many generations. Scientific societies, however, are united by common goals but not a comprehensive doctrine, and non-profit service groups that are not otherwise affiliated with a moral community are likewise united by common ends (such as providing medical care or food to the underserved) rather than a comprehensive doctrine and conversation about the good life. We may eliminate any hypothetical “consumerist community” here, because it is difficult to see how such a group could draw from traditions of thought and doctrine that have provided individuals even a subjective sense of flourishing and the good life over their lifetimes²⁰ that would ground consumerist values as outlined above. We may also eliminate groups that are not clearly unified by a comprehensive doctrine, including political parties, public schools, clubs, hobby groups, businesses²¹, or sports teams, as these groups—if they perform their intended purpose and do not inappropriately moralize their views, like political groups sometimes do—would not necessarily support their members in developing shared comprehensive values.²² They can, however, support their members in finding and developing their own self-chosen comprehensive values, as I will explain in the next section on schools.

²⁰ If a way of life allows an individual to sincerely find a flourishing human life through its practices, this is one condition for a way of life with objective value in Kane’s (2010) account, the other being that it does not violate the Moral Sphere (but treats other rational beings with inscapes as ends), a condition closely related to Rawls’s reasonableness.

²¹ While businesses would not qualify as moral communities, churches and other institutions that make up moral communities may organize themselves or their assets into corporations for legal and/or financial purposes. These corporations, however, with their non-profit status and, more importantly, their unity on a comprehensive doctrine and goal of pursuing a conception of the good life, are primarily moral in nature and not financial, making them communities rather than businesses by this account.

²² Instead, Rawls (2005) would call some of these associations, with final ends and voluntary membership, though they would not count as a community, or a “special kind of association, one united by a comprehensive doctrine, for example, a church” (p. 40, note 43).

As noted above, Americans have gradually and significantly diminished their participation in organized religious communities, a trend we have seen throughout the last several decades. As citizens distance themselves from religious institutions or other moral communities, it is likely that they will turn to other sources for their sense of moral belonging and reinforcement of values. But they do not seem to have turned to other moral communities. Rather, one obvious place they have turned is to political consumer media that caters to partisan biases and creates a “political community” for those who agree on certain political and nonpolitical values but join together for sake of political action rather than seeking the good life. We may see Fox News, MSNBC, Brietbart, The Huffington Post, and others as examples of this phenomenon, and on the surface this might not be a problem, since political action committees and parties are legitimate forms of organization in a liberal pluralist society. However, in order to meet their need of having a moral community, or a group united on a comprehensive doctrine, citizens seem to be turning to political communities and treating them as moral communities.²³ This presents a problem for both a person’s comprehensive moral development and the political process. In the first case, a person is unlikely to have his need for a moral community filled by joining a community united by political ideals and agendas, since this group is more likely to converse about political strategy than about the good life, like

²³ I admit that some who do belong to moral communities may also be part of these political “communities.” However, I see them as likely more balanced citizens and less extreme partisans than those without a moral community that significantly and frequently influences their lives, due to the tempering influence of the community’s frequent reinforcement of their comprehensive beliefs. These comprehensive beliefs are most likely reasonable, given Rawls’s belief in the possibility of an overlapping consensus on a reasonable political conception of justice and citizens’ willingness to adjust their comprehensive doctrines if necessary to accommodate principles of political justice, as discussed in Rawls, 2005, p. 160.

traditional moral communities, and will not have the same character as a religious organization that teaches certain virtues, that proscribes certain behaviors, and that provides gatherings and community bonds with those we would not ordinarily associate with based on social networking preferences. We are unlikely to find in political communities a strengthening force to remain true to our deepest moral commitments, and more likely to blame our problems on the opposing party. In the second case, conflating comprehensive doctrines with political conceptions of justice poses a severe problem for social cooperation: if I engage in political action to promote my comprehensive doctrine, I am being unreasonable. Not only this, but due to the influence of moralized appeals in politics, other citizens are less likely to be reasonable and more likely to unreasonably choose political action on the basis of a comprehensive doctrine instead of a reasonable political conception of justice. While political parties and other groups united by their political views can make legitimate moral appeals, they are moral specifically for the narrow context of creating and upholding a well-ordered liberal political society; when nonpolitical values become part of their appeal and platform without a subsequent appeal to publically reasonable justifications, these groups and their members inappropriately confuse political and nonpolitical moral values and their proper scope of influence in a liberal society, and further encourage unreasonableness.

In addition, moral education in public schools has declined due in part to the emphasis on standardized testing and college/career readiness, as well as the challenges of adhering to standards of liberal neutrality and avoiding potential parent complaints. As Paul Barnwell (2016), a teacher of twelve years, states:

For many American students who have attended a public school at some point since 2002, standardized-test preparation and narrowly defined academic success has been the unstated, but de facto, purpose of their schooling experience. And while school mission statements often reveal a goal of preparing students for a mix of lifelong success, citizenship, college, and careers, the reality is that addressing content standards and test preparation continues to dominate countless schools's [sic] operations and focus. (para. 7)

While there is legal precedent for teaching character, ethics, and even religion, as long as these remain neutral in aim, many educators believe that they are untouchable topics due to concerns about neutrality or out of concern for potentially divisive political discussions (see Barnwell, 2016). Some schools are beginning to teach "soft skills" referred to as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which I will argue later may include moral education, but the amount of time and effort spent on character education is low and students are also not receiving moral training outside of the home:

A reluctance to teach about religions and value systems is coinciding with a steady decline of teen involvement in formal religious activity over the past 50 years, according to research led by San Diego State Professor Jean Twenge. And while attending church is only one way young people may begin to establish a moral identity, schools don't seem to be picking up the slack. There's undoubtedly a fear about what specific ethical beliefs and character traits schools might teach, but one answer might be to expose students to tough issues in the

context of academic work—not imposing values, but simply exploring them.

(Barnwell, 2016, para. 15)

Even assuming that teens continue conversing with friends and may converse with them about moral topics, the lack of moral conversations at schools and churches or other moral communities contributes to a situation where genuine, non-persuasive social interactions about morals are decreased, leaving much of teens' exposure to moral values in the form of media-based, persuasive social interactions. Given these trends, I argue that it is plausible to conclude that individuals are spending less time and receiving less influence from families and moral communities, and more time and influence from media. Thus their discussions about comprehensive doctrines are less likely to be authentic exchanges with human beings interested in understanding the good life and more likely to be scripted according to the capitalist framework of advertising.

When we interact with those in our community in discussing a comprehensive doctrine, we conceive of the interaction as a certain practice, with its traditions, conventions and metaphysical assumptions developed over a long period of time. We can see this when we compare a discussion about God in a Christian discourse and a secular humanist one. In the former, spiritual experiences and revelations to prophets are considered valid epistemological references for establishing the truth of a claim, while empirical evidence is given usually some role, but a less privileged one. In the latter, spiritual experiences can be dismissed as non-empirical and empirical evidence is given a higher privilege. While both groups discuss the good life, the former may speak in terms

of a person's ability to commune with deity and become sanctified while the latter may speak in terms of a person's ability to act autonomously, develop their rational capacities, or reach certain subjective standards such as desire fulfillment. Regardless of whether we accept the metaphysical assumptions of either ethical conversation, I argue that there are clear differences between this kind of interaction and that of advertisements and other propaganda-like media. When we deliberate in a conversation about the good life, this practice seems to encourage us to seek truth, to seek what brings happiness, or to seek greater understanding. On the other hand, when we interact with propaganda-like media, we are not checked in our biases and views; we are more likely to uncritically accept ideas based on emotional appeals or misleading rhetoric. In short, authentic human interactions with others about the good life within an established framework of practices such as Christianity or secular humanism seem likely to encourage reflection on comprehensive doctrines and the development of the capacities needed for full political autonomy; in contrast, interacting with propaganda-like media seems likely to discourage reflection on comprehensive doctrines and the development of these capacities. This is not to say that art, for example, cannot encourage an exploration of morality, but I argue that its value in doing so is to encourage one to reflect on, learn about, and potentially join a conversation about the good life; in fact, great art may be said to be non-propaganda-like in this regard, that it does encourage reflection and conversation in this manner. Regardless, I argue that decreased time and exposure to these kinds of critical moral conversations and increased exposure to propaganda-like media (even otherwise quality art) discourages citizens' development of full political autonomy and makes them

more likely, given the environment of political consumerism, to accept and act according to unreasonable comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions.

Our comprehensive doctrines also dictate the practices we use to inform the success or failure of our political interactions, and in this sense we can judge whether we are serving “God” (virtue, reasonableness, social cooperation, our highest ideals) or “mammon” (vice, unreasonableness, social manipulation, our tribalist ideals), or in other words, whether we are autonomously living up to our sincere moral commitments (see Callan, 1988). A reasonable comprehensive doctrine will view the political process as some combination of negotiation, consensus-building, compromise, relationship-building, and statesmanship. An unreasonable moral doctrine will view the political process as advertising, persuading, marketing, or military strategy. The internal goods of these types of practices differ, but allocating them to judgments of political interactions indicates whether the citizen seeks a reciprocal interaction among cooperative equals or a compulsive relationship among hostile, uncooperative, or incapable fellows who are thus to be regarded as inferior in the political process. A sign that a person may be acting reasonably is that she approaches political interactions seeking the internal goods of the former practices; a sign that she may be acting unreasonably is that she approaches them seeking the internal goods of the latter.

The need to protect our interests in non-ideal circumstances complicates this picture, and we may object that at times we must view the political process as marketing, advertising, or strategy in order to secure necessary victories for worthy causes. For example, if we identify with an oppressed minority group, we may reasonably decide to

vote for the candidate that supports protecting that group because we believe that protecting this group will be best for us and for all. After all, oppression of any group always makes a society unjust, and as Du Bois (1920) notes, only the sufferer knows his own suffering (Part VI, p. 76–77); as such, our voices should indicate how political institutions can serve our interests. As a part of this process, we may seek to persuade others to accept our view and to vote for this candidate or policy, and it may be plausible that we consider advertising and other propaganda-like media the only effective way to do so, in that it alone can successfully compete for voters' attention or prevent our opponents from using unreasonable methods to persuade them otherwise. We might see ourselves with the ideal of being reasonable when the world is more reasonable, or being willing to be reasonable to the degree that this is possible, but that we must be unreasonable now as a "burdened virtue" (Tessman, 2005) that perhaps even harms our flourishing for the good of the whole. To paraphrase Machiavelli, sometimes we must be immoral—even by our own moral commitments—to fulfill our responsibility to be just to those we care for and protect their interests, and it would be naive to believe that we could simply act virtuously and others would reciprocate.

This is a dangerous assumption, however, because those on the other side of the political divide could easily make the same argument—as soon as we are reasonable, they will be reasonable, but not until. There seems to be the need for a certain degree of concession made by both sides to understanding and reciprocity, and the current state of political advertising and other propaganda-like media undermines this. I argue that we can still be virtuous—virtuously just—citizens if we act out of reasonable considerations

and also politically communicate and use public reason with others according to these standards. If I am from an oppressed religious minority and want to advocate for religious freedom, I should use public reason to argue, only using the ideas that everyone can reasonably agree to, and also not use propaganda-like tactics to attack my enemies. Even if I violate reasonableness for expediency's sake, it corrodes our political culture as it prevents reciprocal civility and social cooperation. It seems that part of the solution necessitates that we hold ourselves to higher standards of public reason in our political discourse, and establish institutions and support candidates who do so to promote this, although the practical reality of politics means that this cannot be the only part of the solution. In non-ideal circumstances, we may need to, for example, adopt strategic considerations or use propaganda-like rhetoric to advocate for worthy causes, though respect for ourselves and our fellow citizens should place some moral limitations on how and when we do so. I will explore some potential solutions in the final sections of this paper that take this situation into consideration.

In conclusion, I argue that one significant reason citizens struggle to cooperate in contemporary American society and other liberal democracies is that citizens are socialized into seeing the political process through the lens of persuasive propaganda-like media, and expecting to be entertained, to be marketed to, to play a zero-sum, win-lose game with the other side, and to let entertaining or otherwise emotionally-provocative messages choose political views for them. Like any other business, media companies meant to express political views and provide news on political topics have strong financial incentives to use the most effective marketing tactics they know, which contain

the implicit content that political decisions are to be made like consumer purchases or through social pressuring rather than as a deliberative process of reciprocal cooperation. What compounds the problem is that not only are citizens exposed to pervasive propaganda-like media influences in their political (and everyday) lives, but that they are spending less time and attention devoted to serious moral conversations to seek and adhere to a reasonable comprehensive view of the good life, such that even those who would otherwise choose reasonably, our potential overlapping consensus, find themselves with a Hobson's choice when advocating for worthy political causes and feel they must use unreasonable tactics to combat unreasonableness. In a mass media world, propaganda becomes the language of persuasion of everyday life, not conversations based on relationships of trust.²⁴ And this kind of intense competition for attention is not only confined to capitalism and selling consumer products; it happens whenever we compete for scarce resources, which in this case include attention and loyalty from others to our ways of life. When we have an instrumentalist attitude toward politics, we will naturally seek to use propaganda-like messages to win elections to impose our will on others. This is an inevitable consequence of competition for resources—including loyalty to our comprehensive doctrines, for we can see that the best defense against others imposing

²⁴ Note again that art, with its appeal to the emotions, may also fall under this definition of propaganda-like media. While beyond the scope of this paper, I see great value in artistic expression; even so, this similarity with propaganda may caution us not to overbalance ourselves with art consumption to the exclusion of ethical conversations, reminiscent of Plato's criticism of art. It could simply be that art and the strong emotions associated with it were not originally adapted (evolutionarily speaking) to happen outside of a context that we have now lost, like needing to have musical performances mean something significant to our comprehensive doctrines in our culture and community (see, for instance, Xunzi, 2014, p. 218–223 for an ancient account of how musical performances conduce to moral cultivation), and urge us toward shared cultural ideals.

their will on us is to impose our will on them, or in other words, the only way to defeat the power of unreasonable rhetoric is to use even more skillfully applied unreasonable rhetoric. As such, due to the nature of contemporary politics and media, we cannot achieve an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, and even those who would otherwise choose reasonable actions appear to be required to use practical strategies for legislating and activism which employ manipulative, unreasonable tactics.

VI. Legal solutions

Due to the complexity of the problem and its being so embedded in our economic and political systems, as well as its intimate involvement with human emotions and comprehensive doctrines, I do not suppose that there is a single solution that would resolve it. I believe, however, that there are ways to mitigate the problem and encourage reasonableness and civility in political discourse and resistance to reasonableness *akrasia* and the influence of propaganda-like media. I will explore some possible legal solutions in this section and spend the subsequent sections exploring educational ones. On the question of increasing autonomy, which due to the place of full political autonomy in Rawls's thought places it as an important condition for choosing to act reasonably (see also Callan, 1988), Lippke (1989) provides several suggestions on how to encourage consumers to develop greater autonomy and greater resistance to the implicit content of pervasive persuasive advertisements. These include campaign finance reform, creating space for media not subject to the competitive constraints of advertisements, increasing

autonomy through workplace participation, and education, the last of which I will discuss in the next section. I will begin with Lippke's proposed legal solutions and add some of my own, as well as discuss what role each of these might play in addressing the problem of unreasonableness and lack of social cooperation.

Lippke (1989) proposes campaign finance reform as one way to reduce the influence of advertisement in politics in particular:

to lessen if not eliminate the influence of wealth and economic power over the decisions of democratically elected political officials...[This would include] such things as the development of a public financing scheme for all political campaigns and the institutionalization of mechanisms to guarantee the independence of government officials from those they regulate or purchase products and services from. (p. 53)

This approach has the advantage of making political leaders potentially less dependent on lobbyists and more dependent on the opinions of the voters, meaning that they would have much more limited funds to use on promoting their positions and advertising may be a less effective way to do so. However, even complete public financing of campaigns would be insufficient to prevent the current state of political consumerism because candidates alone are not the only ones who use advertisements; we would need to restrict all political speech from private sources that uses propaganda-like techniques, including so-called Super PACs whose power arguably has increased since the 2010 *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision (Scotusblog, 2010). Also, in the current climate of political divisiveness, where politicians rely on interest groups for campaign funding, it

would not be practical or possible for a politician who endorses such a position to remain in office. Perhaps it is worth considering once we have reached a more civil politics, but we remain far from this ideal state.

A similar but more sweeping solution would be to censor or otherwise restrict advertising or other propaganda-like media messages to prevent them influencing citizens in a pervasive fashion, or to restrict them in the realm of politics. One way to do this could be through taxation on advertisements or other financial means, which could be justified by an appeal to the self-defeating nature of mass advertisement on the political process.

Discussing consumerism more generally, Heath (2001) argues that efforts to limit the effects of consumerism can be justified based on a “liberal objection,” one that respects citizens’ value systems and life choices but recognizes the inefficiency of allowing the status-race of consumerism to disrupt their lives. He argues that whenever a person who is satisfied with his standard of living spends more of his leisure time earning money in the pursuit of relative status, that person is worse off than he was when he had less money and more leisure time. Yet if the person adopts the values of consumerism, he must keep up with his neighbor’s high-status purchases (a newer car, for instance) in order to not feel that he has fallen behind. As such, he and his neighbor are in a sort of prisoner’s dilemma: if both of them reject consumerism, then both are better off, but if either of them spends his leisure time earning more money to surpass the status of the other, both are worse off. As such, consumerism is self-defeating regardless of one’s

values. Heath argues that the most effective solutions would likely be a progressive income tax and taxes on high-status luxury items to disincentivize purchases and hopefully prevent the status-anxious consumer from feeling that this purchase was a status necessity. In addition, the luxury tax would discourage the frivolous purchase of high-status items which can be objects of envy for others, and if less consumers in a given neighborhood possess these items, they will likely be viewed as less essential to maintain respectability. Yet given Heath's description of hip consumerism, where the popularity and status-value of a product is directly proportional to its rebellious character, or being outside of the perceived mainstream, it is unlikely that such a tax scheme would be successful, except to prevent over-frequent changes to status-driven aspects of a person's possessions.

We could potentially apply this logic to political consumerism, for example, in taxing or penalizing excessive political advertising to incentivize candidates to rely less heavily on it. While this may encourage less advertising during campaigns, citizens would still have the pervasive influence of advertisements and other media to induct them into the implicit content of consumerism that would render them vulnerable to propaganda-like tactics and rhetoric in advertisements that campaigns do use. And the "hip" version of political consumerism suggests that media producers could market commitments to a political view rather than a candidate or his policies: even if a conservative, for instance, hears less advertisements about a political campaign, she could still migrate to entertainment, news, and social media messages that she considers cool,

rebellious, or out of the mainstream (or “lamestream” in the words of Sarah Palin and others) which only reinforce political consumerism.

We could consider taxing or limiting organizations such as Super PACs, or groups not affiliated with candidates who make political speech. But it would be contentious and potentially impossible to even identify what counts as political speech—does a feature film that portrays a candidate in an unflattering light as a character necessarily constitute political speech?—let alone implement these kinds of reforms. Perhaps the *Citizens United* decision could be reversed, and limits and restrictions could be imposed upon organizations or individuals seeking to influence elections. But this would still not solve the core problem of candidates marketing themselves and their platforms, and it is difficult to imagine that any legislation could be agreed upon or effectively implemented to change this.

At this point, we have arrived at the territory of media censorship, and in a liberal democracy where free speech rights are upheld, especially one with such high access to information and difficulty controlling it, direct censorship would be problematic if not impossible. Cass Sunstein (2009) has lamented, for instance, that censorship is not possible in a liberal society. He argues that rumors rather than truth, now often discussed as fake news stories, often win out in the free marketplace of ideas. While we continue to follow John Stuart Mill (1859/2011) on the point of being skeptical that a government arbiter knows better than adult citizens themselves what media is acceptable to allow, we are faced with the dilemma of rumors and fake news that undermines democratic discourse and a populace that can interact as free and equal citizens. One solution would

be to only censor messages from political candidates and their official representatives using official campaign funds for campaign purposes. We could imagine “fair messaging” laws that require candidates to make disclaimers to potential voters that they as elected officials must abide by certain standards of democratic decency and civility, that while they will advocate for positions, they must inevitably compromise, and that no one gets everything they want in politics without making enemies of their fellow citizens. This may somewhat encourage civility by requiring candidates to publicly model virtues such as reasonableness. But severely restricting candidates’ use of campaign messages, like campaign finance reform, relies on the broken, uncooperative system that currently operates in order to change it, which is likely why every such effort has failed. And even if we can mandate that candidates make their political messages simultaneously public service announcements for practicing the virtues of liberal democratic citizenship, the invisible hand of the market will likely still find a way to influence elections—whether through the polarized news media, sensationalist social media personalities, entertainment biased for marketing purposes, or Super PAC efforts to do what candidates cannot. As long as politics relies on garnering voters’ attention, and as long as businesses can earn money by exploiting consumers’ political views, we are unlikely to see changes in the consumer political mindset through stricter campaign messaging laws.

Lippke (1989) also suggests we could create more space for media not subject to the constraints and necessities of advertisement, to “divorce the media from their almost exclusive reliance on commercial financial support” (p. 53), such as from organizations that would not derive their financial solvency from whether their media content

succeeded in persuading people. This seems plausible if space could be given to charitable organizations or moral communities whose aims are to promote greater reasonableness and civility, and who are funded by groups who are not relying on them making propaganda-like appeals. Phillips (1997) suggests, as mentioned above, that advertisements such as messages about spending time with family from religious groups could be examples of how the form of advertising could be used for constructive purposes. Messages from moral communities and public service announcements may be of some use, but do not seem sufficient, given the vast financial interests and pervasiveness of advertising and other propaganda-like media, to make a significant difference alone, as consumers will still be overwhelmingly exposed to commercial media (see Sneddon, 2001, pp. 22–23). In addition, Lippke’s (1989) stated goal to “provide individuals with increased access to the means of expression” (p. 53) can be judged in part on our observations of how this has played out through the democratization of media through platforms such as YouTube. We may argue it has led to “the creation of a more diverse cultural life” (Lippke, 1989, p. 54), but because producers of media still have to compete for individuals’ time and attention in order to be noticed, even if they do not rely on money, they are subject to the same constraints, what Lippke calls “narrow commercial criteria” (p. 54). Public financing of media material could be promising, but with a divisive political environment, it is unclear if both sides could agree on content to promote—and moral communities are only a small player by comparison to businesses. At most it would only represent a small step toward solving a large problem, and would be unlikely to make much change in advertising culture.

Lippke also argues for changes in workplace participation to build citizens' autonomy. This is specifically a solution aimed at increasing citizens' autonomy by giving them more opportunities for choice and responsibility at work. Worker participation mechanisms, like those Lippke (1989) mentions, "guarantee workers participation in the economic decisions that vitally affect their lives" (p. 53) and may encourage them to be more self-critical and proactive in their political life, and less prone to relying on the influence of advertisements. This has some potential to make a difference. We see an example of this kind of collaborative decision-making and communal culture in Malcolm Gladwell's (2000) depiction of W. L. Gore & Associates, Inc. Through trial and error, the company has determined the optimal maximum size of a group working together in the same building, which also happens to align with Robin Dunbar's "Dunbar number" of 150 based on the estimated number of stable social relationships that can be maintained based on human neocortex size. This arrangement ensures that members can personally connect with one another as team members, and the company has been able to create an environment of collaboration and mutual trust, not only through limiting the number of people who work together but also by the egalitarian structure of the company so that all are associates and see each other as valued members of the company.

Participating politically and collaborating on decisions with fellow coworkers not only encourages workers to develop autonomy but also to act reasonably; while citizens may never have to (knowingly and) voluntarily interact with someone of the opposite political party, they must interact with coworkers frequently, so they are more likely to

act to maintain a relationship of reciprocity. Practicing engaging in the practice of negotiation and similar reasonable practices to achieve political goals in the workplace may increase citizens' likelihood of and familiarity with viewing political participation outside the workplace in these reasonable terms. There are some potentially worrisome possibilities, such as that worker participation, for instance, in collective bargaining proceedings, may not guarantee any more reasonable participation, as workers may choose to use the same kinds of propaganda-like tactics against others in their workplace, especially if they must negotiate over a status divide (such as that between management and labor). Even so, workplace autonomy and worker participation could certainly contribute to a more socially cooperative liberal state, although it is doubtful that this would provide the same degree of moral reinforcement and support as a moral community, so it seems that it would be helpful but not sufficient. It might also not be neutral or culturally sensitive to Americans from different culture orientations who see no need to develop such autonomy over decision-making (and for whom it may conflict with their comprehensive doctrines, making it a potentially unreasonable policy in a liberal state).²⁵

Another solution to pervasive media influences that Lippke does not explicitly recommend regards limiting the media access of children. Liberal states can place restrictions on minors for their own well-being, contrasted with the need to respect the

²⁵ A potential compromise could be to make the autonomy-promoting structure an optional part of a company's culture that a worker may or may not participate in, based on his comprehensive doctrine. If this is the case, a liberal state that is not liberal perfectionist could encourage companies to be responsive to their employees' desires regarding workplace autonomy so that those whose comprehensive doctrines encourage ethical autonomy can build autonomy and become more moral by their own standards, while others can opt out.

autonomy (or seeming autonomy, at least) of adults (see Mill, 1859/2011). Research also suggests that advertising is harmful to children, especially those of low-income backgrounds and minority races, and the APA considers it unethical for psychologists to contribute to business practices that use manipulative marketing strategies targeted at children (see Kramer, 2006). These influences encourage unhealthy behaviors such as overeating that lead to problems like obesity (Kramer, 2006; also Raley, 2006). The APA advocates public service announcements, education programs, and legislation to prevent exploitation of children by businesses (Kramer, 2006). This likely only applies to cases where evidence has indicated clear harm to a child's well-being as a result of advertising, such as advertising junk food, dangerous activities, or drugs that are illegal for them to use, including alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. Laws that would make schools safe havens from pervasive advertisements, including banning cell phones at schools or restricting what content students can access online at schools, or those that require parents to use child protection filters on all Internet browsers on devices children have access to, seem plausible and potential places of across-the-aisle compromise. What content these filters restrict could be a point of contention, especially at home, and it is unlikely that they would catch most if not much of the kind of consumer media targeted at political subgroups mentioned above. But this could provide a starting place for a solution at the level of childhood education.

While it would be difficult to apply a filter to sufficiently insulate children or adults from politicized propaganda-like media influences, insulating children from some of these influences and encouraging adults to step outside of them could constitute real

possibilities. If we can restrict the kinds of advertisements directed at youth and children, and if we can guarantee that they have exposure to certain kinds of materials that will educate them and prevent them from being easily swayed to unreasonable decisions by propaganda-like media, then this could help prepare them for citizenship. The state has good reason and justification for limiting children's exposure to advertising because of how it impacts brain development and also how their consumer choices can negatively impact health (video games, foods, etc.). For example, schools could mandate that children were educated in such a way as to mitigate the effects of consumer politics, and could also involve and educate parents so that they could become involved in the process and learn how to make responsible decisions (and how to reinforce this with their children). I will explore the means to accomplish this in the next section.²⁶

VII. Educational solutions and liberal neutrality

Of Lippke's proposed solutions, I find education the most plausible and pragmatic given the current divisive political climate. In addition to asserting that education could

²⁶ One other obvious solution would be to increase efforts at economic justice and reducing inequality. This could potentially reduce the need for citizens to work excessive hours to maintain their standards of living, which Thomas Piketty (2014) argues is increasingly necessary in the increasingly unequal societies of the developed world. I admit that increased attention to economic justice, including family-related reforms that Cline (2015) suggests such as increased parental leave for the birth of children and other family-friendly policies, would provide opportunities for citizens to spend more time with family and more time pursuing the good life within their comprehensive doctrines. However, one major argument I advance in this essay is that even with increased time, citizens are unlikely to spend it on seeking the good life due to the pervasive influence of persuasive media in their lives. I still see the value in promoting these economic and family-friendly reforms, though, as part of an overall effort to help citizens prioritize good lives over meeting financial needs that also includes both comprehensive and political moral education programs.

help create the social conditions of autonomy, Lippke (1989) claims that currently, “our society’s educational and religious institutions, which might serve to counter ads, are ill-equipped to raise and deal with complex issues such as the nature of the good life” (pp. 43–44). I argue that it is precisely in these institutions, in addition to the family, that we can and must bolster citizens’ understanding and commitment to a view of the good life that can counter the impact of advertising and other propaganda-like media, and that no legal solution alone can address this problem, though the state can and should support these institutions. As advertisers and political campaigns are likely to find way to circumvent any legal measures to prevent propaganda-like rhetoric, I believe that creating a more informed, capable, (politically) autonomous, and morally developed citizenry would be a more effective solution. In this section, I will sketch a possible educational solution which involves building on the growing educational practice of Social Emotional Learning in public schools. As well as providing a curriculum that warns against the dangers of advertisements and other propaganda-like media, this program would seek to develop in citizens the virtues and community connections that support the social conditions of autonomy as appropriate to liberal neutrality, cultivate virtues of citizenship to promote reasonableness in public discourse and political decisions, and encourage citizens’ adherence to a reasonable self-chosen comprehensive doctrine in connection with family and community support.

Due to the pluralist nature of the liberal state, one that does not compel anyone to accept any particular view of the good life or what ultimate ends are valuable, and which actively works to preserve these liberties among its citizens, all state-sanctioned activities

must abide by liberal neutrality as a standard of reciprocity all can reasonably agree with. Liberal neutrality means that the state does not take a position on nonpolitical values or at least has a neutrality of aim and that educators do not promote one value system over another (see Ebels-Duggan, 2013). In addition, Rawls (2005) argues that this neutrality of aim can be reasonably expected to “ensure for all citizens equal opportunity to advance any conception of the good they freely affirm” provided that it respects the principles of justice (such as the limits of reasonableness or Kane’s Moral Sphere), and that “the state is not to do anything intended to favor or promote any particular comprehensive doctrine rather than another, or to give greater assistance to those who pursue it” (p. 192–193). As such, the liberal state can only provide a political moral education for the virtues and duties of citizenship and not a moral education for becoming a good person according to a certain set of ultimate ends or comprehensive doctrine, or else it would violate neutrality. In a liberal political society, however, it is not reasonable to expect that a “neutrality of effect or influence” could be achieved (Rawls, 2005, p. 194). Even if political liberalism resembles comprehensive liberalism and may encourage citizens to adopt it, Rawls (2005) considers this one of the “unavoidable consequences of reasonable requirements for children’s education” that we may need to accept with regret (p. 200). In his view, it is crucial to “set out carefully the great differences in, both scope and generality between political and comprehensive liberalism” (Rawls, 2005, p. 200), so that political liberalism can avoid bias and promote pluralism and individuals’ freedom to choose their own comprehensive doctrines as much as possible.

In relation to mitigating the influence of advertising, I argue that while state-funded public schools cannot provide a wholly adequate or comprehensive moral education, there are many options that they can and should pursue to educate students about the democratic process and their role as citizens, which can unite them on the key “final ends” that citizens adhering to a reasonable political conception of justice have in common (Rawls, 2005, p. 202). Owen Flanagan (2017) argues that character education within the confines of liberal neutrality can consist in teaching children about their brains and moral psychology, such as natural biases toward prejudiced viewpoints and ways to counteract them, as well as expose them to ideas from various cultures to expand their concept of moral possibilities. He also argues that moral education can emphasize that for most people, the content of their character is more significant than their wealth and status, and that the former rather than the latter are likely more valuable and should be pursued according to the student’s comprehensive doctrine.

Kane (2010) argues from his Moral Sphere Theory that liberal pluralist societies can use methods of moral education such as the “values clarification” activity that allow the students to present their own views on questions of ethical values and discuss them (pp. 254–255). Rather than fostering moral relativism, Kane argues that this could, if done properly, promote the attitude of initial openness to other perspectives that forms the basis for his political moral sphere, a space citizens seek to create in which all persons can treat all others as ends and can meet one another with openness as they collectively seek a better understanding of the good life. Modeling and practicing openness teaches children to consider others’ views and treat others with respect, but also to critically

evaluate which views would conflict with the Moral Sphere that ensures pluralism and individual liberties (similar to Rawls's criteria for political reasonableness). Thus, students would develop a sense of how to engage as citizens and also how to judge which views or aspects of views are incompatible with the liberal ideals of their society. Kane (2010) enumerates six virtues that this curriculum could teach which would promote liberal democratic citizenship: honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, and caring (pp. 256–257). John Teehan (1995) also highlights a set of what he calls the “Deweyan” virtues for democratic citizenship based on John Dewey’s democratic thought, including openness to new ideas and willingness to decide based on reason rather than force, which are necessary for a democratic society to function. Liberal democratic societies could thus educate students in liberal democratic citizenship practices, fair engagement with those of other views, and initial openness and fair evaluation before making judgments, as well as following Flanagan’s (2017) principles to seek out different “possible moral worlds” to learn from. These could provide a foundation of tolerance for others’ views and knowledge about their own on which to build to promote reasonableness and adherence to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine. Activities that help students develop the virtues of testimonial and hermeneutical justice as described by Miranda Fricker (2007/2010) could also be included here.

One potential complication in this would be what kinds of moral conversations and exposure to other cultures and lifestyles reasonable citizens would consider appropriate for a neutral setting. Parents might be uncomfortable with teachers exposing young children to influences from comprehensive doctrines that conflict with their own

or call their core values into question, and might at very least ask that these more controversial discussions be left for later years after children are more mature and prepared to engage with conflicting values. Some parents may even wish to opt their children out of some of the content entirely. For example, while conservative Christian parents might affirm a reasonable comprehensive doctrine when it comes to seeing others as equal citizens, they may want exclusive filtering rights of what their child hears about other religions or those who participate in sexual practices that conflict with the values of their faith. Rather than trusting the literature that is explored in class or the influences of class members, parents may prefer to have these conversations within their home or moral community and would be uncomfortable if not opposed to having their children directly encounter and discuss in class a story about a teenager becoming disillusioned with Christianity and leaving his faith to become atheist. Likewise for secular parents whose teenager is exposed to an emotionally wrought story of a teen converting from atheism to Christianity. Efforts should be made to accommodate reasonable limitations to the curriculum, perhaps with the intention that eventually schools will find the right balance between presenting diverse lifestyles and parental preeminence in deciding which lifestyles to present, as well as agreed-upon guidelines for age-appropriate exposure.

The question of neutrality is more complicated with regard to ensuring that students sufficiently learn comprehensive doctrines such that these commitments are sufficiently robust to mitigate the influence of advertising and other propaganda-like media. On the matter of education in a comprehensive doctrine or at least in a partially comprehensive doctrine that sets standards for ultimate ends, the state can influence

children and promote their moral education, but it must take a subtler approach, one that I term “home-centered, school-supported.”²⁷ Recently, American educators have begun incorporating “soft skills” training and discussions into the core curriculum and advisory/home room classes at public schools. This movement is called Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and incorporates a broad array of topics related to character education and non-academic proficiencies that impact students’ ability to persevere through difficulties and function in adult-level projects. According to CASEL (2019), one prominent organization, SEL refers to “the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (para. 1). This SEL approach addresses political values and can serve as a platform for citizenship education and reasonableness training. I also argue that it can be used to encourage students and their families to become involved with discussions, communities, and practices that foster the development of autonomy, teach them a self-chosen comprehensive doctrine, and resist the influence of propaganda-like media.

To situate my proposal in the current discussion of liberal neutrality in publicly endorsed moral education programs, I will refer to an article by Kyla Ebels-Duggan (2013), who presents a well-articulated treatment of the subject. She argues that the commonly proposed practice of moral education in public schools that involves a neutral presentation of all worldviews fails the test of liberal neutrality. In order to make this

²⁷ This is similar to the philosophy underlying the 2019 Sunday school curriculum in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. See Cook, 2018.

argument, she first delineates four possible moral education models that a school of any type could adopt:

- (1) Educate students exclusively in and about their parents' worldview, while suppressing knowledge of other ways of life.
- (2) Teach children about many ways of life, in a context that treats the worldview that their parents embrace as true or best.
- (3) Present multiple worldviews, including parents' own, in a neutral way.
- (4) Advocate a single, state-selected worldview. (Ebels-Duggan, 2013, p. 42)

She argues that Models 1, 2, and 4 would all violate liberal neutrality if taught to students in a public school setting, and Model 3 is impossible to achieve. Models 1, 2, and 4 violate liberal neutrality in a public setting because they are not approaches that all reasonable citizens could accept as respecting their views of the reciprocal relationship we have as socially cooperating citizens and the values of civic friendship; the reasonable person

has a certain attitude about politics, which I think is best interpreted as comprised of the following two commitments: (1) Affirmation of the great value of civic friendship with others who seek this cooperative relationship. (2) Recognition that among these are some citizens whose convictions about what is valuable are different from and potentially in conflict with your own, and thus that the reasons to cooperate offer nontrivial normative guidance. (Ebels-Duggan, 2013, p. 36)

In suppressing knowledge of other ways of life, Model 1 encourages an insular approach to moral education that does not model the principle of charity to other views or encourage civic friendship with those of differing views. Model 2 may allow for modeling charity and respect for other views, but teaches that the parents' view is best and still privileges one view over another, so it cannot be neutral in aim in a public setting. Finally, Model 4 obviously violates neutrality by imposing one worldview on children despite the inevitably pluralist conditions of a liberal society, as Rawls describes above.

While we may argue that this leaves Model 3 as the best model to achieve neutrality, Ebels-Duggan (2013) argues that attempting to teach according to Model 3 likewise violates neutrality. If a teacher presented all views neutrally, this would indicate to the students, at least implicitly, that all worldviews are equally valuable, which in itself is a non-neutral worldview, and would be equivalent to Model 4. In other words, neutral presentation would present itself as substantive neutrality, and it would be difficult to clarify the difference between the two, in particular for children without the ability to notice such subtle differences. In addition, neutral presentation is less able to teach students the principle of intellectual charity, or "explicitly encouraging political respect for those who hold" other views, as claiming that one view (the parents' view) is correct but others should be respected in political society more effectively models this virtue (Ebels-Duggan, 2013, p. 54). Ebels-Duggan (2013) also mentions that while Model 1 may be out of line with the need to cultivate civic friendship among those with different views in a pluralist society, we have no reason to believe that parents or teachers who

adopt Model 2 would not teach this to their children. In light of this, she argues that the most promising model for moral education in the liberal state is Model 2, and that we could imagine solutions involving vouchers for private parochial schools, homeschooling, and similar practices to provide students moral education in their schooling.

I believe that Ebels-Duggan correctly identifies the flaws of assuming that neutral presentation provides a neutral education, and I further argue that neutral presentation does not ensure that children have a sufficient moral education in nonpolitical comprehensive values to mitigate consumerism and participate in a pluralist democratic society. However, given Kane's and Flanagan's considerations above, as well as Rawls's discussion of political moral values and comprehensive values, I believe we can create a system of moral education that satisfies neutrality, teaches intellectual charity, and provides both citizenship and character educations. While Ebels-Duggan's proposed solution seems plausible as a step toward moral education for some, it seems highly unlikely that all families would be able to either find a school that accommodates their desired worldview or homeschool their children. We cannot assume that parents will have the education and capacity themselves to provide a wholly adequate moral education to their children, although they will certainly play an important role. I propose a program of moral education in all schools where teachers instruct according to neutral political moral values such as those in SEL programs and the virtues of liberal democratic citizenship.

While teachers in my proposed program will be enacting a version of Ebels-Duggan's Model 4, it is imposing a state-selected and reasonable doctrine of the good citizen, not the good life—although this may include the stipulation that a good citizen chooses and adheres to some reasonable comprehensive doctrine—and as such it not only remains neutral but also teaches substantive content (is not relativistic) and encourages students toward developing comprehensive moral values. Recall that, according to Rawls, the political conception of justice is a moral conception for the purpose of establishing and upholding liberal institutions to produce a well-ordered, free, and pluralist society. As such, teachers in public schools can rightly promote one moral worldview, so long as it remains limited to a reasonable political conception of justice that all reasonable citizens could agree to. In my proposed model, as teachers plan for discussions about ethics and the good life to arise in the curriculum, they will assign students to discuss with their parents and community figures and create assignments or projects exploring their own comprehensive views. They will then have opportunities to share or listen to other class members voluntarily share their views. In this way, teachers can mediate and model civility, Rawls's virtue of reasonableness, and Kane's virtue of openness as agents or "priests" of the state (see Althusser, 1970/1971)²⁸, endorsing a state-sponsored conception of reasonable citizenship in a pluralist society. The teacher,

²⁸ While Althusser describes teachers as "professional ideologists" who indoctrinate the people in the state's ideology, like priests of the Catholic Church did in Medieval Europe, I am using this idea in a socially beneficial way as per Rawls's view of the reasonable political conceptions of justice and Kane's Moral Sphere. Rather than socially manipulating children to accept their place in the oppressive ruling ideology, I see teachers in this context as propagating the state's worldview akin to Ebels-Duggan's "Model 4" except using a reasonable political conception of justice as the worldview in question, and encouraging liberalism, autonomy, and social cooperation through their efforts.

although he adheres to his own comprehensive doctrine and his conduct may make these comprehensive moral commitments obvious, will openly act as the moderator of student discussions and model of charity and understanding, and seek to demonstrate the political moral virtues of democratic citizenship. He will support students in discovering and reflecting on their views of the good life, while still pointing out ideas that are inconsistent with a liberal conception of justice to avoid the perception of complete substantive neutrality. Rather than communicating that all ways of life are equally valuable or respectable, he will act as liberal arbiter to identify ways of life that break the moral sphere or represent unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, albeit in a diplomatic, respectful manner (particularly with regard for student feelings).

Consider an example where a history teacher instructs her high school class about the beliefs and practices of Nazi Germany in the 1940s. The teacher need not remain neutral on any points that any reasonable citizen could agree to, such as that the Nazis' ideas represent a threat to liberal democracy, that they disrespect citizens' rights, or that they cause great injustice. What the teacher must not say, however, is that their acts were evil in the sense of being morally wrong from the perspective of a comprehensive doctrine. Even if all citizens agree, the most the teacher should say is that the Nazis were unjust (or immoral according to political morality) and we as citizens should never repeat their actions. Perhaps she could make claims such as that most people from most moral doctrines will agree that the Nazis' actions were evil. She might, when pressed by students and where she judges appropriate, express that within her own comprehensive doctrine, the Nazis' actions were evil or morally wrong. In addition, she may assign the

students to speak with family and community members about the Nazis' actions and discuss with their classmates, as they feel comfortable, about how they would view the situation from their comprehensive doctrine. A Christian student might say the Nazis were morally wrong because all people are children of God with infinite value and ought to be treated with kindness and love, and that murder violates God's commandments. A secular humanist might say that allowing humans to reach their potential as free, autonomous individuals is the highest value and the Nazis were morally wrong because they stopped individuals from being able to do this. The purpose of this activity, perhaps an example of Kane's values clarification activity, is to guide students to seek out families and communities for ethical answers from a comprehensive doctrine, and for teachers to model political virtues of citizenship as students search for moral answers from non-neutral sources outside the public school.

This effort would involve significant efforts at parent outreach and education. It would involve training parents on intellectual charity, moral education, and involvement in moral communities. However, some schools already explicitly train parents on SEL skills, such as River School in Napa (see Inlay, 2019). I argue that schools can incorporate principles of moral education into SEL training for parents, make it a mandatory or highly recommended element of parental participation in schooling (perhaps with incentives or penalties at the legal level), and have discussions in school that require parents to get involved with their children's moral education. The state will not decide on the content, so it can remain neutral. However, because developing character is so important, the state can mandate that students receive a moral education

from somewhere. It would be according to parental prerogative where this occurs, but it must happen somehow. Additionally, because of the importance of a community in reinforcing an individual's and family's commitment to moral principles, the state could include assignments or provide financial or other incentives to find or form communities in its recommendations and training for parents and students. While this will not guarantee that students will choose to act as reasonable citizens they are more likely to develop a robust conception of the good life through family and community and by entering the conversation about the good life that has become a tradition in these communities.

We may object, however, that this may not have the desired effect, and will instead cause people to become entrenched in unreasonable comprehensive doctrines and join a community that becomes an echo chamber, since its members share the same beliefs. Although we can suppose that public schools' efforts to connect children and parents with communities of their choice may result in some becoming part of communities that hold unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, there are two reasons to believe that this will not threaten reasonableness: the overlapping consensus and what I call the principle of diversity. As already mentioned, faith in an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines such that Rawls envisions entails that we believe that a majority of citizens would choose reasonable comprehensive doctrines if given the opportunity to do so. Due to their interaction with people of different comprehensive doctrines, such as in school and workplaces, it is likely that they will seek reciprocity in

the political process.²⁹ In addition, if the state-sponsored SEL curriculum teaches parents and students to join a moral community on the basis of their sincerely-held comprehensive values, this is likely to encourage a greater variety of individuals to participate in a given community, not only those who would be devout on their own, but those who need a slight “nudge” (see Sunstein & Thaler, 2008) to do what will improve their lives, according to their own perspective. On this principle of diversity, this greater variety, likely including individuals from a wider range of the political spectrum in any given community, would act as a safeguard against the community becoming an echo chamber for political mobilization (see Mills, 2017). After all, they would discuss the good life enough that they would be more resistant to the propaganda-like appeals of political partisans, and be more like Sherry Baker’s (2008) “Principled Advocates” than “Pathological Partisans” about a given viewpoint or way of life.

Let us consider some potential objections to this educational proposal. One objection is that the state can provide a sufficient moral education for liberal democratic citizenship by teaching the political values of reasonableness, civility, and keeping the moral sphere, with some cautions about the manipulative power of advertising and the importance of learning about our brains and biases. This approach could include teaching students about a wide variety of comprehensive views and presenting them as equally

²⁹ In fact, I believe that a greater danger would be that they socially collapse into one dominant comprehensive view that is unreasonable toward other comprehensive views, as we have in the “red state, blue state” phenomenon of politically polarized residential patterns in contemporary American society. Martin and Webster (2018) note that it is not as simple as people moving based on political preferences, but that they move to locations for nonpolitical reasons that correlate with shared political views with others with these preferences. Regardless of the mechanism, residential polarization can be seen as a threat to learning reasonableness and dealing with those of different views.

acceptable in a liberal society, so long as they remain reasonable. This may be one reading of Flanagan's (2017) proposed reforms to character and moral education.

Because this approach can successfully respond to Ebels-Duggan's critique of teaching one state-endorsed view of the good life, as it takes no positions on the relative goodness of any reasonable comprehensive doctrines and only affirms them as good because reasonable, it may seem that we do not need to go to such lengths to encourage citizens to develop views from their own comprehensive doctrines. If I am sufficiently taught as a student to respect others' autonomy and treat others as ends, I could have a "citizenship" approach to choosing life values that balances out unreasonableness: when a course of action breaks the moral sphere or fails to demonstrate reasonable reciprocity to another citizen, it is impermissible because unjust; when it doesn't, it is permissible because just. People who develop comprehensive views in a family or personal context can pursue the final ends of those doctrines, while those without such commitments can develop a partially comprehensive doctrine and use their training as good citizens to prevent their consumer activities and voting patterns from being unreasonable. Perhaps schools would need to be careful when endorsing comprehensive doctrines as reasonable to emphasize that this does not equate to endorsing them as right or conducive to a good life, to remain reasonable toward parents who teach their children taught that a certain comprehensive doctrine is right and others are wrong and may object to a positive portrayal of other doctrines. On this argument, developing the virtues of citizenship could be sufficient to counteract the influence of advertising and other propaganda-like media. Rawls, on Nussbaum's (2011) reading, might even approve of this approach, as he indicates, for

instance, that it could be an advantage if citizens have partially comprehensive doctrines, as they would be more amenable to joining the overlapping consensus of reasonable views (see Rawls, 2001, pp. 192–195). It could be that it does not matter what path one takes to reach reasonableness, and how one arrives, but only that one becomes reasonable, and the state's only task need be to train students (and adults) in principles of reasonableness that all reasonable citizens can accept, trusting that they will see such value in a liberal political society that they incorporate a reasonable political conception of justice into whatever comprehensive views they develop.

However, I argue that this is still insufficient to produce reasonable citizens with the virtues of citizenship, as the influence of propaganda-like media will still render citizens highly vulnerable to reasonableness *akrasia*, and citizens will succumb to either consumerist influences through advertisements or unreasonably seek to create a moral community out of a group united for political, non-comprehensive purposes. To begin, in the current environment, it seems inevitable that political parties must compete for votes through propaganda-like means, and therefore must emotionally appeal to a set of values that are emotionally laden. For most if not all people, a comprehensive doctrine that contains a conception of the good life and the good person will have much stronger emotional resonance than a set of political views about how to conduct the state, even if they have some moral resonance to the moral principles of political justice. Consider that advocates of political candidates or policies will frequently advertise their views using aspects of comprehensive doctrines, such as in arguments that allowing increased Mexican immigration threatens American cultural values or that we should allow

increased immigration because diversity is inherently valuable. As such, the individual without a community and a solid grounding in a comprehensive doctrine is more likely to commit reasonableness *akrasia* by adopting political positions as comprehensive doctrines and thus refusing to engage in a reciprocal relationship (even if just in his mind when thinking about the other side), which frustrates social cooperation. He is also more likely to be swayed by advertisements and other propaganda-like media, as his political conception of justice, robust though it may be, will not guide him specifically on matters related to final ends or the pursuit of the good life.

Recall that, according to Rawls (2005), citizens must adhere to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine in order to add the “module” of a reasonable political conception of justice onto this comprehensive doctrine (p. 145). There needs to be some philosophical foundation for reasonableness in the individual’s mind. As noted above with regard to political rhetoric, comprehensive doctrines about one’s way of life are more emotionally laden than political moral conceptions about citizenship. As such, while the appropriately-trained democratic citizen will seek out and adhere to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, any approach that disregards this important aspect of citizenship is likely to produce citizens who are more susceptible to reasonableness *akrasia*, as they lack the emotionally robust commitments to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine that insulate them from being persuaded by advertisements and other propaganda-like media to become unreasonable; the unreasonable influences will override their intellectually learned commitments as a citizen (in school) to political reasonableness. What makes liberal political conceptions neutral, their lack of

comprehensive moral content, is precisely what makes them insufficient for producing reasonable citizens, who rely not only on political conceptions but more emotionally-laden comprehensive doctrines about the way to live a good life that is worth voting and even fighting to protect. It is within these commitments that a political conception of justice can grow, not external to them; as Rawls (2005) points out, the political conception of justice is a “freestanding” view that is justified in citizens’ minds by its consistency with their moral doctrines and meant to be attached to them (p. 12). Additionally, when people feel like they belong, when they have families and communities who meet their emotional needs, it is reasonable to conclude that they are less likely to accept angry emotional appeals or see others as enemies, and more likely to act reasonably. This connects to Putnam’s (2000) writings as well as the findings of PEW (2019) about the importance of communities to self-reported happiness.

A different objection may arise which critiques the idea that the individual can rationally decide whether to be reasonable or commit reasonableness *akrasia*; rather, according to proponents of situationism who oppose virtue ethics approaches, individuals are not so much influenced by character or rational choices as they are by their environment.³⁰ As such, it appears that any model which relies on the individual to make decisions in absence of changing her environment is doomed to failure. Instead, a situationist may argue that only the solutions that change conditions are worthy of attempting, and that we should focus our efforts on legislation to regulate advertising to

³⁰ See Miller, 2016.

children, unreasonable political speech, and the amount of exposure people have to propaganda-like media.

I agree that environmental factors present an important consideration, and I believe that my solution incorporates a view of virtues as a product of both personal choice and environmental influence. I want to acknowledge my situationist influence, however, because it highlights some goals of this approach. First, I argue for laws to regulate minors' exposure to advertisements and other propaganda-like media, changes to workplace dynamics to foster autonomy (if desired) or at least reciprocity among those with different comprehensive doctrines, and educational adjustments to ensure that children and parents have opportunities to connect with communities and consciously engage with and develop their own comprehensive doctrines.

Second, moral development relies not only on an environment, but also the individual's choice to place herself in a particular environment. The classical Confucian Xunzi argued that rigorous study of ethical texts under a sagely teacher's direction, engaging in appropriate rituals with the proper attitude, and attending community musical performances allowed a person to cultivate a second nature in harmony with the Way, or governing principle of the universe (Xunzi, 2014). We may likewise observe that the learning, rituals, and emotional/artistic experiences approved of and promoted by a given community shape the manifestation of a person's natural moral tendencies. Jonathan Haidt (2013) describes these as moral foundations, and Flanagan (2017) describes them as moral modules or "sprouts" after the philosophy of classical Confucian Mengzi. According to Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory, humans innately possess biological

predispositions to form moral judgments based on certain types of considerations, such as care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity.³¹ The types of actions that provoke the individual's sense that one of these moral modules has been upheld or violated, however, are dependent upon socialization within a particular culture or worldview. He compares the ways that contemporary Americans who identify as conservative and liberal conceptualize these views of morality, and concludes that while each of us can use reason to make our views logically consistent or justify ourselves when cornered by the other side's objections, it is ultimately our intuitions (invoking Hume's idea that reason is the "slave to the passions") that determine our voting behavior, as these intuitions rely on the views of morality we have developed through our environment.

It may be that we genuinely connect with people who have certain views more than others, or that we are socially pressured into adopting certain views to avoid cognitive dissonance. But Haidt (2013) argues that people disagree on politics and religion because we moralize both, and morality, in its evolutionary role of binding communities together, has strong affective components that makes it difficult for us to sympathize with those outside of our "moral matrix" or the environment we have been socialized into. Haidt (2013) presents the solution of increased socializing with and building genuine friendships and relationships of reciprocity with those of different moral views (comprehensive or political), so that we can change how we emotionally consider

³¹ He also adds liberty as a sixth moral foundation, but I believe that this is a manifestation of fairness in an environment where liberty is moralized as a part of social reciprocity. We may argue that allowing people unhindered personal choice is fair and that treating others as equal citizens is also fair, which would place Haidt's "liberty" foundation squarely within the "fairness" foundation, although people from different political cultures may develop different and even conflicting moral reactions about fairness.

those of other moral/political communities, which allows us to see them as persons instead of demonizing them.³²

Because our environments play a significant role in shaping our emotions, and because emotions seem to drive our moral decisions more powerfully in the moment than reason, I argue that an effective way for an individual to become or remain reasonable is to choose to place himself in circumstances where he will receive socialization into a reasonable comprehensive doctrine and a reasonable political conception of justice. It can additionally combat tendencies toward tribalism inherent in a mindset guided by consumer values and encourage citizens to see one another as striving for the same goals or at least from the more charitable lens of our comprehensive doctrine (as compared to our political party affiliation). For example, by spending more time in moral communities discussing the good life and less time letting advertisers and propagators of other propaganda-like media (such as political advertisements) dictate values to us, we are likely to become more genuine and less unreasonable. Schools and other public institutions, even under the constraints of liberal neutrality, can teach children and parents to conscientiously choose to value time with people who are not trying to sell something

³² While I agree with Haidt's main argument as I have presented it, I have also excluded some elements I see as problematic, such as his observation that liberals and conservatives appeal to different moral modules in campaign rhetoric and that we can separate out additional moral foundations such as liberty. Rather, as he suggests at some points (in particular when showing bumper stickers from the two sides; see Haidt, 2013, p. 150–179), it appears that liberals and conservatives in the United States really do develop their moral views in two distinctive environments, though each will have sub-environments with more subtle differences, and that each environment provides rhetoric and principles to shape our moral reactions in certain ways. These ways include: what violates our feelings against harm (physical or economic violence or both), what counts as appropriate care, what constitutes fairness and unfairness, who constitutes a legitimate authority (whether scientists or religious leaders or both), which groups we should show in-group loyalty toward (our country or those across the world with our views), and what non-negotiable standards we must meet in order to be human beings and not sub-human animals or monsters (such as taboos against cannibalism, extramarital sex, and racism).

to them. As such, one solution would be to sponsor events and opportunities for those of various views to genuinely engage with one another as equals, such as through the values clarification activities and other SEL activities mentioned above in schools, or through regular community events that go beyond superficial displays of unity and allow citizens to honestly and openly communicate their feelings and views with one another for purposes of sympathizing rather than persuading. This also relates to Haidt's preferred solution of associating with those with different views to change our moral reactions and see them as people to care about and understand rather than enemies to be defeated.

VIII. Reclaiming liberal neutrality in education

Another objection may be that in teaching children to keep the Moral Sphere, to respect persons as ends, and to respect pluralism, we are actually giving them an adequate vision of the good life: that is, teaching the ethical theory of Western liberalism, or what Rawls (2005) calls "the comprehensive liberalism of Kant or Mill" (p. 159). This ethical tradition (see MacIntyre, 1981) emphasizes human rationality, scientific naturalism, the rights of individual persons, and the scientific method as the means of attaining knowledge. We could argue that this could serve as a fitting default for children without moral communities or whose parents do not teach them comprehensive doctrines, and could be a sufficient bulwark against the excesses of a pervasive consumerist atmosphere otherwise unchecked by a comprehensive doctrine. This tradition has had a major role

and was a significant influence in creating the liberal pluralist state and the distinctive form of democracy that liberal democracies currently aspire to, so it would seem to be an adequate ethical perspective from which to derive democratic citizenship.

However, this objection leads the neutral pluralist state into the same problems that Ebels-Duggan (2013) points out with regard to promoting a state-supported worldview: it violates neutrality. Recall that in saying that having the state education system teach citizenship by appeal to principles such as Rawls's political justice or Kane's Moral Sphere Theory, this could only be appropriate if it is presented as a neutral political view that does not dictate any nonpolitical moral values and is compatible with any reasonable comprehensive doctrine. This means that, for all of its virtues, liberalism as a comprehensive doctrine must not be confused with liberalism as a political philosophy. This is relevant to Haidt's observations about moralized politics, and I argue it contributes to the "culture wars" over the American political agenda: people from various sides may take their political views to be comprehensive views or use their comprehensive views to unreasonably advocate for political policies.

While Ebels-Duggan argues that we need not bracket our moral commitments in democratic participation, which I agree with, and which Rawls agrees with as well (see Nussbaum, 2011, p. 17), this does not equate to using reasons from within one comprehensive doctrine for public reasoning and justification in the political context. According to Rawls, to preserve neutrality and a respect for pluralism, we must not make arguments for political positions using the language of moral arguments from within a comprehensive doctrine, but must eventually (in the argument) tie it to principles that all

reasonable citizens could agree with. Just as, for instance, the political left would reject and call out arguments that a conservative makes to ban abortion because it is a violation of the sixth commandment, likewise a conservative could reasonably reject a liberal's argument for teaching in schools that all kinds of sexuality are equally acceptable for being a good person, as this is not actually a neutral position. What the conservative could say is that she believes abortion is morally wrong because it violates a divine commandment in her faith but then argue in a political context that it violates the political right to life of a human being in a womb; from here, we could have a discussion or debate about what constitutes a living being and whether or in what situations fetuses warrant legal rights or in what situations their rights supersede those of the women who carry them. Likewise, the liberal could say that he staunchly believes that all sexual practices are equally acceptable for a good human being to practice, assuming they violate no one's autonomy, but argue that in a democratic society, it would cause citizens to view one another as unequal if all sexualities were not said to be acceptable of citizens, which could be argued but would at most say that no sexual practice that does not violate the moral sphere or principles of political justice would cause a person to be a bad citizen, since the state should have no jurisdiction over the definition of a good person (and this view could also be contested through public reason like the view on abortion described above).

Yet this does not seem to be consistently understood or practiced by many in the education profession. For example, when teaching about racism, we can surmise that teachers in liberal states will typically not say that racism violates political conceptions of

justice because it creates a situation where individuals cannot exercise their freedoms; rather, they will say that racism is morally wrong, that those who practice it are evil, and that a commitment to anti-racism is essential for a person to be a good person, not just a good citizen. While there are many examples of principles that are widely (or perhaps universally) shared among citizens, a liberal pluralist state must remain neutral on comprehensive values. It cannot condemn acts as those of an evil person or applaud acts as those of a good person, only make judgments of political value on whether a person is a good or bad citizen. As Aristotle famously noted, a good person and good citizen are not necessarily the same, and are judged by different criteria. But whereas his point seemed to be that there is only one standard of a good person and many standards of a good citizen according to a given constitution, in liberal democratic societies there is one standard of a good citizen (though the details of this may be debated) and there are many standards of a good person, according to different conceptions of the good life. As such, the state cannot pass comprehensive moral judgment, only political moral judgment, for it reserves that right to comprehensive doctrines and individuals' freedom of conscience.

This may be the reason why education has become an ideological battleground for culture wars in American politics. If teachers with left-wing political views incorporate elements of morality from left-leaning comprehensive doctrines and communities into their teaching, conservative parents are justified in protesting that this violates neutrality, as would be the case if conservative teachers taught traditional religious forms of morality. However, leaving these kinds of decisions, as it were, to school boards and

local popular taste produces a strange result: if it is acceptable to teach children in San Francisco, California that sex outside of marriage is ethically permissible, then it must also be acceptable to teach children in Provo, Utah that sex outside of marriage is ethically impermissible. At present, it seems that the moral messages children receive at school either rely on the popular views of those around the school such as in that city or state (usually the right-wing solution) or are mandated by the federal government using values from a comprehensive liberalism and claiming them as politically neutral (usually the left-wing solution). Both options violate liberal neutrality and invite the other side to seek legal remedies for what they (rightly) perceive as unreasonableness against their views and violations of reciprocity and institutional neutrality. If conservatives allow states to decide to teach the Ten Commandments as God-given rules for a good life in red states (or any who can get a majority to vote for this agenda), then this is unfair to parents who wish their children raised according to secular, nonreligious, or non-Christian comprehensive doctrines. If liberals require or even allow teachers in public schools to teach that all sexual practices that do not violate human rights are equally good, then this is unfair to parents who wish their children raised in one of many traditional, including religious, comprehensive doctrines. Hence we see the struggle for the curriculum that both sides of the debate have perpetuated.

In this case, I argue that schools must renew their commitment to liberal neutrality in order to promote and model reasonableness and other virtues of citizenship. This requires them to preach only justice and injustice, and to tolerate all reasonable comprehensive doctrines that parents wish students taught, such as those that students

express during values clarification activities. For example, Nussbaum (2011) clarifies how we can understand Rawls's inclusiveness with regard to reasonable comprehensive doctrines which differ from comprehensive liberalism, especially in regard to metaphysical and political claims of inequality:

Some major religions in the United States affirm metaphysical differences between women and men that affect, for example, the assignment of religious functions. Thus, women cannot be priests in the Roman Catholic Church or in the [restored Christian] religion. In Orthodox Judaism women's ritual role is constrained in many ways. Are such doctrines sufficient to make the religious doctrine unreasonable? Notice that in the case of race, the clearly unreasonable doctrines are doctrines that assert something that conflicts directly with the political conception: that African-Americans should be slaves, or that they should have unequal political rights. If we imagine, instead, a doctrine that urges, on metaphysical grounds, a differential assignment of ritual roles by race, it is not clear what Rawls would say about this doctrine. Consider an earlier doctrine of the [restored Christian] religion, now abandoned, which argues that people of African descent cannot hold the priesthood. In at least some versions of the doctrine, its metaphysical grounds do not impugn the political equality of those citizens...That doctrine would presumably be reasonable in Rawls's view, because it is compatible with equal respect; it is a doctrine that reasonable citizens might hold. If we interpret the religious inequality of women, in the religions in question, to have a parallel structure—it is a metaphysical doctrine that is fully

compatible with affirming the full political equality of women—then the religions in question ought to count as reasonable comprehensive doctrines, whatever their metaphysics are. (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 8–9)

This allows us to explore the difficulties with what teachers might typically state out of ignorance of liberal neutrality and how to reframe the conversation in terms of moral citizenship rather than comprehensive morality. A typical example might be when a teacher asserts the following in a classroom: “All ways of life that don’t harm others are equally good.” If we as teachers say this, we violate liberal neutrality because the liberal state does not define the range of the (comprehensive) good, only the just: not good people, only good citizens. Thus we could say instead: “All reasonable ways of life—those that don’t break the moral sphere, those that allow us to cooperatively participate in a society of free and equal persons—are acceptably just for a citizen to pursue.” This clearly situates the conversation in the realm of the good citizen and remains neutral as to comprehensive morality. In addition, we should add that believing that some ways of life are correct and others incorrect, some good and others evil, some better and others worse according to a comprehensive, nonpolitical standard is acceptable and perhaps inevitable in a pluralist society, even a reasonable pluralist one. We can accept that our views differ and respect even unpopular views without losing what is definitive about the liberal state: that it only prescribes moral standards for the virtues of a citizen.

Consider an atheist secular humanist who respects his Christian coworkers as fellow citizens worthy of equal democratic regard but adheres to comprehensive views that consider it inappropriate, inefficient, and even immoral (according to, for example,

William Clifford's ethics of belief) to hold views about how to pursue a good life on the basis of faith. An observant Christian might likewise consider an atheist coworker misguided and believe that she, the Christian, is living an ethically better life than her coworker by making covenants with God and cultivating Christlike love through divine grace, but still love and respect her coworker as a human being and fellow citizen. It does not count as racial or religious discrimination for a person or tradition to hold a particular view about whether people with certain qualities are or are not living a good human life, or if they contain beliefs about the metaphysical status of persons on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, or race; what matters is whether people under the influence of these views actually practice discriminatory behavior in their political lives or view others as less than equal citizens on account of such qualities. We might object by mentioning the importance of thought and perspective, and how comprehensive views that differentiate people based on such qualities could produce discriminatory social practices. However, if individuals appropriately differentiate between their comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions of justice, and if they have sufficient training to manage these different aspects of their perceptions, they could reasonably hold comprehensive views that view various groups as having different metaphysical or ethical statuses while still maintaining respect and civic friendship with all citizens. There may be some cases where comprehensive views do conflict with liberal reasonableness; Rawls (2005) says that even though political liberalism allows a wide variety of reasonable views the opportunity to flourish, there can, referencing Isaiah Berlin, be "no social world without loss: that is, no social world that does not exclude

some ways of life that realize in special ways certain fundamental values” (p. 197).

We may count the consumer way of life as one of these excluded ways of life. We could imagine, however, the courts adjudicating particular cases to provide maximum freedom of conscience for the maximum range of reasonable citizens.

IX. The roles of teachers, schools, families, and communities

In education, the teacher’s character and presentation play an important role in modeling what we might call the distinction between ethics and politics, including charity for other views, respect for all as citizens, and expressions of personal comprehensive moral beliefs. Ebels-Duggan (2013) argues that an important part of a moral teacher’s responsibility in a liberal society is to show charity toward other viewpoints, something more easily achieved when affirming one doctrine as morally right. On my proposed model, the teacher would teach and model liberal citizenship and an attitude of justice and reasonableness. But the teaching of charity for other comprehensive views would come from the students, with the teacher as facilitator.³³ The teacher would choose which moral issues to address, those either related to the current topic in the content area or which the teacher or school decides are relevant to the students due to an understanding of their social and emotional needs. In addition, the teacher would contact parents, guardians, and community and spiritual leaders who are working with these

³³ At least, in the classroom; students would also receive moral instruction within a moral community from parents and/or other moral teachers that could model charity for other viewpoints by affirming one comprehensive doctrine as correct, consonant with Ebels-Duggan's view.

children to inform them to help the child prepare ahead of time. During the discussion, the teacher would mediate among student viewpoints and act as a neutral arbiter to invite and encourage students to take charitable views of their classmates' views. If there are not other views present—for example, if the students happen to share the same comprehensive view—the teacher could also introduce different views and play the role of their advocate to show the students what a person from that perspective might charitably say in such a situation.

The question arises from Ebels-Duggan about whether this will teach students that all viewpoints, even unreasonable ones, are equally valid and worth defending. After all, the teacher is the role model of civility, and if he can show charity toward another view, such as an unreasonable one that advocates forced conversion to a religion, this seems to justify it. One answer is that the teacher could charitably respond from that viewpoint's perspective but also note that this viewpoint is unjust according to the liberal perspective of justice; while it could be a live option for some human beings to hold, it is not the kind of viewpoint that someone in our society could hold and still be a good, reasonable citizen. This allows them to differentiate between a good person and a good citizen, and also again encourages them to see the teacher, when acting in a teacher's role, as a priest of the state (see Althusser, 1970/1971)—in other words, as representing the state's political doctrine, which in the case of liberal democracies is a reasonable political conception of justice. Even people who break the moral sphere with their lifestyles or hold unreasonable comprehensive doctrines are still people, and will likely see

themselves as good, even if we cannot accept their ways of life here.³⁴ A second answer is that the teacher can transparently admit that he has personal comprehensive views, and that he does not actually view all ways of life as equal. Whether the teacher shares his own views with the students would take discretion and care, including consideration of students' age and maturity, since the goal would be to model charity for the students and also show that the teacher can take on a comprehensive view but be sympathetic to others while not endorsing either moral relativism or using his position to sway students toward his views.

Another solution to this would involve the teacher admitting that she has a comprehensive view but never sharing it, or at least not its details, when discussing with the class. Yet if the teacher is seen as someone without a comprehensive view, where will children receive their model of a responsible adult living according to a reasonable comprehensive doctrine? For one, the teacher should show in her moral conduct that she lives according to some comprehensive doctrine. Also, and more importantly, children need role models at home and among their moral community. Ebels-Duggan alludes to this in her conclusion when she mentions that her ideal system could include

³⁴ We may also ask what would happen if a student expressed their own (or their parents') comprehensive views and they were unreasonable, such as the religion mentioned above that advocates forced conversion. In this case, the teacher might use SEL techniques of open/honest questions and empathic listening to help the student realize that the comprehensive doctrine is unreasonable in a liberal society, or might simply contact the parents and inform them about what he, as the teacher, is obligated to teach (perhaps to give them the opportunity to opt their child out of certain conversations if they disagree). Preferably, the teacher could inform parents of this beforehand and ask for comments or concerns about the curriculum. Even, however, if some students affirm unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, a teacher's modeling care and concern for the individual even while admitting that some aspects of his comprehensive doctrine are incompatible with liberal society could provide a valuable modeling of civility as well as an opportunity for the child to reflect on his views and, in Rawlsian fashion, choose to alter them to join the overlapping consensus.

homeschooling and increased parochial school enrollment. I argue that parent education programs are vital in fostering children's moral education, and that agents of the state can and should also become involved with families and community leaders to promote moral education from the perspective of their moral community's comprehensive doctrine. This could take the form of classes and training offered by the school directly that train parents on SEL strategies, building relationships of trust, communicating, and talking about moral issues, as well as the importance of having a comprehensive doctrine to communicate to children in the first place and the parent's role as role model of their ethics. Schools may offer incentives or make these trainings mandatory for parents. In addition, teachers, social workers, and school officials could collaborate with clergy or other moral community leaders to give training and presentations on similar topics, including showing support for parental transmission of moral training to children. This may include financial incentives such as tax breaks for moral communities and/or parents to incentivize communities to offer classes on parenting preparation, child discipline, and teaching moral education in the home from the perspective of a comprehensive doctrine of the parents' choice. It could also involve, in high-risk cases, initiatives such as the Nurse-Family Partnership that Erin Cline (2015) discusses when exploring programs that use science-based strategies that resonate with Confucian values to strengthen families. The Nurse-Family Partnership provides young, impoverished mothers with compassionate mentorship and training about parenting from nurses who follow up with them from months before their child is born to two years after, counseling them on parenting techniques and how to involve the father and other family

members for social support. This program demonstrates one possible goal of a government-sponsored program of moral education support for moral communities: to invest in creating social capital and skills among citizens so they can more effectively self-govern.

This constitutes what I call a home-centered, school-supported moral education program.³⁵ This program would not only encourage and seek to strengthen families in transmitting ethical ideals from a comprehensive doctrine to their children, making them more resilient against advertisements and other propaganda-like media, but also strongly emphasizing the distinction between ethics and politics through direct educational instruction and teaches the importance of charity, civic friendship, respect, and developing the virtues of liberal democratic citizenship in addition to adhering to the ideals of a comprehensive doctrine. I argue that this program provides encouragement and opportunities for parents and children to develop comprehensive views and join self-chosen moral communities centered around a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, as well as encourages thoughtful reflection and understanding of diverse moral communities around them, while also not violating the state's commitment to liberal neutrality.

X. Conclusion

³⁵ Taking inspiration from, as mentioned above, The Church of Jesus Christ's recent home-centered, church-supported program of religious instruction.

As I have argued, a liberal pluralist state must, on Rawls's account, ensure that citizens affirm reasonable comprehensive doctrines from which they can derive reasonable political conceptions of justice in order to achieve a cooperative society in which persons can see one another as free and equal members in order to reach the condition of a well-ordered state, or, on Rousseau's account, to reach a condition of civic friendship and respect where they can wholeheartedly compromise to create a general will among the society. Pervasive persuasive advertising and other forms of propaganda-like media in political campaigns, activism, and idea-promoting media, using the methods necessary to succeed in the current capitalist system motivated by the values of competition, material accumulation, and efficiency, necessarily socialize citizens into the shallow consumer culture of self-gratification, illogical reasoning, disregard for fair standards of evidence, and lack of interest in hearing the views of others. When citizens lack the education and support of a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, especially through a moral community that can check their own self-interested and self-deceived rationalizations, they are likely to commit reasonableness *akrasia* and fail to act morally according to their own comprehensive doctrines, conditions which relate to Lippke's concerns about the social conditions of autonomy. This happens when they choose the unreasonable aspects of their comprehensive beliefs over the reasonable ones, a phenomenon that could result from several reasons, but which, given the propaganda-like character of current political campaigns and activism, plausibly results from treating politics like consumption and using shallow, propaganda-like rhetoric to persuade.

The implicit content of advertising and other propaganda-like media, including political messages, discourages the citizenship virtues needed for a cooperative and fair society. In other words, advertising and political messaging as it is currently done encourages unreasonable behavior in politics, and without an identity tied to a moral community and comprehensive doctrine, citizens are likely to conflate political doctrines with comprehensive views, especially due to the moralistic emotional appeal political campaigns use to promote their positions. While many legal solutions may be sought, most would be unlikely to improve the situation because they are impractical or unlikely to even pass Congress—and unlikely to be effectively enforced if passed. Yet some of them may provide some support to reduce the impact of advertising and other propaganda-like media on politics. These would include regulations on political campaign speech to model the virtue of reasonableness, increased workplace autonomy to socialize workers into reciprocal relationships with those of different comprehensive views, and regulations on advertising to children.

I have argued, however, that it is more likely that a measure to strengthen moral education in the home and moral community and to supplement and support it with citizenship education in schools and other public institutions will produce lasting change. I also believe that it would be more likely to pass Congress and receive wholehearted implementation, provided that schools emphasize the distinction between comprehensive and political values—which is likely to appeal in particular to conservatives who feel besieged by what they often perceive as a “liberal bias” in education—and provide safe spaces for difficult discussions that will strengthen moral communities and help members

of different communities engage in reasonable and civil public dialogue together—which is likely to appeal in particular to liberals who advocate tolerance and empathy training. In this way, states can legitimately “nudge” (see Sunstein & Thaler, 2008) individuals and moral communities into actions that they themselves would approve of and wholeheartedly strive for, justified by an appeal to the need for social cooperation through reasonable interactions and viewpoints among citizens to create, or at least begin to create, a well-ordered society.

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