**The Abuse of Expertise and the Problem with Public Economics**

**Gordon Barnes**

In recent decades, economists have played an active role in shaping public policy by publicly recommending the adoption of certain policies. These recommendations are often based on normative assumptions that are not the product of economic analysis; nor are they shared by the laypeople to whom these recommendations are made. Inducing people to adopt public policies for reasons that are neither the product of expertise, nor shared by the people, is a form of manipulation that violates the ideals of a liberal democratic society. Thus, the economists’ recommendations constitute an abuse of their expertise.

**Keywords:** public economics, expertise, ethics of expertise

*“Finally, I went to the craftsmen, for I was conscious of knowing practically nothing, and I knew that I would find that they had knowledge of many fine things. In this, I was not mistaken; they knew things I did not know, and to that extent, they were wiser than I. But, men of Athens, the good craftsmen seemed to me to have the same fault as the poets:* *each of them, because of his success at his craft, thought himself very wise in other most important pursuits, and this error of theirs overshadowed the wisdom they had.”*

Socrates*, The Apology of Socrates*

On March 12, 2018, the Initiative on Global Markets hosted a U. S. Economic Experts Panel – one of many that they have hosted over the years. The resolution for the panel read as follows: “Imposing new US tariffs on steel and aluminum will improve Americans’ welfare.” The economists each answered the question, always in the negative, and usually without any comment or qualification concerning the use of the phrase “improve Americans’ welfare”. The Harvard economist, Oliver Hart, answered with an unqualified “No,” and then explained his answer with the following statement: “A robust result is that free trade increases national income. The cases where this is not true are rare and hard to spot” (Cockrell 2018). In answering the question in this way, Hart tacitly assumed the following conditional statement: *if a policy increases national income, then that policy improves Americans’ welfare*. The antecedent of this conditional is a descriptive statement of positive economics, which neither assumes nor entails any normative or evaluative claims. However, the consequent of this conditional uses the term “welfare”, which is a normative or evaluative term. In common parlance, to improve someone’s welfare is to make them better off – to improve their *well-being*. Thus, the consequent of this conditional, as it would be understood by the layperson, is a statement about human well-being. Are economists experts on human well-being? Is Oliver Hart an expert on the good life? Of course, in welfare economics, the term “welfare” is a term of art, which is defined in a very precise way -- one that makes the welfare of people measurable. However, as I will argue in what follows, that simply pushes the problem back onto that definition of the term “welfare”. By making a statement about what will improve Americans’ welfare, Oliver Hart and other economists’ make normative assumptions about the nature of human well-being, as well as matters of justice and fairness, despite the fact that economics, as a science, does not give one expertise in any of these matters.

Economists making pronouncements about what would be good for people is not a new development. In his recent book, *The Economist’s Hour: False Prophets, Free Markets, and the Fracture of Society*, Binyamin Appelbaum documents the extent to which economists have actively shaped public policy for decades. According to Appelbaum,

“In the four decades between 1969 and 2008, economists played a leading role in curbing taxation and public spending, deregulating large sectors of the economy, and clearing the way for globalization.  Economists persuaded President Richard Nixon to end military conscription. Economists persuaded the federal judiciary largely to abandon the enforcement of antitrust laws. Economists even persuaded the government to assign a dollar value to human life—around $10 million in 2019—to determine whether regulations were worthwhile. Economists also became policy makers. The economist Arthur F. Burns replaced Martin as the Fed’s chairman in 1970, inaugurating an era in which economists—including Paul Volcker—led the central bank.  Two years later, in 1972, George Shultz became the first economist to serve as Treasury secretary, the job once held by Dillon. The number of economists employed by the U.S. government rose from about two thousand in the mid-1950s to more than six thousand by the late 1970s.” (Appelbaum 2019)

Throughout his book, Appelbaum documents the pervasive influence of economists in shaping public policy in the United States, and other countries as well. Was that appropriate? Was it appropriate for economists, as experts in that particular discipline, to shape public policy in that way? In what follows, I will argue that it was not appropriate. When economists make public statements about public policies, they are abusing their expertise as economists. That is the thesis of this paper.[[1]](#footnote-1) To that end, here is how I will proceed. In section 2, I will define the concept of a recognized expert, identify the social function of recognized expertise, and describe the social and political context of recognized expertise. In section 3, I will argue that, given the social and political context of recognized expertise, recognized experts have certain moral obligations, and some speech acts violate those obligations. More precisely, certain speech acts of recognized experts constitute a form of manipulation. In section 4, I will apply this account of the abuse of expertise to the speech acts of economists in shaping public policy, where I will argue that this constitutes an abuse of their expertise. In section 5, I will make some concluding remarks.

*2. Expertise: Definition, Function, and Context*

To say that someone is an expert is to draw a contrast between that person and another class of people – the laypeople. Thus, the nature of expertise consists in some difference between experts and laypeople. However, there are many relevant differences between a typical expert and a typical layperson. Psychologically, experts and the laypeople differ in their intrinsic cognitive properties – experts possess many beliefs and skills that laypeople lack (Feltovich, *et al.* 2006). Epistemically, experts and laypeople differ in their cognitive achievements – experts possess knowledge and intellectual virtues that laypeople lack (Goldman 2001). Socially, experts occupy a different social role, with respect to their area of expertise, than laypeople – laypeople defer to the opinions of experts within the relevant domain, whereas experts do not defer to the opinions of laypeople in that domain (Mieg 2006). Normatively, experts exercise *legitimate* authority over laypeople, within their area of expertise – laypeople *should* defer to the experts in the relevant area of expertise (Zagzebski 2018). These are all relevant differences between the typical expert and the typical layperson. So which of these differences *defines* the difference between the expert and the layperson?[[2]](#footnote-2) Fortunately, it is not necessary for present purposes to settle on a particular definition of expertise, *per se*. For the purposes of this paper, the relevant concept is a distinct, but related concept – that of a *recognized expert.* Building on Alvin Goldman’s recent definition of expertise, here is how I will define the concept of a recognized expert (Goldman 2018).

S is a *recognized expert* for a group of people G, in domain D, if and only if S and the members of G correctly believe that S has the capacity to help the members of G solve a variety of problems in D, or execute an assortment of tasks in D, which the members of G would not be able to solve or execute on their own. S can provide such help by imparting to the members of G their distinctive knowledge or skills.

Recognized expertise is a triadic relation between an individual, a group of people, and a specific domain. It consists in the fact that the individual, and the members of the relevant group, correctly believe that this individual has the capacity to help the members of the group solve problems and execute tasks in a particular domain, which they would not be able to solve or execute on their own. Moreover, this capacity is constituted by, and exercised through, the individual’s knowledge and cognitive skills. This definition incorporates the psychological, epistemic, and social dimensions of expertise. However, this is not a definition of expertise, but of the related concept of a recognized expert. I believe that the concept of a recognized expert is a familiar and important concept, and that this definition captures, nearly enough, what we usually mean by that phrase. Hence, when I use the term “expert” throughout this paper, I will mean a recognized expert, in this sense of the term.

Why are there any experts? What purpose do they serve?[[3]](#footnote-3) Expertise is one particular instance of the division of labor in a complex society. As individuals, human beings are very limited. Our desires far outrun our powers to satisfy them. Moreover, it often seems that some people are better suited to perform certain tasks than other people are. Thus, in order to amplify our powers, and satisfy more of our desires, we allow different people to specialize in providing different goods and services, and then exchange them with each other. To facilitate this system of exchange, we establish a system of indirect reciprocity, in which each person helps those who help others. We institute a system of rewards and punishments to enforce this system of indirect reciprocity. This is the social context of expertise. Expertise is one of the specialized services that some people provide for others in a complex society. The expert has the capacity to help others solve problems and execute tasks that they would not be able to solve or execute on their own. Thus, the expert offers to help laypeople solve these problems and execute these tasks in exchange for the goods and services that other people provide. Thus, understood in its social context, expertise is essentially a *service* that some people provide for other people in a complex society.

The system of indirect reciprocity, in which each person helps those who help others, requires mutual trust. Each person has to trust that others will prove what they say they will provide. This is true *a fortiori* in the case of expertise. That is because the layperson if often unable to tell whether the expert has provided exactly what she claims to provide. Since the layperson lacks the relevant knowledge and skills in the expert’s domain, the layperson is often unable to tell whether the expert has actually helped her to solve the relevant problem or execute the relevant task. Suppose that I ask my mechanic to help me choose a reliable car. If I know little or nothing about cars, then I have no way of knowing, at least in the short run, if my mechanic has helped me choose a reliable car or not. As a layperson, I simply have to trust my mechanic, somewhat blindly, to fulfill their end of the bargain. Since trust can be broken, exploited, and abused, trust makes us vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. In this context of nearly blind trust, the layperson is vulnerable to abuse by the expert. This is another important feature of the context in which experts offer their services to laypeople.

Thus far, I have focused solely on the social context of expertise. However, expertise also occurs in a political context. For the purposes of this paper, I will assume that the political context is that of a liberal democracy. Consequently, there are two, distinct, but related ideals that define this political context: the liberal ideal of *tolerance* and the democratic ideal of *relational equality*. Liberal societies are characterized by an attitude of *tolerance*, which extends even to people who hold radically different values from our own. As Thomas Scanlon has argued, the ideal of tolerance ultimately consists in this ideal:

“… [that] all members of society are equally entitled to be taken into account in defining what our society is, and equally entitled to participate in determining what it will become in the future. … What tolerance expresses is a recognition of common membership that is deeper than these conflicts, a recognition of others as just as entitled as we are to contribute to the definition of our society.” (Scanlon 2003: 190, 193)

Moreover, the right to participate equally in the definition of our society includes not only formal rights, such as the right to vote and hold office, but also the right to participate as an equal in the informal processes of democratic deliberation. According to Scanlon, “A tolerant society…is one that is democratic in its informal politics” (Scanlon 2003: 190). In a liberal society, each person has an equal right to participate in the formal and informal processes that constitute our political life. Furthermore, one of the ways in which people participate in determining what our society will be like is by choosing the values that guide them in the conduct of their own, personal lives. Thus, the entitlement to equal participation in determining the character of our society includes the entitlement to choose the values that guide a person in conducting their own life. That is why the desire to *prevent* people from influencing the development of society often manifests itself in attempts to restrict people’s choices in their private lives. As Scanlon explains,

“The desire to prevent those with whom one disagrees from influencing the evolution of one’s society has been a main motive for restricting expression. …This motive supports not only censorship, but also the kind of regulation of private conduct that raises the issue of ‘the enforcement of morals’. Sexual relations between consenting adults in the privacy of their bedrooms are not ‘expressions’, but it is no mistake to see attempts to regulate such conduct and attempts to regulate expression as closely related. In both cases, what the enforcers want is to prevent the spread of certain forms of behavior and attitude both by deterring it and, at least as important, by using the criminal law to make an authoritative statement of social disapproval. … [Therefore], what is objectionable about the ‘legal enforcement of morals’ is the attempts to restrict individuals’ personal lives as a way of controlling the evolution of mores.” (Scanlon 2003: 190-192)

Choosing the values that guide a person in their private life is one of the principal ways of participating in the informal processes that determine what our society is like. Since tolerance requires that everyone participate equally in determining what our society is like, tolerance also requires giving everyone an equal right to choose the values that govern their private lives.

Thus understood, the liberal ideal of tolerance manifests a deeper, democratic ideal – the ideal of *relational equality*. Here is how Daniel Viehoff characterizes this ideal:

“… [Relational Equality] requires, among other things, rough equality of power over the interactions that make up the relationship. Relational equality is, in turn, threatened where the parties to the relationship have significantly different power over how they interact with and relate to one another. We might call this the threat of subjection, and refer to equal power as a matter of nonsubjection. Where the parties to a relationship lack equal power, the relationship lacks the distinctive value associated with relating to one another as equals. … But this is not all. … nonsubjection requires not only that the parties in fact have roughly equal power, but also that the parties be *committed* to having equal power. Normally, having such a commitment is a matter of being guided, in our deliberation and actions, by norms that sustain and protect equal power among us – norms that bar us from relying in our dealings with one another on advantages that are in fact distributed unequally among us, or that we know are quite likely to be so distributed.” (Viehoff 2014)

If two or more people aspire to relate to each other as equals, then they are committed to maintaining a balance of power between them, in the relationship. Thus, they will actively avoid acquiring more power than their partners in the relationship. If they happen to have some advantage over their partners in the relationship, they will not exploit that advantage to exercise more power than their partners in the relationship. That is the ideal of relational equality, and it is one of the guiding ideals of a liberal democratic society. To say that these are the ideals of a liberal democracy is not to say that they are absolute moral rules that should never be violated. Rather, the ideals of tolerance and relational equality constitute strong, *pro tanto* reasons that can be outweighed in certain circumstances. However, since they generate strong, *pro tanto* reasons, the ideals of tolerance and relational equality should guide all of our interactions in a liberal democratic society, except in those cases in which they are outweighed by even stronger reasons.

In summary, then, here is the social and political context of expertise. Expertise is one of the many services offered in a complex society, with a division of labor. Experts help laypeople solve problems and execute tasks that they would otherwise be unable to solve or execute. Experts do this in exchange for the goods and services provided by other members of society. Due to the difference in knowledge and skills between experts and laypeople, laypeople are often required to place something close to blind trust in the experts who serve them. Since blind trust is vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, this renders laypeople vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by experts. However, in a liberal democratic society, people are guided by the ideals of tolerance and relational equality. Each member of society is entitled to equal participation in the formal and informal processes of democratic deliberation that determine what our society will be like, and every member of society is committed to maintaining a balance of power in their relationship with the other members of society. People in a liberal democratic society actively refrain from taking more power in their relationship with their fellow citizens than their fellow citizens have in that relationship. Now, in this social and political context, what are the obligations of experts, and what would constitute a violation of those obligations?

*3. The Obligations of Expertise*

A recognized expert offers a service to laypeople – to help them solve problems and execute tasks that they could not solve or execute on their own, in exchange for some sort of compensation. Therefore, the first obligation of the expert is simply to provide this service – to use her distinctive knowledge and skills to help laypeople in this way. However, in the context of a liberal democratic society, the expert should provide this service in a way that respects the ideals of tolerance and liberal equality. Thus, the expert should respect the layperson’s right to choose the values that guide her in her private life, and her right to participate equally in all the other informal processes that determine what our society is like. Moreover, the expert should strive to maintain a balance of power between herself and the layperson. More precisely, the expert should refrain from taking advantage of her expertise to arrogate more power to herself than the layperson possesses. These obligations are *pro tanto* obligations -- they can be overridden. However, the expert is subject to these obligations unless there is a sufficiently strong reason to violate them.

Stated abstractly, those are the obligations of a recognized expert in a democratic society. More concretely, these obligations have the following corollary. When a recognized expert speaks or acts in her capacity as a recognized expert, her reasons for her statement or action must be either (a) reasons that are produced solely by her distinctive knowledge and skills in the domain of her expertise, or (b) reasons that she and the laypeople – her clients -- share in common. To see that this is, indeed, a corollary of the obligations of an expert in a liberal democratic society, consider the following case.

*The Mechanic.* Jack is an auto mechanic who owns his own shop. He promises good service and fair prices. Jack also gives advice to his customers when they purchase a new vehicle. As it happens, Jack believes very strongly that every American should buy cars that are manufactured in America. One day, one of Jack’s customers, Jill, comes to Jack for advice about purchasing a new car. Jill does not share Jack’s commitment to buying cars that are made in America, and Jill is unaware of Jack’s commitment to this. Jill has narrowed her choices down to two vehicles, and she wants to know which of these two vehicles will best meet her needs. One of the two vehicles that she is considering is manufactured in America, while the other one is manufactured in another country. The vehicle that is manufactured in America is slightly inferior, in specific respects that matter to Jill, to the one that is manufactured in another country. Jack is aware of this. However, Jack believes that these deficiencies in the car are outweighed by the good of buying American made cars. Therefore, Jack recommends that Jill purchase the vehicle that is made in America, and she follows his advice.

Jack the Mechanic has violated his obligations as an expert in a liberal democratic society. Which features of his action make it such a violation, and why?

Jack the Mechanic uses his position as an expert to get his client to act for reasons that are not produced by his distinctive knowledge or skills as an expert, nor are they shared by his client. His commitment to buying cars that are manufactured in America is not the product of his expertise as a mechanic, nor is that commitment shared by his client, Jill. Thus, Jack has used his position as an expert to get his client to act for reasons that are not produced by his expertise, nor shared by his client. As is often the case, Jack’s reasons for his recommendation are *values*, and they are values that his client does not share. In order to benefit from the services of the expert, the layperson is forced to trust the expert, and this makes the layperson vulnerable to the expert. More precisely, the layperson cannot tell whether the expert’s reasons for her recommendation are good reasons or not. In the case described above, the expert exploits this vulnerability to get the client to act for reasons that are neither produced by expertise, nor shared by the client. Furthermore, in doing so, the expert prevents his client from deliberating and choosing for themselves whether to act on the experts’ values. That violates the liberal ideal of tolerance, because it denies the clients’ equal participation in the informal processes that determine the character of our society. Tolerance requires that Jill have the opportunity to deliberate and choose for herself whether to favor companies that manufacture cars in America. Thus, Jack the Mechanic has denied Jill equal participation in the informal processes that determine what our society is like, and that violates the ideal of tolerance in a liberal society.

Furthermore, the expert in this case has used his status as an expert to take more than his fair share of power in his relationship with his client. If we ask why the client eventually acts as she does, the correct explanation of her action will lead us back to the experts’ own values. Jill purchases that car because Jack the Mechanic recommends it, and Jack recommends it because Jack values buying American cars. Therefore, the real reason that Jill buys that car is that Jack values buying American cars. Thus, Jill’s action is ultimately due to Jack’s reasons. Since Jill herself does not share these reasons, Jill is acting for reasons that are not truly her own. Rather, Jill is now acting for Jack’s reasons. To get someone to act for your own reasons – reasons that they do not share – is to take control over that person, and taking control over another person definitely violates the democratic ideal of relational equality. If two people accept the ideal of relational equality, then they to aspire to maintain a balance of power in their relationship. Consequently, they will refrain from using any advantage they might have to take more than an equal share of power in the relationship. To exploit the vulnerability of a client, in an expert-client relationship, in order to get the client to act for your reasons, which the client does not share, is to arrogate power to oneself in a way that clearly violates the ideal of relational equality. In summary, then, if an expert gets a layperson to act for reasons that are neither produced by their expertise, nor shared by the layperson, then that expert has violated the ideals of tolerance and relational equality that govern a liberal democratic society. Acting in this way is an abuse of expertise.

Another way to understand the moral wrongness of such actions is to see that they share many of the objectionable features of *manipulation*. One of the hallmarks of wrongful manipulation is that it involves one person taking power or control over another person, and thereby depriving her of genuine, robust authorship of her own actions. After considering some paradigm cases of manipulation, Patricia Greenspan characterizes manipulation in this way.

“What the manipulee is deluded about in these cases [of manipulation] is the extent to which he is the agent of his action; the agency of others is to some degree ‘masked.’ … The mistake people make when they are manipulated successfully typically involves missing the fact of the other’s influence. … Our complaint in these cases is a complaint about unfair terms of social exchange. …In objectionable cases of manipulation, others are taking unfair advantage of the opportunity for control.” (Greenspan 2003)

She concludes that “Manipulation is unfair to the extent that it involves taking more than one’s fair share of power over the other party’s choice situation – whether by deception or some other means” (Greenspan 2003:160). That is exactly what happens when experts get laypeople to act for reasons that are neither produced by expertise, nor shared by the laypeople. In such situations, laypeople are deluded about the extent to which they are the authors of their own actions, since they act for reasons that they do not share. Consequently, the experts in these situations take more than their fair share of power over the layperson’s choice situation. In both of these respects, the abuse of expertise resembles the objectionable features of manipulation. In fact, Greenspan proceeds to apply this account of manipulation to relationships that require trust, and the result is an apt description of the abuse of expertise.

“Manipulation is typically a violation of trust, though more so in some relationships than in others. In some relationships, as noted, we delegate to others a certain authority over the terms on which we operate. … However, there are limits to what we are handing over in such cases that may or may not be respected by the other party. Imagine Ulysses tying himself to the mast to withstand the Sirens – but then betrayed by a disloyal crew that takes advantage of the occasion to stage a mutiny. … Something similar might apply to the various unreflective choices we make in ordinary interaction.” (Greenspan 2003: 160-161)

Here again, this is an apt characterization of what happens in the abuse of expertise, as described here. The layperson trusts the expert to help her solve a problem or execute a task, and she trusts the expert to do this in a way that tolerates her values, and maintains a balance of power between them. In cases of abuse, the expert betrays the client’s trust by getting them to act for reasons that they do not share, and thereby arrogating to themselves more power in the relationship than the client possesses. This is another way in which the abuse of expertise constitutes wrongful manipulation.[[4]](#footnote-4) In the following section of this paper, I will apply this account of the abuse of expertise to public economics, and I will argue that many of the speech acts of economists in the public sphere constitute an abuse of their expertise.

*4. The Abuse of Expertise in Public Economics*

Many people will be incredulous at the idea that any of this applies to the statements of economists concerning public policy. My project in the remainder of this paper is to demonstrate that they are mistaken. I will begin by stating the argument very succinctly, using the example of Oliver Hart’s recent statement to illustrate the argument. Then I will state the best possible defense of the role of the economist in shaping public policy. The remainder of the paper will be devoted to showing, in detail, that this defense fails. Moreover, the way in which the defense fails also shows that the original objection to the economist was actually correct.

Recall the story with which I began this paper. In 2018, the Initiative on Global Markets hosted an Economic Experts Panel, and proposed this resolution: “Imposing new US tariffs on steel and aluminum will improve Americans’ welfare.” The Harvard economist, Oliver Hart, answered the question with an unqualified “No,” and then explained his answer with this statement: “A robust result is that free trade increases national income. The cases where this is not true are rare and hard to spot.” Hart argued as follows.

1. Free trade increases national income.

2. Therefore, free trade improves Americans’ welfare.

The unstated assumption of Hart’s argument is that if a policy increases national income, then that policy improves Americans’ welfare. This unstated assumption of Hart’s argument embodies a disputed moral claim. That is because Hart’s assumption completely ignores *the separateness of persons*.[[5]](#footnote-5) By identifying *Americans’ welfare* with *U.S. national income*, Hart treats the American people as if they were one big person, with one big income, which we call “the national income”. However, there is no such person, and no such income. Rather, there are 320 million, distinct people, each with their own, separate income. Moreover, as two of the economists on the panel admitted, tariffs, like most economic policies, affect different people in different ways. This fact raises moral questions – questions of justice and fairness, which are beyond the scope of economics to answer. The question *“Does a small gain for many people justify a very large loss for a few people?”* is not a question of economics, but of moral and political philosophy. Nevertheless, Hart tacitly assumed an answer to that disputed moral question, and he based his policy recommendation on that tacit assumption. Therein lies the problem. In a democratic society, everyone is entitled to equal participation in the process of answering such disputed moral questions. Therefore, the experts in a democratic society must respect each person’s right to deliberate and decide for themselves how to answer such questions. When an economist presents his own opinion on a moral question *under the guise of his expertise in economics,* he undermines the layperson’s ability to decide for themselves how to answer it. The layperson trusts the economist, as an expert, to help him solve problems that he cannot solve on his own. However, at no point did the layperson delegate his *conscience* to the economist. The layperson did not say, “Make my moral judgments for me.” Nevertheless, that is exactly what Oliver Hart did. Hart did not acknowledge the controversial moral judgment on which he based his recommendation. He did notsay, “Well, if we agree that a certain amount of gain for the majority of the people is a sufficient reason to allow a significant loss for a minority of the people, then yes, this is a good policy for the American people.” That statement would have acknowledged the moral assumption of Hart’s recommendation. It also would have acknowledged the fact that his moral assumption was neither the product of his expertise in economics, nor shared by all of the people to whom he was speaking. It would have given the laypeople an opportunity to decide for themselves whether to accept the moral assumption of Hart’s recommendation. Hart did not do that. Instead, he used his position as a trusted expert to get his audience to accept a claim for a reason that was neither the product of his expertise, nor shared by all of the people to whom he was speaking. Therefore, Hart abused his expertise.

At this point, welfare economists and their allies will object that this argument completely ignores all of the work that has been done over the last century to construct tools for measuring and comparing human welfare. That would be correct. The relevant question is whether these tools actually solve the problem identified in the objection. To determine the answer to that question, I will begin by stating the best possible defense of the role of the economist in shaping public policy.

*The Economist’s Defense.* Insofar as people are rational, they are in the best position to know what is good for them. To assume otherwise is paternalistic. Since people are in the best position to know what is good for them, their preferences should be taken as a reliable indicator of their welfare. Therefore, a person’s welfare can be measured in terms of how many of her preferences are satisfied. Measuring welfare in this way, it is plausible to say that if a policy increases the welfare of some people, and it does not reduce anyone’s welfare, then that policy improves the welfare of the group as a whole. Of course, many policies will improve the welfare of some people, while reducing the welfare of other people. In those cases, we should ask this question: would it be possible for the winners under the new policy to compensate the losers under the new policy, to such an extent that everyone would prefer this final state of affairs to the state of affairs prior to the policy change? If the new policy makes this possible, then the new policy improves the welfare of the group as a whole, since it puts the group, as a whole, in a position to satisfy everyone’s preferences more than they were previously satisfied. Therefore, if a policy creates such a situation, in which it would be possible for the winners under the new policy to compensate the losers under that policy, in such a way that everyone would prefer the final result to the state of affairs prior to the policy, then it is accurate to say that this policy *improves the welfare of the group as a whole*.

This defense of welfare economics is the result of almost a century of careful thought. Does it vindicate the role of economists in shaping public policy? I will argue that it does not. Throughout this discussion, it will be important to remember the central issue in this debate. I have argued that if an expert uses her status as an expert gets a layperson to accept a claim, then it must be for reasons that are either the product of her expertise, or shared by the layperson. Otherwise, the expert has abused her expertise. This is especially true if the assumptions in question are normative or evaluative claims that are contested in society. To make recommendations, as an expert, that are ultimately based on normative assumptions that are contested in society is, in effect, to impose one’s values on unsuspecting laypeople, under the guise of one’s expertise. That clearly violates the liberal democratic ideals of tolerance and relational equality. Thus, the standard of appropriate conduct for economists in relation to public policy is this: *the recommendations of economists with respect to public policy must be based on assumptions that are either the product of economic analysis, or shared by the laypeople*. Henceforth, I will refer to this as “the standard.” My argument is that, despite their best efforts, the policy recommendations of economists typically violate the standard. As Daniel Hausman, Michael McPherson, and Debra Satz put it,

“…economists attempt to steer clear of controversial ethical commitments when doing theoretical welfare economics. …Yet when welfare economists address policy questions, they purport to know how to make life better for people.” (Hausman *et al.* 2017: 149) [[6]](#footnote-6)

In an attempt to solve this problem, welfare economists have developed the concepts and tools employed in the *Economists’ Defense* above. The question is whether that defense provides a foundation for public policy recommendations that assumes no controversial normative claims. The answer is that it does not.

The economist assumes that people’s preferences are a reliable indicator of what is good for them. But how does the economist know what people prefer? The economists’ only access to people’s preferences is through their market choices. Thus, right from the start, the economist is forced to restrict the range of preferences that are taken to indicate personal well-being to the preferences that are revealed in people’s market choices. However, this restriction distorts the economist’s understanding of people’s preferences. That is because some preferences are not revealed by any market choices. As Hausman puts it, “some preferences, such as preferences for communities free of urban sprawl, are hard to signal when one buys groceries, cars, or even homes” (Hausman *et al.* 2017: 163). This lacuna in the economists’ knowledge of people’s preferences often leads to false predictions. In the years prior to the passage of free trade legislation in the United States, some people argued that the closing of American factories would harm many American workers. In reply, many economists predicted that American workers would simply move to where there were jobs. Consequently, they were surprised when many American workers did *not* move. Some took lower-paying jobs, and others simply dropped out of the workforce altogether. What did economists miss here? Many American workers, especially in small towns, have a very strong preference for living in their community of origin, with their extended family and friends. However, that preference was not revealed in any market choices until they were forced to choose between maintaining their income and staying in their community of origin. The result of this mistake was a significant, unforeseen harm to many American workers. This illustrates how the economists’ restriction to market-revealed-preferences can lead to false predictions and harmful consequences.

But does it violate the Standard for expert recommendations? Yes. The restriction of welfare-indicating preferences to those that are revealed by market choices is equivalent to the value judgment that only those preferences that are revealed by market choices are relevant to human welfare. Despite the fact that this was never the economists’ intention, the economists’ policy recommendations are ultimately based on this assumption. Needless to say, the proposition that only market-revealed preferences are relevant to human welfare is neither the product of economic analysis, nor an assumption that is shared by most of the laypeople. Therefore, this assumption, unintended as it was, violates the Standard. Recommendations based on this assumption are neither the product of economic expertise alone, nor based on assumptions that are shared by the laypeople.

Second, people’s actual preferences are often based on false beliefs. Specifically, their preferences are often based on false beliefs about the consequences of having their current preferences satisfied. In such cases, the economist is forced to assume that the satisfaction of such preferences still improves the person’s welfare. Here again, this assumption is neither the product of economic analysis, nor shared by all the laypeople. It is tempting to think that this assumption is justified by a principle of non-paternalism. By valuing the satisfaction of people’s preferences, regardless of whether those preferences are based on false beliefs, the economist is refusing to play the role of judge of truth and falsity. That seems like an appropriately non-paternalistic attitude. However, this reply is based on a misunderstanding of the problem involved here. The assumption that the satisfaction of preferences that are based on false beliefs is likely to benefit people is a normative assumption – a value judgment, which is neither the product of economic analysis, nor shared by all of the laypeople. Many people reject this value judgment. Consequently, the economist who bases policy recommendations on this assumption fails to meet the Standard for experts in a liberal democratic society. Moreover, the problem of preferences based on false beliefs points to a distinct, but closely related problem. By assuming that the satisfaction of people’s desires is a reliable indicator of personal welfare, the economist ignores the way in which those preferences were formed. This is equivalent to another value judgment, namely, that the way in which a person’s preferences were formed is irrelevant to the value of satisfying those preferences. Thus, even if a preference was induced by false advertising, or other kinds of social manipulation, the economist tacitly assumes that satisfying this preference improves the welfare of the person who formed the preference in this way. Here again, this is a value judgment that is neither the result of economic analysis, nor shared by the laypeople. Furthermore, in a democratic society, one of the ways in which people correct their false beliefs, and change the preferences that are based on those beliefs, is through public discussion and debate. As Hausman points out, “people’s preferences for policies respond to arguments and may be different after public debate than they were before.” By recommending policies that would satisfy people’s actual preferences, even if those preferences are based on false beliefs, the economist short-circuits one of the processes that enable people in a democratic society to correct their mistakes about their own well-being. That is also an abuse of expertise.

The economists’ assumptions about human welfare violate the standard for expert advice in a liberal democratic society, but they are not the most significant of the economists’ violations. That honor belongs to the economists’ treatment of considerations of *justice.* Recall that very few, if any economic policies benefit everyone. On the contrary, most economic policies benefit some people, but harm other people. These policies raise questions of *justice* for those who are harmed. When an economist recommends a public policy for economic reasons, what do they say about these matters of justice? Recall this statement from the Economists’ Defense.

If a policy creates such a situation, in which it would be possible for the winners under the new policy to compensate the losers under that policy, in such a way that everyone would prefer the final result to the state of affairs prior to the policy, then it is accurate to say that this policy *improves the welfare of the group as a whole*.

This is how an economist might defend the claim that a policy benefits the group as a whole, even if it actually harms some members of the group. The first, and obvious problem with this defense is that the imagined compensation is purely hypothetical. The economist has no control over whether any such compensation will ever occur, nor can they predict whether it will occur. In many cases, no such compensation ever occurs. Thus, to continue to say that a policy that meets this standard improves the welfare of the group is misleading at best. Furthermore, it leaves us with an important, unanswered question about the *justice* of such a policy. If a policy confers a small benefit on a very large number of people, but is causes severe harm to a small number of people, then would it be just to implement such a policy, even if the losers will never be compensated for their loss? That is a very important question, and one that is obviously relevant to the decision to adopt the policy. If an economist recommends such a policy, for economic reasons, then how does her recommendation deal with the matter of justice?

The answer must be one of the following. Either the economist is assuming that it would be just to adopt such a policy, or the economist is simply ignoring the question of justice. If the economist is assuming that it would be just to adopt such a policy, because the benefits outweigh the harms, then the economists’ recommendation is based on an assumption about justice that is neither the product of economic analysis, nor shared by all of the laypeople. The proposition that *it is just to cause a severe harm to a small number of people if it is necessary to confer a small benefit on a large number of people* is not a proposition of economics, but of moral philosophy. The economist, *qua* economist, is in no special position to pronounce on this question. If the economists’ recommendation is based on this assumption, then the economists are inducing laypeople to accept a policy for moral reasons that they do not share, all under the guise of expertise in economics. Thus, they are violating the Standard for expert advice in a liberal democratic society. When the public asked for expert advice from economists, they did not intend to delegate their conscience to the economists, and that should be clear.

Many economists will object that when they recommend public policies, they are *not* making assumptions about justice. They will readily grant that they have no expertise in matters of justice, nor did they ever claim that they did. Their recommendations are based on purely economic considerations, without any regard for matters of justice. The problem with this reply is that economists frequently recommend the adoption of public policies *without qualification*. While their recommendations are often stated in terms of welfare, the conversational implication of their statements is clear – that these policies should be adopted. (I will illustrate this with two historical examples very shortly.) Thus, if economists are making no assumptions about justice, then they are recommending the adoption of public policies without any consideration for matters of justice. In that case, *the economists are inducing the public to ignore considerations of justice in their choice of public policies, all under the guise of their expertise in economics.* To use one’s status as an expert to recommend a policy that will harm some people, under the guise of one’s expertise, is to usurp the moral conscience of other people. That is not the prerogative of an economist. It is an abuse of expertise.

To some readers, these accusations will seem unduly harsh and unfair. To show that this is not the case, I will substantiate these claims with two examples from recent economic history. In the mid-1970s, the United States faced a new kind of economic problem, one that Keynesian economists had assumed to be impossible – rising inflation and a stagnant economy. This had already occurred in the United Kingdom, where the British politician Iain Macleod had coined the term “stagflation.” By 1975, the unemployment rate in the United States reached 9 percent, and inflation was over 10 percent. This continued through the summer of 1979, when President Jimmy Carter decided to find a new Chairman for the Federal Reserve. He chose Paul Volcker. Volcker was a lifelong advocate for cracking down on inflation. In his senior thesis at Princeton in 1949, he argued that the Federal Reserve should take stronger measures to crack down on inflation. He described inflation as “a grave threat to the economy.” In graduate school, at Harvard, Volcker recalled listening to one of his professor’s say that a little inflation is good for the economy. Volcker later recalled that in that moment, there was “a word flashing in my brain like a yellow caution sign: ‘Bullshit’” (Appelbaum 2019: 76). Thirty years later, in 1979, his opinion had not changed, and now he was poised to do something about it.

In reality, the effects of inflation at that time were mitigated by the fact that through the 1970s, wages had risen right alongside inflation. According to Binyamin Appelbaum,

“Policy makers had tolerated inflation because the cure as held to be more painful than the disease. Wages had climbed roughly as fast as prices during the 1970s, preserving the purchasing power of the typical household. Most Americans were borrowers more than lenders, and inflation reduced the burden of their debts: paying a thirty-year mortgage required a smaller share of income with each passing year. Home ownership rose during the 1970s – indeed, in 1978, the share of Americans who owned homes was higher than it would be in 2018. Nobody liked inflation, but the idea of driving the economy into a recession seemed like unnecessarily strong medicine.” (Appelbaum 2019: 73)

As this illustrates, the net effects of inflation are many and varied, and they certainly vary from person to person. Moreover, the alternative that Volcker would soon implement would be much worse for some people than inflation was. This tradeoff posed a fundamental moral question, which was exposed in an exchange that took place in Volcker’s confirmation hearing in July 1979.

Senator William Proxmire, a populist in the old Wisconsin tradition, opened Volcker’s confirmation hearing by asking for assurances Volcker would not raise interest rates to levels that would be ‘very difficult for small businesses, the farmer, and the working people.’ Volcker, chomping on a cheap cigar, offered little comfort. ‘I don’t think we have any substitute for seeking an answer to our problems in the context of monetary discipline,’ he said.” (Appelbaum 2019: 77)

The exchange between Proxmire and Volcker identifies the inescapable moral issuethat the country faced at that moment. Proxmire, speaking on behalf of the American people, was asking a question about justice for the people who might be harmed by Volcker’s plan. Volcker’s reply is misleading, at best. Of course there was “a substitute” for what he was about to do. In fact, there were many such substitutes. But Volcker, speaking as an expert in economics, told Proxmire and those he represented that he, the expert, knew what had to be done. In doing so, Volcker either assumed that the policy he would implement was just, or he induced the public to ignore considerations of justice. Either way, Volcker abused his expertise, and the consequences were severe.

“As the Fed tightened the money supply, interest rates climbed sharply. The prime rate … topped out above 20 percent. Other rates went much higher. Consumers stopped buying cars and washing machines; millions of workers lost their jobs. Without jobs, many lost their homes and hopes of a comfortable retirement. … Factory workers suffered most. Unemployment in the auto industry reached 23 percent. Among steelworkers, it hit 29 percent. And the damage was enduring: a study of Pennsylvania workers who lost jobs in the mass layoffs found that six years later they were still earning 25 percent less than before the recession.” (Appelbaum 2019: 79-80)

In response to these severe harms, Volcker expressed his normative assumption openly.

“ ‘You just have to tell yourself that somehow it’s in the larger interest of the country – and even of these people – to get this straightened out,’ he told the journalist William Greider.” (Appelbaum 2019: 80)

Therein lies the problem. Volcker, as an expert in economics, was not in a position to determine what was “in the interest of the country – and even these people.” That normative judgment was outside the scope of his expertise as an economist. Of course, at this point, two U.S. Presidents had given him that prerogative. However, he was given that prerogative *because he, like other economists, claimed to know what was best for millions of people.* That claim was an abuse of their expertise -- it betrayed the trust of the laypeople by disguising normative assumptions as the products of expertise in economics. The decision to impose severe harms on millions of people in order to prevent the lesser, but more widespread, harms of inflation, should have been made by the people, through their elected representatives, not by an economist.

Unfortunately, this was not the last time that economists would abuse their expertise. As early as 1967, economists like Milton Friedman argued publicly that the United States should liberalize its trade relations with countries like China. According to Friedman, “They are saying to us, ‘Look, if you’ll take some of our goods for cheap, we’ll give them to you.’ Well, let’s not be fools, let’s take it” (Appelbaum 2019: 244). In the years that followed, many economists echoed Friedman’s call to liberalize trade relations with the rest of the world. One of the most vehement of these advocates for free trade was the young Paul Krugman. As always, the argument was that this policy was in the interest of the country as a whole. In an article in the *Journal of Economic Literature,* Krugman wrote that “The economist’s case for free trade is essentially a unilateral case: a country serves its own interests by pursuing free trade regardless of what other countries may do” (Krugman 1997a). In a series of popular books and articles, Krugman extolled the virtues of free trade, and excoriated anyone who dared to question it (Krugman 1994a; 1994b; 1997b). To anyone who dared to question him, Krugman was merciless.

“When William Greider, the former Washington Post journalist, warned in a deeply reported book called One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism that developing nations were gearing up for major industrial competition that would mean ‘[s]ome sectors of Americans are triumphant and other sectors are devastated,’ Krugman called it a ‘thoroughly silly book.’ When Michael Lind, another prominent public intellectual, suggested (accurately) that U.S. productivity growth might not be enough to offset ‘the global sweatshop economy,’ Krugman declared Lind to be ignorant of economic ‘facts’ and said that ‘one should not expect someone who does not work in the field to be able to get it right without some guidance.’ Krugman was no less kind to fellow economists who dared to question the free trade consensus. When Laura D’Andrea Tyson was chosen to head Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisers in 1993, Krugman said she lacked the ‘necessary analytical skills’.” (Hirsh 2019)

By raising the prospect of severe harm to some workers, William Greider and Michael Lind were posing a moral challenge to free trade. They were asking, implicitly, if this would be fair to those who might be severely harmed by it. In one of his articles on the subject, Michael Lind argued that multinational corporations’ use of global labor would explain the growing divergence between productivity and compensation in the United States. In a speech in 1995, Krugman replied to Lind, and his reply contained a striking, and very puzzling admission. Krugman replied that, “No matter how much productivity increases, wages will fall if there is an abundance of workers competing for a scarcity of jobs – an abundance of the sort created by the globalization of the labor pool for U.S.-based corporations” (Krugman 1995). In this statement, in 1995, Paul Krugman explicitly states that globalization will reduce wages for American workers. Obviously, this raises questions of justice for those workers. Moreover, in a liberal democratic society, such questions are to be decided by the people, democratically; they are not to be dictated by an economist, under the guise of his expertise in economics.

Under the influence of economists like Krugman, the idea of free trade and globalization became a reality. It began with the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, and culminated with the normalization of trade relations with China in 2000. Over the next decade, the fears of people like William Greider and William Lind would come true. In a series of studies published between 2013 and 2016, David Autor and his colleagues documented the extent to which free trade with China caused severe and irreparable harm to millions of American workers (Autor *et al.* 2013a; 2013b; 2014; and 2016a). By 2019, even Krugman realized that he had been mistaken. In an essay entitled “What Economists (Including Me) Got Wrong about Globalization,” Krugman admitted that he had underestimated the severity of the harms that would result from globalization. Specifically, he underestimated just how badly a certain subset of the population would be hurt (Krugman 2019). In his memoirs, in 2018, Paul Volcker – himself an erstwhile champion of neoliberal globalization, came to the same realization. “We failed to realize the costs of open markets and rapid innovation to sizable fractions of our own citizenry,” he lamented (Volcker 2018). Indeed. In addition, there is some evidence that these costs to “sizable fractions of our own citizenry” have had significant political ramifications as well. Following the U.S. Presidential Election in 2016, David Autor and his colleagues conducted a study to determine whether the economic effects of Chinese imports had shaped the outcome of the election in the crucial states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. The results were striking.

“We find a robust positive effect of rising import competition on Republican vote share gains. The magnitude of the Republican gains is non-trivial. A counterfactual study of closely contested states suggests that Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania would have elected the Democrat instead of the Republican candidate if, ceteris paribus, the growth in Chinese import penetration had been 50 percent lower than the actual growth during the period of analysis. The Democrat candidate would also have obtained a majority in the electoral college in this counterfactual scenario.” (Autor *et al*. 2016a)

If Autor and his colleagues are correct, then the economists’ success in persuading the American public to adopt free trade policies, without regard for the effects on a sizable minority of the population, probably played a significant role in determining the outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election.

These are just two examples of a pattern of behavior by economists over the last half-century. Repeatedly, economists have recommended public policies that threatened to cause severe harm to a sizable portion of the population. These recommendations were based on unstated moral assumptions, or, alternatively, they induced laypeople to neglect morally relevant considerations in their choice of public policies – all under the guise of expertise in economics. This was an abuse of expertise, and many people paid a severe price for it. I hasten to add that even if one agrees with the moral judgments of these economists, that would not vindicate their behavior. The problem with the economists’ behavior is not that their moral assumptions were false, but that it was not their prerogative to disguise those moral assumptions as expertise in economics. Alternatively, if they were ignoring moral questions altogether, then it was not their prerogative to induce the public to do likewise, also under the guise of expertise in economics. That was an abuse of their expertise.

*5. Concluding Remarks*

The epigraph to this paper is a quotation from Socrates, in *The Apology*. On one interpretation of that text, Socrates denies that anyone has expert knowledge of what constitutes a good life for a human being. According to Socrates, some people in his society *believe* that they have expert knowledge of the good life for a human being. The poets, the politicians, and the craftsmen all believe that they have such expert knowledge. To test their claims, Socrates goes to each of these groups, and examines them. First, he examines the poets and the politicians, and he finds that they do not have expert knowledge of virtue. Then he goes to the craftsmen, and he sees that they *do* have knowledge of many fine things. However, he concludes that they, too, lack expert knowledge of the good life for a human being. Why do the craftsmen believe that they have expert knowledge of virtue, if they do not? Socrates answer is intriguing.

“…the good craftsmen seemed to me to have the same fault as the poets: each of them, *because of his success at his craft*, thought himself very wise in other most important pursuits, and this error of theirs overshadowed the wisdom they had.”

The craftsmen, like the poets, failed to distinguish their area of expertise from knowledge of the “most important pursuits,” i.e., *what is good for a human being*. Over the last half-century, economists have made a similar mistake, confusing their expertise in economics with expertise in what is best for millions of distinct human beings.

Here is one possible reply to this argument. One might contend that, in certain respects, economists *are* experts in what is good for human beings. With respect to what is good for people *economically,* economists are experts. If that is true, then economists are not abusing their expertise when they give advice that makes normative assumptions. Of course, this rely assumes that there is such a thing as moral expertise, and that laypeople are capable of recognizing such expertise. There are reasons to doubt both of these assumptions. Even if there is such a thing as moral expertise, it is not clear that it would be recognizable by non-experts. Reflecting on the early Platonic dialogue, *Laches,* Alexander Nehamas explains the problem.

Experts in *arête* … present a very complex problem. Do such experts exist at all? And if they do, how are they to be recognized? In the case of shoemakers, or doctors, we can tell whether the shoe fits or the fever has gone: we have relatively clear ways of recognizing them. But in the case of ethical experts, it is not clear that we can recognize the experts independently of the fact that we find their views and their reasons for them convincing. But to find such reasons convincing is already to follow them (Nehamas 1998: 81).

In recent years, Sarah McGrath has pressed similar concerns about the recognizability of moral expertise (McGrath 2009; McGrath 2011). In order to recognize someone as a moral expert, we would have to have evidence that they are reliable in moral matters. In order to establish that they are reliable in moral matters, we would have to establish that they have a track record of making true moral judgments. How could we establish that a person has a track record of making true moral judgments? This is where the problem lies. We have no access to moral truths that is independent of our own moral intuitions and judgments. Thus, the only way to establish that someone has a track record of making true moral judgments is to compare their judgments with my own. If I make false moral judgments most of the time, then I will be unable to determine, correctly, that another person is a moral expert. On the other hand, if I make true moral judgments most of the time, then I will be able to establish that someone is reliable in making true moral judgments, but only because I, myself, am reliable. However, in this case, the epistemic authority that is at the heart of the concept of an expert seems to vanish. If the only way for me to determine that someone else is a moral expert is to compare their moral judgments with my own, then it is not clear why I would take them to have any epistemic authority with respect to my own judgments. Thus, moral expertise seems to be unrecognizable to those who are morally ignorant, and useless to those who are morally knowledgeable.

There are possible replies to that argument. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to resolve this question definitively. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there is moral expertise, and that it is recognizable and useful to laypeople. Even if that is so, it is doubtful that expertise in economics alone would suffice for moral expertise. Economics is not ethics. One need not have any of the knowledge or skills that are employed in ethics in order to be an expert in economics. Thus, I see no reason to think that expertise in economics would suffice for moral expertise. Finally, even if there is recognizable moral expertise, and even if economists possess it, they would then belong to a group of experts who disagree amongst themselves. The normative assumptions that are often made by economists are disputed or denied by many moral philosophers, and these moral philosophers have at least as good a claim to moral expertise as any economist. Thus, even if we were to grant the economist the status of moral expert, we would face the problem of disagreement among moral experts. For these reasons, I doubt that the pronouncements of economists can be justified by appeal to their alleged status as moral experts.

On January 17, 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower gave his farewell address as President. This was the address in which Eisenhower gave his famous warning about the emerging “industrial-military complex.” In the same address, Eisenhower warned of another emerging threat to democracy. After acknowledging the danger of government control of scientific research, Eisenhower added that, “We must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite” (Eisenhower 1961). In his recent book, *Liberal Democracy 3.0: Civil Society in an Age of Experts,* Stephen Turner argues that “specialized technical discourse – not only science but other kinds of expert knowledge – presents a fundamental political problem for liberal democracy” (Turner 2003: 5). If the abuse of expertise in public economics is any indication, then both Eisenhower and Turner were correct. The ever-increasing power of experts poses a fundamental problem for liberal democracy – one that will require careful thought and attention if liberal democracy is to be preserved.

*SUNY Brockport*

*gbarnes@brockport.edu*

**References**

Appelbaum, Binyamin. 2019. *The Economists’ Hour: False Prophets, Free Markets, and the Fracture of Society*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.

Autor, David, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson. 2013a. “The China Syndrome: Local Labor Market Effects of Import Competition in the United States,” *American Economic Review* 103:6.

Autor, David, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson. 2013b. “The Geography of Trade and Technology Shocks in the United States,” *American Economic Review* 103:3.

Autor, David, David Dorn, Gordon Hanson, and Jae Song. 2014. “Trade Adjustment: Worker Level Evidence,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129:4.

Autor, David, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson. 2016a. “The China Shock: Learning from Labor-Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade,” *Annual Review of Economics* 8.

Autor, David, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson, and Kaveh Majlesi, 2016b. “A Note on the Effect of Rising Trade Exposure on the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Munich Presonal RePEc Archive*, <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/112889/>

Ballantyne, Nathan. 2019. “Epistemic Trespassing,” *Mind* 128: 367-394.

Cockrell, Jeff. 2018. “Will Americans Benefit from New Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum?” *Chicago Booth Review,* University of Chicago Booth School of Business, March 13, 2018, <https://www.igmchicago.org/surveys/steel-and-aluminum-tariffs/>

Dowding, Keith. 2016. “Power and Persuasion,” *Political Studies* 64.

Eisenhower, Dwight. 1961. “Farewell Address to the Nation,” available at <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-dwight-d-eisenhowers-farewell-address> .

Feltovich, P. J., M. J. Prietula, and K. A. Ericsson. 2006. “Studies of Expertise from Psychological Perspectives,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, ed. K. A. Ericsson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldman, Alvin. 2001. “Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63: 85-110.

Goldman, Alvin. 2018. “Expertise,” *Topoi* 37: 3-10.

Greenspan, Patricia. 2003. “The Problem with Manipulation,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 40:2.

Greider, William. 1997. One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Hausman, Daniel, Michael McPherson, and Debra Satz. 2017. *Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy, Third Edition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Hirsh, Michael. 2019. “Economists on the Run,” *The Big Think*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/22/economists-globalization-trade-paul-krugman-china/> .

Krugman, Paul. 1994a. *Peddling Prosperity: Economic Sense and Nonsense in an Age of Diminished Expectations.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Krugman, Paul. 1994b. “Competitiveness: A Dangerous Obsession,” *Foreign Affairs*, Council on Foreign Relations.

Krugman, Paul. 1995. “Ricardo’s Difficult Idea,” <https://web.mit.edu/krugman/www/ricardo.htm>

Krugman, Paul. 1997a. “What Should Trade Negotiators Negotiate About?” *Journal of Economic Literature* 35:1.

Krugman, Paul. 1997b. “In Praise of Cheap Labor,” *Slate,* The Washington Post Company.

Krugman, Paul. 2019. “What Economists (Including Me) Got Wrong about Globalization,” <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-10-10/inequality-globalization-and-the-missteps-of-1990s-economics>

Lackey, Jennifer. 2018. “Experts and Peer Disagreement,” in *Knowledge, Belief, and God: New Insights in Religious Epistemology,* ed. Matthew A. Benton.Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McGrath, Sarah. 2009. “The Puzzle of Pure Moral Deference”, *Philosophical Perspectives* 23.

McGrath, Sarah. 2011. “Skepticism about Moral Expertise as a Puzzle for Moral Realism,” *Journal of Philosophy* 108:3.

Mieg, H. A. 2006. “Social and Sociological Factors in the Development of Expertise,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, ed. K. A. Ericsson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nehamas, Alexander. 1998. *The Art of Living.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Nozick, Robert. 1974. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Plato. *The Apology of Socrates,* in *The Trial and Death of Socrates, Third Edition*, trans. G. M. A. Grube. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Quast, Christian. 2018. “Expertise: A Practical Explication,” *Topoi* 37: 11-27.

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Scanlon, T. M. 2003. *The Difficulty of Tolerance: Essays in Political Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, Stephen P. 2003. *Liberal Democracy 3.0: Civil Society in an Age of Experts.* London: Sage Publications.

Viehoff, Daniel. 2014. “Democratic Equality and Political Authority,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42: 2.

Volcker, Paul. 2018. *Keeping at It: The Quest for Sound Money and Good Government*. New York, New York: Hachette Book Group.

Zagzebski, Linda. 2012. *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1. One possible objection to the economists’ statements is that they are guilty of what Nathan Ballantyne calls *epistemic trespassing* – making statements outside of one’s area of expertise. I believe that this is true. However, in what follows, I will argue for a much stronger claim – that these statements are *wrong,* because they constitute an abuse of expertise, in virtue of the fact that they violate the ideals of a liberal democratic society. On the former claim, see (Ballantyne 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This question has been discussed at length in recent years. For two, contrasting views, see (Goldman 2018) and (Quast 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The following account of the social function of expertise is indebted to Christian Quast (Quast 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In a similar vein, Keith Dowding argues that an act of political persuasion is manipulative if the agent of the persuasion induces the patient of the persuasion to accept a claim, and the reasons for which the patient accepts the claim are not the same as the reasons for which the agent accepts the claim. According to Dowding, non-manipulation requires that the agent induce the patient to accept the claim *for the very same reasons* as the agent herself accepts the claim. Dowding’s account of political manipulation concurs with my own. If an expert gets a layperson to act for reasons that the layperson does not share, then obviously the expert and the layperson do not endorse the action *for the very same reasons,* since the layperson does not share the reason at all. See (Dowding 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In a rare moment of agreement, both John Rawls and Robert Nozick objected to the type of reasoning that Hart engages in here (Rawls 1971: 27; Nozick 1974: 33). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The following arguments are indebted to Hausman, McPherson, and Satz (Hausman *et al.* 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)