ROMAN CHARACTER:
MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY AND THE SUCCESS OF ROME

By
Weston Liefer

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Oxford
April 2018

Approved by

________________________________
Advisor: Professor John Lobur

________________________________
Reader: Professor Molly Pasco-Pranger

________________________________
Reader: Professor Steven Skultety
For Grandma Doris and Grandpa Elmer
ABSTRACT
WESTON DOUGLAS LIEFER: Moral Foundations Theory and the Success of Rome
(Under the direction of John Lobur)

This study explores the six foundations in Jonathan Haidt’s Moral Foundations Theory and how they manifest in Livy’s History and Augustan policy. Their presence within each of those areas will demonstrate how strongly the foundations were entrenched in Roman culture and may help explain the successful transition from a republic to an empire by examining how these foundations encourage group cohesion. Added to this, this study may also help provide more support for Haidt’s theory. Moral Foundations Theory posits that there are six moral foundations of culture that have developed over time, each responding to a unique trigger: Care, Loyalty, Fairness, Authority, Liberty, and Sanctity. With the advent of culture, the way these foundations were triggered changed (i.e. some cultures only trigger some). Roman culture was able to trigger all six, which helped their civilization lasted so long. To explore this I analyzed the first ten books of Livy, finding many episodes in which the foundations were present (the ones presented are those in which the foundations are most prominent). I also looked at the way in which Augustan policy triggered the foundations thereby allowing the Romans to come back together after decades of civil war and aiding him in forming an empire which would last for centuries. The examples presented also display that these foundations are mutually reinforcing, that is several will occur in one situation thus making each other stronger. This study found that the foundations were abundantly present in Roman culture and their presence not only helps confirm Moral Foundations Theory but also allows us to see how Roman culture triggered these foundations.
Table of Contents

Introduction.........................................................................................................................1

Chapter I: A Foundation for Pixar......................................................................................10

Chapter II: The Essence of Samwise Gamgee.................................................................23

Chapter III: Harvey Dent’s Obsession ..............................................................................34

Chapter IV: Cultural Shock in the South........................................................................42

Chapter V: The Jedi Versus The Sith.................................................................................53

Chapter VI: The Sanctity of Marriage...............................................................................63

Conclusion..........................................................................................................................71

Bibliography.......................................................................................................................73
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>A Recent Trigger for the Care/Harm Foundation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Another Trigger for the Care/Harm Foundation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>A WWI Propaganda Poster</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Depiction of the Intervention of the Sabine Women</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Panel featuring three children on the Ara Pacis</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Close-up of a child on the Ara Pacis</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Coin Depicting the line of succession with Julia flanked by her sons Gaius and Lucius</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Example of Fertility and Abundance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Modern Trigger for Care/Harm</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Horatii Painting</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Example of crossover between Livy and Augustus</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Regulus Painting</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Brutus Painting</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Augustus Statue</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Relief on the Ara Pacis</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Rome was one of the most successful and influential civilizations in world history. At its height, it stretched from beyond the border of Scotland to the fertile crescent in Mesopotamia. By outcompeting all the groups on the Mediterranean basin (and many in Northwest Europe) Rome unified this domain into one geopolitical entity. Within this vast territory were millions of people from an array of ethnic and racial backgrounds - such as Celts, Greeks, Egyptians, and Germans - who considered themselves to be Roman. How did the Romans achieve such a monumental feat? One place that might provide insight would be the cultural characteristics that went along with becoming “Roman,” that is to say the values and ideas which were integral to Rome’s dominance.

Recent developments in the theory of evolutionary moral psychology might assist in understanding the force behind many aspects of this civilization. Moral Foundations Theory is a new model that was developed by psychologist Jonathan Haidt in order to explain why issues, primarily political, have become so polarized. The theory explains the polarization in terms of instincts (termed “modules” or “foundations”) which evolved to enable us to form efficient groups and outcompete other species. A fascinating part of this theory is that human cultures can interact with these foundations to develop them or diminish them. This thesis will seek to answer the question: did Roman culture develop them in a way that led to great advantages over other groups in structure, morale, and organization, and at the same time frame them in ways that were attractive and thus
facilitated assimilation? In short, the answer appears to be yes. Throughout this thesis, I will present evidence for how these foundations present themselves in Roman culture, specifically honing in on Livy’s first decade and Augustan policy and how the presence of the foundations in both helped transition Rome from a republic to an empire.

The foundations were adaptations in early humans which enabled them not just to survive but to work together. Haidt argues that there are “universal cognitive modules upon which cultures construct moral matrices.”\(^1\) He and his team identified six foundations by finding “adaptive challenges of social life….and then connecting those challenges to virtues which are found in some form in many cultures.”\(^2\) Several examples include: caring for children, avoiding contaminants, and reaping benefits of two-way partnerships. Early humans could overcome said challenges by working together resulting in those with group-oriented tendencies to survive while the more individualistic humans died off. This group characteristic also helped humans to outcompete other species which led to our dominance of the animal kingdom.

Haidt found that all six foundations had two sides and that each had certain triggers which had originally developed to ensure survival. For example, the Authority foundation was triggered by signs of dominance or submission. Once triggered the foundations caused humans to have positive or negative reactions. Thus, the labels he gave them denote the two polar sides of the spectrum: care/harm (trigger examples: seeing a puppy versus seeing someone harm one), fairness/cheating (a friend paying you back versus not), loyalty/betrayal (keeping a secret versus revealing one), authority/subversion (obeying a parent versus disobeying one), sanctity/degradation (a

---

\(^2\) Haidt (2012) 146.
church versus a brothel), and liberty/oppression (democratism versus totalitarianism).

Moreover, triggers can vary across societies and even between members of the same society. For example, in America, conservatives have strong authority triggers specifically in regard to hierarchy whereas liberals often define themselves as in opposition to hierarchy, inequality, and power.

As humans evolved the foundations enabled them to form groups, giving them advantages in motivation and cooperation, enabling them to outcompete other species and complete harder tasks. For example, the idea of sharing meat after a hunt is built off of the fairness/cheating foundation which encouraged early humans to work together in order to bring down more and greater prey. The foundations helped these groups grow into villages, cities, countries, and so on. As humans became more and more civilized, the foundations became to a degree less essential, yet they still retained their presence. Culture can shrink or expand these triggers, leading to some being more or less operative in each. Thus, for example, the sanctity trigger is perhaps quite powerful among Muslims (who pray five times a day) and Orthodox Jews. Both have strict religious and dietary practices centered on sanctity and purity.

Furthermore, cultures interact with these foundations in different ways depending on the type of society and this is why it will be difficult to fully understand Roman society. American, Australian, Western European, and any other industrialized democracy are what Haidt classifies as a WEIRD (western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) society whereas Roman society was non-WEIRD. Haidt generalizes the distinction as such, “The WEIRDer you are, the more you see a world full of separate
objects, rather than relationships.”\(^3\) Since WEIRD people have such an individualized view, they place their own needs above those of institutions and groups. In contrast, non-WEIRD people have a sociocentric view and place the needs of groups and institutions above individuals. Thus different views give rise to different moral concerns and as such, some of the Romans’ actions will appear odd or foreign to us.

How did this sociocentric view help Rome though? Haidt states, “Group selection pulls for cooperation, for the ability to suppress antisocial behavior and spur individuals to act in ways that benefit their groups….in general, groupishness is focused on improving the welfare of the in-group….“\(^4\) What makes Rome so interesting is that after Augustus took control the in-group consisted of anyone who called themselves Roman. He and Livy helped usher in a society where every citizen was united into one group that was focused on improving Roman culture. For instance, several of Livy’s stories promote loyalty to the state above all else and this, in turn, promoted a united Rome, a “Rome First” mentality, if you will. This aspect of a single, inclusive Roman group interacted with the foundations in a unique way and helped enable the transition from republic to empire.

When Livy was writing, he viewed Rome as a declining moral society. He states, “Of late years wealth has made us greedy, and self-indulgence has brought us, through every form of sensual excess, to be, if I may so put it, in love with death both individual and collective.”\(^5\) To help remedy such a situation, he thought it prudent to write a history

\(^3\) Haidt (2012) 113.
of Rome, detailing the exploits of their ancestors in order to revitalize Roman culture, which he wrote about in the following way:

I do honestly believe that no country has ever been greater or purer than ours or richer in good citizens and noble deeds; none has been free for so many generations from the vices of avarice and luxury; nowhere have thrift and plain living been for so long held in such esteem. Indeed, poverty, with us, went hand in hand with contentment.6

Livy intended for the stories of their ancestors to serve as examples for contemporary Romans, explicitly showing them how real Romans acted. These exemplarities resonated with the Romans but why did contemporary Romans like his renditions? The examples embedded in this narrative, designed to improve Roman moral sense, resounded powerfully in Livy’s readership then and now and helped establish a canon of examples. In this thesis, I will argue that Livy’s success is by and large due to his implicit understanding of moral foundations and his success in framing them.

A second reason Livy’s stories are so popular is that they taste good. Haidt compares morality to taste in the sense that when people display the positive side of the foundations it tastes good to both those doing the action and those perceiving it. Haidt describes these taste receptors as “an adaptation to long-standing threats and opportunities in social life. They would draw people’s attention to certain kinds of events (such as cruelty or disrespect), and trigger instant intuitive reactions, perhaps even specific emotions (such as sympathy or anger).”7 Hearing about someone being loyal to the state would have tasted good to the Romans. And displaying their own loyalty to the state would have tasted even better. A modern example would be a news story about a

---

7 Haidt (2012) 144.
fireman who saved someone from a burning building or car. This kind of story generally makes people feel good. In short, it tastes good to us.

The stories present in Livy were not his inventions; rather, they had been established in Roman culture for several centuries as stories the Romans told that, on an implicit and archetypal level, placed them in relationship to these foundational elements of human moral psychology. What does seem to be the case, however, is that Livy framed them in a unique way that gave them a powerful resonance through the remainder of antiquity and into the Romantic period, to judge from the popularity of depictions by Jacques-Louis David or Macaulay’s *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

Thus, the salience of Livy’s narrative is twofold. First, the stories might lend evidence that, prior to Livy, Roman culture emphasized these triggers to a degree that gave them group advantages over other cultures. That is to say, Livy’s material represents centuries-old legends that already placed the Romans in a powerful relationship to the moral foundations vis-a-vis their self-identity. Second, Livy produces his narrative as the dawn of the Roman empire, during a very transitional phase of Roman social and political culture, and thus the foundations also resonate strongly in contemporary sources outside Livy, specifically in Augustan policy. By occasionally reaching outside of the text, we can establish points of contact that might help us understand why the Augustan transformation itself was so successful. Before we can delve into Livy’s work, however, it is important to understand the author himself. His biography is just as important as his work because it influenced his view of Roman society.

Livy, the premier historian of Roman history up through the fall of the Republic, has provided modern scholars with large amounts of information about Rome from its
founding up to 167 BCE through his writings. Unfortunately, the majority of his works have been lost. Originally he published 142 books but only books one through ten, and twenty-one through forty-five exist in relatively complete form. Also, his works and letters dealing with contemporary events were lost, except in epitome form, thus we know very little about his personal thoughts on the era.

One of the few things that can be confirmed is that he was born in Patavium, which fostered his idealizing of the old days. P.G. Walsh wrote, “This region became increasingly the proverbial repository of the ancient Roman virtues, and Patavium, in contrast to Rome, retained much of the strict moral outlook of older days.”

This adherence to Roman virtue and retention of the older morality pervades Livy’s work and contributes to his ability to trigger the foundations through his stories.

It is likely that Livy was present for Augustus’ triumphant return to Rome after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra and as such, he may have viewed Augustus as someone who would restore the traditions of old. Walsh wrote that “He must have welcomed Augustus as the second founder who was needed to put a halt to the progressive degeneration, political and moral, to which Sallust and others had drawn attention.”

There is some crossover between Livy’s work and Augustan policy, as many of the practices presented in the first decade were revived during the reign of Augustus. However, it must not be assumed that Livy was taking cues from Augustus or vice versa. Both saw Rome as a fractured state and saw presenting examples from the past was the best way to heal Roman morality. As such, both were forming public policy in their own right rather than one of them borrowing from the other. Walsh reiterated this when he

---

wrote, “The conclusion must be that Livy was constructively forming public policy….rather than sedulously praising it.”

Livy and Augustus, despite not knowing about moral foundations theory or even psychology, were able to trigger these foundations. The reason being is that these foundations have such a strong evolutionary hold on us that if a writer or politician wants to make something resonate, they would naturally come into play. Many of the stories which Livy wrote and the policies Augustus pursued help confirm Haidt’s theory though he never addressed either man in his book.

Before we continue though, let me clearly lay out what I intend to argue. In no way will I claim that Augustus influenced Livy or vice versa. Instead, since the stories had resonated in Roman culture for some time and were seen as somehow foundational to Roman identity, and since Livy is a product of the early empire, I will look at the role Livy played in articulating these foundations and also the wider role they held in imperial propaganda and culture, namely through Augustan policy.

Going forward, I will dedicate a chapter to each foundation and explain their evolution as well as how they manifest themselves today. Then I will provide examples which show how the specific foundation resonates in Livy’s work and Augustus’ policy for two reasons. First, I wish to show how powerfully they resound in Roman culture. In contrast to modern society, where many of these foundations seem to have diminished, they appear to be prevalent in Rome. This will help provide support for moral foundations theory by highlighting a culture which maximized their effects. Second, it might help illustrate one of the areas which enabled the successful transition from republic to empire as well as the rise of Rome in the first place. Thus this thesis has two

---

10 Walsh (1961) 14.
goals: to provide support for Haidt’s thesis with a body of work which he did not consider, yet which seems to validate his thesis, and to help explain an important and complicated process which enabled Rome to successfully transition into an empire.

A FOUNDATION FOR PIXAR

Pixar has a reputation as a great filmmaker. Most of their films are very memorable (as evidenced by the recent enthusiasm for Incredibles 2) but, aside from their entertaining stories, something else makes the movies stand out. Many of their movies
and shorts can make audiences care about a character in a short amount of time. An example of this is the opening sequence of Up where the viewer sees an old man reminisce about falling in love, marrying his sweetheart, and then losing his wife. Before the ten minute mark, a viewer cares about the old man. The reason is that Pixar taps into what Haidt calls the Care/Harm foundation. To fully explain this foundation, I first need to discuss babies.

Babies are expensive. Human babies specifically are born many months before they can walk and then the parents need to invest a great amount of time, money, and energy, to ensure the baby’s survival. Haidt argues that mothers didn’t learn everything about parenting solely from cultural instruction or trial and error. He states, “Mothers who were innately sensitive to signs of suffering, distress, or neediness improved their odds [of survival], relative to their less sensitive sisters.”\(^{11}\) Moreover, since multiple people need to work together in order to take care of babies, evolution favored women and men who showed an “automatic reaction to signs of need or suffering, such as crying, from children in their midst (who, in ancient times, were likely to be kin.)”\(^{12}\) The suffering of one’s own child was one of the original triggers for the Care/Harm foundation. As humans formed groups, the foundation expanded, causing humans to react if they saw their neighbor’s kid in discomfort. Today we don’t even need to know the child in order to trigger the foundation as figure one and figure two demonstrate.

The Care/Harm foundation is perhaps one of the easier ones to explain because most of us experience the triggers early in our childhood, such as caring for a stuffed animal. As we grow, the foundation will encompass more than just the immediate world.

---

\(^{11}\) Haidt (2012) 154.

For instance, two very recent examples include the widely circulated pictures of two young Syrian boys, the image of Omran Daqneesh, injured during an airstrike in Aleppo in August of 2016 and the image of a drowned refugee Aylan Kurdi in September 2015. In the case of Omran, people were captivated by the traumatized look from the boy with his face half obscured by dried blood. Upon looking at the photo the foundation urges us to pull the boy close, clean him up, and reassure him of his safety. The second image of Aylan is heart-wrenching. It completely activates our instinct to protect the vulnerable. These two images cause us to feel powerful emotions because we find children cute and, as Haidt states in his book, “Cuteness primes us to care, nurture, protect, and interact.”

Fig. 1: A Recent Trigger for the Care/Harm Foundation

The WWI propaganda poster in figure three also denotes the foundation by showing a reaction which the Harm side can provoke. Western nations demonstrated this when they lept into action upon seeing Aylan and Omran. Another recent example would include Trump bombing Syrian airfields because his foundation was triggered. According to a New York Times article, “Mr. Trump was already shaken by photos his staff had shown him of children dying after the Syrian government’s chemical weapons attack — far more graphic than those the public had seen — so the president did not need a lot of convincing.”

In his book, Haidt explains that over time the triggers for the moral foundations change and adapt to new events that happen around us. In the early stages of evolution, it

---

made sense to care only for one’s own family due to the need to survive each day. As humans evolved and developed ways to communicate with the rest of the world, the trigger for the Care foundation changed and expanded. Since day-to-day survival is nearly guaranteed for us, we can afford to care about other people, animals, places, and so on, thus the Care/Harm foundation has gained more triggers.

A person does not enter the world with a fully formed Care/Harm foundation. It is cultivated in childhood through play items, such as stuffed animals, or stories, which the Romans utilized. An example of this would be Rome’s archetypical origin story for their founder. Romulus and Remus were supposed to be drowned since they were prophesied to overshadow their great uncle. However, the men ordered to drown them could not carry out the task, due to the twins’ infancy, and left them on the riverside. Following this
a she-wolf and later a shepherd both found the babies irresistible, resulting in their survival and later founding of Rome. This motif can be seen in many other stories such as Cyrus the Great’s origins as well as the story of Moses and the survival of each person is, in some part, due to the activation of the Care Foundation.

One of the best examples of the way Livy frames this foundation comes a little after Rome’s founding. The Roman population had grown significantly. However, the city lacked a sufficient number of women. Rome’s founder proposed marriages in many of the neighboring cities but they refused him because they viewed the inhabitants of Rome as the dregs of society. Livy explains this view when he writes:

....to help fill his big new town, [Romulus] threw open, in the ground - now enclosed - between the two copses as you go up the Capitoline hill, a place of asylum for fugitives. Hither fled for refuge all the rag-tag-and-bobtail from the neighboring peoples: some free, some slaves, and all of them wanting nothing but a fresh start.\(^\text{15}\)

Thus, due to this prevalent opinion and the inability to attain proper marriages, the new Romans staged a celebration and invited the nearby Sabine tribe. Then they abducted the Sabine women at the festival and forced them into marriages that resulted in children.

The fathers and brothers of the women were naturally infuriated and a war ensued. The women became distraught watching their fathers and husbands kill each other and decided to try and stop the fighting. During a particularly bloody battle Livy tells of how the Sabine women entered the fray:

They parted the angry combatants; they besought their fathers on the one side, their husbands on the other, to spare themselves the curse of shedding kindred blood. ‘We are mothers now,’ they cried; ‘our children are your sons - your grandsons: do not put on them the stain of parricide.’\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{15}\) Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, 1.8.

Figure four shows an eighteenth-century painting from the great French neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis David depicting this event and it is easy to see how powerfully the narrative interacts with the foundation.

The plea had the desired effect as neither side wanted to risk harming their women, nor did they want to harm the children. Livy described how this affected the men as such, “The effect of the appeal was immediate and profound. Silence fell and not a man moved. A moment later the rival captains stepped forward to conclude a peace. Indeed, they went further: the two states were united under a single government, with Rome as the seat of power.”

The Sabine story is important because it symbolized a reunification of two warring sides and their ability to live in peace once more. Robert Brown notes as much in his article when he wrote, “…the women thus hold for Livy a symbolic significance as

---

embodiments of a *concordia* which complements the Romulean qualities of *virtus* and *pietas*. The three virtues provide a model for future generations of the fruits of combining physical courage and religious observance with a policy of forgiveness and reconciliation."\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, this episode is important because of the close relationship between the Romans and the Sabines. The two share many similarities and as Robert Brown points out, “For Livy, the war between the Romans and the Sabines and the intervention of the women must have had a special resonance with the recent civil wars. So close indeed is the relationship between the opposing sides, so eloquently emphasized by the Sabine women, that the war between the Romans and the Sabines takes on the complexion of a civil war.”\textsuperscript{19}

The themes and motifs present in these stories were useful during the period after Augustus dispatched both Antony and Cleopatra: they promoted healing and compassion. Augustus understood that if he wanted to bridge a divide that had been growing for nearly six decades, the symbol of children would be useful. After several years of implementing the new regime (cast as a restoration of the old), Augustus decided he needed to remind the people of two things: 1) Civil war was no longer a possibility and 2) he was legitimately concerned about the people’s well-being. These two points can be observed in the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, the “Altar of Augustan Peace”, which was commissioned in 13 BCE (voted by the Senate but it served the ideological purposes of the regime). The important feature here, for the sake of this paper, is the presence of children. On the long north and south side friezes, as Paul Zanker states, “And of course

children occupy the foreground, the promise of the future, clinging to their parents….Children and parents belonging to the imperial family, as far as we can identify them, are disposed according to their proximity to the throne.”

With the line of succession so prominently displayed, a sense of security grew. This display reflects Augustus’ desire to reassure and reaffirm his commitment to peace and thus promoted an ethos and program which helped assuage the fear of another civil war.

---

Also, he promoted two ideas that deeply resonated with vital emotional triggers: growth and prosperity.

Added to the Ara Pacis, coins were also minted, showing the line of succession, such as figure seven. This ensured that everyone in the empire knew the line of succession and thus allowed peace to permeate the society. Moreover, children on the Ara Pacis present not only served to display the line of succession but also to further the notions of fertility and abundance. A clear example of this can be seen on the east side of the altar, pictured in figure eight. Zanker notes of the figures that “it is immediately obvious that she is a divinity whose domain is growth and fertility.”

The animals which surround the deity and the children in her lap each further Augustus’ message. Zanker writes that “The viewer was meant to….understand the message, that the blessings of peace had been won and made secure by the newly fortified virtus of Roman arms.” In order to further promote these ideals, Augustus also passed laws which discouraged

---

adultery and remaining childless. This was not popular with the men of the upper classes as many enjoyed employing mistresses and also having children would be expensive for them. He then presented his own family as an example for the Romans to follow.

Suetonius writes that:

When the knights even then persistently called for its repeal at a public show, he sent for the children of Germanicus and exhibited them, some in his own lap and some in their father's, intimating by his gestures and expression that they should not refuse to follow that young man's example. And on finding that the spirit of the law was being evaded by betrothal with immature girls and by frequent changes of wives, he shortened the duration of betrothals and set a limit on divorce.\(^{23}\)

These images not only triggered the foundation but also fostered the people’s endearment toward Augustus. Think of it this way: whenever England’s young Prince

\(^{23}\) Suetonius, Aug., 34.2.
George is in public the internet is flooded with pictures of him looking adorable, such as in figure nine. Everyone, from the Today show anchors to the average viewer, is gushing over just how cute George is. In turn, these feelings are also attached to William and Kate and our opinion of them is heightened by the fact that pictures of their child fill us with happiness. This is not to claim that William and Kate are manipulating us, but rather shows how people generally react to children.

The same was true for the Romans when they would see the carvings on the Ara Pacis. Augustus’ grandchild on the Ara Pacis is made to look innocent as he clings to his father’s robes and glances back at his mother. This would trigger the Care/Harm foundation in the Romans, just like how Prince George does for us, and then Romans would associate this feeling with Augustus as well. Moreover, Augustus wanted to create a society in which the people felt it was safe to have children and to start a family. By
displaying his own family he provided Romans with an example and he also passed several laws which promoted having children and withheld things, such as inheritances, from those who remained childless. These moves helped to grow the Roman population and Augustus brags about census growth in the Res Gestae (Sec. 8).

In sum, my goal in this chapter was to show you how this foundation helped to bind Roman society together again. Using the images of children, Livy and Augustus capitalized on one of the original triggers for the foundation and, in turn, promoted reconciliation. In particular, the Sabine story was important in this regard as it symbolized unification after the civil wars. Livy’s narrative, Augustus’ acts, and monuments helped Roman society feel both incentivized to reunify and assured in the line of succession. With that being said, there had to be something for the Romans to unify under. Something they would feel absolute loyalty toward which could provide them with a common identity.
THE ESSENCE OF SAMWISE GAMGEE

As a child, I lived in a suburb of the St. Louis area and in 2012, I had a front-row seat to the Loyalty/Betrayal foundation at work. I grew up with baseball as a way of life: opening day is the third biggest holiday, behind Christmas and Thanksgiving, and going to the games is a rite of passage. After wins, my school and town would drown in a sea of red jerseys and more often than not, these jerseys had the name Pujols on the back. Albert Pujols was one of the best players in baseball during his career in St. Louis. For us, he was the equivalent to what Tom Brady is for Foxborough. In 2012 his contract ran out and he had the option of signing a deal with either the Cardinals or the Angels, who had offered more money. For days people only talked in hypotheticals about what he would do. For most fans it seemed an easy decision: the Cardinals had found him and turned him into one of the best players in baseball. At the same time, the fans had supported his meteoric rise, treating his family like royalty and supporting all his endeavors. For example, if a company ran an ad with Pujols featured it was likely that their business would see a rise in customers.

Pujols ended up choosing the offer from the Angels and this greatly angered the fans. They burned Pujols jerseys by the bucketload and a restaurant, originally named after him, changed its name. Natives of St. Louis mentioned Pujols only after a string of expletives and even today become gleeful when he has a bad game or season. This
irrational anger is a textbook example of what Haidt terms the Loyalty foundation, which is “anything that tells you who is a team player and who is a traitor, particularly when your team is fighting with other teams.”24

Thus what angered fans wasn’t just greed, as many people claimed, but rather a sense of betrayal. Pujols had become a traitor in the fan’s eyes, as such the reactions of the fans made sense because there is hardly another word in our language that is able to elicit the same kind of absolute hatred. Traitors have long been held in condemnation. For instance, in The Inferno, Dante places traitors in the lowest circle of hell which includes people like Brutus, Cassius, and Judas. The dislike of traitors can be found in many cultures and, along with being an original trigger for the Loyalty foundation, the concept of tribalism can help explain this widespread hatred. Tribalism, in the evolutionary sense, is displayed by early hominids who formed a group in order to survive or to defeat another group.

Originally, this foundation came about as a way to survive. Haidt wrote, “...our ancestors faced the adaptive challenge of forming and maintaining coalitions that could fend off challenges and attacks from rival groups. We are the descendants of successful tribalists, not their more individualistic cousins.”25 For early humans, survival depended upon knowing who was loyal to the group and who might betray the group. It allowed hominids to form cohesive groups which could then survive more challenging situations. Tribalism has become ingrained in society and can be seen in a multitude of areas today.

---

24 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 163.
Haidt claims, “....we love tribalism so much, we seek out ways to form groups and teams that can compete just for the fun of competing.” If you ever cheered on your school at any type of competition, congrats, you have experienced tribalism. It is not just sports though; universities compete against each other to have the best departments, businesses compete to become the most prosperous, political parties compete to control the White House. The point of this is that in each situation we form groups with people in order to achieve a goal. If someone breaks from the group or hampers its ability in some way, we label the action as a betrayal and ostracize the person from the group. If the Loyalty/Betrayal foundation is this prevalent in our own society, you can imagine that it played an integral role in Roman society. Livy presents us with several episodes that detail how this foundation influenced the Romans and signify its importance to their society.

The first instance of this foundation comes in the reign of Romulus and involves the Sabines once more. This event happened when the two cities were still at war prior to the the episode presented in the last chapter. Livy describes it as follows, “Spurius Tarpeius, the commander of the Roman citadel, had a daughter, a young girl, who, when she had gone outside the walls to fetch water for a sacrifice, was bribed by Tatius, the king of the Sabines, to admit a party of his soldiers into the fortress. Once inside, the men crushed her to death under their shields, to make it look as if they had taken the place by storm - or, it may be, to show by harsh example that there must be no trusting a traitor.” The swift punishment that Tarpeia received showed that not only do the Romans not tolerate betrayal but neither did their enemies. It emphasizes the fact that even in war

26 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 163.
27 Livy, The Early History of Rome, 1.11.
traitors were condemned by both sides, thus showing the strength of the foundation across cultures. In fact, the Romans had a designated rock from which they would throw murderers, conspirators, slaves, and traitors to their death.

There is more to Tarpeia’s tale that intensifies her despicable character. As Livy writes, “There is also a story that this girl had demanded as the price of her services, ‘What they had on their shield-arms.’ Now Sabines in those days used to wear on their left arms heavy gold bracelets and find jeweled rings - so they kept their bargain: paying, however, not, as the girl hoped, with golden bracelet, but with their shields.”28 This merely inflamed the dislike of Tarpeia because being a traitor as well as greedy breaks several societal norms that people adhere to. The Romans reviled a greedy and traitorous person and so Tarpeia became the poster child for these two attributes.

However, some sources change Tarpeia’s motives. For instance, Propertius characterizes Tarpeia, not as a malicious traitor but a girl in love. He wrote, “She saw Tatius maneuvering on the sandy plain and uplifting his blazoned arms over his horse’s golden mane: she was stupefied by the king’s looks and his kingly armor, and the urn dropped from between her heedless hands.”29 Propertius then details the deal she made with Tatius after falling in love, “Now she had betrayed the trusty gate and her defenseless country, and asks him to name the wedding-day of his choice.”30 The next part is where the two stories overlap, as each has Tarpeia killed for treachery, “But Tatius

28 Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, 1.11.
30 Propertius, *Elegies*, 4.4
(for the foe allowed no honor to treachery) answered: ‘Wed, and thus mount my royal bed.’ So saying he crushed her beneath the massed shields of his company.”

Both Livy and Propertius were alive in the same period (Livy was the senior by twelve years) and one can see how prevalent the notion of loyalty to the state was at the time since both works condemn Tarpeia’s treachery despite her differing motivations.

A second example in Livy comes from the reign of Tullus Hostilius, the third king of Rome, and involved two sets of triplets. Reciprocal cattle raids had occurred between the city of Rome and Alba and each city sent envoys to the other with instructions to regain their stolen property. Tullus never had any intention of settling the matter peacefully and by inciting war, he hoped to gain Alban territory. When the two armies squared off against each other, the leaders engaged in talks prior to the battle, where they chose to decide the victor through a duel between Alban triplets, the Curiatii, and Roman triplets, the Horatii. Before the battle, each set of siblings was required to swear an oath to their city that they would either defeat their enemies or die. A representation of this oath (again from the neoclassical painter Jaques-Louis David) can be seen in figure ten.

The two sets of brothers prepared for battle and the fighting soon began. Two of the Romans fell quickly but not before all three Curiatii brothers suffered injuries. Livy described how the final Horatii brother acts as follows, “No match for his three opponents together, he was yet confident of his ability to face them singly, and, with this purpose in mind, he took to his heels, sure that they would be after him with such speed.

---

31 Propertius, *Elegies*, 4.4
as their wounds allowed.” He dispatched the three brothers one at a time and Rome won the battle, thus conquering Alba.

The brother walked at the front of the army for his triumphant return to Rome. His sister, who had been betrothed to one of the Curiatii, stood waiting outside the Capena gate. When she saw her lover’s cloak dangling over her brother’s shoulder Livy writes:

> The sight overcame her: she loosed her hair, and, in a voice choked with tears, called her dead lover’s name. That his sister should dare to grieve at the very moment of his own triumph and in the midst of national rejoicing filled Horatius with such uncontrollable rage that he drew his sword and stabbed her to the heart. ‘Take your girl’s love,’ he shouted, ‘and give it to your lover in hell. What is Rome to such as you, or your brothers, living or dead? So perish all Roman women who mourn for an enemy!’

The Romans arrested Horatius and a trial took place to determine his guilt. Livy states that for all intents and purposes, Horatius would have received a death sentence if his

---

**Figure 10: Horatii Painting:** A representation of the oath of loyalty that the Horatii brothers took before the duel.


---

father had not intervened: “In the course of the hearing the decisive factor was the statement of Horatius’ father, to the effect that his daughter deserved her death.”

To sum up the rest of the story, the Romans acquitted Horatius, the father performed ceremonies to expiate the crime, they made Horatius pass under a wooden beam with a hooded head as under the ‘yoke’ of submission, and they built a tomb for the sister at the spot where she died. The punishment passed on Horatius would suggest that another foundation was at work here. Possibly, this could be a result of the Authority/Subversion foundation (which I will cover after the next chapter). The idea here is that Horatius defied the authority of Rome by killing his sister. Being a Roman citizen, she was protected by the law and as such, Horatius had to be punished in order to discourage the killing of other citizens.

For this chapter, however, it is more important to focus on the motivation of Horatius for killing his sister and his father’s defense. Both represent situations in which the Loyalty foundation played a pivotal role. The reason for Horatius killing his sister is really quite simple. Her mourning over a fallen enemy was viewed as a betrayal to Rome because she placed her lover ahead of Rome and her brothers. Horatius’ actions emphasize the point that the safety and security of Rome should be placed above all else, especially in this case where defeat would have meant the conquest of Rome. Thus Horatius saw her crying as a betrayal of the city which his two brothers just died defending. His father agrees with him by saying in Horatius’ trial that the girl deserved to die. This situation is similar to one I will present in a few chapters where Brutus, a consul at the time, is forced to execute his sons for plotting against Rome. In both scenarios, the

---

story is showing that when compared to loyalty to Rome, familial unity means very little. In short: state before family.

As such, Livy is not condoning familial murder in this story but rather underscoring the importance of loyalty to the state. Added to that, he is showing the power loyalty has over the Romans and that loyalty to Rome should come before all else. The Horatius episode, with its extreme trigger, served to show that there were no exceptions. At the same time that Livy was triggering the Loyalty foundation through his version of these stories, Augustus enacted a program that would trigger the same foundation through images and actions.

At the outset of Augustus’ young empire, loyalty was a crucial element in ensuring that peace reigned. As such, the new leader chose to enact programs that would call forth memories of the Romans’ history, many of which promoted loyalty to the state. One of the easiest ways to promote a certain story throughout the whole empire was to put it onto a coin. Somewhere between 19 and 4 BCE, a coin was minted, figure eleven, that featured an image of Augustus on the front and on the back the scene from Tarpeia’s story where she is crushed to death by shields. The presence of Tarpeia on the coin speaks to the success of the theme of loyalty. From it, we can see the impact which Livy’s renditions were having and how the themes in them were being used by Augustus.
Both sides of the coin are vital to the reputation of Augustus. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill notes, “Both obverse and reverse are value-laden. The emperor’s head is a symbol of authority based in ideal on consent. The emperor was ideally respected and literally worshipped by all his subjects. Any reverse image specifies one of the reasons for which he is respected: the ‘good’ deserves respect.” Not only would the ideal of loyalty to the state be ascribed to Augustus but also it would be promoted throughout the empire by this coin. It conveys the message that the people and the state should be one body with the same values. Wallace-Hadrill wrote, “Augustan coin language emerges from a background of competitive assertiveness in the triumviral period of attempts to identify personal and individual values with those of the state.” It also suggests that Livy’s stories were received well and that they were thought to explain what real “Romaness” was. Moreover, the image of Tarpeia’s death would have reiterated the fate

---


of traitors. This would resonate with the Romans in the early decades of the Augustan age because of the proscriptions which had taken place.

The proscriptions were a list of people who those in charge wanted to be killed. Sulla created a list when he was dictator and the triumvirate of Antony, Augustus, and Lepidus also published a list. Appian, a Greek historian, details the result of the proscriptions under the triumvirate. He states:

> Every kind of calamity was rife, but not as in ordinary sedition or military occasion: for in those cases the people had to fear only the members of the opposite faction or the enemy, but could rely on their own households; but now they were more afraid of these than of the assassins, for as the former had nothing to fear on their own account, as in ordinary seditions or wars, they were suddenly transformed from domestics into enemies, either from some concealed hatred, or in order to obtain published rewards, or to possess themselves of the gold and silver in their masters' houses. For these reasons each one became treacherous to his master, preferring his own gain to compassion for him, and those who were faithful and well-disposed feared to aid, or conceal, or connive at the escape of the victims because such acts made them liable to the very same punishments.\(^{37}\)

Loyalty to the state resonated with the people and as such Augustus’ goal was to show everyone that he upheld this value in order to lead by example. Furthermore, the image of Tarpeia on the coin also served Augustus’ program of healing Roman society. As Paul Zanker notes, “At the same time as his “restoration of the Republic” and the creation of his new political style, Augustus also set in motion a program to “heal” Roman society. The principal themes were renewal of religion and custom, *virtus*, and the honor of the Roman people.…A completely new pictorial vocabulary was created in the course of the

---

next twenty years.”38 The story of Tarpeia takes on more significance because it represented the Rome that Augustus and Livy both desired to live in; a place where betrayal no longer eroded the trust between citizens.

In sum, I named this chapter after Samwise Gamgee because loyalty is his strongest character trait in “Lord of the Rings”. His utter devotion to Frodo is evident when he storms an orc tower risking himself and the ring, in order to rescue his friend. Augustus and Livy were trying to instill the same devotion in Romans and by triggering the Loyalty/Betrayal foundation they were able to build a cohesive community which placed Rome above all others. Originally, this foundation helped humans form groups, or tribes, in order to fend off challenges and rival groups. We can see it at work through Livy’s stories and Augustan policy as both were geared towards binding Roman society together. By emphasizing the ideal of state before everything, Rome became a community where its members would sacrifice anything to preserve their state. With that, comes the idea of mutually beneficial relationships which is a trademark of the Fairness/Cheating foundation.

HARVEY DENT’S OBSESSION

I named this chapter after the character Harvey Dent in *The Dark Knight* because the Fairness/Cheating foundation plays a pivotal role in his character arc (spoilers ahead). Prior to becoming Two-Face, Harvey owns a coin, the two sides of which are the same. This ensures that in a situation which should always be fair, he can cheat the system. After his transformation into Two-Face, one side of the coin is marred and Harvey becomes obsessed with the idea of fairness. In a climactic confrontation between Batman, Jim Gordon, and Two-Face, Harvey exclaims that it’s not about what he wants, it’s about what’s fair. This statement captures the basic idea of mutually beneficial relationships: working together in order to enlarge the pie we all share instead of keeping it all for ourselves.

For early humans who were hunters, this foundation encouraged them to work together in order to bring down larger prey and then share it amongst themselves. Haidt states:

> For millions of years, our ancestors faced the adaptive challenge of reaping these benefits without getting suckereded. Those whose moral emotions compelled them to play “tit for tat” reaped more of these benefits than those who played any other strategy, such as “help anyone who needs it” (which invites exploitation), or “take but don’t give” (which can work just once with each person; pretty soon nobody's willing to share pie with you).³⁹

As hominids learned who they could trust, they performed more actions together, eventually leading to the formation of cultures and societies. Those who proved untrustworthy were shunned by the groups.

³⁹ Haidt (2012), 159.
Today we can see this foundation at work in multiple arenas. Perhaps one of the more prominent is politics where people consistently accuse another person of being a cheater. For example, if we look at how Trump used this foundation in the 2016 election, two examples stick out. Two of his major opponents were Ted Cruz in the primary and Hillary Clinton in the general. Trump dubbed the former “Lying Ted” and the latter “Crooked Hillary”. He would then reference them only by this nickname and thus trigger the Fairness/Cheating foundation. People already have a general distaste for politicians as it is, but when Trump added these monikers to his opponents, he exacerbated their untrustworthiness. This fits nicely in how Haidt states the foundation in his book, “We feel pleasure, liking, and friendship when people show signs that they can be trusted to reciprocate. We feel anger, contempt, and even sometimes disgust when people try to cheat us or take advantage of us.”\(^{40}\) Trump was capitalizing upon Hillary’s checkered past to heighten the feelings of anger and contempt towards her.

This foundation was one of the harder ones to find in Livy, mainly due to the fact that many situations in Livy straddle the line between categories of foundations like Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, and Authority/Subversion. More often than not, the situations overlap a great deal with the latter two, but there are several instances that display the Fairness/Cheating foundation well.

A prime example comes during the First Punic War (264-241 BCE). Unfortunately, this section of Livy’s work is only available to us in fragmentary form only; I will thus be pulling from Cassius Dio to help supplement Livy’s work. The Romans and Carthaginians were fighting over control of Sicily, and one of the prominent Roman generals was Marcus Regulus. He enjoyed some success in battle before being

\(^{40}\) Haidt (2012), 159.
captured by the Carthaginians. Some time after his capture, Cassius Dio (drawing on Livy) tells us, “The Carthaginians now made overtures to the Romans, on account of the great number of the captives, among other causes; and with the envoys they sent also Regulus himself, thinking that through him their whole object was as good as gained, because of the reputation and valour of the man;”\(^{41}\)

The Carthaginians had informed Regulus that if he couldn’t get the Romans to acquiesce to a deal, then upon his return, they would torture and kill him. Yet Regulus, “although he was bound by an oath to return to Carthage if he did not obtain the exchange, he advised the Senate against both proposals. When he returned to imprisonment, he was executed by the Carthaginians.”\(^{42}\) On all accounts, Regulus was home free once the Carthaginians had sent him to Rome. Nothing was stopping him from abandoning his oath and avoiding death except his sense of honor. Even the other Romans begged him to stay (an event depicted by the painter Andries Cornelis Lens in


figure twelve), but Regulus refused because he placed the honor of Rome first. This story clearly triggers the Fairness/Cheating foundation because by honoring the deal he made with Carthage, Regulus was showing that the Romans were a trustworthy people.

Another example of this foundation comes to us from Plutarch, who most likely used Livy as his source for the episode. This episode takes place around 280 - 279 BCE when King Pyrrhus invaded Italy. He invaded because Rome had fallen out with some of its southern cities and was preparing to subdue them through military force. These cities knew that they could not defeat Rome on their own and thus enlisted the help of Pyrrhus. The invading force contained a large number of troops and in their first engagement, Pyrrhus defeated the Romans.

Sometime after this, but before the famous battle of Apulia, Pyrrhus’ doctor sent the Romans a letter. Plutarch details it as such, “The letter had been written by the physician of Pyrrhus, who promised that he would take the king off by poison, provided that the Romans would agree to reward him for putting an end to the war without further hazard on their part.” The Romans resented this offer because it was immoral and unfair behavior. Since it triggered the foundation in a negative way the Romans firmly rejected this offer. They also then took it a step further as Plutarch notes:

[The consuls] sent a letter to Pyrrhus with all speed urging him to be on his guard against the plot. The letter ran as follows: "Caius Fabricius and Quintus Aemilius, consuls of

---

Rome, to King Pyrrhus, health and happiness. It would appear that thou art a good judge neither of friends nor of enemies. Thou wilt see, when thou hast read the letter which we send, that the men with whom thou art at war are honourable and just, but that those whom thou trustest are unjust and base. And indeed we do not give thee this information out of regard for thee, but in order that thy ruin may not bring infamy upon us, and that men may not say of us that we brought the war to an end by treachery because we were unable to do so by valour.”

Pyrrhus killed the physician, exchanged hostages with the Romans, tried to open peace talks (which the Romans refused), and then fought at Apulia, where he lost so many men that his invasion was halted. The commitment to honorable and fair action is what made this episode resonante in Livy’s day. Backstabbing and betrayal were a cancer that had been rotting through Roman society for decades. By promoting honor and fairness Livy triggered the Fairness foundation thereby aiding the recovery of Rome. However, the episode most likely has some inflating going on since it paints the Romans in such a favorable light. It is most likely that the whole episode is an invention to stroke the Roman ego. Regardless, its usefulness for this study cannot be understated due to its ability to trigger the foundation.

To turn to Augustus, he played both sides of the aisle for the Fairness/Cheating foundation. Tacitus provides us with an excellent account of how the people viewed Augustus’ actions upon his death in 14 CE. In The Annals Tacitus wrote:

Among men of intelligence, however, his career was praised or arraigned from varying points of view. According to some, “filial duty and the needs of a country, which at the time had no room for law, had driven him to the weapons of civil strife — weapons which could not be either forged or wielded with clean hands. He had overlooked much in Antony, much in Lepidus, for the sake of bringing to book the assassins of his father. When

Lepidus grew old and indolent, and Antony succumbed to his vices, the sole remedy for his distracted country was government by one man. Yet he organized the state, not by instituting a monarchy or a dictatorship, but by creating the title of First Citizen. The empire had been fenced by the ocean or distant rivers. The legions, the provinces, the fleets, the whole administration, had been centralized. There had been law for the Roman citizen, respect for the allied communities; and the capital itself had been embellished with remarkable splendour. Very few situations had been treated by force, and then only in the interests of general tranquillity.”

Augustus took care to ensure that his domination of the government and the transition to an empire was as amiable as possible, at least according to this passage. Tacitus presents the other side of the argument in the next chapter of his Annals and thus completes the portrait of Augustus:

On the other side it was argued that “filial duty and the critical position of the state had been used merely as a cloak: come to facts, and it was from the lust of dominion that he excited the veterans by his bounties, levied an army while yet a stripling and a subject, subdued the legions of a consul, and affected a leaning to the Pompeian side. Then, following his usurpation by senatorial decree of the symbols and powers of the praetorship, had come the deaths of Hirtius and Pansa, — whether they perished by the enemy's sword, or Pansa by poison sprinkled on his wound, and Hirtius by the hands of his own soldiery, with the Caesar to plan the treason. At all events, he had possessed himself of both their armies, wrung a consulate from the unwilling Senate, and turned against the commonwealth the arms which he had received for the quelling of Antony. The proscription of citizens and the assignments of land had been approved not even by those who executed them. Grant that Cassius and the Brutii were sacrificed to inherited enmities — though the moral law required that private hatreds should give way to public utility — yet Pompey was betrayed by the simulacrum of a peace, Lepidus by the shadow of a friendship: then Antony, lured by the Tarentine and Brundisian treaties and a

---

marriage with his sister, had paid with life the penalty of that delusive connexion. 46

These passages demonstrate that Augustus played both sides of the aisle when it came to this foundation and connects back to Haidt’s quote. He could not always be fair to people, otherwise they would take advantage; he also could not always be harsh otherwise he would be deposed. Augustus shows an ability to utilize both in order to legitimate his rule.

One of the areas which Augustus excelled at was making the common people love him. One such example is how he gained the land needed to build his forum. After the battle of Philippi in 40 BCE, Augustus had vowed to build a temple to Mars Ultor (the Avenger) in order to celebrate his victory over Caesar’s assassins. Due to the ensuing war between him and Antony, he didn’t get around to actually planning it until the 20s BCE, and it wasn’t finished until 2 BCE. It was at this point that he decided to adhere to the fairness side of the foundation as Suetonius wrote, “[Augustus] made his forum narrower than he had planned because he did not venture to eject the owners of the neighbouring houses.” 47 This strategy had several consequences. First, the people would like Augustus more. He had the power to evict them, and the money to buy them out if he wished. By not forcing anyone out, he showed that he respected their individual rights. This, in turn, convinced the people that Augustus wasn’t an all-powerful ruler but rather the most prominent citizen who respected everyone. This again harkens back to the quote from Haidt about people working together in order to enlarge the pie. People were allowed to keep their homes and Augustus constructed a new forum for the city, thus everybody wins.

46 Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.10.1
In sum, at the group level, the Fairness/Cheating foundation encourages everyone to work together in order to reap larger rewards. This idea was reintegrated into Roman society through Livy’s stories and Augustus’ policies, some of them at least. The foundation helped end the infighting between the Romans by promoting the ideals of fairness and honor and by binding people together into mutually beneficial relationships. Augustus tried to exemplify these ideas through his actions yet at the same time, he had to exercise a certain amount of authority in order to remain on top.

CULTURAL SHOCK IN THE SOUTH

I chose to attend college at Ole Miss, a place with a culture that is far different from my home. Part of the reason I came down was the exotic feel of the school. Amidst the sweltering Mississippi heat people referred to elders as “sir” or “ma’am”, they dressed up for football games, and they drank sweet tea at least once a day in the summer. Naturally, some of their habits rubbed off on me. While I still refuse to dress up for football (comfiness > dressing up), and I still dislike sweet tea (which is blasphemy to say aloud in the south), I couldn’t stop “sir” and “ma’am” from entering my vocabulary. It has reached a point now where I just default to using those two words anytime I meet an elder.
This came as quite a shock to people back home where “sir” and “ma’am” are reserved for formal occasions (and where we dress like normal people for football). At one point I went to my local Walmart and during the checkout, the cashier kept asking me yes or no questions, to which I would reply “yes ma’am” or “no ma’am”. She let it slide the first few times, but then she stopped scanning, looked up at me and asked, “Are you in the military?” To which I promptly replied, “No ma’am”. A confused look ran across her face but she dismissed the issue by saying, “Well, your mother raised you right then.” This episode made me wonder why such politeness was the exception back home but the expectation at school. Less than six hours separates these two places and yet they felt like worlds apart in this regard. Any Southerner will tell you it’s because the South is just more polite than the north (which might have some truth) but the roots of this topic go deeper.

The Authority/Subversion foundation plays a much larger role in the South than in the North. This is not to say that northern parents accept disobedience; my dad punished me many times for breaking the rules, but never once did he instill the necessity of referring to other adults as “sir” or “ma’am” in me. In the South, however, teaching that habit to a child is a staple of parenthood. It’s also more pervasive, in that society at large reinforces the attitude to a higher degree. This issue is not isolated to the American south. In many other countries, such as Spain, France, and Italy, this kind of respectful terminology is built directly into the language. Haidt explains that “The urge to respect hierarchical relationships is so deep that many languages encode it directly.”

For example, in most romance languages, such as French, a speaker has to choose between addressing someone in the respectful form or the familiar form. If this sounds foreign to

---

48 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 165.
you, think of it this way: if you refer to someone as Mr. Smith, that is the respectful form for English. On the flip side, a familiar form would include calling someone by their first name.

The foundation plays a much larger part in society than just how we address people though. Haidt describes triggers for the foundation as, “anything that is construed as an act of obedience, disobedience, respect, disrespect, submission, or rebellion, with regard to authorities perceived to be legitimate. Current triggers also include acts that are seen to subvert the traditions, institutions, or values that are perceived to provide stability.” For example, the Queen’s guard in Britain is famous for their stoic behavior. Tourists sometimes go so far as to mimic the strut of the soldiers, which is still tolerated. However, no one is allowed to touch the Queen’s guard and, upon breaking this rule, the soldiers brandish their bayonets and yell at the offender. By touching the soldier, a person is subverting a long-held tradition and value associated with the guards. Another example would be the rock of the 70s and the 80s. Many of the songs, such as John Mellencamp’s “Authority Song” and Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not Gonna Take It” trigger this foundation by promoting the theme of subverting authority. This is partly why many parents disliked the rock of those two decades.

For Livy and Augustus, the Authority/Subversion foundation was viewed as vital to stopping the onslaught of civil war. For both men, valuing authority was what made Rome great and would help the Romans recover from their crisis. Livy found the stories which best represented this foundation and then shaped them into what became the standard form. Through this process, he promoted the values which he thought were most important to healing his culture. A prime example of the authority foundation is presented

49 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 168.
when Rome had just transitioned into a republic. At this time Brutus, the leader of the revolution that overthrew the kings, served as consul. Several Tarquins still lived outside of Rome and, as Livy wrote, “Everybody knew that war with the Tarquins was sure to come; it was, however, unexpectedly delayed, and the first move in the struggle took a form which no one had anticipated. Treason within the city itself nearly cost Rome her liberty.”

This came about because a group of aristocrats that had lived a life of luxury during the monarchy had lost the freedom to do as they pleased in the republic. Envoys from the Tarquins also came to Rome at this time and while in the city, they plotted with the aristocrats. One of the nobles was an uncle to Brutus’ two sons, Titus and Tiberius, and he convinced them to join the conspiracy. However, the plot was discovered because, “a slave overheard what they were saying: he had already guessed what was going on and was waiting for the delivery to Tarquin’s envoys of the letters, the seizure of which would provide him with conclusive evidence.”

Brutus had the traitors, including his own sons, arrested. Livy described the scene in detail:

There was pity for their punishment, and greater pity for the crime which had brought it upon them; in every heart was a sorrow of incredulous sorrow for such treachery at such a time: that these young men, in the very year when Rome was liberated - and by their father’s hand - when the newly created consulship had fallen first to a member of their own family, should have brought themselves to betray the entire population of Rome, high and low alike, and all her gods, to a man who had once been a haughty tyrant and now, from his place of exile, was planning her destruction!

The consuls took their seats on the tribunal; the lictors were ordered to carry out the sentence. The prisoners were stripped, flogged, and beheaded. Throughout the

50 Livy, The Early History of Rome, 2.2.
51 Livy, The Early History of Rome, 2.4.
pitiful scene, all eyes were on the father’s face, where a father’s anguish was plain to see.\textsuperscript{52}

Figure 13: Brutus Painting: A rather severe consequence of obeying the Authority side of the foundation as Brutus receives the bodies of his sons

Livy makes a point to show how much this punishment pains Brutus because he wanted to show that despite Brutus’ personal desire, he adhered to the authority of the state. The fallout from this event is depicted in figure thirteen.

While this episode is heartbreaking, it serves as an important example of the message that Livy conveyed through his work. It should pain Romans to kill fellow citizens but it is a required act if Rome’s authority is subverted. Brutus’ actions are a perfect example for a statement that Haidt makes: “Human authorities take on responsibility for maintaining order and justice.”\textsuperscript{53} At the time of this example, the Romans had just deposed a king who abused his power and authority. Placed in the same

\textsuperscript{52} Livy, The Early History of Rome, 2.6.
\textsuperscript{53} Haidt (2012), 167.
situation, Brutus had to fulfill the obligations of his station or risk ceding Rome to chaos. Haidt describes this sort of situation as such:

> When people within a hierarchical order act in ways that negate or subvert that order, we feel it instantly, even if we ourselves have not been directly harmed. If authority is in part about protecting order and fending off chaos, then everyone has a stake in supporting the existing order and in holding people accountable for fulfilling the obligations of their station.\(^{54}\)

A second example in Livy comes during the fourth century BCE. During this time, the Romans and the Latins, after having been allies for many years, had entered into conflict and Rome dispatched a consular army to engage a large Latin force. The consul feared that his men would make some blunder due to the fact that the Latins “who were the same as themselves in language, customs, type of arms, and above all in military institutions; soldiers had intermingled with soldiers, centurions with centurions, tribunes with tribunes as equals and colleagues in the same garrisons and often in the same maniples.”\(^{55}\) Thus he ordered his men not to engage the enemy. Amongst the soldiers was the consul’s son, Titus Manlius, who was a squadron leader for cavalry. While he and his squad were out reconnoitering they came close to a Latin outpost where the opposing captain recognized Titus and challenged him. Defying his father’s wishes, Titus fought and beat the man in single combat and returned to the camp with the spoils. He went straight to his father’s tent and told him of his actions, after which his father replied as such:

> Titus Manlius, you have respected neither consular authority nor your father’s dignity; you have left your position to fight the enemy in defiance of my order, and, as

\(^{54}\) Haidt (2012), 168.

far as was in your power, have subverted military
discipline, on which the fortune of Rome has rested up to
this day; you have made it necessary for me to forget either
the republic or myself. We would therefore rather be
punished for our own wrongdoing than allow our country
to expiate our sins at so great a cost to itself; it is a harsh
example we shall set, but a salutary one for the young men
of the future. As far as my own feelings are concerned they
are stirred by a man’s natural love for his children, as well
as by the example you have given of your courage, even
though this was marred by a false conception of glory. But
since consular authority must either be confirmed by your
death or annulled forever by your going unpunished, I
believe that you yourself, if you have any drop of my blood
in you, would agree that the military discipline which you
undermined by your error must be restored by your
punishment. Go, lictor, bind him to the stake. 56

The consul then gathered the whole army to watch Titus be decapitated. While this
punishment sounds extreme to us, its brutality emphasizes how strong the
Authority/Subversion foundation was in the Roman culture. Similar to Brutus, the consul
had to show that he couldn’t tolerate disobeying the state as that only led to worse
consequences. The episode also allowed Livy to display one of his central themes of how
real Romans act according to the actions of their ancestors.

One of Augustus’ primary goals upon gaining complete control of the Roman
state was to assure people that he did not intend to usurp the established hierarchy, that is
respecting the Senate and not claiming absolute power as Caesar did which only invites
more chaos. While he had every intention of remaining the apex predator of Roman
society, he went through the motions in order to appease the people. He tells us as much
in the Res Gestae:

In my sixth and seventh consulships, when I had
extinguished the flames of civil war, after receiving by
universal consent the absolute control of affairs, I

56 Livy, *Rome and Italy*, Book VIII 7.10.
transferred the republic from my own control to the will of the Senate and the Roman people....after that time I took precedence of all in rank, but of power I possessed no more than those who were my colleagues in any magistracy.\textsuperscript{57}

Augustus managed his authority strategically, imposing certain precedents but at the same time deferring to the Senate. This can be seen in Suetonius:

Since the number of the senators was swelled by a low-born and ill-assorted rabble (in fact, the Senate numbered more than a thousand, some of whom, called by the vulgar Orcivi, were wholly unworthy, and had been admitted after Caesar's death through favour or bribery) he restored it to its former limits and distinction by two enrollments, one according to the choice of the members themselves, each man naming one other, and a second made by Agrippa and himself.\textsuperscript{58}

In this example, Augustus deftly manages to implement a policy without stepping too harshly on the Senate’s toes. By allowing them to make their own recommendations for who should remain in the Senate, he acknowledged their authority. Augustus was going to reduce the Senate anyway, but by involving the Senate he decreased the amount of collateral damage.

Moreover, by performing actions such as this, Augustus continually showed his respect and deference to tradition as well as constitutional norms. Another such example shows his reverence for the highest priest position in Rome, “After he finally had assumed the office of pontifex maximus on the death of Lepidus (for he could not make up his mind to deprive him of the honour while he lived)....”\textsuperscript{59} Usurping the power from Lepidus while he lived would have been a major violation of the respect this position

\textsuperscript{57} Augustus, \textit{The Res Gestae}, 34.1.
commanded. By allowing his former enemy to maintain this position Augustus once again shows restraint in asserting his authority as well as his respect for Roman custom.

Also, military recruits were required to take an oath of loyalty before they could become official members of the army. Claude Nicolet discusses the oath in a way which demonstrates the respect Romans should have for the established hierarchy:

...the recruits took the oath (*sacramentum dicere*) which in common language became a synonym of military service. It was, in fact, the keystone of the system from a religious, legal and civic point of view. The term *sacramentum* itself was an indication of its solemnity: it is not the ordinary word for ‘oath’, which was *conjuratio* or *jusjurandum*, but had religious implications, signifying that anyone who violated it was *sacer*, ‘accursed’. Once a soldier had taken the oath he was linked by the strongest ties to the Republic, his commander, and his comrades.\(^\text{60}\)

This oath was to ensure absolute respect for the hierarchy within the army and entailed the following reparations as recorded by Livy, “Then [the soldier] was forced to take a fearful form of oath bringing down a curse on his own head and on his household and family, if he did not go into battle where his generals led, and if he either fled from battle himself or did not immediately kill anyone he saw doing likewise.”\(^\text{61}\) Not only does this trigger the Authority/Subversion foundation but also the Sanctity/Degradation foundation. The two become mutually reinforcing in this example and thus this oath has a greater effect on the Roman psyche.

Starting with Marius and Sulla, the soldiers’ loyalty had lain with the general rather than the state and this allowed the general to command enormous amounts of power. This is also what allowed Caesar to march against Rome. Claude Nicolet states,

---


\(^{61}\) Livy, *Rome and Italy*, 10.38.
“[The Romans] also regarded warfare as a consecrated service…, transforming a citizen into a warrior and sealing a pact between him and the gods of his mother city, the state, his commander, and his fellow-soldiers, so that only death or a regular discharge could loosen the sacred bond.”62 In terms of the political arena, the deference a soldier showed to his commander was supposed to be equivalent to the deference showed to a magistrate. However, when a magistrate was seen to be acting in his own self-interest, the people would become violently opposed. I present such an example in the next chapter.

Since Augustus was viewed as the leading member of Roman society, this oath-bound all of the soldiers to him. Added to the fact that the people and the Senate had already acknowledged Augustus as the head of the state, this pact allowed him to garner even more authority. He played upon the Romans’ feelings towards warfare in order to consolidate his control of the military and thus further cement his station at the top of Roman society.

In sum, this chapter emphasized an important ideal for the Roman people: State before everything. The promotion of this value by Livy and Augustus helped to reform the Roman identity and enabled them to come together as one people. This encompasses one of the primary functions of moral foundations theory that is, the building and binding of cultures and groups in order to survive and flourish. While the Romans promoted the respect of hierarchy, the people at the top walked a thin line when it came to ruling. When it comes to oppression, the Romans had little tolerance and I will address this aspect in the next chapter.

62 Nicolet, The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome, 103-104.
THE JEDI VERSUS THE SITH
The popularity of *Star Wars* cannot be understated. It has millions of fans across the globe and has provided careers for countless authors, game designers, animators, actors, etc. Two of the most prominent factions in George Lucas’ creation are the Jedi and the Sith. The former is clearly portrayed as representing good while the former stands for evil. Perhaps one of the better examples for this chapter’s foundation, Liberty/Oppression, comes in looking at the roles of each faction in the prequel and original trilogy.

In those films, the Jedi are shown to be separate from the ruling body of the Republic but still supportive of it. They do not get involved in the dealings of the Senate unless they are required to in order to preserve peace. Thus we see a representation of Liberty. In contrast, the Sith work throughout the prequel trilogy, to overthrow the Republic and institute an Empire. Ultimately succeeding in this, the original trilogy then shows a galaxy oppressed by a totalitarian dictator (Emperor Palpatine) with an extremely visible enforcer (Darth Vader). Thus we have an example of oppression. While other factors also contribute to Star Wars’ success, the way that it triggers the Liberty/Oppression foundation helped fans connect to the franchise.

At surface level, this division appears like a simple separation of good and evil. However, the Liberty/Oppression foundation plays an important role determining why the Jedi and Sith are likable and hateable respectively. Moreover, it can also help explain why people often find themselves entrenched on two sides of an issue. To examine this, I must first look at humans prior to the creation of settlements.

Haidt explains that before we became settled, humans were mobile hunter-gatherer societies that lived in largely egalitarian communities. Someone might still try to
dominate the group, but if they pushed too far, the rest would band together and get rid of this alpha. For example, according to Haidt, alpha chimps have important roles, but when they get out of hand, the others gang up and give him a “beatdown”. Through this, came first the Authority/Subversion foundation and second the Liberty/Oppression foundation. Haidt explains the latter in the following way, “The original triggers, therefore, include signs of attempted domination. Anything that suggests the aggressive, controlling behavior of an alpha male (or female) can trigger this form of righteous anger, which is sometimes called reactance. (That’s the feeling you get when an authority tells you that you can’t do something and you feel yourself wanting to do it even more strongly.)”

Reactance can be seen in almost any sibling squabble. When the elder tries to assert their authority by telling the younger one what to do they inadvertently trigger the Liberty/Oppression foundation.

American culture is full of this foundation. The Declaration of Independence, for example, is just one long trigger for this foundation. Over time humans have become more nuanced and nowadays many people who desire power do not display themselves as a blatant alpha male. Thus, “the current triggers include almost anything that is perceived as imposing illegitimate restraints on one’s liberty, including government.”

Examples of the reaction this causes would include the music videos referenced in the Authority chapter, specifically Twisted Sister’s song “We’re Not Gonna Take it.” It’s also present in every political election cycle in the United States. Liberals generally employ this foundation in the pursuit of equality such as demanding higher taxes on the rich or a guaranteed minimum wage, while Conservatives use it in order to achieve

---

liberty and view items such as high taxes and business regulations as treading on their liberty. Much like us, the Romans had strong feelings about Liberty and Oppression which helped to form the basis of how they thought their government should work.

One of the most prominent examples of this foundation comes from the first book of Livy. Right after Lucretia reveals to her husband and his entourage that Sextus Tarquinius, the son of the king, had raped her, she committed suicide. This inflamed the men’s anger and one of them, Lucius Junius Brutus, took charge and began to form a rebellion. They carried Lucretia’s body into the square in Collatia where it served as a symbol for the rebellion. Livy says that “Brutus cried out that it was time for deeds not tears, and urged them, like true Romans, to take up arms against the tyrants who had dared to treat them as a vanquished enemy, not a man amongst them could resist the call.” (italics added).

They then marched to Rome where crowds gathered in the Forum and Brutus made a speech which Livy outlines in the following way:

He made a speech painting in vivid colours the brutal and unbridled lust of Sextus Tarquinius, the hideous rape of the innocent Lucretia and her pitiful death, and the bereavement of her father, for whom the cause of her death was an even bitterer and more dreadful thing than the death itself. He went on to speak of the king’s arrogant and tyrannical behaviour; of the sufferings of the commons condemned to labour underground clearing or constructing ditches and sewers; of gallant Romans- soldiers who had beaten in battle all neighbouring peoples - robbed of their swords and turned into stone-cutters and artisans. He reminded them of the foul murder of Servius Tullius, of the daughter who drove her carriage over her father’s corpse, in violation of the most sacred of relationships - a crime which God alone could punish. Doubtless, he told them of other, and worse, things, brought to his mind in the heat of

---

65 Livy, The Early History of Rome, 1.58.
the moment and by the sense of this latest outrage, which still lived in his eye and pressed upon his heart.66

All of this served to rile up the people and convinced them to join Brutus’ rebellion. He then left to gather a proper army at Ardea while the citizens of Rome held the city. When the king returned he found the city gates closed to him and was told that the people had exiled him. Thus, Rome turned from a monarchy into a republic.

When Superbus’ son chose to rape Lucretia, this pushed the Romans towards viewing the ruling family as tyrants. Haidt states in his book, “We all recognize some kinds of authority as legitimate in some contexts, but we are also wary of those who claim to be leaders unless they have first earned our trust. We’re vigilant for signs that they’ve crossed the line into self-aggrandizement and tyranny.”67 While the other foundations helped to shape the individual stories they were present in, the Liberty/Oppression foundation directed the path that Rome took for the next several centuries and explains why the hatred of kings/tyrants was integral to Roman society. This is an ideal that Livy would have wanted to convey to his readers because at the time that he was writing, Romans had experienced a decisive shift to autocratic rule (Julius Caesar) that had deeply offended traditional sensibilities.

Earlier I pointed out that the Declaration of Independence is just one long trigger for the Liberty/Oppression foundation. Brutus’ speech falls into the same category. While at face value both are intended to inform the ruling party of the reasons for the rebellion, underneath that they serve to stoke the fires. It’s hard not to feel a patriotic swell of pride when you hear “We the People…” even though we live two hundred years removed after the events.

67 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 201.
A little later in his history, Livy tells us about a period in Rome where the people insisted that the law be translated into written code. Due to this, they abolished all the normal offices for one year and the Romans established ten decemvirs, a council of ten elected men, to write the laws (the 12 tables). They were unable to complete this task within the year and so another year was granted with another round of elections taking place. However, one of the decemvirs, Appius Claudius, feared losing his powerful position and so took it upon himself to guarantee his own reelection as well as keeping out others who would oppose him consolidating the rule. By fixing the election, he won the vote along with others whom he approved of and could control.

Livy then says that after the election, Appius wasted no time in planning with his colleagues how to gain absolute power. Romans viewed this sort of power as automatically irresponsible and throughout the years, took measures to decrease the avenues to such power. For example, after Julius Caesar was named perpetual dictator in 44 BCE, he was assassinated in March and then Marc Antony passed laws which abolished the dictatorship, among other things. One of the most prominent displays which Appius and his comrades performed occurred on the first day after the elections. Originally, the decemvirs could only have one lictor who bore a fasces, an ax bound by rods that symbolized someone had the power to use capital or corporal punishment. However, Livy says that each man had twelve lictors and they proceeded to enter the Forum. Livy states, “Had they been ten kings, the menace would have been no more terrible; and the fear they inspired in high and low alike was intensified by the belief that what they desired was a pretext for beginning their bloody reign - that if anyone in the
Senate or the streets spoke a word for liberty, the rods and axes would promptly be made ready, if only to teach the rest a bitter lesson.”

This began a fast decline for the decemvirs who failed miserably at ruling Rome. In military matters, they suffered several defeats and at one point Appius tried to lay claim to a Roman woman (Livy, 3.43 - 3.48). All of this resulted in the disbandment of the decemvirs and most of the decemvirs went into exile. Appius faced a trial that would have most likely resulted in the death penalty and had he not killed himself before they reached a verdict. Following this, Rome transitioned back to a republic run by consuls.

A further example presents itself in Livy’s fourth book. In this episode, a man named Spurius Maelius gained popularity by distributing free grain to the people. With this newfound power Livy tells us that:

[The people’s] devoted support seemed to promise him the consulship at least, but - so rarely are the fair promises of fortune enough to satisfy the human heart - he was soon nursing a loftier - and a criminal - ambition. Even the consulship he would have had to fight for against the united opposition of the nobility, but it was no longer the consulship he wanted: it was the throne.

Spurius’ ambitions were eventually discovered and reported to the Senate by Lucius Minucius. Livy writes, “There was no doubt in Minucius’ mind that plans were going on to set up a monarchy, and that though the time to strike had not yet been fixed everything else had been arranged - the tribunes bribed to betray the country’s liberty and the mob leaders all assigned their tasks.” After this was revealed to the Senate they appointed a
dictator who promptly ordered Spurius to appear. Spurius refused and begged the populace for help but they would not aid him and he was killed.

Through this example, we can see an innate Roman reactance to any person who attempted to establish complete dominance over them. As Haidt says, “the rise of a would-be dominator triggers a motivation to unite as equals with other oppressed individuals to resist, restrain, and in extreme cases kill the oppressor.”

We can see this foundation’s effect throughout Roman history. One instance, for example, would include when the senators united to assassinate Caesar, who had become the dominator.

All this makes what Augustus did even more impressive. Slowly but surely over the course of his rule, he consolidated the power into one person without ever appearing as an oppressor to the people. He consistently used this foundation to ingratiate the people towards him but at the same time also established dominance over the state.

Conveying to the Roman people that he was a liberator and not an oppressor was of great importance to Augustus. So much so that in his Res Gestae, it is the first thing he lists among all his other accomplishments, “At the age of nineteen, on my own initiative and at my own expense, I raised an army by means of which I restored liberty to the republic, which had been oppressed by the tyranny of a faction.”

The first line triggered this foundation in a way which made the people feel grateful toward Augustus for saving them and, by extension, more loyal to him.

However, Augustus did use oppression on the military to some degree. This topic was also presented through a different lens in the Fairness/Cheating chapter. The reason it crops up again is because in this situation it is possible to see two foundations at work.

71 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 201.
72 Augustus, The Res Gestae, 1.1.
(Liberty and Fairness) which lends support to the idea that these foundations are mutually reinforcing. Before Augustus came to power, for several decades the military had determined who would rule and it would continue to have a large say throughout the rest of the empire. Any large army could declare their commander the true leader of the state and march on Rome. Due to this, the military felt that they had no restrictions and could do as they pleased, thus becoming disobedient to most leaders who would not indulge them. Augustus reestablished discipline through some harsh measures as Suetonius writes:

He made many changes and innovations in the army, besides reviving some usages of former times....He dismissed the entire tenth legion in disgrace because they were insubordinate, and others, too, that demanded their discharge in an insolent fashion, he disbanded without the rewards which would have been due for faithful service. If any cohorts gave way in battle, he decimated them and fed the rest on barley. When centurions left their posts, he punished them with death, just as he did the rank and file; for faults of other kinds he imposed various ignominious penalties, such as ordering to stand all day long before the general's tent, sometimes in their tunics without their sword-belts, or again holding ten-foot poles or even a clod of earth.73

These punishments were able to be carried out, in part, because of Augustus’ legitimacy. Since he was viewed as the liberator Romans saw his actions as restoring order to a chaotic world. At the same time, the punishments were traditional, so he could always claim to be enforcing the standards of the ancestors. Augustus also undertook actions to show the soldiers that they were not on equal footing. Suetonius provides a further example of how Augustus emphasized this message, “After the civil wars he never called any of the troops ‘comrades,’ either in the assembly or in an edict, but always ‘soldiers’;  

and he would not allow them to be addressed otherwise, even by those of his sons or stepsons who held military commands, thinking the former term too flattering for the requirements of discipline, the peaceful state of the times, and his own dignity and that of his household."

By ensuring that he gave the soldiers no cause to think that they had free reign, Augustus established discipline over the military once more and also guaranteed that it would not rise against him with someone as a replacement. He also monopolized all important commands, put people in charge of the legions who were beholden to him, and made sure the army was loyal to the Caesarian family. In these last examples, one can see both the Fairness and Loyalty foundation at work. The former being triggered by his monopolizing of commands, the latter by his placement of people who were loyal to him. This would suggest that not only do these foundations have a strong individual effect in the Roman world but they also mutually reinforced each other.

In sum, people feel strongly about their liberty either personal or national. From sibling rivalries to debates on the biggest political stages, this foundation plays an integral part in forming how we react to certain things. For the Romans, the foundation helps to explain why absolute rulers never lasted long until Augustus figured out how to appear as if he wasn’t a dominator. Prior to him, the foundation had served to unite the Romans in order to overthrow would be rulers such as Tarquinius Superbus in Livy’s stories and Julius Caesar in 44 BCE. Augustus, by portraying himself as a liberator, utilized this foundation and thereby formed the Roman people into a cohesive group as he transitioned them into the empire. To cement this bond Livy and Augustus also focused

their efforts on the importance of religion which brings us to our final foundation: Sanctity/Degradation.

THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

The Sanctity/Degradation foundation is the cause of most of the culture wars in America. Only a few years ago when legalizing gay marriage was in the limelight, many politicians who opposed it spoke of how they wanted to protect the “sanctity of marriage”. Haidt explains that the Sanctity foundation “makes it easy for us to regard some things as ‘untouchable,’ both in a bad way (because something is so dirty or polluted we want to stay away) and in a good way (because something is so hallowed, so sacred, that we want to protect it from desecration).”75 For many, marriage is intended to be a sacred bond between a man and a woman. Thus, to them, men marrying men, or women marrying women, directly violated this foundation and same-sex marriage desecrated the said sacredness of marriage. Many viewed gay marriage as threatening a pillar of our community and Haidt notes that “When someone in a moral community desecrates one of the sacred pillars supporting the community, the reaction is sure to be swift, emotional, collective, and punitive.”76

75 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 173.
In Rome, many areas and cults had a sacred nature, but perhaps none more so than the Vestal Virgins. This was a cult that was dedicated to Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, and charged with maintaining a sacred fire and they were brought to Rome by the Numa, the second king. Livy describes their establishment as such, “The priestesses were paid out of public funds to enable them to devote their whole time to the temple service, and were invested with special sanctity by the imposition of various observances of which the chief was virginity.”

The priestesses were some of the holiest people in Rome and were chosen when they were still very young in order to ensure that they were virgins. Their virginity was deemed as their defining feature and if one became unchaste, the consequences were dire: if a Vestal broke her chastity, then terrible disasters would befall Rome. One such episode is reported in Livy when the Romans were waging war against the Volscians. The Romans were not able to utilize their resources for waging war and purportedly there were unexplainable occurrences both in the city and the countryside. As such, the soothsayers investigated the matter and, as Livy tells it, “…declared as a result of [the investigations] that the wrath of heaven was due to the improper observations of religious ceremonies. In consequence of these alarms, a Vestal Virgin named Oppia was condemned on a charge of unchastity and put to death.”

The Romans were outraged when the sacredness of a Vestal Virgin was (supposedly) defiled. The virgins were considered to be the purest thing in Rome and, to borrow Haidt’s phrase, were sacred pillars which supported the community. To contaminate this purity was to insult not only Rome but also the gods themselves. If this

---

sounds a bit over the top, a similar example can be found in our own culture when it comes to the religious right and, for that matter, entire religious denominations. An important value for the religious right and many religious denominations concerns chastity before marriage. An important figure they often invoke is the Virgin Mary who is worshipped in some circles because of her chasteness. As Haidt says when comparing conservatives to liberals, who do not place as much emphasis on chastity, “Conservatives - particularly religious conservatives - are more likely to view the body as a temple, housing a soul within rather than as a machine to be optimized, or as a playground to be used for fun.” In the same way that many people believe that they are commanded by God to be chaste, the Romans thought that the gods would severely punish them should one of the Virgins break her vow.

A second example in Livy comes after the Romans overthrew the kings and formed the republic. The two consuls at the time were Horatius and Publicola, and they had to decide which of them would dedicate the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline. Lots were drawn and Horatius received the responsibility while Publicola was given command of the forces facing off against Veii. The relatives of Publicola were insulted that Horatius had been allowed the honor of dedicating the temple and sought to prevent him from performing his duty. When most of their schemes had failed, they resorted to an act which Livy details:

When all else failed, and Horatius, with his hand on the door-post, was actually in the middle of his prayer, they broke in on the ceremony with the news that his son was dead, implying that while his house was in mourning he was not in a position to dedicate a temple. Horatius either did not believe the message or showed extraordinary presence of mind - which, we are not told, nor is it easy to

79 Haidt, The Righteous Mind, 175.
guess; but in any case, the news had so little effect that he merely gave instructions for his son’s funeral and went on to complete the ceremony of dedication.  

Religion was an extremely important aspect of the Romans’ lives and through this example, Livy is showing how high a regard it should be held in. Had Horatius cut off his prayer and left, the Romans would have feared repercussions from the gods since the ceremony was not followed strictly, a belief which is also present in the first example. Religious ceremonies were incredibly sacred in Rome and were something the leaders had to respect above almost everything else. The Romans believed that if they disrespected the gods it would break the peace of the gods (pax deorum). Breaking this would lead to calamity and misfortune being cast on Rome. An example of this can be seen in Suetonius’ *Life of Tiberius*, “Claudius Pulcher began a sea-fight off Sicily, though the sacred chickens would not eat when he took the auspices, throwing them into the sea in defiance of the omen, and saying that they might drink since they would not eat. He was defeated, and on being bidden by the Senate to appoint a dictator, he appointed his messenger Glycias, as if again making a jest of his country's peril.”

As the religious leader, not only did Horatius have a duty to maintain the pax deorum but he also had a duty to the people that required him to carry out the dedication. The same is true of religious leaders today. An example from the early 2000s is the scandal where many priests were exposed to have been molesting young boys and girls. This triggered immense amounts of anger because first, priests are imbued with a certain amount of sanctity, and second, young children are seen to be completely innocent and pure, much like the Vestal Virgins. When the priests shirked their own sanctity and

---

compromised the purity of a child, people naturally became enraged. The priests had a duty to be the best of the congregation and by discarding this duty, they caused many people to question whether they could trust the church.

Augustus understood the importance of his duty as a religious leader and took many measures to assure the people that he was obeying the gods’ will. Moreover, he was awarded a *clipeus virtutis* (shield of bravery) which the Res Gestae states, “the Senate and the Roman people gave me this in recognition of my valour, my clemency, my justice, and my piety.”

The inclusion of piety attests to Augustus’ commitment in displaying his reverence. After the civil war with Antony, Augustus set about restoring temples and publicly praising to gods in order to promote the value of sanctity throughout the empire.

Another aspect which allowed him to exude an air of piety was first his refusal and then later his appointment as pontifex maximus, the chief priesthood of Rome (and a current title of the Pope). At the time of his refusal, Lepidus, an enemy during the civil war, held the priesthood and Augustus understood that if he usurped the position from him, it would violate its sacredness. The Res Gestae states:

> I declined to be made Pontifex Maximus in succession to a colleague still living when the people tendered me that priesthood which my father had held. Several years later I accepted that sacred office when he, at last, was dead who, taking advantage of a time of civil disturbance, had seized it for himself, such a multitude from all Italy assembling for my election, in the consulship of Publius Sulpicius and Gaius Valgius, as is never recorded to have been in Rome before.”

---

82 Augustus, “Res Gestae Divi Augusti,” 34.
A little after his appointment, Augustus distributed statues of himself in the guise of the pontifex throughout the city and empire, such as the one in figure fourteen. This not only allowed the people to see Augustus as the religious leader but also continued to promote piety as one of his main attributes.

Augustus also thought it important to remind the people that their ancestors had been observant of the religious customs. Specifically, Augustus wanted to depict Aeneas in a favorable light since he was the forefather of Rome and also, Augustus had put in measures to tie his lineage all the way back to Aeneas. *The Aeneid* was published in 19 BCE and in it, Vergil, Augustus’ literary client, detailed the exploits of Aeneas, one of the main forefathers of Rome, as he fled Troy and traveled across the Mediterranean until making landfall in Italy. At one point Vergil has Aeneas go to the underworld where his

![Augustus Statue: Displayed in the National Museum of Rome this shows Augustus as Pontifex Maximus which triggered the Sanctity foundation in Romans.](image)

Figure 14: Augustus Statue: Displayed in the National Museum of Rome this shows Augustus as Pontifex Maximus which triggered the Sanctity foundation in Romans. Personal Photo
father, Anchises, shows him the line of his descendants. It is in this section that Vergil wrote:

Turn your two eyes this way and see this people, your own Romans. Here is Caesar, and all the line of Iulus, all who shall one day pass under the dome of the great sky: this is the man, this one, of whom so often you have heard the promise, Caesar Augustus, son of the deified, who shall bring once again an Age of Gold to Latium, to the land where Saturn reigned in early times.  

This not only helps link the two men but also shows Augustus as being ordained by the gods to rule, thereby increasing the young emperor's air of sacredness. While Vergil used poetry to tie Augustus to Aeneas, the princeps placed Aeneas prominently on the Ara Pacis and showed him respecting the sanctity of his household gods. Figure fifteen shows the scene in full, where Aeneas is presenting a sacrifice to his gods,

---


---

Figure 15: Relief on the Ara Pacis: Displayed in the Museum of the Ara Pacis it depicts Aeneas offering sacrifice to his household gods. This scene served to both trigger the foundation and to continue establishing the link between Aeneas and Augustus. 

Personal Photo
and served to trigger the Sanctity/Degradation foundation in the Romans since it showed such an important figure respecting their customs. In turn, this influenced the Romans to see more links between Aeneas and Augustus and to believe that both observed their religious ceremonies dutifully.

In sum, the Sanctity trigger is perhaps one of the better foundations at getting people to form cohesive groups. When we view something as pure and instill sacredness in that object, often we will do whatever it takes in order to prevent it from being defiled. The object can be anything from a person (Virgin Mary, Vestal Virgins), to a race (Aryan race, Roman’s ancestors) or even a practice (communion, dedicating a temple). All of these have the ability to bind us together and create a more united society and Rome is evidence of this.
CONCLUSION

Moral Foundations Theory is able to help us better understand why Livy and Augustus strived to reintegrate Roman society by emphasizing specific values. Each saw their fractured state as a result of the degradation of these values and Livy’s History consistently showed these values as the reason why Rome was great. P.G. Walsh notes, “[Livy] looks at the past as at a battlefield of manners, and seeks to illustrate the moral qualities needed for a state to thrive, and for individual prosperity. His idealization of the past depicts such qualities in sharp outline so that our vision on them is not blurred by trivial human inconsistencies.”

Augustus, as the leading man in Rome, also viewed these values as integral to Roman survival and thus dedicated many of his policies to their revival. The actions and words of both men display the incredible hold which these foundations have on us and exemplify how vital they are to a society’s continuation.

Moreover, by espousing the attributes which triggered these foundations, Roman society became one whole rather than a million pieces. This reunification of the Roman empire enabled them to spread their culture across the Mediterranean basin and leave lasting impacts on countless modern cultures. Through the works of Livy and the programs of Augustus, a sturdy foundation was laid upon which the idea of a Roman world could be built.

---

85 Walsh (1961), 66.
Originally, the foundations evolved in order to allow humans to work together, to form societies that would enable them to survive. Today, they are a large influencer behind many of our cultural debates and are also the reason that we come together in times of hardship. Rome achieved unparalleled success without the conscious knowledge of these foundations, and we can see that by triggering these foundations Augustus and Livy were able to reunite the Roman people and successfully transition the state from a republic into an empire.
Bibliography

Books/Articles:


Images:


Web:


