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## Power over People: Classical and Modern Political Theory

### Scope

Any political theory can be analyzed and evaluated on the basis of two major criteria: the importance of the questions that it addresses and the coherence of its responses to those questions. Thus, the first two questions that we ask of any political theorist are these: Does the theory cover the essential and enduring questions of political theory? How systematic are the responses to those questions?

These lectures examine some of the fundamental questions that have shaped Western political thought since its inception in Athens in fifth century B.C., together with some of the most influential answers that political theorists have proposed. The issues addressed in these lectures—and in Western political theory generally—fall into three broad categories. The first involves the essential characteristics of human nature and the good society. Is human nature essentially spirit or matter? Is it directed by reason or dominated by passion? Is it fixed or malleable? Is it innately sinful, aggressive, and violent, or is it fundamentally benign, cooperative, and nonviolent? Will the good society be characterized by perfect harmony or by continued conflict? If conflict is inevitable in the good society, must it be controlled through the leader’s discretionary use of coercive power, or can it be contained constructively within political institutions? Are social unity and harmony achievable or even desirable? Do the progress and vigor of society depend, by contrast, upon some form of struggle?

The second set of fundamental questions involves the relationship between the individual and society. What is the right relationship of the individual to society? What is the relationship of individual freedom to social and political authority? What constitutes legitimate political authority? Does it come ultimately from God, the state, or the individual? Are human beings fundamentally equal or unequal?

The final set of questions involves theories of change. What are the fundamental dynamics of change? What role is played by discretionary leadership or moral values in effecting change? Are there inexorable laws of history that produce change? Is an unchanging, enduring, universal system of ethical values possible? Must such a system be grounded in a theory of absolute truth? If an enduring, universal system of values is possible, what precisely are those values, and what is their relevance for political and social action? Should transformative leadership be based on the hard facts of political reality and human weakness, or on the knowledge of absolute truth? Is the most fundamental change ideological, economic, or psychological in nature?
Should agents of change pursue reform through gradual, evolutionary means, or should they pursue the total transformation of society and human nature through revolution? Should radical change be pursued through violence or nonviolence? Should it rely mainly on spontaneity or on authoritarian organization?

Those questions orient our study of a wide range of theories of power and its use. We contrast Plato’s idealism with Aristotle’s realism, Marx’s optimism with Freud’s pessimism, and Hitler’s exclusionism and exaltation of violence with Gandhi’s inclusionism and insistence on nonviolence. For centuries such questions have eluded final solution, and we should not expect to answer them definitively here. The questions should prompt us, however, to think more deeply about ourselves, the standards that guide our behavior, and our obligations, if any, to society.

Objectives: Upon completing these lectures, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Identify the fundamental questions and concerns that shape classical and modern political theory.

2. Explain the essential differences between the “idealist” and “realist” traditions in political theory, and identify some of the most influential thinkers in each tradition.

3. Describe the influence of one’s understanding of human nature upon one’s vision of the good society, making specific reference to the theorists examined in this course.

4. Compare and contrast the views of those theorists regarding the purpose (if any) of the state, the relationship between politics and ethics, and the qualifications (if any) for exercising political power.

5. Compare and contrast the views of leading political theorists regarding the meaning of freedom, the sources of legitimate political authority, the legitimacy of individual resistance against constituted authority, and the obligations (if any) of individuals to the state or society.

6. Distinguish among the differing attitudes toward the use of violence that are held by the theorists examined in this course.

7. Compare and contrast the views of those theorists regarding the possibilities for fundamental transformation of human nature and society, as well as the means by which that transformation can be brought about.

Recommended Readings to Accompany the Lectures*

_The Bhagavad-Gita_. Translated by Barbara Miller. Bantam.

_Sophocles. Antigone_. Harper.


_Goldman, Emma. Living My Life and My Disillusionment in Russia_.

_Shulman, Alix. Red Emma Speaks_.


_Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Basic Political Writings_. Indianapolis: Hackett.

* The books in this reading list appear in the order that they are discussed in the lectures.
Lecture One

The Hindu Vision of Life

Scope: We begin these lectures by examining the Hindu vision of life as expressed in two of the sacred texts of Hinduism: The Bhagavad-Gita and the Chandogya Upanishad. Hindu idealism prefigures Socratic and Platonic thought in its emphasis on self-mastery, its upholding of ideal standards of conduct, and its focus on teaching by example. As in Socrates, the Hindu texts portray illusion and ignorance as the source of fear, and the light of knowledge as its corrective. Liberation from ignorance and fear brings perception of the highest truth of Hinduism: the interconnectedness of all being. The Hindus depart from the Western classical tradition, however, in their distrust of politics and the state, although we shall see that distrust reflected in the writings of later theorists such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emma Goldman.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Outline the central tenets of the Hindu vision of life, and describe how and to what extent they prefigure the tenets of Socratic and Platonic thought.
2. Describe the four stages in the Hindu journey of life, and describe the objective of that journey.
3. Outline the Hindu theory of human nature, and relate it to the Hindu view of the relationship between individuals and society.

Outline

I. The Hindu tradition focuses on idealism.
   A. In the Hindu tradition, one must first acquire self-mastery through self-knowledge in order to be qualified to exercise power over others.
   B. The theory of idealism holds that there are ideal standards of conduct by which humans should guide their behavior.
      1. Those ideal standards do not have to be realizable in order to be valid.
      2. Hindu idealism gives us a context for understanding the idealism of Plato.
   C. The ideal of education is part of the Hindu tradition.
      1. Indian teachers (gurus) sought to teach by example.
      2. In Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies, Karl Potter explains that the Indian educational ideal is based on the teacher’s need to know the student as an individual and to be always cognizant of the student’s innermost needs.

II. In the Hindu tradition, education is intended to impart certain ideal values.
   A. The Hindu educational ideal is based on the conviction that fear arises from illusion, which in turn is dispelled by education.
      1. Through education, we become aware that evil and sin are illusions that arise from our sense of fear and anxiety.
      2. By shedding light on the object of our anxiety, we can overcome our fear of it and, by extension, our separation from other human beings. Through self-discipline, we perceive the unity of being, which is the highest truth.
   B. Education should impart the following values, in ascending order of importance:
      1. Artha: the value of wealth and property. Artha conveys the illusion that wealth and property are important, and thus it is the lowest value.
      2. Kama: sensual, especially sexual, pleasure.
      3. Dharma: religious duties, which impart a sense of righteousness.
      4. Moksha: spiritual liberation. Moksha brings freedom from illusion, fear, and ignorance, and thereby leads to perception of the unity of all being.

III. The individual passes through the following four ideal stages of life:
   A. Brahmacharya: the student stage, encompassing the first 25 years of life. The brahmacharya is devoted to studying all knowledge and understanding the sacred texts of Hinduism.
   B. Grihastha: the household stage (ages 25 to 55), which involves establishing and providing for a family and raising children.
   C. Vanaprastha: literally “forest hermit,” or a solitary seeker of truth.
      1. This stage can begin when one sees “the son of a son,” thus ensuring the family’s continuity. The individual then begins a search for self-knowledge and freedom, which must involve leaving all family responsibilities behind.
      2. The ideal of vanaprastha underlies the Hindu suspicion of politics, and it conflicts with the Platonic and Aristotelian vision of the state as the locus of virtue.
   D. Sannyasa: the final state, meaning “sainthood,” that depends upon the result of vanaprastha.
      1. The person returns to society after having perceived the unity of all being. Thus enlightened by the highest knowledge, the sannyasin moves throughout society yet transcends its rules (of caste) and temptations (of wealth, property, or sex).
2. The behavior of the “saint in society” is strictly nonviolent because he or she has learned the necessary connection between the highest truth (the identity of all being) and nonviolence (ahimsa). That connection rests on the premise that if we inflict injury on another, we necessarily harm ourselves.

IV. The Hindu vision of the ideal relationship between the individual and society is based on a theory of human nature and an understanding of how nurture (education) should develop one’s nature.

A. The Hindu theory of the tripartite self parallels the tripartite Hindu social system.
   1. The human personality is composed of satva (wisdom or goodness), rajas (courage or energy), and tamas (desire or appetite). Every person possesses those qualities, but in varying proportions.

2. Social organization reflects the predominance of those qualities among different classes of people. Brahmans (the philosopher and priest caste) dominate because they possess great wisdom and goodness. Kshatriyas (the political and military caste) excel in courage and energy. Vaishyas (the commercial and agricultural caste) are characterized by desire and appetite.

B. In its origins, the Indian caste system was based on merit, not heredity (although it subsequently degenerated into an exploitative system based on privilege and heredity). The function of education is to nurture or develop the individual’s innate qualities or natural gifts. Through education, the individual discerns the social function for which he or she is best suited.

C. The Hindu and Platonic systems can be compared.
   1. In its reliance on education to discern the social roles for which an individual is by nature best suited, the Hindu system resembles Plato’s ideal merit-based order.

2. Plato and the Hindu tradition differ in their view of politics. Plato holds that a philosopher can wield power wisely and safely, while the Hindus view politics as a contaminating influence that the wise must avoid since it diverts them from their spiritual quest of giving society a moral vision.

Recommended Reading:
The Bhagavad-Gita. Translated by Barbara Miller. Bantam.

Lecture Two
Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War

Scope: Thucydides’ diagnosis of the causes of the Peloponnesian War provides the historical context for understanding Plato’s philosophy. Thucydides recounts Pericles’ “Funeral Oration,” in which the “First Citizen” extolled some of the very features of Athenian society that Plato later blamed for Athens’ loss to Sparta. Athens’ mishandling of power under Pericles’ leadership served Plato as an object lesson of what to avoid in constructing a well-ordered republic. Thucydides’ pessimistic view of both human nature and prospects for the wise use of power differs sharply from Plato’s more optimistic assessment, which we will examine more closely in subsequent lectures.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Describe Pericles’ portrayal of Athenian democracy and his view of politics and power as presented in his “Funeral Oration,” and evaluate the accuracy of those portrayals in the light of subsequent events.

2. Describe Plato’s critique of Athenian democracy, as well as his diagnosis of the reasons for its decline.

3. Compare and contrast the views of Thucydides and Plato regarding the malleability, or perfectibility, of human nature and the ability to wield power wisely.

Outline

I. The Tragedy of Athens.

A. Athenian democracy was both more and less extensive than modern democracy.

1. It exceeded modern standards of democracy by giving every adult male citizen a share in direct rule. The Athenian assembly met once every month; membership involved no literacy or property qualifications; and any citizen could address the assembly directly and propose policy.

2. However, Athenian democracy was highly restrictive by modern standards because it denied political rights to women, metics (resident aliens), and slaves. Direct rule was exercised by some 40,000 male citizens (out of a total population of some 350,000).

3. Athenian public life was dominated by amateurs. Plato was concerned about the absence of professionalism in Athenian politics.
B. Thucydides recounts Athens’ war with Sparta from 431 to 404 B.C. in his *History of the Peloponnesian War.*

II. Analysis of Thucydides’ account of Pericles’ “Funeral Oration.”

A. Pericles dominated Athenian public life between 461 and 429 B.C., during Athens’ “Golden Age.” He was Athens’ leading general and the most prominent political leader during those 30 years.

B. Pericles’ “Funeral Oration” sets forth the ideals by which Athens viewed itself at the outset of the Peloponnesian War in 431 B.C.

1. Pericles extols the Athenian values of honor, courage, and freedom, and he celebrates the power of the Athenian empire.

2. He identifies Athens’ political system as the city’s greatest achievement. He portrays Athenian democracy as a model for all Greece, since it is based on freedom for all under law.

3. Pericles contrasts Athens’ political system with Sparta’s. Lacking the Athenians’ democratic spirit, Spartans are capable only of “state-induced courage” because of their state’s heavy emphasis on military discipline. He praises Athenian versatility and spontaneity, qualities that Plato viewed as weaknesses.

4. Pericles extols the greatness of Athens’ empire, which he attributes to the state’s unabashed exercise of power. He urges Athenians to “fall in love” with their state.

5. Pericles believes that women should avoid public duties and strive not to be spoken about by men.

III. Pericles’ proud testament to Athens’ glory contrasts with Thucydides’ subsequent account of how the Peloponnesian War corrupted Athens. The contrast emerges most clearly in Thucydides’ recounting of the civil war in Corcyra.

A. Corcyra was driven by a horrific struggle between rival factions of pro-Athenian and pro-Spartan forces.

1. In the ensuing slaughter, “People went to every extreme and beyond it.” Fathers killed sons, and people were slain within the precincts of religious temples. “War,” Thucydides says, “is a violent teacher.” Both Plato and Aristotle saw the violence and extremism occasioned by war as corrosive of human nature and the good society.

2. As words changed their usual meanings, civilization began to degenerate. Character began to deteriorate as people were swept away by their ungovernable passions.

3. Thucydides concludes that “love of power, operating through greed and personal ambition, was the cause of all these evils.” He thereby poses the problem that will preoccupy Plato in *The Republic* (i.e., can power be wielded wisely?).

B. Thucydides’ realism and Plato’s idealism compared.

1. Thucydides does not believe that human nature can be improved through education or any other means in order to prevent violence, war, and the corruption that results from the exercise of power.

2. In contrast, Plato asserts that people and their state can attain justice through education. Unlike Thucydides, Plato is an optimist who believes in the perfectibility of human nature. He argues in *The Republic* that power can be exercised wisely and that politics, therefore, need not inevitably be corrupt.

Recommended Reading:

Pericles’ “Funeral Oration” depicts the glory and achievements, the leadership and superior civilization, that Athens had attained by 431 B.C. It testifies the summit of Athens’ success. The revolution in Corcyra portrays Greece as being engulfed in a profound crisis of the spirit arising from the breakdown of all order. The crisis demonstrated the evils of anarchy, when “people went to every extreme and beyond it.” How could Athens and the Greek world clash so disastrously? Thucydides points to several causes. First, civil war is a “violent teacher” that instructs people in barbaric behavior, turning them into savage extremists. Second, a deterioration in language marked the decline of character, when “words had to change their usual meanings,” and so undermined rational discourse and attitudes of moderation. Above all, however, the “love of power, operating through greed and through personal ambition, was the cause of all these evils.” The love of power encouraged “violent fanaticism” that corrupted leadership on all sides. Thucydides implies in Pericles’ “Funeral Oration” that Athenians had learned how to exercise power. That false confidence was a sign of Athenians’ arrogance, or hubris.

We are concerned with the historical context because of its influence on Plato. In *The Republic,* Plato responded to the problem of power as he viewed it within the context of the Peloponnesian War and the spiritual corruption that power engendered. Plato believed that the challenge faced by any great culture is to learn how to use power wisely. For that to occur, the leaders of a political system must be wise, and to have wise leaders, the educational system must be rightly constructed. Athens failed to wield power wisely because its value system was corrupted. It esteemed courage, honor, and empire more than reason or wisdom. The helm was occupied by Pericles, a military commander, rather than by a philosopher. Only right education and the consequent development of an intelligent and responsible leadership might have saved that remarkably gifted and creative civilization.

Pericles’ “Funeral Oration on the Ideals of Athens”
(from Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*)

I shall begin by speaking about our ancestors, since it is only right and proper on such an occasion to pay them the honor of recalling what they did. In this land of ours there have always been the same
people living from generation to generation up till now, and they, by their courage and their virtues, have handed it on to us, a free country. They certainly deserve our praise. Even more so do our fathers deserve it. For to the inheritance they had received they added all the empire that we have now, and it was not without blood and toil that they handed it down to us for the present generation. And then we ourselves, assembled here today, who are mostly in the prime of life, have, in most directions, added to the power of our empire and have organized our State in such a way that it is perfectly well able to look after itself in both peace and in war.

I have no wish to make a long speech on subjects familiar to you all: so I shall say nothing about the warlike deeds by which we acquired our power or the battles in which we or our fathers gallantly resisted our enemies, Greek or foreign. What I want to do is, in the first place, to discuss the spirit in which we faced our trials and also our constitution and the way of life which has made us great. After that I shall speak in praise of the dead, believing that this kind of speech is not inappropriate to the present occasion, and that this whole assembly, of citizens and foreigners, may listen to it with advantage.

Let me say that our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbors. It is more the case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else. Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which a man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty. And, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other. We do not get into a state with our next door neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of black looks which, though they do no real harm, still do hurt people’s feelings. We are free and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deep respect.

We give our obedience to those whom we put in positions of authority, and we obey the laws themselves, especially those which are for the protection of the oppressed, and those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break.

And here is another point. When our work is over, we are in a position to enjoy all kinds of recreation for our spirits. There are various kinds of contests and sacrifices regularly throughout the year; in our homes we find a beauty and a good taste which delight us every day and which drive away our cares. Then the greatness of our city brings it about that all the good things from all over the world flow into us, so that to us it seems just as natural to enjoy foreign goods as our own local products.

Then there is a great difference between us and our opponents, in our attitude toward military security. Here are some examples: our city is open to the world, and we have no periodical deportations in order to prevent people observing or finding out secrets which might be of military advantage to the enemy. This is because we rely, not on secret weapons, but on our own real courage and loyalty. There is a difference, too, in our educational systems. The Spartans, from their earliest boyhood, are submitted to the most laborious training in courage; we pass our lives without all these restrictions, and yet are just as ready to face the same dangers as they are. Here is proof of this: when the Spartans invade our land, they do not come by themselves, but bring all their allies with them; whereas we, when we launch an attack abroad, do the job by ourselves, and, though fighting on foreign soil, do not often fail to defeat opponents who are fighting for their own hearths and homes. As a matter of fact none of our enemies has ever yet been confronted with our total strength, because we have to divide our attention between our navy and the many missions on which our troops are sent on land. Yet, if our enemies engage a detachment of our forces and defeat it, they give themselves credit for having thrown back our entire army; or, if they lose, they claim that they were beaten by us in full strength. There are certain advantages, I think, in our way of meeting danger voluntarily, with an easy mind, instead of with a laborious training, with natural rather than with state-induced courage. We do not have to spend our time practicing to meet sufferings which are still in the future; and when they are actually upon us we show ourselves just as brave as these others who are always in strict training. This is one point in which, I think, our city deserves to be admired. There are also others:

Our love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance; our love of the things of the mind does not make us soft. We regard wealth as something to be properly used, rather than as something to boast about. As for poverty, no one need be ashamed to admit it: the real shame is in not taking practical measures to escape from it. Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the state as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well-informed on general politics—this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say he has no business here at all. We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions: for we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated. And this is another point where we differ from other people. We are capable at the same time of taking risks and of estimating them beforehand. Others are brave out of ignorance; and, when they stop to think, they begin to fear. But the man who can most truly be accounted brave is he who best knows the
meaning of what is sweet in life and of what is terrible, and then goes out undeterred to meet what is to come.

Again, in questions of general good feeling there is a great contrast between us and most other people. We make friends by doing good to others, not by receiving good from them. This makes our friendship all the more reliable, since we want to keep alive the gratitude of those who are in our debt by showing continued good will to them: whereas the feelings of one who owes us something lack the same enthusiasm, since he knows that, when he repays our kindness, it will be more like paying back a debt than giving something spontaneously. We are unique in this. When we do kindnesses to others, we do not do so out of calculations of profit or loss: we do them without afterthought, relying on our free liberality. Taking everything together then, I declare that our city is an education to Greece, and I declare that in my opinion each single one of our citizens, in all manifold aspects of life, is able to show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person, and do this, moreover, with exceptional grace and exceptional versatility. And to show that this is no empty boasting for the present occasion, but real tangible fact, you have only to consider the power which our city possesses and which has been won by those very qualities which I have mentioned. Athen, among the states we know, comes to her testing time in a greatness that surpasses what was imagined to her. In her case, and in her case alone, no invading army is ashamed at being defeated, and no subject can complain of being governed by people unfit for their responsibilities. Mighty indeed are the marks and monuments of our empire which we have left. Future ages will wonder at us, as the present age wonders at us now. We do not need the praises of Homer, or of anyone else whose words may delight us for the moment, but whose estimation of facts will fall short of what is really true. For our adventurous spirit has forced an entry into every sea and into every land; and everywhere we have left behind us everlasting memorial of good done to our friends or suffering inflicted on our enemies.

This, then, is the kind of city for which these men, who could not bear the thought of losing her, nobly fought and nobly died. It is only natural that every one of us who survive them should be willing to undergo hardships in her service. And it was for this reason that I have spoken at such length about our city, because I wanted to make it clear that for us there is more at stake than for others who lack our advantages; also I wanted my words of praise for the dead to be set in the bright light of evidence. And now the most important of these words has been spoken. I have sung the praises of our city; but it was the courage and gallantry of these men, and of people like them, which made her splendid. Nor would you find it true in the case of many of the Greeks, as it is true of them, that no words can do more justice to their deeds.

To me it seems that the consummation which has overtaken these men shows us the meaning of manliness in its first revelation and in its final proof. Some of them, no doubt, had their faults; but what we ought to remember first is their gallant conduct against the enemy in defense of their native land. They have blotted out evil with good, and done more service to the commonwealth than they ever did harm in their private lives. No one of these men weakened because he wanted to go on enjoying his wealth: no one put off the awful day in the hope that he might live to escape his poverty and grow rich. More to be desired than such things, they chose to check the enemy’s pride. This, to them, was a risk most glorious, and they accepted it, willing to strike down the enemy and relinquish everything else. As for success or failure, they left that in the doubtful hands of Hope, and when the reality of battle was before their faces, they put their trust in their own selves. In the fighting, they thought it more honorable to stand their ground and suffer death than to give in and save their lives. So they fled from the reproaches of men, abiding with life and limb the brunt of the battle; and, in a small moment of time, the climax of their lives, a culmination of glory, not of fear, were swept away from us.

So and such they were, these men—worthy of their city. We who remain behind may hope to be spared their fate, but must resolve to keep the same daring spirit against the foe. It is not simply a question of estimating the advantages in theory. I could tell you a long story (and you know it as well as I do) about what is to be gained by beating the enemy back. What I would prefer is that you fix your eyes everyday on the greatness of Athens as she really is, and should fall in love with her. When you realize her greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard. If they ever failed in an enterprise, they made up their mind that at any rate the city should not find their courage lacking to her, and they gave her the best contribution that they could. They gave her their lives, to her and to all of us, and for their own selves they won praises that never grow old, the most splendid of sepulchers—not the sepulcher in which their bodies are laid, but where their glory remains eternal in men’s minds, always there on the right occasion to stir others to speech or action. For famous men have the whole earth as their memorial: it is not only the inscriptions of their graves in their own country that mark them out; no, in foreign lands also, not in any visible form but in people’s hearts, their memory abides and grows. It is for you to try to be like them. Make up your minds that happiness depends on being free, and freedom depends on being courageous. Let there be no relaxation in fact of the perils of the war. The people who have the most excuse for despising death are not the wretched and unfortunate, who have no hope of doing well for themselves, but those who run the risk of complete reversal in their lives, and who would feel the difference most intensely, if things went wrong for them. Any intelligent man would find a humiliation caused by his own slackness more painful to bear than death, when
The Revolution (or Civil War) in Corcyra (from Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War):

After describing the apex of Greek political culture in Pericles’ “Funeral Oration,” Thucydides now recounts the disastrous decline of the Greek world in his chapter on the revolution in Corcyra. He tells how the Peloponnesian War reached the tiny island of Corcyra in 428 B.C. Corcyra became the victim of a larger struggle between the two great powers, Athens and Sparta, as the island was split into two rival factions, one siding with Athens and the other with Sparta. Thucydides viewed Corcyra as a microcosm of Greek civilization as it was overtaken by war. The war took its toll in a new climate of political violence, lust for power, and “general deterioration of character” that marked the profound spiritual crisis of ancient Greece in the midst of civil war. In *The Republic*, Plato identifies the crisis with the breakdown of Athenian democracy, and he holds democracy responsible for its costs.

When the Corcyreans realized that the Athenian fleet was approaching and that their enemies had gone, they brought the Messenians, who had previously been outside the walls, into the city and ordered the fleet which they had manned to sail round into the Hylliac harbor. While it was doing so, they seized upon all their enemies whom they could find and put them to death. Then they dealt with those whom they had persuaded to go on board the ships, killing them as they landed. Next they went to the temple of Hera and persuaded about fifty of the suppliants there to submit to a trial. They then condemned every one of them to death. Seeing what was happening, most of the other suppliants, who had refused to be tried, killed each other there in the temple; some hanged themselves on the trees, others found various other means of committing suicide. During the seven days that Eurymedon stayed there with his sixty ships, the Corcyreans continued to massacre those of their own citizens whom they considered to be their enemies. Their victims were accused of conspiring to overthrow the democracy, but in fact men were often killed on grounds of personal hatred or else by their debtors because of the money they owed. There was death in every shape and form. And, as usually happens in such situations, people went to every extreme and beyond it. There were fathers who killed their sons; men were dragged from the temples or butchered on the very altars; some were actually walled up in the temple of Dionysus and died there.

So savage was the progress of this revolution, and it seemed all the more so because it was one of the first which had broken out. Later, of course, practically the whole of the Hellenic world was convulsed, with rival parties in every state—democratic leaders trying to bring in the Athenians, and the oligarchs trying to bring in the Spartans. In peacetime there would have been no excuse and no desire for calling them in, but in time of war, when each party could always count on an alliance which would do harm to its opponents and at the same time strengthen its own position, it became a natural thing for anyone.
who wanted a change of government to call in help from outside. In the various cities these revolutions were the cause of many calamities—as happens and always will happen while human nature is what it is, though there may be different degrees of savagery, and, as different circumstances arise, the general rules will admit of some variety. In times of peace and prosperity, cities and individuals alike follow higher standards, because they are not forced into a situation where they have to do what they do not want to do. But war is a violent teacher; in depriving them of the power of easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most people’s minds down to the level of their actual circumstances.

So revolutions broke out in city after city, and in places where the revolutions occurred late the knowledge of what happened previously in other places caused still new extravagances of revolutionary zeal, expressed by an elaboration in the methods of seizing power and by unheard-of atrocities in revenge. To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one’s unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action. Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man and to plot against any enemy behind his back was perfectly legitimate self-defense. Anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted, and anyone who objected to them became a suspect. To plot successfully was a sign of intelligence, but it was still cleverer to see that a plot was hatching. If one attempted to provide against having to do either, one was disrupting the unity of the party and acting out of fear of the opposition. In short, it was equally praiseworthy to get one’s blow in first against someone who was going to do wrong, and to denounce someone who had no intention of doing any wrong at all. Family relations were a weaker tie than party membership, since party members were more ready to go to any extreme for any reason whatever. These parties were not formed to enjoy the benefits of the established laws, but to acquire power by overthrowing the existing regime; and the members of these parties felt confidence in each other not because of any fellowship in a religious communion, but because they were partners in crime. If an opponent made a reasonable speech, the party in power, so far from giving it a generous reception, took every precaution to see that it had no practical effect.

Revenge was more important than self-preservation. And if pacts of mutual security were made, they were entered into by the two parties only to meet some temporary difficulty, and remained in force only so long as there was no other weapon available. When the chance came, the one who first seized it boldly, catching his enemy off guard, enjoyed a revenge that was all the sweeter from having been taken, not openly, but because of a breach of faith. It was safer that way, it was considered, and at the same time a victory won by treachery gave one a title for superior intelligence. And indeed most people are more ready to call villainy cleverness than simple-mindedness honesty. They are proud of the first quality and ashamed of the second.

Love of power, operating through greed and personal ambition, was the cause of all these evils. To this must be added the violent fanaticism which came into play once the struggle had broken out. Leaders of parties in the cities had programs which appeared admirable—on one side political equality for the masses, on the other the safe and sound government of the aristocracy—but in professing to serve the public interest they were seeking to win the prizes for themselves. In their struggles for ascendancy nothing was barred; terrible indeed were the actions to which they committed themselves, and in taking revenge they went farther still. There they were deterred neither by the claims of justice nor by the interests of the state; their one standard was the pleasure of their own party at that particular moment, and so, either by means of condemning their enemies on an illegal vote or by violently usurping power over them, they were always ready to satisfy the hatreds of the hour. Thus neither side had any use for conscientious motives; more interest was shown in those who could produce attractive arguments to justify some disgraceful action. As for the citizens who held moderate views, they were destroyed by both the extreme parties, either for not taking part in the struggle or in envy at the possibility they might survive.

As a result of these revolutions, there was a general deterioration of character throughout the Greek world. The simple way of looking at things, which is so much the mark of a noble nature, was regarded as a ridiculous quality and soon ceased to exist. Society had become divided into two ideologically hostile camps, and each side viewed the other with suspicion. As for ending this state of affairs, no guarantee could be given that would be trusted, no oath sworn that people would fear to break; everyone had come to the conclusion that it was hopeless to expect a permanent settlement and so, instead of being able to feel confident in others, they devoted their energies to providing against being injured themselves. As a rule those who were least remarkable for intelligence showed the greater powers of survival. Such people recognized their deficiencies and the superior intelligence of their opponents; fearing that they might lose a debate or find themselves out-maneuvered in intrigue by their quick-witted enemies, they boldly launched straight into action; while their opponents, over-confident in the belief that they would see what was happening in advance, and not thinking it necessary to seize by force what they could secure by policy, were the more easily destroyed because they were off their guard.

Certainly it was in Corcyra that there occurred the first examples of the breakdown of law and order. There was the revenge taken in their hour of triumph by those who had in the past been arrogantly
oppressed instead of wisely governed; there were the wicked resolutions taken by those who, particularly under the pressure of misfortune, wished to escape from their usual poverty and coveted the property of their neighbors; there were the savage and pitiless actions into which men were carried not so much for the sake of gain as because they were swept away into an internecine struggle by their ungovernable passions. Then, with the ordinary conventions of civilized life thrown into confusion, human nature, always ready to offend even when laws exist, showed itself proudly in its true colors, as something incapable of controlling passion, insubordinate to the idea of justice, the enemy to anything superior to itself; for, if it had not been for the pernicious power of envy, men would not so have exalted vengeance above innocence and profit above justice. Indeed, it is true that in these acts of revenge on others men take it upon themselves to begin the process of repealing those general laws of humanity which are there to give a hope of salvation to all who are in distress, instead of leaving those laws in existence, remembering that there may come a time when they, too, will be in danger and will need their protection.

Fact Sheet on Ancient Greece in Plato's Era (Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.)

Attica was the leading Greek "city-state" during the fifth century B.C., and Athens was its principal city. Attica’s total area was roughly equal in size to Rhode Island. Athens has been termed a “democracy” and Sparta an “oligarchy,” but Athenian democracy was very limited, with political rights restricted to adult male citizens.

Athens’ population (see Zimmern, pp. 174–178) consisted of three classes:

- Citizens composed of some 160,000 men, women, and children. Among the citizens, only adult males (about 40,000) could exercise political rights.
- Resident aliens, or “outlanders,” composed of some 96,000 mainly non-Athenian Greeks, and some Phoenicians and Jews. Alien adult males (about 24,000) did not have political rights, although some were relatively wealthy, and economically were an integral part of Attica.
- Slaves composed of some 100,000 men, women, and children. Slaves were denied all political rights. Plato and Aristotle saw slavery as a fact of nature. As Aristotle stated, “The lower sort of mankind are by nature slaves.” Most slaves were “imported barbarians” who served as domestic servants, or as assistants in business, craft industry, and workshops.

The city-state of Sparta, also known as Laconia, on the Peloponnesian peninsula had a population of 300,000 to 400,000. The populations of Athens and Sparta were roughly the same. In contrast to Sparta where politics were dominated by the military, Athens had an extraordinarily high involvement by its citizens in public affairs. (The Greek term for “city-state” was polis, or polity.) The “Constitution of Athens” provided for more than 20,000 men to be on the political payroll, either receiving public salaries as judges or as other civil officials, or as members of the army and navy (6,000 men).

The ruling institution in Athens was the Assembly, which was composed of all adult Athenian males. No property or literacy qualifications were required. The Assembly was the sole legislative body and normally met once a month, with a quorum of 6,000 being necessary to conduct business. Any citizen could address the Assembly and propose policy. Most of its agenda and business, however, was prepared by either the Council of Five Hundred (called the Boule and chosen by ballot) or an “inner council” (executive committee) of 50 men. The supremacy of the Assembly was vigorously maintained. According to H. D. F. Kitto, the Assembly “controlled not only legislation and administration, but justice as well.” The Athenian court system consisted of juries, which varied in size from 101 to 1,001 men, and were run, as far as possible, by amateurs. The professional was given as little scope as possible. Plato was a severe critic of Athenian democracy and complained above all about its lack of professionalism.
Lecture Three
Law and Rule in Sophocles’ Antigone

Scope: Sophocles’ tragic play Antigone offers a literary context for Plato’s philosophy. The play introduces certain key problems that will occur throughout these lectures: (1) whether and under what circumstances it is legitimate to resist constituted authority, (2) how to weigh conflicting claims of social order and individual conscience, and (3) how to ensure compatibility between positive law and natural or divine law.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:
1. Compare and contrast the various understandings of law that are presented or implied in Sophocles’ Antigone.
2. Compare and contrast the types of political rule represented by Creon, Pericles, and Plato’s philosopher-king; and relate those types to each protagonist’s view of women.

Outline

I. Sophocles (495–406 B.C.) was one of the leading dramatists of ancient Greece.
   A. Of his 120 plays, 96 won first prize in dramatic competitions against some of the greatest playwrights in history, among them Euripides, Aeschylus, and Aristophanes.
   B. Sophocles’ play Antigone is one part of a trilogy that also includes Oedipus Rex and Oedipus at Colonus. Antigone was so popular with Athenian audiences that it earned Sophocles the high honor of being named a general.

II. Here is a plot summary.
   A. The play opens in the city of Thebes in the aftermath of a battle in which Antigone’s two brothers, Polynices and Eteocles, have killed each other.
   B. Creon, the despotic ruler of Thebes and uncle of Polynices and Eteocles, has ordered that Eteocles be honored with official burial because of his loyalty to Creon. Creon has also decreed that Antigone’s other brother, Polynices, be thrown to the dogs because he had attacked the city in an effort to overthrow Creon.
   C. The play opens with Antigone speaking to her sister, Ismene, and vowing to bury their brother Polynices in defiance of Creon’s order.
III. Our analysis of the political ideas in Antigone focuses on two concepts of law and rule/leadership.

A. The idea of law as expressed by Antigone.
   1. Antigone invokes the idea of “divine,” or “unwritten,” law to justify her defiance of what she regards as the profane and illegitimate edicts of Creon.
   2. In her interview with Creon, Antigone offers one of the first claims to civil disobedience of positive law on the basis of a higher law.
   3. Antigone’s understanding of law foreshadows the concept of natural law (as explicated by Martin Luther King Jr., for example).

B. Creon’s very different understanding of law.
   1. Creon asserts that his word is law. He argues that the ruler must be obeyed whether his laws are just or not.
   2. Creon justifies his view by noting that he has provided political stability and that defiance of constituted authority will bring anarchy and ruin.
   3. Representing the people of Thebes, the Chorus at first accepts Creon’s understanding of law. When Creon’s despotic actions lead to his downfall, however, the Chorus sees “God’s law” punishing Creon for his hubris, or arrogance. It concludes that rulers must show good sense and moderation; they must not display hubris or rebel against the gods.

C. Plato’s conception of law in The Republic.
   1. Plato discerns a natural or higher law of right and justice, which sets the ideal standard to which conventional or “man-made” law should conform.
   2. A sound system of education allows philosophers to bring conventional law into accord with natural law.

IV. The following are conceptions of rule or leadership.

A. Rule of Creon, the despot.
   1. Creon’s idea of rule is tyranny; it presupposes the use of law to enforce and legitimize the tyrant’s arbitrary and despotic power.
   2. Creon’s concept of political rule parallels his attitude toward women. He insists that women must be kept under strict control; he views them as objects to be dominated and ruled completely. Antigone incurs his wrath because she is a woman who refuses to be dominated.

B. Rule of Pericles, the military commander.
   1. Pericles differs from Creon in espousing democratic leadership and the rule of law, which Pericles sees as the primary values of Athens.

2. Pericles does not share Creon’s contempt for women, but Pericles stereotypes their role as good wives and mothers, and asserts that they cannot exercise political power.

C. Rule of Plato, the philosopher.
   1. Plato argues that philosophers will exercise political rule in the ideal state. Leaders should be thinkers with a vision of the higher law.
   2. His revolutionary view of leadership was in accord with a radical conception of the role of women. Those women who can demonstrate equal intelligence to men should serve equally with them as rulers of his Republic.

Recommended Reading:
Lecture Four

Socrates and Socratic Quest

Scope: In this lecture, Professor Dalton reviews the thought and educational method of Socrates, the founder of the Western intellectual tradition. That great teacher inaugurated Western political philosophy by asking—and urging his contemporaries to ask themselves—what is the best way for human beings to live. Socrates sought that type of knowledge throughout his life’s journey, and he also sought to bring it to others by encouraging them to critically examine their own beliefs.

Socrates explains and justifies his life’s quest in Plato’s Apology. He offers an unconventional understanding of both truth as a method rather than a possession and wisdom as awareness of one’s own ignorance. In addition to the Apology, Professor Dalton discusses Plato’s Symposium. The subject of this dialogue—the meaning of love—is also an object of the Socratic quest for self-knowledge. The good, Socrates teaches, should be the object not only of man’s knowledge but also of his love.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:
1. Describe the Socratic method for pursuing knowledge of the truth.
2. Compare Socrates’ response to his condemnation by the Athenian jury with Antigone’s response to her condemnation by Creon.
3. Describe Socrates’ views of the purpose of life, the origins of fear, and the ultimate questions that should concern human beings, and then compare those views with the central tenets of the Hindu philosophical tradition.
4. Describe the three definitions of love set forth in Plato’s Symposium.
5. Describe Socrates’ view of the relationship between knowledge and love.

Outline

I. Socrates (470–399 B.C.) was Plato’s teacher and the preeminent philosopher of ancient Greece.
   A. Socrates’ purpose is suggested in a story from Plato’s dialogue Gorgias, in which Socrates asks one of the most enduring yet urgent questions in philosophy: “What course of life is best?”
   B. Socrates recommends the philosophical life (i.e., the pursuit of truth). He describes his philosophical quest as a “pilgrimage” for truth.

II. In The Apology, Plato explains the meaning of Socrates’ quest and describes how his teacher pursued it, at the cost ultimately of his own life. The title of this dialogue refers to Socrates’ defense of his life and mission before a jury of his Athenian peers in 399 B.C. In defending himself against charges of impiety and corrupting the youth of Athens, he made the following points:
   A. Wisdom consists of “knowing that one does not know.” One should begin the search for truth in a spirit of humility and with awareness of one’s own ignorance.
   B. Truth is a value to be pursued, not an object to be possessed with a claim to infallibility.
      1. Philosophy differs from religion in claiming only to pursue the truth, not to possess it.
      2. Socrates defines the pursuit of truth in terms of a dialectical method. Pursuit of the truth is a collaborative enterprise, which helps to explain Plato’s use of the dialogue format.
   C. “The unexamined life is not worth living.”
      1. Socrates declares that a higher obligation compels him to practice philosophy and to exhort others to seek the truth, even if it means his own death.
      2. Like the Hindus, Socrates views the ultimate questions as the most important things in life.

III. The Socratic quest seeks knowledge of love as well as of truth. The meaning of love is the subject of Plato’s dialogue, The Symposium, which recounts a conversation among Socrates and his friends about love, with each defining love in different terms.
   A. Pausanias defines love primarily in physical terms. Love seeks only the satisfaction of physical desires.
   B. Aristophanes defines love in romantic terms as a search for one’s other half.
      1. Humans in their original state combined male and female within one individual. Jealous of humans’ happiness in that state, Zeus split the species in half.
      2. Love consists of each half’s yearning for the other half from which it has been severed. Love is the pursuit of the other part that will complete us and fulfill our identity.
   C. Socrates refutes both of these definitions of love and offers another.
      1. Pausanias’ definition ignores the romantic quality of love, and Aristophanes’ definition does not recognize that we love only what is seen as good.
      2. All reality is perceived as good; evil has no reality. What we perceive as good becomes the object of our love.
3. Socrates describes the “ladder of love,” beginning with physical love, then ascending to romantic love, and culminating in love for the good, or what we know as “Platonic love.” We idealize the object of our love; we do not fall in love with its evil or wicked qualities, but with what we perceive as good. We seek to know and love that which is good.

IV. Socratic and Hindu philosophy can be compared.
   A. Like Socrates, the Hindu gurus regard kama, or physical love, as insufficient; it is superseded by higher levels of love.
   B. Evil is illusion; we pursue self-knowledge, which we regard as good, in order to achieve self-mastery.
   C. We display self-mastery by loving what is noble and true.

Recommended Reading:

Lecture Five
Plato: Idealism and Power, Part 1

Scope: In this and the following lecture, we examine Plato’s Republic, a seminal text of the Western philosophical tradition and the point of departure for our study of power over people. As Professor Dalton explains, The Republic raises fundamental issues (e.g., the structure and malleability of human nature, origins of right conduct, qualifications for exercising political power, reasons for obedience to the law, and mutual obligations of individuals and the state) that set the parameters for subsequent Western political theory.

Although Plato has much in common with the Hindu tradition, he departs from it in regarding the state not as a coercive force but as an agent of virtue. The state can improve individuals by eliciting and cultivating—through education—their best qualities. The question that orients the dialogue in The Republic is the meaning of justice, understood broadly as “right conduct.” According to Socrates, justice consists neither in traditional religious usages, as Polemarchus argued, nor in the will of the stronger, as Thrasymachus contended. Instead, Socrates explains that justice—in both the individual and the city—consists of the right ordering of the whole, with no part usurping the functions of any other part and with reason ruling over all.

According to Plato, contemporary Athens did not satisfy Socrates’ criteria for justice. Plato offers a poetical critique of Athenian democracy in his metaphor of the “ship of state,” which is erratically steered by a demos in thrall to a demagogic crew and neglectful of the qualified navigator’s advice. Just as reason governs spirit and appetites within the just individual, so the state must be led by those who enjoy true knowledge rather than those who are misled by passion and deceived by illusion. Plato advocates a new educational system by which the state can identify and cultivate natural rulers who can attain knowledge of ultimate truth and pursue the common good of their subjects rather than their own particular interests.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture and the next, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Compare and contrast Plato and the Hindu tradition on the role of the state and its ability to wield power wisely.
2. Compare and contrast the definitions of justice, or “right conduct,” offered by Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Socrates in The Republic.
3. Explicate Plato's parallel between justice in the individual and justice in the state.
4. Describe the three "waves" of revolutionary change advocated by Plato, and explain how they will help to bring about the ideal society.
5. Describe Plato's critique of democratic government, as encapsulated in his metaphor of the "ship of state," and identify what he regards as the essential qualifications for wielding political power.
6. Explain Plato's theory of the stages of cognition as presented in his metaphors of the divided line and the cave.

Outline

I. Plato seeks in The Republic to define right conduct, both for the individual and the city.
   A. While the Hindus see the state as an agent of discipline, Plato sees it as a moral force— as an agent of virtue and a means of education.
   B. Plato holds that the wise can be trusted to wield power wisely, while the Hindus believe that political power will corrupt the wise.

II. The Republic takes the form of a dialogue between Socrates and a series of interlocutors, each of whom offers a definition of right conduct, or justice.
   A. Polemarchus asserts the traditional definition of right conduct.
      1. He argues that right conduct means "giving each man his due." It is a form of retributive justice and is based on the ethic of "an eye for an eye."
      2. Socrates responds that it can never be just— although it might be expedient—to harm another person.
   B. Thrasydamus offers a novel definition of justice.
      1. He argues that might makes right; the stronger party defines as "just" what is in that party's interest. "Injustice" brings happiness, at least to those who practice it.
      2. Socrates responds by analogizing the ruler to a physician. Just as the physician qua physician seeks to benefit not himself but his patients, the ruler qua ruler seeks to benefit his subjects. The ruler, like the physician, must possess the scientific knowledge that is proper to his craft. The ideal ruler thinks of the common interest, not his personal interest.
   C. Glaucon presses Socrates to offer a more convincing refutation of Thrasydamus' argument.
      1. Glaucon argues that justice arises not from a moral imperative or eternal truth but from expediency. Justice has its origins in the desire of the weaker for security against the stronger. Given the opportunity, all people will pursue their own self-interest regardless of law or justice. Glaucon cites the "myth of Gyges" to support the social-contract theory of justice. He challenges Socrates to defend justice as a good in itself, apart from its practical benefits.

II. In reply to both Thrasydamus and Glaucon, Socrates offers his philosophy of the state. The state, like the individual personality, is composed of reason, spirit, and desire, or appetite. Justice consists of the right ordering of those three elements, with reason ruling over all.

III. Socrates argues that people can be led through education to gain real knowledge rather than mere opinion, and to live according to reason. The rule of reason requires three "waves" of revolutionary change in Athens.
   A. Qualified women must be allowed to hold political power.
   B. The nuclear family and private property among the ruling class must be abolished in order to reinforce its adherence to the common interest.
   C. Philosophers should rule.

Recommended Reading:
Lecture Six
Plato: Idealism and Power, Part 2

Outline

I. Plato’s critique of democracy was based on both personal experience and philosophical determinations.
   A. His personal experience with Athenian democracy proved disillusioning. He saw it corrupted by the ignorance of the mob and the dishonesty of its leaders. He believed that corruption of mind and spirit led directly to the condemnation of his teacher, Socrates.
   B. Athens displayed the thoughtlessness and ignorance that were inherent in democracy.
      1. Democracy failed to distinguish between freedom and license.
      2. Democracy catered to the satisfaction of desires while failing to impose real order or to foster a sense of civic duty.
      3. Democracies are governed by mere opinion rather than by genuine knowledge.

II. Plato offers the parable of the “ship of state” to describe the deficiencies of democracy and the need for meritocratic rule.
   A. The ship’s master (representing the demos) is physically imposing but somewhat ignorant, short-sighted, and deaf.
   B. The master is subdued by the crew (representing the corrupt politicians who manipulate and dominate the demos). Asserting that navigation requires no special skill, the crew members seize control of the ship and operate it in their own interest. Both they and the master are guided by opinion rather than knowledge.
   C. Only the navigator (representing the philosopher) understands the science of how to sail the ship correctly, but he is ignored by the crew. He is not corrupted by power, since he understands that only knowledge of this science can ensure that the ship reaches its destination. The parable teaches that the ship of state should be guided by those who possess real knowledge, not mere opinion.

III. In presenting his theory of the stages of cognition, Plato elaborates the distinction between real knowledge and opinion. Plato describes four states, or levels, of intellectual development, from elementary opinion to the highest philosophical understanding.
   A. The first stage, typified by Polemarchus, involves an uncritical and unthinking acceptance of the world of appearances.
   B. At the next stage, typified by Glaucon, we begin to critically examine the society’s conventional beliefs.

C. At the third stage, we advance from opinion to knowledge. We pursue knowledge of abstract reality especially through the study of mathematics and astronomy.

D. In passing to the fourth stage, we begin to perceive people’s abstract humanity and recognize ourselves in them. As the Hindu gurus would put it, we perceive ourself in all people, and all people in ourself.

IV. Plato’s allegory of the cave illustrates his theory of cognition in depicting intellectual development as a journey from the darkness of opinion to the light of real knowledge.
   A. After the philosopher discovers the highest truths outside the cave, he must return to the cave and assume political leadership, even at the risk of his own life.
   B. Apprehension of the truth brings freedom from illusion and thus from fear.
   C. Power can be wielded wisely, but only by those who have reached the ultimate level of knowledge. They alone cannot be corrupted by petty disputes over power, and only they can guide the state to justice.

Recommended Reading:
Philosophical Background to Plato's Republic: Key Terms and Concepts

Thucydides described how the Peloponnesian War caused a moral and political crisis that engulfed Athens, creating a compelling need to restore a credible system of values. Plato responded to that call. A philosopher rather than a historian, he tried to reconstitute or reconstruct his intellectual world. In The Republic, he worked with ideas that had emerged during the Golden Age of Athens in the brilliant writings of its poets and playwrights, as well as in the philosophers who preceded him. Plato's thought was forged in a climate of ideas represented by the following glossary of philosophical terms:

Arete: “Virtue” or “excellence,” as used by Plato and defined by Cornford (in his notes on this term) in his translation of The Republic, pp. 8–9, 30, 37–39. As conceived by Plato, arete has two distinct meanings. The first refers to the special “virtue” or function of any being (i.e., the virtue or peculiar strength of a horse is to run fast). Second, arete means the particular moral virtue of a person (i.e., the special quality or strength in a potential political leader is to reason well). Arete in this sense is an inherent given or inborn quality that awaits development through a system of education. Its meaning is in some respects similar to the word phusis, or “nature,” noted below.

Dike: “Righteous, fair, just.” As Cornford notes (p. 2), The Republic asks: “What does justice mean?” The word Dike literally means justice, but Plato uses it in a broader sense to mean “right conduct” (p. 2). He tries to define the nature of moral behavior. Note Plato’s connection of Dike with Arete in The Republic (pp. 37–39) and how he relates both of those virtues to his idea of happiness (eudaemonia).

Idea: Not only “idea” in the abstract sense of a model of perfection, but also as an archetypal expression that we may be able to imagine but not put into practice. For example, Euclid’s line is imagined as a model of perfect straightness, but it cannot practically be drawn as such. As an idealist, Plato argues that ideal patterns or models have validity. We should strive to emulate them in theory, even if we can only approximate them in practice (The Republic, pp. 175–77). Note Cornford’s interpretation of Plato’s theory of the forms as “ideals or patterns” (p. 180).

Nomos: “Custom” or “convention”; man-made law as distinct from natural law. Nomos refers to mutable human laws that are the products of our struggle to meet our everyday needs by fashioning rules. In The Development of Plato’s Political Theory, George Kloski remarks that “Greek thought came to be permeated with the distinction between nomos and phusis” (p. 2). That distinction is central to Plato’s theory of law; in The Republic, he tries to establish a conception of nomoi, or laws of just political conduct, that are rooted in phusis. Note Glaucon’s challenge to Socrates to relate law to justice in The Republic, pp. 43–45.

Phusis: “Nature of what is natural to a person or thing.” Some Greek thinkers contended that phusis meant no more than what is and that nature had no moral implications. Plato, however, wanted to show that laws of justice are grounded in natural laws of right; for him, phusis represents a foundation for all morality. Note Plato’s use of phusis in The Republic (pp. 150–54) in describing what is “natural” and “unnatural” for men and women.

Techne: “Skill, craft, cunning of hand.” This word denotes the talent or skillfulness that a person has acquired through education or any practical training in the arts and crafts. In Plato’s Republic, techne means a kind of expertise or art that may or may not be joined with a person’s natural gift or excellence, his or her arete (pp. 8–11). Plato’s ideal system of education seeks to develop a perfect fit between the individual’s arete, or moral virtue, and his or her techne, the acquired skill or expertise that affords a full expression of the arete. If technical expertise is not grounded in and then enhanced by moral virtue, it may lead to unjust conduct. That was the fault of Sophists like Thrasymachus who were skilled at rhetoric but lacked the virtue required of great educators.

Eudaemonia: “Happiness.” The traditional meaning of happiness in ancient Greece usually implied material prosperity and good fortune. Plato and Aristotle distinguished the conventional understanding of eudaemonia as mere “pleasure” from “true happiness,” which referred to a state of mind and activity with a sense of moral purpose in life. For Plato and Aristotle, happiness involves knowledge of virtue and the practice of goodness. A right system of education was essential for nurturing eudaemonia.
Plato's Republic


Below is a summation of Plato’s main assumptions as they appear in the discussion of justice in the opening chapters of The Republic. (All page references are to the Cornford translation.)

- Cephalus: Justice is “telling the truth” and “paying back” one’s debts (p. 7).
- Socrates: Justice cannot always mean that, since the standard would require one to return a weapon to a madman (p. 7).
- Polemarchus: Justice is “to render every man his due” (p. 9). It obliges one to help friends and harm enemies (p. 12).
- Socrates: Justice does not mean “giving every man his due ... because we have found that it is never right to harm anyone” (p. 14). Note Cornford’s comment on Socrates’ consequent departure from traditional Greek ethics (p. 12).
- Thrasyvamus: Justice “means nothing but what is to the interest of the stronger party” (p. 18). (Thrasyvamus uses the word “interest” 33 times [pp. 18–23].)
- Socrates: Justice demands correct perception of interests by the ruler (p. 20).
- Thrasyvamus: He agrees. Justice requires that the ruler, “in so far as he is acting as a ruler, makes no mistakes” in interpreting his interest. By analogy to the physician, justice involves knowledge and training (pp. 20–21). Thus, the ruler qua ruler must meet a professional standard of right rule (Cornford’s note, p. 21).
- Socrates: He seized on the analogy of a ruler to a physician (pp. 22–24). Justice demands a ruler’s awareness of the subjects’ interests, and by analogy to a physician, the desire to serve them. “[E]very art seeks not its own advantage ... but the interest of subject.”
- Thrasyvamus: He proposes the analogy of a ruler to a shepherd. The ruler exploits the subjects for his own purposes. Justice means ruling in the interest of the stronger at the cost of a subject who obeys (p. 25).
- Socrates: He differs on analogy to a shepherd, but he relies on the analogy to a physician (pp. 27–28). “[G]enuine ruler’s nature is to seek only the advantage of the subject” (p. 29). Justice means the ruler performs function and service according to his nature.
- Thrasyvamus: He begins now to defend “injustice” (p. 26); he argues its superiority in “character and intelligence” to justice (p. 32).
- Socrates: Justice or right conduct is like a perfect musical score, with fine balance, “a measure which is absolutely right.” It must be superior to injustice, which has “no measure or limit” (Cornford’s summary, p. 33).
- Thrasyvamus: Injustice is a “source of strength,” superior in power to justice (p. 34).
- Socrates: He disagrees, arguing that injustice must foster weakness. Both among thieves and within an individual’s personality, injustice will cause divisiveness, disharmony, and discord, and it will make united action impossible. “Only fair treatment can make man friendly and of one mind” (p. 35).
- Thrasyvamus: Injustice brings happiness, or getting more than one’s fair share of power, pleasure, and wealth (pp. 30, 36, including Cornford’s comments).
- Socrates: Justice rather than injustice brings happiness because happiness is found in the life of the good man living in accord with virtue. Only a just soul will live in that way (pp. 36–39, including Cornford’s comment that this idea was developed by Aristotle). Note the connection between arete, or “specific excellence or virtue,” (p. 39) and happiness (eudaemonia).
- Glaucon: His and Adeimantus’ arguments are designed to produce a further refinement of Thrasyvamus’ theories (or those of the Sophists), which Socrates will undermine throughout the rest of the book. The style shifts at this point, with Glaucon setting forth at length three major arguments: (1) Justice is not an eternal absolute principle, but merely the expression of changing human laws and contentions (pp. 43–44). (2) Justice is demanded and practiced only by the weak, who lack power to commit injustice. If an individual had the requisite power, he would pursue his own self-interest, following his natural inclination to indulge in limitless pleasure and accumulate limitless wealth. Plato characteristically makes this argument through the use of a myth (pp. 44–45). (3) A life of injustice is happier if wealth and cunning are developed (pp. 46–47).
- Adeimantus: He insists that the current use of education to indoctrinate justice and virtue is a farce and is based on appeal to rewards, punishment, and reputation. He demands that Socrates show the intrinsic merit of justice valued for its own sake (pp. 48–53).
Plato’s Ideal of Non-Injury

“There will never be a finer saying than the one which declares that whoever does good should be held in honor, and the only shame is in doing harm.” (The Republic, p. 155)

The most important statement of Plato’s ideal of non-injury occurs in The Republic (the references here are to the Cornford translation), but the concept appears in other dialogues as well, especially the Gorgias and Crito (references are to the Penguin editions). In The Republic, the bases of the doctrine are established in Socrates’ exchange with Polemarchus over the meaning of justice. Polemarchus cites the Greek poet Simonides’ definition of justice: “That it is just to render every man his due… [H]is idea was that, as between friends, what one owes another is to do him good, not harm.” Socrates replies, “And what about enemies? Are we to render whatever is their due to them?” Polemarchus says, “Yes, certainly… which means, I suppose, what is appropriate to an enemy—some sort of injury” (p. 9).

Socrates proceeds to refute that traditional definition of justice, which reflects the accepted, conventional wisdom of the ancient Greek world (signified by Polemarchus’ reliance on the authority of the sage Simonides). Socrates first suggests the analogy of the physician (p. 9) in this context, and in doing so he asks implicitly whether, in the model of right conduct practiced by the physician, it is ever correct to harm another. The repeated references to the physician (pp. 10, 20–23, 27–28) indicate Plato’s persistent connection between the ethical code of medical practice and the idea of non-injury in politics. In view of Plato’s consistent use of that analogy, it is likely that he (writing about 380 B.C.) knew the physician’s oath of Hippocrates (460–377 B.C.), which states: “I swear by Apollo Physician… that I will carry out, according to my ability and judgment, this oath… I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrongdoing. I will keep pure and holy both my life and my art. In whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrongdoing and harm.” It is precisely this standard of ethical or just conduct—the idea that the professions of physician and ruler are analogous in that neither should intentionally inflict harm on another—that Plato applies in the early part of The Republic.

Cornford emphasizes the novelty of Socrates’ refutation of the traditional view of justice in his editorial comment that until Socrates denied the old retributive notion of justice, “no one had ever said that we ought to do good, or even refrain from doing harm, to them that hate us” (p. 12). As Cornford says, Plato then makes Socrates connect the ideal of non-injury with a wide range of ethical standards about how we should behave toward others. Socrates asks Polemarchus, “Can it really be a just man’s business to harm any human being?” Polemarchus responds by continuing to insist that it is right to harm “bad men who are his enemies.” Socrates then argues that doing harm to another can never make the recipient of the harm a better person because “to harm them means making them worse men. To harm a man, then, must mean making him less just” (p. 13). Socrates means that by inflicting harm on another, we may restrain or control that person, but we cannot thereby expect to elicit his or her “peculiarly human excellence,” special gift or potential, or, in Plato’s theory, his or her arete. If we wish that person to act justly, we must follow the example of the good teacher who elicits the best qualities of students by realizing that “it is never right to harm anyone” (p. 14; ideal reiterated on p. 155).

The fact that the ideal on non-injury is not peculiar to The Republic is clear from Plato’s statement of the ideal in his earlier dialogue, the Crito, in which Socrates concludes that “one ought not to return a wrong or defend one’s self against injury by retaliation” (pp. 88–89). That concept is later reaffirmed in the Gorgias, when Socrates says, “[T]o inflict any wrong upon me and mine brings more harm and disgrace upon the wrong-doer than upon me who suffers the wrong” (p. 119). He concludes the dialogue by noting that “this conclusion alone stands firm: that one should avoid doing wrong [or injury] with more care than being wronged…” (p. 148).

Plato’s concept of non-injury is an ideal. As noted in “Plato’s Three Cities” (see pages 46–48 herein), the ideal is unattainable in the earthly republic. Thus Plato repeatedly compromises the ideal by admitting the necessity of war for the defense of the polis (pp. 168–74), capital punishment (p. 100), cultivation of military attitudes (pp. 63–64, 258) and exile (pp. 90, 262).
Plato’s style (i.e., his mode of expressing his philosophy) resembles that of a dramatist or playwright. He is unique among political theorists in using dialogue, and he infuses his story about the meaning of justice with numerous dramatic forms, such as myths (pp. 44–45, 106–7); analogies (e.g., the leader to the physician, musician, navigator; music to politics; and bodily health to political health); comparisons (e.g., the Idea of the Good to the sun, pp. 218–20); and his famous allegory of the cave (pp. 227–35), which compares the illusory world of our earthly existence to the transcendental reality of the world of sunlight.

Plato’s philosophical justification for his political organization is suggested in the parable of the “ship of state” (pp. 195–96). Our political experience is comparable to a life-and-death situation (i.e., it is a matter of survival). The polis is analogous to a ship: we sink or sail, live or die, according to how expertly the polis is navigated. Plato had learned that truth as a consequence of Athenian democracy’s disastrous failure in war with Sparta. The crew in the parable represents corrupt politicians and the power of belief. They are not to be trusted because they are concerned only with power and self-interest rather than with the disinterested pursuit of truth and the welfare of the polis. The ship’s “master” represents the demos, or sovereign people. They constitute the majority (“bigger and burlier”) but are not respected as a source of moral authority or right leadership (“deaf and shortsighted … deficient in seamanship”). The people stand always in need of enlightened leadership.

The navigator, unlike the master or crew, has studied the science of navigation. Politics, likewise, is a science in which one can acquire expertise through right education. The source and power of knowledge for the navigator come not from the ship but from the stars (eternal truths) found above, in the heavens. The source and power of knowledge for the philosopher-king will also come from a study not of the people but of the absolute truths found in the world of eternal forms or ideas. Note that Plato inserts the analogies to the physician at the end of the parable (p. 196) to combine with the navigator.

Plato prepares us further for his theory of the Forms or Ideas with an analogy of the artist to the ruler (p. 209), his “portrait of an artist.” In the analogy, Plato believes that society and character must first be “scraped clean” before the Republic can be established. The artist uses as a reference point the “models” or ideal abstract archetypes of justice, goodness, and temperance. The models are abstractions that cannot exist in their perfection on earth but that must be used as points of comparison for shaping the polis. The artist attempts “to reproduce the complexion of true humanity.”

Plato’s Republic encompasses a vision of three cities: the corrupt city of contemporary Athens; the ideal city of the Republic as it might exist on earth; and the eternal city that exists as a transcendent Idea, outside and above the cave (or human condition).

Plato describes the corrupt city of Athens in a letter quoted by Cornford (Intro., pp. xviii–xviii). Athens tends to move from one extreme form of government to another—from democracy to oligarchy, both of which are unjust regimes. Plato views the political disorder and intellectual bankruptcy with contempt and despair, saying that “the whole fabric of law and custom was going from bad to worse at an alarming rate. The result was that I, who had at first been full of eagerness for a public career, when I saw all this happening and everything going to pieces, fell at last into bewilderment.” His sharp criticism of Athens’ experience with democracy and oligarchy is implicit in his extended analysis of oligarchy, democracy, and despotism in the latter part of The Republic (pp. 273–301). Although oligarchy and democracy differ in important respects, each is characterized by the same two destructive forces: the arrogance of power and the contempt for just rule according to reason. Athens displayed both of those flaws, especially when it committed the worst of crimes—the condemnation and execution of Plato’s mentor, Socrates, in 399 B.C.

The composition of the earthly ideal city is Plato’s main concern in The Republic (especially pp. 53–235). He sets forth an archetypal ideal political community, a vision of a just polity that can serve as a model of emulation. Cornford observes that “Plato’s thought, from first to last, was chiefly bent on the question how society could be reshaped so that man might realize the best that is in him. This is, above all, the theme of his central work, The Republic” (Intro., p. xv). Socrates begins his description of the ideal polis with his vision of a “social organization” in which every person will be able to do “the one thing for which he is naturally fitted” (p. 57). He then outlines the system of education that will promote the ideal, arguing that education is “the one thing that is sufficient” to produce this polis on earth. In The Republic, justice in the individual and in the state are closely and logically related because “the individual soul contains the same three elements and they are affected in the same way as are the corresponding types in society” (p. 131). Educators and rulers must organize the polis according to the rule of reason (p. 140), since that principle constitutes justice in the individual and the state.

Plato advocates three revolutionary changes to establish the ideal republic in his metaphor of the “three waves” of reform that will sweep away the worst features of corrupt Athens. Plato’s ideal city will enjoy: (1) access to rule by qualified women (pp. 149–55), (2) a unified and harmonious community of Guardians that will be as integrated as a single person, not torn apart by private allegiances to family and property (pp. 163–66), and (3) the rule of reason resulting from
merger of “political power and philosophy” (pp. 177–79). The last of the changes is “the most formidable of all.” Regarding his vision of the Republic, Socrates says, “Our plan is difficult—we have admitted as much—but not impossible” (p. 208). However, he does not believe that the validity of his ideal should be judged on the basis of practicability or feasibility, and he comments that “we did not set out to show that these ideals could exist in fact” (p. 177). A theory cannot be judged according to its practicality any more than the beauty of an art work is evaluated according to how closely it resembles its model. Plato intends to set forth “ideal patterns” (pp. 177–78) or models of archetypal political and moral truths. Our task is to construct an ideal that we deem truthful or valid, and then through a system of education to approximate that ideal in reality.

Finally, Plato describes the eternal city of the Forms. According to him, the celestial city exists in the heavens as an ultimate reality, independent of human thought or experience. St. Augustine envisaged it later in Christian form as the City of God. Plato theorized that this eternal city comprised Forms or archetypes “of which the many individual things in the world of appearances [that we humans often imagine as ultimate reality] are like images or reflections” (Cornford’s note, p. 180). As students of philosophy, we seek to learn how to understand the Forms—to become educated in subjects like mathematics and philosophy that will enable us to think abstractly and to perceive the universal essences that transcend particular elements of our experience. Such study enables us to discriminate between “the existence of beautiful things” and “Beauty itself” (p. 183) or the “essential Form of Beauty” (p. 187).

Everything on earth has an eternal counterpart or model of perfection; the many things that we call “good” exist on earth only as reproductions of an eternal Ideal of the Good, a transcendent Goodness. Each thing has a “ness” quality, an archetype that we can imagine but cannot duplicate exactly. We can imagine Euclid’s line even though we cannot draw it precisely; we call this perfect image the “ness” quality of a line. Plato conveys that idea by comparing the philosopher-ruler to an artist. As he tries to shape his ideal city, the ruler consults the models that he has perceived through his knowledge of the earthly city. As he forms the ideal constitution for his earthly Republic, “he will frequently refer to his model, the ideals of justice, goodness, temperance, and the rest, and compare with them the copy of the qualities which he is trying to create in human society. Combining the various elements of social life as a painter mixes his colors, he will reproduce the complexion of true humanity, guided by that divine pattern whose likeness Homer saw in the men he called godlike” (p. 209).

Many of the apparent contradictions in Plato’s Republic are resolved if we recognize the differences between the eternal city and the ideal of the earthly Republic. The latter, even if realized, is still a city in the cave that is populated by humans—most of whom cannot escape the illusions of mortal existence. In the eternal city, people will practice perfectly such theories as those embodied in Plato’s ideal of non-injury. Even in the best of earthly Republics, however, most people will necessarily be limited and hindered by mortal imperfections. Although Plato deplores warfare (pp. 61–62), he foresees the need to prepare for war, even in an ideal Republic (pp. 168–74). The ideal of non-injury remains an ethical standard that philosophers such as Socrates must respect and pursue, but it will never be fully attained, even in the best of polities. Plato makes clear in his analogies to the physician and navigator, however, that the ideal ruler pursues the ideal of non-injury.
Three Forms of Leadership and Types of Rule
in Plato's Republic

Plato discerns three elements in the individual personality and in the state:
reason, spirit, and desire. Each element suggests a distinct trait or characteristic
of political rule: the rule of reason, the rule of spirit, and the rule of desire.

Rule of Reason

The rule of reason is Plato's model of correct rule. It is personified by Socrates,
who was "the most righteous man in Athens" although he could not assume a
position of power. In the ideal polity of Plato's Republic, the "third wave" of
revolutionary change will produce an unprecedented political state in which
"philosophers become kings" and so "political power and philosophy meet
together" (pp. 178–79). Plato lays the groundwork for that theory of rule in the
first part of The Republic with the concept of arete, a crucial idea that provides
the essential theoretical justification for his later insistence on specialization of
all functions—especially that of ruling—within the ideal polis. Plato's model of
correct rule and leadership requires that those who rule must exercise their
function by virtue of their arete, or intellectual and moral excellence. The gift of
superior intellect is nurtured through a system of education that selects qualified
people, or potential philosophers with a "passion for wisdom," a passion "to see
the truth" (pp. 182–83). An education in philosophy trains the mind to discrimi-
nate between knowledge and belief and their two corresponding forms of power
(pp. 183–88).

Plato reiterates throughout Part III (pp. 175–235) that the rule of reason can be
administered only by "the genuine lover of knowledge" who "strives after the
whole of truth." Possessing such a quality of mind, he or she "will be temperate
and no lover of money ... the last person to care about the things for the sake of
which money is eagerly sought and lavishly spent" (p. 191). That type of ruler is
analogous to the navigator who "is fit to command a ship" only because he has
attained a knowledge of his subject in just the way that the ruler of the polis
should master a science of politics (pp. 195–96).

The most powerful part of Plato's argument for the rule of reason occurs in
Chapters XXIV–XXV (pp. 221–35). The first of those chapters explains Plato's
theory of cognition, or the states of cognitive development that the aspiring
philosopher-ruler must experience in order to qualify for power in the Republic.
The second part of the argument comes with Plato's allegory of the cave and its
application. The allegory culminates in a sharp contrast between two types of
power (pp. 233–35). Lesser rulers "live fighting one another about shadows and
quarreling for power, as if that were a great prize" (p. 234). The philosopher-
rulers "think of holding power as an unavoidable necessity," because "the life of
true philosophy is the only one that looks down upon offices of state."

The allegory of the cave teaches the lesson that "access to power must be
confined to men who are not in love with it ... in the hands of men who are rich,
not in gold, but in the wealth that brings happiness, a good and wise life" (p. 235).
The philosopher will wield as much power as any ruler, since Plato's ideal
state concentrates power in the hands of a few. Even though the philosopher
does not desire power, he certainly does have to wield it fully and
effectively. The difference between Plato's ideal ruler and a tyrant is not that the
former lacks power but that he can be trusted with it. People can trust the
philosopher because he or she has achieved knowledge of eternal values and,
equally important, knowledge of his or her own self. That kind of knowledge,
distinct from mere belief, will provide happiness. "All goes wrong when, starved
for lack of anything good in their own lives, men turn to public affairs, hoping to
snatch from thence the happiness they hunger for. They set about fighting for
power..." (p. 235). "The happiest man is he who is first in goodness and justice,
namely the true king who is also king over himself; and the most miserable is
that lowest example of injustice and vice, the born despot whose tyranny prevails
in his own soul and also over his country" (p. 306).

Rule of Desire

We now consider Plato's critique of the rule of desire and the type of ruler that
he most despises, the despot or tyrant. Desire occupies its proper place in a just
soul or a just polis when it remains subordinate to reason. In that case, desire
inspires love of wisdom. However, when desire runs rampant in a soul or a city,
without any sense of self-discipline or order, then justice becomes impossible. If
such an undisciplined person attains a position of absolute political power, the
likely result is despotism. Those who interpret The Republic as a blueprint for
totalitarianism should explain why Plato denounces so vehemently all forms of
tyranny in the latter part of the book. He conceives of The Republic as a book
about justice. If the rule of reason means the rule of justice, and if the
philosopher-ruler is the archetypical expression of the just person, then the rule
of desire contradicts the ideal since injustice characterizes both the despot and
his tyranny.

Plato summons up his worst descriptive language for the tyrant in whom there
are "combined the traits of drunkenness, lust, and lunacy"; an insatiable thirst for
money and power; contempt for law and reason; and constant provocation of
wars. "Throughout life, the despot character has not a friend in the world; he is
sometimes master, sometimes slave, but never knows true friendship or freedom.
There is no faithfulness in him; if we were right in our notion of justice, he is the
perfect example of the unjust man" (p. 301). Once again, the despot is
necessarily unjust because "tyranny prevails in his own soul and also over his
country." Rule of reason is the antithesis of rule of desire, especially because the
philosopher-ruler is not tyrannized by lust for money or power. The tyrant,
however, is driven and enslaved by the passion to dominate others; ironically,
the desire to dominate others comes to dominate the tyrant himself.
Whatever his critics may say about the implications of authoritarianism in *The Republic*, Plato was certainly aware of the dangers of despotism. Those who associate Plato’s theory with fascism must explain how he could describe and denounce in such vivid terms the very sort of despot typified later by Adolf Hitler. In fact, Plato could paint such an accurate picture because he had observed various Greek and Persian tyrants and loathed them all because they represented the fatal flaw in all political rule: the absence of intellect and the corresponding weakness of irrationality. Hitler displayed that irrationality in defending his foolish decision to invade Russia by explaining: “I feel it in my blood.”

Plato perceived irrationality in all of the tyrants around him. He must also have recognized it in Sophocles’ portrayal of the tyrant Creon. Plato’s *Republic* was written about 60 years after the first performance of *Antigone* in Athens and was probably inspired by it. Creon is the quintessential example of the hubristic ruler driven by an irrational will to power and a drive to dominate. Creon’s son Haemon pleads with his father to listen to reason because “of all God’s gifts, good sense is far the best,” and because “there is no disgrace in being able to learn.” The Chorus echoes Haemon’s sentiments. Creon responds by casting his curse upon Antigone and demanding that Haemon watch her die. When Plato set forth his theory of despotism in *The Republic*, he was placing Sophocles’ character Creon within a Platonic philosophical framework, relating tyranny to a theory of injustice and sharply contrasting both tyranny and injustice to the rule of reason and the theoretical character of a philosopher-ruler.

**Rule of Spirit**

Finally, we examine Plato’s portrayal of the rule of spirit. Plato identified “spirit” with courage or honor (p. 307), an admirable moral virtue in an individual or society but not one desirable in the ruler (pp. 265, 271). He distinguishes courage from wisdom, placing the latter in a superior role. He divides the Guardian caste into two parts: the philosophical group (characterized by reason and wisdom), and the administrative or military group (characterized by spirit and courage), with the former group ruling the latter. Plato had observed the characteristics of Athens’ Board of Generals, which had successfully defended Athens against Persia and contributed to the enormous growth of the Athenian empire, but which had also taken Athens into the disastrous war with Sparta.

Pericles’ justification of the war ethic in his “Funeral Oration” suggests both the strengths and weaknesses of the military mentality. Pericles describes “the spirit in which we faced our trials,” and he appeals throughout to “our adventurous spirit,” “daring spirit,” and “spirit of adventure.” Spirit in this sense is never associated with reason or intellect but always with “courage and gallantry,” “real courage and loyalty,” “gallant conduct,” and a “sense of honor.” Those virtues define “the meaning of manliness”: “this is good fortune—for men to end their lives with honor.” With those virtues, Athenians have attained “the power of our empire,” the source of her “greatness”: “Mighty indeed are the marks and monuments of our empire.”

Although Plato believes that courage and honor are necessary qualities for any *polis*, they must be subordinate to reason. Just as the rule of desire allowed Creon to establish his tyranny, the rule of spirit allowed Pericles to assume power. The danger lies in the threat that *hubris*—the arrogance of military values *uninformed* by philosophy—will slip out of control and destroy the *polis*. That is precisely what happened in the Peloponnesian War. Pericles proudly depicted Athens as a *polis* able to handle power, but it was soon corrupted in the manner Thucydides describes in “The Revolution in Corcyra.”

The lessons that Plato learned from the example of Pericles’ rule and the experience of the Peloponnesian War are summarized above. They should be reiterated here because they apply directly to Plato’s critique of the third form of leadership, the rule of spirit. Plato’s central concern (as emphasized in the comment on p. 16) is with the problem of power. He had witnessed during his youth the agony of war and the decimation of a great culture. He attributed them directly to the corruption of power, that is, to the way in which Athens’ domination of other peoples led her own leaders to define justice in ruthless terms “that the weaker must be kept down by the stronger” (Cornford, p. xvi). According to Plato, the Sophists, especially Thrasydamus, (*The Republic*, pp. 15, 18) expressed that corrupt conception of justice. Although the rule of spirit can have its moments of glory as any military venture might, it might also lead to disaster through the irrational mishandling of power.
Lecture Seven

Aristotle’s Critique of Plato’s Republic

Scope: We turn now to Aristotle, who was both Plato’s greatest student and one of his most trenchant critics. Professor Dalton explains that Aristotle shared many of Plato’s basic assumptions (e.g., the primacy of reason, the intrinsic connection between politics and ethics, and the role of the city in improving individuals through education). Although Plato and Aristotle agreed that humans can fulfill their nature only in a social context, they followed very different methodologies and thus came to very different conclusions about what constitutes the best political regime.

Aristotle criticized Plato’s political recommendations primarily on empirical and practical grounds. He rejected Plato’s proposals for revolutionary change by observing that they are impracticable—they do not comport with human nature as we know it. Aristotle attempted to correct Plato’s excesses by taking the “golden mean” as his touchstone for evaluating political arrangements.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Identify the main similarities and differences between Plato and Aristotle in background, interests, methodology, philosophical assumptions, and political conclusions.
2. Summarize Aristotle’s critique of Plato’s three “waves” of revolutionary change.
3. Explain the centrality of moderation, or “the golden mean,” in Aristotle’s political recommendations.
4. Compare and contrast Plato’s and Aristotle’s understanding of human nature.
5. Describe Aristotle’s criteria for assessing the merit of particular constitutions, and explain why Aristotle views “polity” as the best possible regime.

Outline

I. Aristotle’s theory of the “golden mean.”
   A. Aristotle differs from Plato.
      1. Aristotle was a Macedonian and thus was not as personally affected by Athens’ defeat in the Peloponnesian War, as Plato was.
      2. Aristotle saw his teacher, Plato, live a long and productive life, while Plato saw his teacher, Socrates, condemned and executed.
   B. Aristotle came from the middle class, while Plato hailed from the aristocracy.
   C. Aristotle looks to biology as his model of learning, while Plato looks to mathematics. Aristotle relies heavily on observation; he criticizes Plato for positing things without observable evidence (e.g., the transcendent Forms).

II. Aristotle’s critique of Plato’s first wave of revolutionary change (i.e., access of qualified women to political rule).
   A. According to Aristotle, observation shows that nature dictates a union of naturally ruling and ruled elements, for the preservation of both.
      1. The naturally ruling element has superior reason and forethought.
      2. The naturally ruled element should obey the ruling element. That hierarchy is evident throughout nature and it applies to political organization as well as family.
   B. The human soul (psyche) has two elements, one that rules (i.e., reason) and one that is ruled. Nature dictates that order in the soul to allow for right behavior to follow.
      1. Some humans are slaves by nature because they lack the capacity to reason.
      2. Women must not be allowed to rule, since they lack rational capacity. In men, the rational element naturally rules, while in women it is present but usually ineffective. Women’s natural role is to serve the family as good wives and mothers but to stay out of the public sphere.
      3. Aristotle claims that his defense of patriarchy rests on observation.

III. Aristotle’s critique of Plato’s second wave (i.e., the abolition of the nuclear family and private property, and their replacement with communal forms of extended family and common property among the rulers).
   A. Aristotle rejects those reforms as impracticable.
      1. The institutions of the family and private property are rooted in nature.
      2. Observation shows that men pay most attention to what is their own and neglect what is not their own. The sense of possession is natural and brings duty and obligation.
   B. Aristotle sees the family as a natural institution that promotes civic virtue as well as mutual care among loved ones. Parents’ feelings of special attachment to their children are natural.
C. Aristotle also sees private property as a natural institution.
   1. The impulse to own and cherish objects is natural, and efforts to eradicate private property are wrong and futile.
   2. The project to abolish private property is characteristic of Plato’s extremism.
   3. Aristotle suggests that property should be possessed in moderation and should be put to public use whenever possible. Charity is possible only under a regime of private property.

IV. Aristotle’s critique of Plato’s third wave (i.e., the permanent rule of philosophers, which unites political power with wisdom).
   A. Aristotle believes that it is dangerous to concentrate power in the hands of an elite; that concentration will breed discontent and dissension.
   B. The best practical constitution for most states is rule by the middle class.
      1. The middle class embodies moderation because it constitutes the mean between rich and poor. Because it possesses a stake in the property system, the middle class is likely to follow moderation and eschew radical change.
      2. Because it practices moderation and avoids extremes, the middle class is more likely than either the rich or the poor to be guided by reason.
   C. Those qualified for rule must therefore be male, own property, and be literate (or at least have modest education). The middle-class rule will then confer stability and rational control.

Recommended Reading:

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.)

Although our analysis suggests similarities between Aristotle and Plato, it mainly emphasizes their differences, especially the contrast between Plato as the revolutionary and Aristotle as the reformer. Barker and Cornford in their respective introductions to Aristotle’s Politics and Plato’s Republic suggest important differences in the philosophers’ lives. Aristotle was a Macedonian rather than an Athenian, and thus his early life was not overshadowed, as Plato’s had been, by the crisis of the Peloponnesian War and the collapse of Athens’ democracy. As we have seen, Plato emerged from that crisis preoccupied with the problem of power; he was concerned with educating a group of political professionals that might constitute a superior kind of leadership. Aristotle did not share that concern; he perceived neither a severe crisis nor the need for revolutionary change to be effected through an elite corps of Guardians.

Aristotle’s approach to political problems emphasizes reform rather than revolution. He viewed his city and tradition as less corrupt than Plato did, and consequently he saw less need for sweeping transformation. Aristotle, like Plato, was born into a comfortable and affluent family; his father was a court physician to the previous king of Macedonia. However, Aristotle’s background was middle class, while Plato hailed from the aristocracy and was proud of the elitist tradition of public service that his upper-class status implied.

Both Plato and Aristotle identified their pursuit of philosophy with the methods and knowledge of science. Plato found his scientific models in the methods and theorems of mathematics and geometry, while Aristotle, influenced by his father, looked to biology. As a result, Aristotle stressed empirical analysis rather than abstract reasoning. He claimed to discover his conclusions about politics from actual observation of the natural world, and he rejected Plato’s speculations about a transcendent region of divine forms as unnatural, unreal, and otherworldly.

Both Aristotle and Plato spent their crucial formative years (ages 18 to 28) under the tutelage of inspired teachers of philosophy—Plato with Socrates, and Aristotle with Plato himself (for a full 20 years, from 367 to 347 B.C.) As we have noted, Plato’s study with Socrates ended in the trauma of Socrates’ execution by the Athenian democracy. Aristotle, who eventually founded his own school in Athens (called the Lyceum, next to Plato’s Academy), observed his teacher lead a long and productive life as a creative and influential figure, another proof for Aristotle that the political life of Greece was not quite as desperate and deplorable as Plato portrayed it. The Italian Renaissance artist Raphael depicts the differences between Plato and Aristotle in his painting “The School of Athens.” Plato gestures toward the heavens, signaling his dedication to the study of transcendent ideals, the eternal forms of The Republic. Aristotle, conversely, extends his arm forward in a gesture that represents his doctrine of the mean. He rejects Plato’s revolutionary three tidal waves of change,
advocating instead ripples of reform. Aristotle is above all a reformer who advocates a theory of moderation and balance.

That moderation is strikingly evident in Aristotle’s idea of the nature and role of women, which contradicts Plato’s first wave. Aristotle’s ideas about women are reformist. On the one hand, Aristotle does not believe that women should be regarded and treated as slaves within the family, as they so often were in Greece. On the other hand, he disagrees with Plato’s contention that some women should rule. Plato, unlike Aristotle, did not view intelligence and reason as sex-linked. Aristotle observed the inferior status of women and believed that they were by nature subordinate and inferior to men (Politics, pp. 13, 32, 35–36). Women lacked the capacity to reason, and therefore they could neither attain the moral understanding enjoyed by men nor enjoy political rights and citizenship. Aristotle argued that for women “biology is destiny”; their gender determined their social and political inferiority. Aristotle viewed Plato as an immoderate extremist with no sense of the mean who would violate nature by allowing women to rule. It is important to analyze the logic of Aristotle’s theory about women (set forth especially on pp. 35–36) and then to contrast it with Plato’s revolutionary thesis that some women are qualified to rule (explained in The Republic, pp. 148–54, 168, 262).

### Aristotle’s Critique of Plato: Argument for the “Mean” against Extremism

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<th>EXCESS OR DEFICIENCY</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I. Constitutions and Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Aristotle’s views of Plato’s excesses in The Republic are noted in the left column. Aristotle’s ideal, also contrasted with the extremes in the right column, is represented by the “mean” in the middle column. (Page references are to Aristotle’s Politics.)</td>
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<td>Plato’s meritocracy (rule by few) (pp. 54–55)</td>
<td>Polity (rule by middle class male citizens) (pp. 180–82) Moderate means of property and education</td>
<td>Democracy (rule by majority) (pp. 182, 195) No qualifications for governing except sex</td>
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<td>Concentration of power among Guardian elite of permanent rulers</td>
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| **II. Attributes of Polis** (pp. 41–42, 51, 54, 181–82, 315) |
| Total unity or “union” of organic community as in Plato’s Republic | Harmony with diversity; exchange or rotation of ruling functions among citizens of middle class | Anarchy |
| Absorption into polis: one father for 1,000 sons, advocated by Plato | Traditional Greek family: one father for one family | Savagery: lack of family |

| **III. Family** (pp. 43–45) |
| Act only for communal interest | Rational action for “personal interest” | Thoughtless, irrational selfishness |

| **V. Love** (pp. 46–47) |
| Diluted affections (e.g., Plato’s Guardians) | Familial love | Infatuation or loss of self in another |

| **VI. Property** (pp. 18–29, 48–50) |
| Communal | Private ownership, public use | Private |

| **VII. Money** (pp. 18–29, 50) |
| Either renunciation of all money (Plato’s Guardians) or poverty | Charity, generosity, liberality | Hoarding, unsy, miserliness |

| **VIII. Women** (pp. 3, 11, 13, 32, 35–36, 75, 105–6, 317, 325–27) |
| Women as citizens and rulers as in Plato’s Republic | Women as faithful wives and good mothers performing their natural roles in the family | Women as slaves or servants as in “barbarism” |
Lecture Eight
Machiavelli’s Theory of Power Politics

Scope: In this lecture, we examine the work of the Florentine diplomat and political theorist Niccolò Machiavelli, who marks the transition between the classical and modern political traditions. Machiavelli’s thought shows both continuities with and sharp departures from the classical political theorists that we have examined. As you listen to Professor Dalton’s lecture, consider how Machiavelli’s answers to the enduring political questions—especially those regarding human nature, the character and purpose of the state, the relevance of virtue to power, and the nature and proper exercise of power—compare to the answers proposed by Creon, Thrasymachus, Glauccon, Socrates, and Aristotle.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:
1. Compare and contrast the political conditions under which Plato, Aristotle, and Machiavelli lived; the political concerns that shaped the thought of each; and the conclusions that each of them reached.
2. Explain how Machiavelli’s view of the purpose of politics and the state differs from those of Plato and Aristotle.
3. Explain how Machiavelli’s understanding of virtue marks a departure from the classical political tradition.
4. In the context of how each theorist defines the requisites or character of good leadership, contrast Machiavelli’s realism with Plato’s idealism.
5. Compare and contrast Machiavelli’s view of human nature with those of Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, and relate Machiavelli’s understanding of human nature to his recommendations for the use of power.
6. Explain what Machiavelli means by fortuna and virtú and how he views the relationship between those two kinds of power.

Outline

I. Although Machiavelli is a theorist of realism, he has many similarities with the idealist Plato.
   A. Both lived during times of political crisis and saw politics in terms of power. Both looked for power-based solutions to the problems facing their cities.
   B. Both believed strongly in political leadership and agreed that political power should be concentrated in the hands of a few. Plato and Machiavelli agreed that power should be in the hands of a few but disagreed about kinds of power and leadership.

II. In some areas, Machiavelli departs from classical Greek political theory.
   A. Machiavelli sees the state not as an agent of virtue but as an instrument of virtú, or masculine force. Politics is concerned not with fostering virtue but with ensuring security and survival.
   B. Machiavelli warns that the prince will bring himself to ruin if he pursues the ideal state at the expense of the real (The Prince, chap. 15).
      1. Politics concerns how we really live, not how we ought to live.
      2. A prince who wants to keep power must learn not to be good, and to use or refrain from using that knowledge as necessity requires.
      3. The practice of vice can improve the prince’s security and well-being.
   C. Machiavelli’s view of human nature is closer to that of Thucydides or Thrasymachus than to Plato or Aristotle. Machiavelli urges the prince to act pragmatically and to practice vice when it is useful to do so. He also says that virtue and politics need not be intertwined.

III. Machiavelli asks in chapter 17 of The Prince whether it is better for the prince to be loved or feared.
   A. A prince must use violence and strength decisively, or he risks losing his position.
   B. Machiavelli echoes Creon in asserting that the prince must not hesitate to act cruelly if cruelty is required to preserve order in his state because the alternative—anarchy—is even worse.
   C. It is safer for the prince to be feared than loved because people are less reluctant to offend those they love than those they fear.
      1. The bonds of love are easily broken, while those of fear endure because they involve the threat of punishment.
      2. The prince can be feared but not hated, provided that he does not molest his subjects’ wives or property.

IV. Machiavelli discusses political leadership in chapter 18 of The Prince. Machiavelli’s description of the qualities exhibited by the good leader differs profoundly from Plato’s view.
   A. Although it is praiseworthy for the prince to keep his word, he is more likely to gain and keep power by using illusion and deception.
      1. Because of the wickedness of human nature, a prudent prince should not hesitate to break faith when his interest requires such action.
      2. The prince should take as his models the traits associated with the lion and the fox—strength and cunning. In politics, fox-like trickery is preferable to leonine brute force.
B. There is value in appearance and illusion. A prince may not have admirable qualities, but he should seem to have them.

C. The ends always justify the means. A prince’s methods will always be considered worthy. The few have no influence when the many feel secure.

V. Machiavelli discusses two conceptions of power—masculine and feminine—in chapter 25 of The Prince.

A. Fortune (fortuna) is characterized by irrationality. It is a powerful and unpredictable force, compared by Machiavelli to a torrential stream.

B. Virtù is the masculine face of power; it is marked by rationality. Through virtù, one can prepare for and guard against the power of fortune.

C. Fortune is a woman, and the man who wants to hold her down must subdue and control her.

Recommended Reading:

Machiavelli (1469–1527)

Niccolò Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy, in 1469, the same year in which Lorenzo “the Magnificent” de Medici (grandfather of the Lorenzo to whom The Prince is dedicated) came to power. Machiavelli served as chancellor of Florence between 1498 and 1512. He was exiled between 1513 and 1527. During that period of exile, he wrote The Prince and The Discourses (written between 1515 and 1520).

Forces of Change in Early Modern Europe (c. 1450–1550)

I. Political change occurred.

A. The politics of this age were marked by a transition from weak and decentralized feudal regimes to the more centralized rule of despotic monarchs or princes. This transformation occurred in Spain, France, and England, but not in Italy, which remained weak and victimized by neighboring powers.

B. Political events in Machiavelli’s era suggest the process of national consolidation in Spain, France, and England.
   1. Spain: Ferdinand and Isabella (1479–1516) consolidated Spain as a nation-state; Philip II (1556–1598) later transformed the country into a major power.
   2. France: Louis XI (1461–1489); Charles VIII (1492–1498); the French invasion of Italy (1494); Francis I (1515–1547).
   3. England: War of the Roses (1455–1485); Henry VII (1485–1509); establishment of Anglican Church (1534); Elizabeth I (1558–1603).

II. Religious events were marked by bitter conflict between Catholics and Protestants, as each side vied for more political power. The struggle reinforced Machiavelli’s cynical view of religion.

A. The Papacy: Strong leadership, intervention in politics. Alexander VI (1492–1503 as Pope), father of Cesare Borgia (1476–1507); Julius II (1503–1513 as Pope), skillful military leader; Leo X (1513–1521 as Pope) advanced papal power.

B. The Protestant Reformation: Martin Luther (1483–1546), posting of his 95 Theses (1517) that signals beginning of Reformation in Germany; John Calvin (1509–1564), consolidating power of Reformation in Geneva (1541–1564).

C. Savonarola (1452–1498), a political force as religious (Dominican) leader in Florence during Machiavelli’s youth (1494–1497).

III. Cultural change. The Italian Renaissance reached its peak in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as evidenced by the following literary and artistic figures:
A. Boccaccio (1313–1375), Florentine author of *Decameron* (1348), which set literary background for Renaissance in Florence.

B. Sandro Botticelli (1447–1519), Florentine master who painted "Allegory of Spring" and "Birth of Venus."

C. Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), among greatest of Florentine painters including "Last Supper" and "Mona Lisa."

D. Raphael (1483–1520), who was influenced by Leonardo and the Florentines and who painted "School of Athens."

E. Michelangelo (1475–1564), foremost genius of the Italian Renaissance, including "Creation of Adam" and "Fall of Man."

F. Machiavelli's *Prince* is regarded as an enduring, representative statement of the Renaissance.

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**Italy, Florence, and Machiavelli**

At the end of the fifteenth century, the Italian peninsula was controlled by its five most powerful states: the Duchy of Milan and the Republic of Venice in the north, the Republic of Florence and the States of the Church (including Rome) in the central area, and the Kingdom of Naples in the south.

During Machiavelli’s lifetime, Florence was transformed from a first-rate Italian power into a second-rate power under Spanish domination. Invasions of Italy by French armies under Charles VIII (1494) and Louis XII (1499) contributed to Florence’s downfall.

During that period, Florence’s internal affairs were directed by two powerful Italian families: the aristocratic Medici and the populist Soderini. Machiavelli had identified for some time with the Soderini, and thus he was exiled in 1513 after the Medici took power in Florence. In an effort to regain his position, Machiavelli dedicated *The Prince* to Lorenzo de Medici, in whom he saw the potential to unify Italy.

Machiavelli also admired Cesare Borgia, who, with the help of his father, Pope Alexander VI, sought to gain control of all Italy. Machiavelli met Cesare Borgia in 1502 and came to admire his political and military skill, especially his apparent genius at manipulating others to gain political advantage. Borgia personified Machiavelli’s ideal of *virtù* and became a model for the Prince (see *The Prince*, pp. 19–20, 24, 47, 79–80 and editor’s intro. on Borgia, pp. xiv, xviii).
Two General Comments on Italy of This Period

Politically Italy was unlike any other part of Europe. It was, for the most part, dominated by cities and by princely adventures and mercantile princes. The numerous states into which it was divided were not only small in extent but extremely unstable. Hardly one of them can be said to have possessed any sort of solid basis, moral or material. Everywhere existed governments without supporting tradition or recognized moral authority. The military weakness of those governments was such as to leave all Italy an easy prey to the spoiler. Any political thought produced in this Italy was likely to be completely dissociated with any kind of Christianity and completely detached from the thought of medieval schoolmen. The Protestant Reformation had yet to come, but Italy had already gone beyond.


Italian politics became a tangled web, a labyrinth of subterfuge and conspiracy, a platform on which great individuals might exhibit their virtù Italian “cunning” became a byword throughout Europe. Dictators rose and fell. The Medici became dukes in Florence, the Sforza in Milan, while in Venice and Genoa, where the republics were kept, narrow oligarchies held the rule. These states, along with the states of the church, jockeyed about like pugilists in a ring, held within an intricate, shifting, or purely local balance of power.

Niccolò Machiavelli, who, in *The Prince*, wrote the most lasting work of the Italian Renaissance ... dreamed of the day when the citizens of his native Florence, or indeed of all Italy, should behave like early Romans—show virility in their politics, fight in citizens’ armies for patriotic causes, and uphold their dignity before Europe.


Italy was, therefore, at this time a collection of small states that were rich in art but open to military domination and exploitation from Spain, France, England, and Germany. In 1494, when Machiavelli was 25 years old, a French army crossed the Alps for a major invasion of Italy. The peninsula soon became a bone of contention in warfare between France and Spain. By 1527, the year of Machiavelli’s death, the situation in Italy had become still worse: a horde of Spanish and German mercenaries, joined by renegade Italians, fell on Rome and sacked the city in an orgy of pillaging that ended with the imprisonment of the Pope and the public disgrace of his cardinals. For 300 years thereafter, Italy remained a political disaster area. Machiavelli correctly saw Italy’s condition as critical and prescribed an urgent infusion of virtù.

Comparisons and Contrasts Between Machiavelli and Plato

Certain similarities are evident. Both Plato and Machiavelli respond as political theorists to the classic forms of crisis. That is, both face crises of survival because they have witnessed their political orders savaged by invading forces. Both see fundamental flaws in their political systems because the institutional forms of public representation and leadership have proved bankrupt when tested by encounters with Sparta (for Plato) or other stronger political states (for Machiavelli).

Yet it is not a crisis of survival or of system that most concerns these theorists. As political philosophers, they are most preoccupied by the crisis of spirit. They direct their efforts at the disorder existing in the mind of their polities. They wish to change basic thinking about the meaning of reality and appearance, the dynamics of power, and the very nature of politics and human nature. That is their common pursuit, and they both draw similar solutions. Both theorists see bad government as the main source of the crisis, so both want to replace political amateurism with political professionalism. Both agree that politics must be in command because politics is our salvation. The key to the solution, therefore, is to induce right thinking among our political leaders, so that the command will be knowing and effective. Leaders must be aware of the fundamental nature of reality, of the way that power should be employed, of the nature of human nature. Then they may construct a political system that will effectively confront crises and offer the people a better way of life.

The stark differences between Plato and Machiavelli are rooted in their contrasting views of the nature of reality. Plato says, “Without having had a vision of this Form no one can act with wisdom, either in his own life or in matters of state” (p. 231). In other words, the educated person and professional political leader (the Guardian) learn to discriminate between appearance and reality by perceiving the arête, or eternal truth, as the absolute moral principle of Goodness. The structure and values of the ideal republic must be based on that archetypal pattern. Machiavelli, for his part, contends that “there is such a difference between the way we really live and the way we ought to live that the man who neglects the real to study the ideal will learn how to accomplish his ruin, not his salvation” (*The Prince*, chap. 15, p. 44, Norton edition).

Machiavelli, therefore, is a realist who opposes Plato for being an idealist, a utopian dreamer, and utterly impractical.

The basic divergence in Plato’s and Machiavelli’s views of reality has striking implications. Plato’s professional political leader is the Guardian, who has mastered the Platonic system of education and can thus demonstrate that his or her virtue (arete) leads to knowledge of the Forms. The leader is thus qualified through diligent study and the ultimate grasp of absolute truths. For Machiavelli, such a system is not merely a waste of time, but a positively dangerous way to
perceive the tasks of political leadership because it may “accomplish his ruin” and the demotion of the state.

For Machiavelli, the ideal political leader is the man who wields not virtue, or arete, but manly strength, or virtù (chap. 25). Power demands use of force when the state can employ it successfully or the use of deceit and clever manipulation when it cannot. Power, therefore, requires a clear understanding of what is expedient. The leader must use power in ways that will work—either like the lion or the fox (chap. 18). The prince must know human nature well in order to command support. In contrast to what Plato’s Guardians believe about the rational capacity of people to at least appreciate the superiority of reason in the soul, Machiavelli contends that “it is a good general rule about men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, liars and deceivers, fearful of danger and greedy for gain.” In short, people are “rotten” by nature (chap. 17, p. 48). Human nature, therefore, cannot be changed through education but can be only coerced with powerful, shrewd leadership infused with a spirit of virtù.

Virtù, the force of manliness, is opposed to fortuna, the feminizing force (chap. 25). Whereas Plato in his “first wave” tries to unsex politics by emphasizing a person’s strengths (arete) irrespective of sex, Machiavelli now highlights sex and opposes Plato’s view of organic politics with that of orgasmic politics.

Credits


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Dennis G. Dalton, Ph.D., received his bachelor's degree from Rutgers University in 1960 and did postgraduate work at the University of Chicago. In 1965, he earned his Ph.D. in political theory from the University of London. Professor Dalton has been honored with numerous scholarships and grants, including a grant in 1975 from the American Council of Learned Societies for his research in South Africa, a senior fellowship in 1975 with the American Institute of Indian Studies for his research in India, and a Gandhi Peace Foundation Grant in 1970 for his participation in an International Seminar in Delhi, India. Between 1964 and 1966 he was a review editor for the Journal of Developmental Studies (London), and between 1969 and 1975 he served as a U.S. correspondent for the South Asian Review (London).

Professor Dalton’s fields of interest include political theory (classical and modern, Western and Asian); the politics of South Asia (particularly the Indian nationalist movement); and ideologies of modern political movements with reference to Europe, India, China, and Africa. He has written numerous articles about all of those subjects. Professor Dalton has edited and contributed to more than a dozen publications, and he is the author of The Indian Idea of Freedom (1982). He is a member of both the American Political Science Association and the Association for Asian Studies.
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Power over People: Classical and Modern Political Theory

Scope: Any political theory can be analyzed and evaluated on the basis of two major criteria: the importance of the questions that it addresses and the coherence of its responses to those questions. Thus, the first two questions that we ask of any political theorist are these: Does the theory cover the essential and enduring questions of political theory? How systematic are the responses to those questions?

These lectures examine some of the fundamental questions that have shaped Western political thought since its inception in Athens in fifth century B.C., together with some of the most influential answers that political theorists have proposed. The issues addressed in these lectures—and in Western political theory generally—fall into three broad categories. The first involves the essential characteristics of human nature and the good society. Is human nature essentially spirit or matter? Is it directed by reason or dominated by passion? Is it fixed or malleable? Is it innately sinful, aggressive, and violent, or is it fundamentally benign, cooperative, and nonviolent? Will the good society be characterized by perfect harmony or by continued conflict? If conflict is inevitable in the good society, must it be controlled through the leader’s discretionary use of coercive power, or can it be contained constructively within political institutions? Are social unity and harmony achievable or even desirable? Do the progress and vigor of society depend, by contrast, upon some form of struggle?

The second set of fundamental questions involves the relationship between the individual and society. What is the right relationship of the individual to society? What is the relationship of individual freedom to social and political authority? What constitutes legitimate political authority? Does it come ultimately from God, the state, or the individual? Are human beings fundamentally equal or unequal?

The final set of questions involves theories of change. What are the fundamental dynamics of change? What role is played by discretionary leadership or moral values in effecting change? Are there inexorable laws of history that produce change? Is an unchanging, enduring, universal system of ethical values possible? Must such a system be grounded in a theory of absolute truth? If an enduring, universal system of values is possible, what precisely are those values, and what is their relevance for political and social action? Should transformative leadership be based on the hard facts of political reality and human weakness, or on the knowledge of absolute truth? Is the most fundamental change ideological, economic, or psychological in nature?
Should agents of change pursue reform through gradual, evolutionary means, or should they pursue the total transformation of society and human nature through revolution? Should radical change be pursued through violence or nonviolence? Should it rely mainly on spontaneity or on authoritarian organization?

Those questions orient our study of a wide range of theories of power and its use. We contrast Plato’s idealism with Aristotle’s realism, Marx’s optimism with Freud’s pessimism, and Hitler’s exclusionism and exaltation of violence with Gandhi’s inclusionism and insistence on nonviolence. For centuries such questions have eluded final solution, and we should not expect to answer them definitively here. The questions should prompt us, however, to think more deeply about ourselves, the standards that guide our behavior, and our obligations, if any, to society.

**Objectives:** Upon completing these lectures, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Identify the fundamental questions and concerns that shape classical and modern political theory.

2. Explain the essential differences between the “idealist” and “realist” traditions in political theory, and identify some of the most influential thinkers in each tradition.

3. Describe the influence of one’s understanding of human nature upon one’s vision of the good society, making specific reference to the theorists examined in this course.

4. Compare and contrast the views of those theorists regarding the purpose (if any) of the state, the relationship between politics and ethics, and the qualifications (if any) for exercising political power.

5. Compare and contrast the views of leading political theorists regarding the meaning of freedom, the sources of legitimate political authority, the legitimacy of individual resistance against constituted authority, and the obligations (if any) of individuals to the state or society.

6. Distinguish among the differing attitudes toward the use of violence that are held by the theorists examined in this course.

7. Compare and contrast the views of those theorists regarding the possibilities for fundamental transformation of human nature and society, as well as the means by which that transformation can be brought about.

**Recommended Readings to Accompany the Lectures***

*The Bhagavad-Gita. Translated by Barbara Miller. Bantam.


Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Notes from the Underground* and the “The Grand Inquisitor,” in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Dutton.

Goldman, Emma. *Living My Life* and *My Disillusionment in Russia.*


* The books in this reading list appear in the order that they are discussed in the lectures.
Lecture Nine
Rousseau’s Theory of Human Nature and Society

Scope: Having been braced by a dose of Machiavellian realism, we return now to idealism, represented in this lecture by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and in the next by Karl Marx. The Romantic idealism of Rousseau and Marx has much in common with Plato’s idealism. As idealists, all three theorists tend to view human nature as benign and susceptible of improvement. They look askance at competition, wealth disparities, and other manifestations of disharmony and disunity.

The differences, however, are as striking as the similarities—between Rousseau and Marx, as well as between both of them and Plato. Rousseau and Marx view inequality as the product of corrupt human institutions (especially private property), while Plato sees human beings as innately unequal. Rousseau and Marx, for their part, have similar views of human nature, the origins of society, and man’s ideal future state. Both urge a fundamental transformation of individuals and society, but they view in very different terms both the mechanism of that revolutionary change and its endpoint.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:
1. Compare and contrast the philosophical assumptions and conclusions of Plato and Rousseau, especially regarding human nature, the relationship between ethics and politics, and the ideal state.
2. Summarize Rousseau’s critique of his own society and the causes to which he attributed his society’s failings.
3. Compare and contrast Machiavelli’s and Rousseau’s vision of human nature.

Outline

I. Rousseau and Plato share similar beliefs.
   A. Both are idealists but also critical of their own societies. Both look to education as the means to reshape human nature and thereby construct better societies.
   B. Both see a close relationship between ethics and politics.
   C. Both see private property as a cause of materialism, avarice, and inequality.

II. Rousseau differs from Plato in emphasizing human equality. Rousseau describes three ideal societies.
   A. Rousseau’s vision of the past is set forth in his theory of the state of nature.
   1. The past is the world of natural man who has two instincts: self-preservation and repugnance at seeing living things suffer.
   2. Human nature is fundamentally benign.
   3. Human beings have an innate compassionate impulse that prevents them from harming others.
   B. Rousseau’s vision of the present is characterized by corrupt contemporary society.
   1. As a consequence of urbanization and modern technology, human beings in contemporary society are dehumanized and alienated from each other. That dehumanization is illustrated by the failure of Kitty Genovese’s neighbors to come to her rescue or even call the police when she was attacked.
   2. He attributes the alienation and separation among human beings to urbanization, commercialization, a faulty educational system, and the institution of private property. Corrupt social institutions encourage selfishness and suppress compassion.
   3. Private property brings inequality, which promotes rivalry and competition of interests.
   C. In The Social Contract, Rousseau sets forth his ideal vision of a future society characterized by justice, freedom, and equality.

III. Rousseau’s prescription for social utopia is set forth in The Social Contract.
   A. The institution of private property legitimizes social inequality, which fetters the mind and alienates people from each other.
   B. Through education and a new manner of socialization, humans can overcome their fear of each other and develop a new sense of community.
   C. The new sense of community will confer genuine security.
   1. Equality brings safety and protection by fostering community spirit and identification with others.
   2. We must define ourselves not in terms of things but in terms of our relationships with other human beings.
   3. Genuine security requires individual and social transformation; human behavior must be governed by justice rather than instinct.
   D. The social contract can effect the needed changes through legislation to create a new sense of equality. In particular, the educational system must socialize people into a spirit of community.
   E. Genuine freedom is not license but the ability to act as one should—to liberate oneself from the illusion of separation and alienation and to attain a sense of oneness with others.
   F. The ideal society is to be governed by the general will.
1. The general will is not majority or unanimous will. Not all majority decisions are in accord with the general will.
2. The general will is the transcendent moral standard of values that identifies a society at its best. It is the shared civic spirit that unites a people and leads them to identify with each other.

Recommended Reading:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in poverty (both economic and emotional) in Geneva in 1712. He wandered through Europe from 1728 to 1741, then lived in Paris until 1762. While in Paris, he published his Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (1750), On the Origin of Inequality (1775), Emile (1762, his key work on education), and The Social Contract (1762). Later, in Switzerland, he published his Confessions (1765) and Considerations on the Government of Poland (1772). Rousseau can be seen as the archetypal “outsider” in the revolutionary mode of Plato.

The religious and scientific developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries heavily influenced Rousseau’s thought. The Calvinist tradition in France helped to shape his insistence on the relationship between politics and morality (see Frederick Watkins’ Introduction in Rousseau’s Basic Political Writings). Although both Locke and Hobbes were immensely influenced by the scientific discoveries of figures such as Isaac Newton (1642–1727), who published his Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy in 1687, Rousseau was hostile to Enlightenment ideas of science and rationalism. He denounced science, technology, industrialism, and urbanization as being inhumane, alienating traits of an increasingly heartless world, and being incapable of realizing the values of community and compassion that he prized. Locke welcomed most of the intellectual changes occurring around him in Europe, among them the founding of the Royal Society of London (devoted to the sciences) in 1662 and the Academy of Sciences in France in 1666. Rousseau, by contrast, opposed the French Encyclopedists in Paris (1751–1768), especially rationalists like Diderot (1713–1784) and Voltaire (1694–1778), who published his Philosophical Dictionary in 1764.
Rousseau’s Three Visions of the Individual in Society: Past, Present, and Future


The State of Nature (pp. 35–36, 45–46, 53–55, 60–81, 150–51)

Rousseau conceived of “the constitution of natural man” as having had two attributes of human nature “prior to reason”: self-preservation and compassion (i.e., pity or sympathy, pp. 35–36). From the quality of compassion “alone flow all the social virtues” that we possess (p. 54). Rousseau contrasts the state of nature in the Social Contract (pp. 150–51) with the civil state, as indicated below. The civil state must transform, through education and leadership, the “constitution of natural man” into a citizen who enjoys “moral liberty” and “legitimate equality” (pp. 151, 153).

Rousseau’s Modern State (pp. 35–36, 53–55, 68, 81, 141–56)

Rousseau offers this implicit indictment of reason and philosophy as exemplified in the rationalists of eighteenth-century Europe: they have used reason to stifle nature itself (p. 35). He criticizes “the philosopher” who, in contrast to “savage man,” ignores the plight of suffering humanity by refusing to listen to its appeals (pp. 54–55). That is the cold, heartless “reason” and “philosophy” of modernity. Our modern society and state lack compassion because nature’s original impulses of pity and sympathy have been suffocated by modern science and technology, by the cult of “rationalism,” and by the lust for private property (pp. 68, 81). Lacking commitment to community, modern society has degenerated into a state of “private interests,” “different interest,” and “private wills” (pp. 153–54). At best, it knows only the “will of all” (pp. 155–56). People in the modern state are easily led astray by “the seduction of private wills” (p. 162). Above all, the modern state is crippled by a sense of alienation, estrangement, and inability to experience empathy with others. As a result it fails to realize the general will.

The Civil State (pp. 147–56, 160–65, 203–4)

The civil state is achieved through the creation of the social contract (pp. 147–49), which leads to the implementation of the general will (pp. 153–56). The contrast between the state of nature and the civil state is most apparent in Rousseau’s chapter on the civil state (pp. 150–51). Note especially the sharply contrasting descriptive words assigned to each state: “justice” versus “instinct,” “duty” versus “impulse,” “law” versus “appetite,” and “reason” versus “inclinations.” In the civil state, people experience a “remarkable change,” acquiring a “moral quality” previously unknown. “Feelings are ennobled,” and the “soul is elevated.” The change is “from a stupid, limited animal” (the creature of the state of nature) to “an intelligent being.” Citizens lose their “natural” liberty but acquire a “moral” or “civil” liberty (p. 151). They thus transcend the “natural” liberty, which is “to be driven by appetite,” and gain obedience to self-prescribed law. They lose “natural equality” but gain “a moral and legitimate equality” (p. 153). This state realizes the “general will” and “the common good” (p. 153) instead of the “will of all.” The legislator helps in this great task of “changing human nature” (p. 163), of achieving through “sublime reason” the ideal civil state. Rousseau’s theory of “real property” or public property (pp. 151–52) in the civil state is significant because, in contrast to the unjust accumulation of private property by the few in the modern state, distribution of property ensures equality in the civil state. Thus, the ideal state must achieve both liberty and equality (p. 170). Finally, the ideal civil state must remain “very small” (only 10,000 citizens), where each “can easily know all the others” because “the larger the state becomes, the less liberty there is” (pp. 174, 180).
Summary: Three Perspectives on Political Theory

Realists and the Argument for Security (e.g., Machiavelli)
The realists are not alone in wanting security. All of the six theorists that we have studied want a strong polity that can protect its citizens. Each regards civil or international warfare as a threat, and all affirm the need for political order. But the realists argue that security is the paramount and overriding goal of the state: it fulfills all expectations in itself. The pursuit of virtue is a bogus ideal for any state, a chimera or dangerous distraction that undermines rather than enhances the quest for security. Machiavelli warns his prince that he must pursue only those policies that can “save his state.” He furthermore says, “[I]f you look at matters carefully, you will see something resembling virtue, which, if you follow it, may be your ruin, while something else resembling vice will lead, if you follow it, to your security and well-being” (p. 45). That is the politics of virtù or Realpolitik, and it involves a determined, pragmatic use of power unencumbered by moral scruples. As Leo Strauss states in History of Political Philosophy, “Machiavelli consciously lowers the standards of social action” in order to satisfy, as far as possible, a realistic preeminent goal—our basic need for security.

Reformers and the Argument for Diversity (e.g., Aristotle)
All polities must allow for some degree of diversity. Aristotle knows that Plato’s ideal republic will have great diversity in occupation and education. But Aristotle wants diversity among the participants in the process of political decision making, among those who wield political power. Aristotle’s idea of diversity means a broadening of the citizen class, a polis of “free and equal citizens” who share office and shape policy, meaning that “some rule and others are ruled” in turn, with “different sorts of persons” assuming the responsibilities of governing. Power must be concentrated in the hands of a few but distributed because of the “natural equality of all the citizens” (pp. 41–42).

Plato would deplore this kind of polity as rule by amateurs, reminiscent of the rank unprofessionalism of democratic Athens. Aristotle responds that “it is true that unity is to some extent necessary, alike in a household and polis; but total unity is not.... It is as if you were turning harmony into mere unison, or to reduce a theme to a single beat” (p. 51). Locke’s defense of diversity is at one with his idea of liberty. He fears, as much as Aristotle, concentration of power in the hands of a few. “This freedom from absolute, arbitrary power is so necessary to and closely joined with a man’s preservation that he cannot part with it but by what forfeits his preservation and life together” (p. 17).

Idealists and the Argument for Community (e.g., Plato and Rousseau)
In issuing their calls for community, Plato and Rousseau show higher expectations than do either the realists or the reformers. They want to create a wholly new kind of polis, what Plato calls the “republic” and Rousseau calls the “civil state.” Plato suggests his vision of that revolutionary polity in his metaphor of the “three waves.” The second wave envisages an ideal community that “most nearly resembles a single person. When one of us hurts his finger, the whole extent of those bodily connections which are gathered up in the soul and unified by its ruling element is made aware and it all shares as a whole in the pain of the suffering part; hence we say that the man has a pain in his finger.” Plato concludes that “the best organized community comes nearest to that condition” because the ideal polity will be attained when the community “will recognize as a part of itself the individual citizen to whom good or evil happens, and will share as a whole in his joy and sorrow” (pp. 163–64). Plato says that such an ideal is most achievable by the Guardians who, with their superior education, “feel together and aid at the same ends, because they are convinced that all their interests are identical” (p. 166). Although that spirit of unity is felt primarily among the Guardians, their example infuses the entire community: “So our laws will secure that these men [Guardians] will live in complete peace with one another; and if they never quarrel among themselves, there is no fear of the rest of the community being divided either against them or against itself” (p. 166).

Inspired by Plato’s Republic, Rousseau sets forth a similar view of the organic polis: “As soon as this multitude is thus united in one body, one cannot harm one of the members without attacking the whole body.... Thus duty and interest equally oblige the two parties to come to one another’s aid” (p. 150). Even more than Plato, Rousseau infuses his ideal of the perfect community with a romantic conception of how the personal relates to the political. “Every man is virtuous when his particular will is in all things conformable to the general will, and we voluntarily will what is willed by those whom we love.” His theory of leadership is similar to Plato’s, however, because both believe that the leader must seek to transform the corrupt state into an ideal community. Rousseau’s “legislator” should feel himself able “to change human nature; to transform each individual ... into part of a greater whole, from which this individual receives in a sense, his life and his being; to alter man’s constitution in order to strengthen it; to substitute a moral and social existence for the independent and physical existence which we have all received from nature” (p. 163). Thus the theories of both Plato and Rousseau foresee a total transformation of the community, so that it attains a higher consciousness and fuller realization of its human potential.
Lecture Ten
Marx's Critique of Capitalism and Solution of Communism

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Compare and contrast Rousseau's and Marx's vision of man's natural state, their diagnoses of the crisis of contemporary society, their respective visions of the ideal future society, and the means by which that society is to be achieved.
2. Describe Marx's tripartite theory of the self and his theory of work, and explain how his concept of "alienation" differs from Rousseau's.
3. Summarize Marx's critique of the capitalist system of production.

Outline

I. Marx inherited and extended the revolutionary spirit of Rousseau.
   A. Marx's life is summarized.
      1. He was born to a relatively affluent family.
      2. In his youth, he became involved in leftist politics and was exiled to Paris from Germany in 1843.
      3. In 1848, he was exiled to London, where he lived until his death in 1883.
   B. Marx sought revolutionary change even more intently than Rousseau did. His project seems to have failed, but should we conclude that his theory is invalid?

II. Like Plato, Marx proposes a tripartite theory of the self, corresponding to a three-stage vision of social evolution.
   A. The natural self in natural society represents man's instinctual animal needs of food, sex, and work.
   B. The second stage of human and social evolution is the alienated self in alienated society.
      1. Like Plato, Marx viewed his own society as profoundly corrupt, but he went beyond both Plato and Rousseau in arguing that the social institutions of modern society alienated man from other men and from himself.
      2. According to Marx, capitalism alienates men from themselves and from each other.
      3. Capitalism—and ultimately private property—perverts human values, as human beings come to value things over each other. It encourages avarice, competition, and inequality. The cash nexus becomes the criterion of all value.
   C. The third stage is the classless society of communism.
      1. Marx's historical determinism—his confidence that the contradictions of capitalism will inevitably lead to communism—represents a departure from Rousseau.
      2. Marx describes in The Communist Manifesto how the greed and avarice encouraged by capitalism will undermine and inevitably destroy the regime of private property.
      3. Communist society is characterized by equality and true justice.

III. Marx's philosophy of work is examined.
   A. Marx argues that capitalist society distorts men's innate need to work by alienating them from their labor.
      1. Under capitalism, man denies rather than fulfills himself through his labor. His work becomes an imposition rather than a voluntary labor.
      2. In contemporary society, many people are alienated from their labor, which they perform only under compulsion.
   B. Marx asserts that in communist society, individuals will be able to develop themselves freely.
      1. Under communism, the free development of each will conduce to the free development of all.
      2. Communism will bring genuine human fulfillment: the need for sex will be satisfied in love, and the need for work will be satisfied in meaningful labor.
      3. Marx's ideal society is a "species society" in which the citizens will define themselves and realize their "species," or fully human needs of security, love, and creative work.

IV. Is Marx still relevant?
   A. His program has never been implemented, certainly not in the Soviet Union. Marx never advocated totalitarian or despotic rule.
   B. Although his historical determinism has been discredited, his social criticism remains relevant.
      1. The income gap between rich and poor has expanded in the industrial world during the past 30 years.
      2. Democracies often fail to provide both liberty and equality.
      3. Marx’s social critique will remain valid as long as the present trend toward inequality continues.
Karl Marx (1818–1883) saw human nature and society as closely related. The individual expresses his needs in society. Any society will inevitably have a profound influence on the ability of individuals within it to fulfill those needs. All individuals and societies are parts of a vast process of historical change.

As we evolve, we experience three phases of growth, each with its own set of needs. The first phase is that of natural society and the natural self. This phase consists of primarily “animal” needs for subsistence (food, clothing, shelter); sex (procreation); and work (the need to engage in some form of mental and physical activity). Early forms of primitive societies also experience those fundamental needs. They are “natural” in the sense that we never lose them; they remain intrinsic to our nature but are not informed by our reason to a high degree. They are instinctive and spontaneous rather than planned and self-conscious. In this stage of development, the pursuit and fulfillment of the needs of hunger and sex are selfish, and work is performed in a routine manner without much sense of social awareness or self-realization. Yet those natural needs are essential for our growth. They are immature in the natural phase, but they carry the potential for the realization of our species being. In Marx’s writings, the idea of the early phase is set forth implicitly only in Fromm (pp. 99–102, 142–43, 150–51, 181–83).

The second phase of development is that of the alienated self and the alienated society, which is the contemporary system in which we in Western civilization find ourselves. Our animal needs of sustenance, sex, and work continue to be intrinsic to our nature, but they are usually expressed in a distorted form because of the exploitative system of capitalism. We experience our nature as alienated or split; we are divided against ourselves, between our essence (which will be realized fully when we reach the communist society) and our present existence as individuals engaged mainly in exploiting or trying to dominate one another. Our natural needs are often frustrated as we are distracted by illusory needs of money and property. (Fromm explains and contrasts the idea of “true needs” versus “illusory,” or “synthetic,” needs on pp. 62–63. He discusses the concept generally on pp. 14, 25–26, 56–67. Marx addresses it on pp. 140–44.) Those needs are called “illusory” because they are like addictions: we are not compelled to consume or accumulate the amount of money and property that capitalism encourages, but we have become addicted to an appetite for more cash and power. Our behavior has become compulsive and as far removed from our natural needs and state of good health as obesity or bulimia.

Just as the natural phase of self and society is analogous to childhood, the alienation phase can be compared to adolescence. In our growth to mature adulthood, life gets worse before it becomes better. Adolescence is certainly bad in terms of the sense of alienation, rebellion, and various addictions that it often
brings. Marx believes that we as a species are in a phase of adolescence, and we are far from realizing our maturity. At present, especially in Western cultures, we have become hooked on power games and ways to manipulate or exploit others. We confuse our insatiable desire to accumulate things with our real needs. We must note, however, that this stage of adolescence is necessary to our development into a mature society as it is to the personal maturation of the individual teenager. However much Marx condemns capitalism, he still sees it as a necessary and desirable stage in our evolution to communism. Capitalism promotes rather than impedes our progressive evolution into the third and final state of the species being.

As the self and system move through history, the latter serves as the main dynamic of growth, especially in the form of the economic means of production. In the capitalist phase, the system is responsible for distorting the individual’s needs and compelling his or her addictive, compulsive, and immature behavior. The capitalist system has perverted our relationships to others by absorbing them into a “cash nexus.” Capitalism socializes us into creatures who want to possess and acquire rather than to share and cooperate. Our natural need for sex is converted into a lust to dominate. We view others as sex objects rather than as loved ones. The drive to procreate is natural; the system of prostitution is not. In the capitalist system, male and female alike are victims of prostitution because any relationship based on domination will deform both parties, keeping them alienated from one another and from achieving a healthy relationship based on mutual respect and human equality.

If that alienation is true in our love relationships, then it also applies to our attitudes toward work. In the capitalist system, our natural need to express ourselves in creative activity is transformed into alienated labor. Again, we prostitute ourselves to the system by selling our capacities to the cash nexus. The proletariat is alienated from its labor because the worker is subjected to inhuman exploitation by the employer’s compulsive quest for increasing profit. Yet the worker is not the only victim. Marx asserts that “the possessing class and the proletariat class represent one and the same human self-alienation” (Robert Tucker, Marx-Engels Reader, p. 133). That condition is reflected in the ways that money controls the behavior of the capitalist system. We tend to be more competitive than cooperative, more acquisitive than compassionate, because all the signals of our society suggest that our personal merit must be measured by how high we can ascend the ladder of financial success. Our task is to build a new system that will nurture a new way of perceiving ourselves and our society. Such a goal is inevitable because our human destiny is to realize our full potential as mature beings in a free and equal society, rather than in an alienated system that is based on domination.

The third stage of development—that of species self and species society—is attained when alienation is overcome by a communist revolution and subsequent transformation of the economic system. The resultant development of species consciousness enables us to realize our needs in a mature, self-actualized state of human awareness. Thus, the primitive natural needs of subsistence evolve into a secure sense of being able to provide for food and shelter. Marx implicitly contrasts the “cave dwelling” of the savage with the “cellar dwelling” of the proletariat. In the latter, the poor tenant is victimized in a capitalist system that is as insecure as it is unable to provide for the natural needs of all (pp. 142–43, 150–51). In a species society, all would find security within their homes because the system provides rationally for meeting the needs of all and preventing any part of the population from being thrown into homelessness. Attitudes toward sex and love are also transformed in a species society: the natural drive for sex becomes expressed not in prostitution (a word that symbolizes domination and exploitation in any unequal relationship) but in love, where lovers find their species needs realized in a mutually caring and equal relationship (p. 168).

Finally, in a species society, we discover the meaning of creative work. In other words, we come to welcome work as an activity that brings us self-esteem rather than boredom, tedium, and alienation.

When Marx traces the evolution of the self and system from primitive societies to complete communism, he is concerned especially with the nature and quality of work, with the ways that people do or do not engage in meaningful, creative forms of activity. Work as a natural need is associated first with animals who “produce only under the compulsion of direct physical need,” without much reason or consciousness of why they engage in labor (p.102). The progression of consciousness brings the pain of alienation as unjust economic systems emerge. Alienated labor, in particular, “alienates from man his … mental life and his human life” (p. 103). The problem is that while we must evolve as a species, the process of growth requires struggle. The major task is to advance from the state of alienated labor in which “work is external to the worker” and so is “forced labor” (p. 98)—“a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification … not his own work but work for someone else” (p. 99) to a species society of communism in which work will be self-fulfilling and satisfying precisely because it has overcome alienation and reflects the worker’s own abilities and aspirations.

A certain vision of work thus lies at the center of Marx’s ideal communist or species society. He says that it “is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a species-being. This production is his active species life. By means of its nature, it appears as his work and his reality” (p. 102). Marx wants each of us to take part in creating a world in which we actually see our species selves reflected or represented. We can do this best through our work: “The object of labor is therefore the objectification of man’s species life … he sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed” (p. 102).

The word “objectification” should be noted because it signifies a crucial Marxist concept. It means the presence of a person’s activity in the objective world; we look at our environment and see ourselves reflected in it. In Marx’s terms, the
“subject” (the individual) is represented in the “object” (the world of nature around us with which we constantly interact). The process of objectification must occur in any society, capitalist or communist, because the world cannot exist without human interaction. The question is “What kind of objectification will be?” Will we see ourselves reflected or represented in our world as alienated (p. 95) or as species selves (pp. 133–34)? If our reflection is distorted, as it would be in a funhouse of curved mirrors, then in this carnival of capitalism we view not our real essence or the representation of our true needs but the illusory needs created by a crazy system.

Marx’s purpose, therefore, may be expressed in a single imperative: to create a species society that will allow us to objectify our essence. Marx expressed that aim directly (pp. 127-45, 165–68). He demands the abolition of private property as necessary for the creation of communism (pp. 127-32). Private property prevents the “appropriation of the human essence” because it fosters “exclusive enjoyment” in “possession or having” rather than the “all-inclusiveness of a species society.” That theme will reappear later in these lectures in the contrast between Gandhi’s inclusiveness (which in many ways is similar to Marx’s ideal state of communism) and Hitler’s exclusiveness. In his Communist Manifesto (Part 2), Marx says that communism means that “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” In another writing, Marx describes further his vision of a communist or species society in these terms:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (Robert Tucker, Marx-Engels Reader, p. 531).

Marx’s Economic Determinism

(Page numbers from Fromm, Erich. Marx’s Concept of Man. New York: Ungar.)

Marx’s economic determinism is usually associated with his later phase (i.e., the period in which he wrote Das Kapital and A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy). It is rooted if not elaborated, however, in his earlier works (e.g., The German Ideology [1845] and The Communist Manifesto [1848]). It may be defined as the theory that economic forces determine ideology and politics and serve as the primary dynamics of the dialectical movement in history. (The clearest and most succinct statement of the theory occurs on pp. 198, 211–12, 217–18.)

Marx’s idea of this system may be described in these terms: any society is analyzed as having two main components—its ideological “superstructure” and its economic “structure.” As used by Marx (p. 217), the word “superstructure” encompasses his idea of the state (pp. 211, 217) and “ideological forms” or “ideological reflexes” (p. 198) existing in the realm of “consciousness” (pp. 198, 217). The superstructure may have two manifestations or two types of consciousness. The first of the manifestations is “false consciousness,” the ideological rationalization of economic interests by the dominant class. Marx summed up his conception in The Communist Manifesto: “Your very ideas are the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property.” In that sense, “bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law” are ideological rationalizations of economic interests. Those ideas are “false” because they are not directed at a correct understanding of history, but only at masking their own dominance and exploitation (pp. 197–98, 212). The second form of consciousness, enjoyed by Marx himself, involves scientific, empirical, and logically and historically valid awareness of “reality” (p. 199). (Note Marx’s repeated use of the terms “real” or “reality” on pp. 198–99, which suggests a basis for true consciousness.)

For both false and true consciousness, the ideological superstructure is derivative or dependent on “material production and material intercourse” (p. 198). The concept of “ideology” embraces a broad spectrum of intellectual experience: “political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic” (p. 218). “Morality, religion, metaphysics” (p. 198) are all included under the term “ideology.”

According to Marx, the ideological superstructure rests upon and is determined by the “economic structure” (p. 217) or material base. He also refers to that structure as the “economic foundation” (p. 218), the “real basis” or “real foundation” of society, the “mode of production” (p. 217), “the material life process,” and the “social existence” (pp. 217–18), as opposed to “consciousness” or “conditions of life.” Economic conditions or economic relations of society may take two forms. The first involves social activity or relations within and among classes (p. 218). The second involves economic or “material
productive forces” (p. 218), also called the “economical conditions of existence”
i.e., the prevailing system of industry or technology as found in a type of
economy or mode of production such as capitalism. The modes are characterized
by divisions of labor or by organization and production of raw materials such as oil. The modes express forces that operate “independent of their [human] will”
[p. 217]). According to Marx, the second of the forms of economic relations
determines the first. In the dialectical development of economic forces through
history, the economic structure has determined the ideological superstructure.

Lecture Eleven
Freud’s Theory of Human Nature and Civilization

Scope: Sigmund Freud’s pessimistic vision of man, as described in Civilization
and Its Discontents, contrasts vividly with the optimistic visions of both
Rousseau and Marx. As we have seen, Rousseau believes that human
nature is characterized by an innate propensity for compassion and
identification with others; under the correct legal and educational
system, that natural propensity can become regnant throughout society.
Marx criticizes the dehumanizing impact of capitalism, but he
anticipates that the communist revolution will usher in an age of
harmony and personal fulfillment, free of the alienation that enslaves
men in industrial capitalist society. Remove the perverse and alienating
influence of private property, and humankind will achieve its natural
condition of integrity, bliss, and true freedom.

Freud harbors no such optimistic view of human nature or of man’s
ability to achieve happiness and contentment. He sees the human
personality as irremediably split among three constituent parts—the id,
ego, and superego—that incessantly fight each other for domination.
The most powerful of these is the id, which manifests itself in part as
the lust for aggression and domination over others. According to Freud,
man’s inevitable lot is pain and suffering, arising both from his own
psychic alienation and from his victimization by other human beings.
His efforts to escape from suffering through intoxication, isolation, or
sublimation are inevitably self-defeating.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the
following:
1. Describe Freud’s theory of the tripartite self, and compare it with simi-
lar theories held by Marx, Rousseau, Plato, and the Hindus.
2. Compare Freud’s concept of “psychic” alienation with Marx’s class-
based alienation and Rousseau’s interpersonal alienation.
3. Summarize Freud’s explanation of the causes of suffering and of how
human beings attempt to cope with it.
4. Compare and contrast Freud’s and Marx’s theories of work.
5. Identify what Freud, Marx, and Rousseau each regard as man’s
fundamental, or most basic, instinct. Analyze the social and political
implications of their visions of human nature and personality.
6. Compare and contrast the visions of mankind’s future held by Marx and
Freud, and relate the visions to each theorist’s respective view of human
nature.
Outline

I. Marx and Freud have many similarities, but their views of human nature and history are very different.
   A. Both distance themselves from their Jewish roots, reject religion, and are passionate moral prophets.
   B. They differ profoundly, however, on human nature.
      1. Marx believes that human nature is capable of infinite development, leading to the classless society and the end of alienation.
      2. Freud is deeply pessimistic about human nature; he sees pain, suffering, and unhappiness as man’s inevitable lot.

II. Like Marx (and Plato and the Hindus), Freud has a tripartite theory of personality.
   A. The id is the center for sexual and aggressive instincts.
      1. The id seeks to gain pleasure and avoid pain; it knows no moral value judgments.
      2. Although it is the unconscious part of our psyche, the id inevitably dominates the other parts.
      3. The id produces frustration by constantly making demands that cannot be fulfilled.
   B. The ego is the rational, cautious, and commonsense element of the psyche; it is concerned with the external world of objective reality.
      1. Ego represents the external world to the id.
      2. Ego tries to negotiate and conciliate among the external world, id, and superego, but ultimately it is dominated by id and superego. Pressured by all three, the ego generates anxiety.
      3. Therapy seeks to strengthen the ego against the pressures imposed by the id and superego.
   C. The superego represents conscience and imposes standards of moral perfection that are impossible to attain.
      1. Like the id, the superego is totally irrational, but it is the id’s main adversary.
      2. The superego is more powerful than the ego but less powerful than the id. Its main weapon is guilt (instilled by one’s parents as the main shapers of the superego).
      3. The individual incurs pain and suffering by trying to fulfill the unreachable standard set by the superego.

III. Freud examines the individual’s social condition and the origins of human suffering in his classic work, Civilization and Its Discontents.
   A. Suffering comes from any of three sources: our own bodies, the external world, and our relationships with other people. All three are inevitable, and the latter is the most painful.
   B. Suffering results as the elements of the human personality struggle against each other.
      1. We are inevitably doomed to suffer because of our irremediable state of interior psychic alienation.
      2. Our psychic constitution makes us want desperately to hurt others, but we cannot admit this to ourselves or the superego will punish us.
   C. Freud describes three ways in which humans cope with suffering.
      1. Intoxication.
      2. Isolation (although this solution is impractical for most people).
      3. Sublimation (i.e., the expression of a powerful aggressive impulse in socially acceptable fashion such as through sports or work).

IV. Freud perceives society as the collective expression of individual aggression.
   A. The mass id (the collective lust for aggression and domination) struggles with the mass superego (expressed in ethical systems and religion).
   B. Civilization (embodied in the impossible standards set by the great religions) cannot hope to triumph over the force of mass id.
   C. Men are innately aggressive: homo homini lupus (“man is a wolf to man”). The inclination to aggression disturbs our relations with society, and it explains the persistent phenomena of war and persecution of minorities.
      1. Freud rejects Marx’s view that human nature is benign and that only private property causes pain. The blame lies not with the system but with human nature.
      2. Freud sees private property as just one means by which we register our aggression against others.
      3. With his dim view of humanity, Freud would not have been surprised by the Holocaust.

Recommended Reading:
Freud’s Theory

Freud, like Marx, has a theory of human nature that sets forth a conception of the tripartite self. Also like Marx, he begins with a concept of the natural part of the human self as a set of physical needs, including the need for sex. However, the differences between Marx and Freud far outweigh the similarities. Whereas Marx’s concern is the cash nexus, Freud’s is the “bash nexus”—the forces not of money but of aggression.

The excerpts from Freud’s New Introductory Lectures outline his theory of the tripartite self. The first part is the id, defined as a bundle of instincts aimed at gaining pleasure and avoiding pain. Unlike Marx, Freud believes that this “natural self” is and always will be dominant primarily because it exists as the unconscious part of our personality, and we can never be aware of its enormously powerful role in shaping our everyday behavior. The id is the spoiled brat in each self, endlessly demanding, impulsive, irrational, asocial, selfish, and pleasure seeking. When other parts of the personality try to contain it, the id asserts itself in an uncontrollable, unruly, and infantile way, making demands that cannot possibly be fulfilled because the id refuses to make choices or to recognize limitations and contradictions. The id wants it all. In the id, the instincts of sex and aggression are fused, and those two instincts dominate the entire personality. In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud emphasizes the instinct of aggression as more prominent in determining our behavior.

The second part of the personality is the ego, a term that is misleading because we tend to call a person who has an inflated view of himself or herself a “big ego.” In Freud’s theory, though, the ego is not the proud, inflated part of the self, but the cautious, rational voice of common sense that tries to restrain both the id and the superego. If the id is guided by the pleasure principle, then the ego follows the reality principle because it is “turned toward” or concerned with the external world of objective reality. The ego is the “wimp” part of us; reasonable and modest but weak, ineffective, and hopelessly incapable of containing the demands of the superego. It struggles desperately, as Freud says, to serve three masters (id, superego, and the real world) by mediating between the wild and wishful dream world of the id and the restraints imposed by the two others. The ego is the broker, the negotiator, the conciliator; when the id makes its incessant and insatiable demands for sexual gratification and total domination, the ego attempts to assert control. But in that task it is always embattled and besieged; it is inevitably at a terrible disadvantage because it lacks the id’s superior power. The ego tries to call for help from the superego but is usually punished for asking.

The superego, the third part of the personality, is like the id in one key respect: it is totally irrational. But in all other respects it is unlike the id and represents the id’s main adversary within us, the other source of the internal conflict in our incurably alienated split self. The superego is more powerful than the ego but less so than the id. It is the preacher or stern parent of each self that deals primarily in guilt and setting impossible standards of moral perfection. We might recognize our parents in the idea of the superego because it is shaped by parental influence. Whereas the id is composed of inborn instinct, the superego is developed after birth by socialization from parents and society. The superego has two distinct parts: the conscience and the ego ideal (internalized standard of perfection). The former punishes us but the latter rewards us if we strive to meet its unreasonable and unreachable expectations. In those respects, the superego often opposes both the pleasure principle of the id and the reality principle of the ego with the morality principle, calling especially on religion to reinforce it.
Comparisons and Contrasts Between Marx And Freud

We are suffering from a common malady that we have termed “the alienated split self.” What is the split self? It is the personality in conflict: we are divided within ourselves between conflicting sets of motivations and drives, expectations and aspirations. What is the cause of the conflict? We lack consciousness of who we are, of why we are in such a painful state of alienation.

What are we alienated from? For Marx, we are alienated from our essence, which is our sense of species being. Freud believes that a profound alienation pervades our personality, but basically it is twofold: alienation of the id from the superego, as well as alienation of both from the ego, which represents reason and is in touch with external reality.

What remedy is there for such alienation? Marx offers the more optimistic prognosis for resolving alienation because his remedy is to know our species being, which will inevitably occur through historical development. The evolution of economic relations will produce the class consciousness and class revolution necessary to destroy the old order and usher in the new communist one. For Freud, the prognosis is, at best, guarded. The remedy is analysis, but analysis is open only to a few; the masses will probably continue on their destructive paths and perhaps destroy us all. Alienation, then, is inevitable among the majority. Conflict is destructive; we strive not to cure or to overcome but to contain and to cope. In that struggle, strengthening of the ego is our last best hope in a world fraught with aggression.

For Marx and Freud, we can confront the problem of alienation constructively by raising our consciousness. But there are severe limits on how much consciousness-raising can attain.

As an economic determinist, Marx places limits on what can be attained by raising consciousness. He says that social existence determines consciousness; in other words, economic conditions constitute the controlling independent variable in our progress. Consciousness-raising helps, but all the increased consciousness in the world will not work until basic changes occur in how we produce and control our material resources. For Marx, then, the problem has social or systemic roots and can be ultimately resolved only at that level. Robert Tucker observes in Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx that as Marx’s thought matured, “the inner conflict of alienated man with himself became, in Marx’s mind, a social conflict between ‘labor’ and ‘capital,’ and the alienated species-self became the class-divided society” (p. 175). Only class revolution at the right time could provide the remedy.

Freud is, by contrast, a psychological determinist who believes that the unconscious remains a key determinant of our behavior. We must strive to expand our personal consciousness through analysis. Yet, at best, our conscious element will be but the tip of the psychic iceberg. Our ego is besieged, embattled, and weak compared to the id and the superego. We must try to strengthen it because it comprises our common sense, our rational faculty, and our contact with our environment. We strive to reinforce our ego so that we will not cave in and surrender to a runaway id, or be smothered by the guilt of a suppressive superego.

For Marx and Freud, there is a “deeper reality” that underlies our consciousness: for Marx it is the economic structure of society, and for Freud it is the psychic unconscious that controls our behavior. For each, that deeper reality may be known in different degrees and with different results, but it always represents an objective truth beneath the subjective consciousness. Where are we to turn, then, in a world of strangers, or worse, in a world where we are strangers to ourselves? Although Marx and Freud have different perspectives, they nevertheless endorse the ancient advice of the Delphic oracle, stressed by Socrates and repeated by all political philosophers, to “know thyself.” That axiom is not questioned. The only questions are how many of us will join in the quest for self-knowledge and what we will discover.
Lecture Twelve

Thoreau’s Theory of Civil Disobedience

Scope: Henry David Thoreau marks an important departure not only from the classical tradition but also from contemporary liberalism with which he otherwise had much in common. Thoreau follows Machiavelli in rejecting the classical view—upheld by G. W. F. Hegel—that human beings are intrinsically social animals who find their natural fulfillment through the state. Thoreau echoes the Hindu tradition in emphatically rejecting the contention of Plato, Aristotle, and later Rousseau that an intrinsic connection exists between politics and ethics. Not only does Thoreau deny that the state has any moral authority, but also he accuses it of thwarting both the liberty and moral development of individual human beings by implicating them in its perfidies.

Thoreau’s view of the individual’s obligation to the state stands in direct contrast to Creon’s: if a law violates one’s own conscientious view of right and wrong, it must be disobeyed. Individual liberty trumps the claims of state authority in every case. Although Thoreau’s doctrine of civil disobedience proved too much for the liberals of his day, who shrank from subjecting the authority of law to private judgment, it animated the later civil rights struggles led by Mahatma Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Describe Thoreau’s theory of civil disobedience, and evaluate its originality.
2. Compare Thoreau’s views on the supposed relationship between ethics (or morality) and politics (or law) with those held by Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Rousseau.
3. Explain Thoreau’s concept of freedom, and compare it with freedom as understood by Plato and Aristotle.
4. Compare and contrast Thoreau’s and Marx’s criticisms of capitalism and the institution of private property.
5. Summarize Thoreau’s critique of representative democracy.

Outline

I. Thoreau holds special attraction and appeal to people throughout the world because of his personal journey and the devotion of his life to a cause, as described in Walden.

A. Thoreau writes in Walden, his personal journey—beginning with his separation from his own society—was reminiscent of Socrates and Buddha.
B. Walden constitutes Thoreau’s declaration of separation from a culture he found profoundly dissatisfying. He sought to enter a state of universality—and thus of liberation—without leaving the United States.

II. Thoreau sets forth his political philosophy in his essay “On Civil Disobedience.”

A. Thoreau warns in very personal terms against the state’s abuse of power over people. He emphatically rejects all political and economic institutions of the United States and regards himself as an absolute outsider.
1. He refuses on principle to pay poll tax in protest of slavery and the U.S. war with Mexico. He refuses to cooperate with what he sees as a corrupt regime.
2. His act of tax resistance marks the origins of civil disobedience.
B. Thoreau rejects Hegel’s sanctification of the state and of law.
1. According to Thoreau, the state lacks any moral strength.
2. While Hegel argues that individuals fulfill themselves through the state, Thoreau holds that the state destroys individual liberty.
C. Thoreau also goes beyond the British liberal tradition.
1. Thoreau joins British liberal theorists such as John Locke and John Stuart Mill in defending individual liberty and warning against the abuse of state power, but he goes beyond Locke and the British liberals in sanctioning civil disobedience to unjust laws.
2. While Locke holds that the purpose of government is to defend private property, Thoreau constantly denounces the institution of private property.
3. Thoreau challenged Ralph Waldo Emerson to practice civil disobedience by defying unjust laws.
4. Thoreau holds that “that government is best that governs not at all.” He is not an anarchist, however, since he does not insist on the immediate abolition of government.
5. Thoreau criticizes majority rule and representative democracy. He denies the ability of law to make human beings more just.

III. Thoreau critiques capitalism.

A. He attacks capitalism for its exaltation of money and its support for the institution of slavery.
B. Unlike Marx, Thoreau indicts capitalism on moral grounds.

IV. Thoreau’s political philosophy has lasting significance.
A. Thoreau's theory of civil disobedience is unique in combining theory with practice.

B. He issues a call for a revolution that is based on nonviolent noncooperation with an unjust state. Gandhi was profoundly influenced by Thoreau.

Recommended Reading:

**Thoreau: Civil Disobedience Against The State**

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) was born in Concord, Massachusetts, which was considered the center of the "American Renaissance" because of the presence there of some of the brightest lights of American literature and philosophy (e.g., Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne). By the time Thoreau had graduated from Harvard in 1837, he was profoundly influenced by Emerson's philosophy of Transcendentalism. That philosophy is similar to Hegel's idealism in that it holds that a divine essence inheres in all being; a transcendent spiritual reality exists and permeates all nature.

Thoreau’s idea of transcendentalism differs from Hegel’s idealism by denouncing rather than sanctifying the state. Hegel views the state as the agent of the divine on earth. Thoreau calls the state “half-witted,” having physical but not moral strength (pp. 233–34). Thoreau sees God in nature and believes that He inhabits especially the individual conscience; the state seeks to suppress the spiritual work of a person and so must be seen as an alien and unwanted institution. For that reason, Thoreau declares in “Civil Disobedience,” “I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the state, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually” (p. 236).

Therefore, on the issues of the respective roles of the state and the individual, Hegel and Thoreau are diametrically opposed. Hegel is the strong advocate of the state authority because it is legitimized by divine “reason in history.” Thoreau is a staunch opponent of state authority and of the entire theory of nationalism because they undermine the moral development of the individual; the state strives to stifle individual expression. For Hegel, a person achieves freedom only within and through the state, while for Thoreau the state inevitably thwarts individual liberty.

Thoreau expresses his opposition to state authority in two ways: he opposes the institution of slavery by becoming an abolitionist, and he condemns the U.S. war with Mexico (1846–1848). Both slavery and war were seen as logical manifestations of the state’s support of evil. In order to register his dissent from state authority, Thoreau refuses to pay his state poll (head) tax, a tax levied on every male (ages 20–70) in Massachusetts. Thoreau argues that he cannot support a government that is fighting a war with Mexico, that seeks to extend slavery, and that legitimizes slavery under its Constitution.

On July 23, 1846 (during the two years that he lived at Walden Pond), Thoreau was arrested for refusing to pay his poll tax. He was imprisoned for only one night in the Concord jail, but the experience inspired his essay on civil disobedience, first delivered as a lecture titled “The Relation of the Individual to the State” on January 26, 1848.
Thoreau’s essay on civil disobedience pronounces a radical dissent from our political tradition. It marks a sharp departure from both the conservative and liberal ideologies of American nationalism. Just as Hegel is a solid "insider" for affirming the bases of Western civilization and especially its sanctification of the nation, Thoreau becomes a radical “outsider” for unequivocally rejecting his tradition. Among American political theorists before and after Thoreau, there is a striking consensus on three fundamental tenets of our political tradition—the ideas of nationalism, representative democracy, and capitalism. Liberals and conservatives alike endorse those three broad concepts. Thoreau emphatically rejects all three, and this rejection is clear throughout his essay on civil disobedience.

Thoreau’s rejection of nationalism—of the state and government—is announced in the opening paragraph in which he departs from both liberal and conservative positions by stating “that government is best which governs not at all” (p. 222). Thoreau goes on to say that he is not an anarchist because he does not believe that people are as yet prepared for no government. Although he “declares war with the state,” he is nevertheless prepared to “make what use and get what advantage of her I can” (p. 236). If Thoreau was not fully an anarchist, he certainly had strong anarchist leanings. Later, full-fledged anarchists like Emma Goldman would adopt Thoreau as one of them without hesitation primarily because he condemned any claim that the state may make to moral legitimacy. Thoreau conceded that the state might sometimes be expedient, but Hegel and American nationalists could never be satisfied with this conclusion. They say the state—in particular the American nation—is embarked on a unique mission that was (in Ronald Reagan’s terms) secured because “the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material but spiritual.” Thoreau would dismiss that claim as bogus because the state is incapable of such divine inspiration or authorization. The nation is suspect; it makes war and supports slavery.

Thoreau’s attack on representative democracy began with his remarkable critique of voting and elections: “All voting is sort of gaming…. Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it” (p. 226). Thoreau then expands that statement to a broader criticism of the system of the majority rule when he states that “there is but little virtue in the action of masses of men” (p. 226). Finally, the attack reaches its climax with Thoreau’s indictment of the rule of law: “It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice” (p. 223). When the injustice of the law and the state becomes intolerable, “then, I say, break the law” (p. 229). That call to defiance of the law is quite different from the resistance that the American colonists had advocated in 1776 against Britain. They could rightly argue that Americans then had no representation because the British monarchy was based on undemocratic principles. Thoreau, however, is demanding dissent from law in a representative democracy because he believes that the principles of state authority, which is based on the rule of law and the will of the majority, are illegitimate. That thinking renders his position different from American nationalism in particular and from Hegel’s affirmation of the sanctity of the state in general. Thoreau affirms, in an unqualified sense, the right of individual conscience, which is opposed to the claims of any state, whether a monarchy or a representative democracy.

Finally, Thoreau’s critique of capitalism marks the extreme point of his uniquely “outsider” position. As we have seen, Marx had presented a powerful attack on the institution of private property before Thoreau wrote Walden, but when he moved to Walden Pond in July 1845, Thoreau offered a personal statement against the accumulation of private property and for living a life of simplicity and renunciation of wealth. Emerson, in his fine house in Concord, had warned that “things are in the saddle and ride mankind,” but it was Thoreau who lived the principle that “a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can do without.” Although Thoreau had not read Marx, he would have agreed with Marx’s indictment of capitalism: “Its principal thesis is the renunciation of life and human needs” by teaching that life depends on “the more you have” (Fromm, p. 144) and that “my own power is as great as the power of money” (Fromm, p. 165).

Unlike Marx, however, Thoreau states his position in plain moral terms. He calls the “luxuries” and “so-called comforts of life … positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind,” and he subscribes to “voluntary poverty” (Walden, pp. 14, 218–20). Like Marx, Thoreau could condemn capitalism because it supported slavery, and businessmen because they were more interested in making money than in “humanity” (p. 226), but Thoreau couches his criticism in explicitly moral language that Marx avoided. Marx would have agreed with Thoreau that the “rich man is always sold to the institution which makes him rich,” but Marx would not have added, “Absolutely speaking, the more money, the less virtue” (p. 231). Thoreau criticizes the man of commerce because “his moral ground is taken from under his feet” as he strives for endless profits (p. 232).

Marx did not speak of “virtue” and “moral ground” because he regarded himself as a social scientist describing actual events of history. He would have derided Thoreau as another wishful utopian thinker and not a genuine revolutionary. Marx thought in terms of historical inevitability and class struggle, not individual conscience, moral virtue, and voluntary poverty. Marx hated the capitalists’ accumulation of things as much as Thoreau did, but Marx saw no merit whatsoever in being poor or leading a life of simplicity. The problem was not with wealth per se but with the exploitation of the many by the few, which Marx saw as inevitable under capitalism.

That problem marks a key difference between Marx and Thoreau: while both were “outsiders” who condemned the evils of capitalism, Marx blames the system whereas Thoreau holds the individual strictly responsible. Any person,
Thoreau believes, should be blamed if he or she does not perceive the outrageous injustices of the state and then act to resist them. Marx’s mode of resistance is collective: a person must join the party and recognize his or her class identity. Thoreau’s methods are characteristically individualistic, with no concept of class or call to join any movement. Marx’s end, too, is collective: a communist society in which all would experience the common joys of living in a community. Thoreau would not be induced into a community; any kind of collectivism, whether Marx’s communist society or Hegel’s ideal state, would probably prompt another move to Walden Pond. Thoreau negates nationalism, representative democracy, and capitalism. He affirms individualism and the sanctity of the conscience rather than the state.

Thoreau also expounds a certain view of truth that contrasts with both Marx and Hegel. Thoreau, like Marx and Hegel, prizes truth. “Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth” (*Walden*, p. 219). But both Marx and Hegel believe that they possess the truth as surely as any theologian. They find their truth in history because both are determinists who believe in historical inevitability, that the end they envisage not only should transpire but also must and will occur because impersonal forces (divine and economic) dictate that kind of destiny. That view of “truth possessed” is far from what Thoreau presents. He has no idea of historical inevitability or impersonal forces operating independently of our will. When he speaks of truth it is usually in the context of personal discovery, and he views his own life as part of an ongoing quest for a better understanding of what is truth. He criticized those who have already discovered truth in a particular view of God or nation, and he says that “they who know no purer sources of truth, who have traced up its stream no higher, stand, and wisely stand, by the Bible and the Constitution, and drink at it there with reverence and humility; but they who behold where it comes trickling into this lake or that pool, gird up their loins once more, and continue their pilgrimage toward its fountain-head” (p. 239). Thoreau refutes here the notion that he possesses any claim to an absolute truth. He is in pursuit of truth, on a pilgrimage toward its sources, and different systems may be followed along his journey to the fountain-head. We call that view “truth pursued” rather than “truth possessed,” and Thoreau’s description of the idea of truth pursued anticipates Gandhi’s elaboration of it at the end of this course.

Thoreau anticipates Gandhi most directly and significantly in his theory of revolution and civil disobedience. Gandhi says that he was profoundly influenced by Thoreau’s essay on civil disobedience, and he later sought to apply Thoreau’s individual example to action on a mass scale. The ideas in Thoreau’s essay that especially inspired Gandhi begin with Thoreau’s assertion that “All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable.” Thoreau then urges “honest men to rebel and revolutionize” (p. 225). The specific method of resistance that Thoreau encouraged—and that Gandhi adopted—was to offer civil disobedience, in this case voluntary imprisonment by refusing to pay one’s taxes. “If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact the definition of a peaceable revolution…. When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished” (p. 231). From Hegel’s viewpoint, that doctrine was anathema; from Gandhi’s perspective, it was a call to truth. When Thoreau proclaimed in 1848 a nonviolent method for “peaceable revolution,” he expressed an idea that within 100 years would actually bring a revolution to 400 million Indians.
Lecture Thirteen
Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor

Scope: This lecture examines the chapter on the Grand Inquisitor from Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*. The Grand Inquisitor’s understanding of power over people is based, like Freud’s, on individual and mass psychology rather than on economic forces or political institutions. His understanding of human nature, the values that motivate human beings, and the relationship between individual and society all clash sharply with Thoreau’s views.

Rather like Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, the Grand Inquisitor holds that human beings seek not individual freedom but security. While Thoreau views the claims of individual conscience as paramount, the Inquisitor holds that most people regard freedom of conscience as burdensome. Feeling threatened by freedom, they prefer to be told what to do and believe, and they find comfort and security by submerging themselves into a larger whole.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Explain the Grand Inquisitor’s understanding of human nature and how it shapes his concepts of freedom and state power.
2. Compare and contrast the views of Thoreau and the Grand Inquisitor regarding the relationship between individuals and the society around them.
3. Summarize the Grand Inquisitor’s interpretation of Satan’s three temptations of Christ.
4. Summarize the Inquisitor’s understanding of the “psychology of power” (i.e., the mechanisms by which large institutions, such as mass movements, the state, or the Catholic Church, wield coercive psychological power over their followers).
5. Compare and contrast Christ’s understanding of human nature, freedom, and power with the Inquisitor’s view.

Outline

I. Fyodor Dostoevsky was not a political theorist, but he managed to express in his works extraordinary themes that continue to resonate in political and social theory and in contemporary philosophy.

A. In his chapter on the Grand Inquisitor from *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky presents a view of freedom that differs profoundly from Thoreau’s perspective.

B. Dostoevsky was born into a middle-class Moscow family, became attracted to socialism, narrowly escaped execution, and was sentenced to imprisonment in Siberia.

C. Dostoevsky’s portrayal of the Grand Inquisitor as the epitome of wickedness reflects his enmity toward Roman Catholicism.

II. The chapter begins with a fable of the second coming of Christ.

A. Christ returns during an awkward period for the Roman Catholic Church—the Spanish Inquisition during the sixteenth century—as the Grand Inquisitor is burning individuals at the stake.

B. As Christ walks through the city, He conveys His identity to people through His radiance, His presence, and above all His compassion.

C. People recognize Christ and ask Him for counsel and words of wisdom. The Grand Inquisitor commands his troops to seize Christ. The crowd falls under the Grand Inquisitor’s sway and leads Christ away to prison.

III. To justify his actions, the Grand Inquisitor delivers a monologue to the silent Christ in prison.

A. Contrary to Locke and Thoreau, the Inquisitor asserts that people desire not freedom of choice but security. They want to be told what to believe.

1. Freedom of conscience is a burden from which men try to escape. They seek someone to worship and to whom they can turn over their freedom.

2. People are terrified by the needs that are inherent in freedom—to make choices and to face a hostile world alone. Consequently, they seek security by submerging themselves in the crowd and by affiliating with someone having greater power.

3. The theme of the “fear of freedom” has been used to justify totalitarian regimes during the twentieth century, especially the Nazi regime in Germany.

B. The rest of the monologue concerns the differing responses of Christ and the Grand Inquisitor to Satan’s three temptations of Christ.

1. The first temptation is economic: the provision of bread for all. The Grand Inquisitor believes that human beings by nature demand economic security, not liberty. People cannot rise above the cash nexus to desire higher goods such as truth or the knowledge of God. Christ, however, refuses to compromise men’s freedom by bribing them with material goods.

2. The second temptation is psychological: the use of miracle, mystery, and authority to dazzle people into submission. According to Dostoevsky, the Roman Church excels at such displays. The Grand Inquisitor holds that people demand such psychological security and reassurance. Christ, however, wants people to choose
Him freely, not because they are awed by demonstrations of his immortality.

3. The third temptation is political: possession of all kingdoms of the world. The Inquisitor asserts that human beings desire submission in a universal state that can provide universal peace and security. Christ, however, rejects temporal power.

C. Christ responds to the Inquisitor by wordlessly kissing him.

IV. The encounter between the Inquisitor and Christ illustrates two varieties of power—violent and nonviolent. It prefigures the contrast between Hitler and Gandhi. The Grand Inquisitor symbolizes the twentieth century’s widespread abuse of nationalism in pursuit of power.

Recommended Reading:

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881), an exact contemporary of Marx (1818–1883), was born in Moscow, the second of six children. His father was an army doctor of ample means who had a strong influence on his son, directing him away from his passion for literature and to a career in engineering. In 1837, Dostoevsky was enrolled in the Army Engineering College in St. Petersburg, where he spent five years. His father was murdered by his own peasants in 1838. By 1844, Dostoevsky, although an officer in the Army Engineering Corps, decided to resign his commission and return to literary work. Moreover, at precisely the same time (1842–1844) that Marx was being influenced by the French Utopian Socialists (Saint-Simon and Proudhon), Dostoevsky was also reading them and his thinking became mildly socialist. In Russia, this influence meant that Dostoevsky was critical of the government of Czar Nicholas I (who reigned 1825–1855).

Between 1844 and 1849, Dostoevsky published ten novels and short stories. His first novel, Poor People (1845), brought him instant fame. But his socialism soon got him into serious trouble with the government. In April 1849, he was arrested and imprisoned for eight months, was charged with “taking part in criminal plots, insolent attacks against the government,” and was sentenced to death. Dostoevsky told of his harrowing escape (Intro., p. viii), but the sentence was commuted to four years in Siberia. When he was released in March 1854, he had become a passionate adherent of the Czars, first Nicholas I and then Alexander II (who reigned 1855–1881). Until the end of his life, Dostoevsky remained committed to Russia—to the state religion of the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church and to the ideal of Russian culture. He became a chauvinist and never returned to his early socialist views. Indeed, his Russian nationalism was an intense reaction against that early socialism.

The years between 1864 and 1880 were the period of Dostoevsky’s monumental works: Notes from the Underground (1864), Crime and Punishment (1866), and his last and probably greatest novel, The Brothers Karamazov (1879–1880). “The Grand Inquisitor” constitutes one brilliant chapter (Chap. V, Book V) of The Brothers Karamazov.

The setting of the Grand Inquisitor, which Ivan calls his “poem in prose,” is Seville, Spain, during “the worst time of the Spanish Inquisition” (p. 121), which was the sixteenth century. The Inquisition was founded in 1481 by Ferdinand and Isabella to hunt out non-Catholics—mainly Muslims and Jews—confiscate their property, and burn them at the stake. The first Grand Inquisitor was Isabella’s confessor, Tomás de Torquemada (1420–1498), who had about 2,000 people burned alive at public autos da fé, or “acts of faith.” The old cardinal in the poem, the Grand Inquisitor, is patterned on Torquemada.
As the story opens, Christ enters and is recognized by the people. But the Grand Inquisitor, whose power is challenged, orders his soldiers to seize Christ. The people submit because they are “cowed into submission and trembling obedience” (p. 123). The rest of the story consists mainly of the Grand Inquisitor’s justification of his blasphemy: he announces that he has accepted Satan rather than Christ because Satan, not Christ, has a correct understanding of human nature.

The first key theme of the story is that of freedom. The Grand Inquisitor counters Christ’s view of freedom with his own. Notice how this idea of freedom dominates the poem: in ten pages (pp. 124–33), the words “freedom” or “free” are repeated no less than 45 times. Christ’s view of freedom is spiritual liberation that comes from knowledge of God: the Truth shall make you free. The Grand Inquisitor’s understanding of freedom is quite different: “Man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone to whom he can hand over quickly that gift of freedom with which that unhappy creature is born… Did you forget that man prefers peace and even death to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but at the same time nothing is a greater torture” (p. 129). That view of freedom climaxes (pp. 133–34) with the Grand Inquisitor’s assertion that people want security, not free choice. People need to be saved from themselves. They are afraid, so they naturally look to authority “and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and will be awe stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever” (p. 134).

In his book *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm analyzes the views of freedom and authority expressed by the Grand Inquisitor and relates them to modern political movements, especially the phenomenon of Hitler’s Nazi Germany. Fromm says that when, in contemporary society, the individual experiences freedom in John Stuart Mill’s sense of the term, then he or she is afraid, “alone with his self and confronting an alienated, hostile world.” After quoting the above passage from Dostoevsky’s poem, Fromm observes that “the frightened individual seeks for somebody or something to tie his self to; he cannot bear to be his own individual self any longer, and he tries frantically to get rid of it and to feel security again” by eliminating free choice (*Escape from Freedom*, p. 173). Fromm then relates that attitude directly to Hitler’s understanding of how to mobilize the masses and quotes extensively from *Mein Kampf*, emphasizing Hitler’s insight that the Nazi movement provided security and safety for people who feared the terrible uncertainty in Germany after World War I. The conclusion is that whereas Mill believes that what distinguishes us is a desire for free choice, the Grand Inquisitor and Hitler contend that people are driven mainly by fear of choice and an awesome passion for security.

This view of freedom set forth by the Grand Inquisitor is supported by the second theme of the poem, his concept of human nature. The two themes are closely related: the desire for security, not freedom, is part of human nature, and we want security primarily because we know ourselves to be “weak, sinful, worthless, and rebellious” (p. 127). The Grand Inquisitor consistently characterizes human nature as “weak and vile,” saying to Christ that “man is weaker and baser by nature than You believed him to be” (p. 131). We are weak and sinful so we fear freedom and seek to embrace authority. Indeed, human nature yearns for “miracle, mystery, and authority” (pp. 130, 132) to comfort it in moments of chronic doubt and anxiety.

These two dominant themes of freedom and human nature are brilliantly woven by Dostoevsky around the three pillars of the poem’s structure, the “three questions,” (p. 126) or the three temptations of Christ, expressed in the New Testament, Matthew 4:1–11 (and analyzed incisively by Ellis Sandoz in his study of the poem, titled *Political Apocalypse*, especially pp. 153–54, 162). To be brief, we will call these the three temptations of Plenty, Pride, and Power. The Grand Inquisitor, defying Christ in the name of Satan, rejects each of Christ’s responses when He is tempted by the Devil in the wilderness. In the first temptation, that of Plenty, Christ says that “man cannot live by bread alone.” The Grand Inquisitor screams back that people are far more concerned with fulfilling their material or economic wants than pursuing their spiritual concerns. “In the end, they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, ‘Make us your slaves, but feed us’” (p. 127). The Grand Inquisitor’s point is that people consistently yield to the temptation of plenty because they want not “the bread of Heaven” but “earthly bread”—the money and property that will provide security. If the first question is “Will we sell our souls to mammon?” then the answer that comes from modern humanity, loud and clear, is “YES!” To expect pursuit of God, truth, and free choice is to contradict human nature.

The second temptation, that of Pride, is the most obscure and complex of the three. The Grand Inquisitor alludes to it (p. 130) with his reference to Christ’s refusal to jump from the high “pinnacle of the temple” and to demand that God rescue Him with His angels. Such an act by Christ would have amounted to the sin of pride because He would have indulged in a vain display of His superhuman nature by flaunting His immortality. In like manner, Christ refused to “descend from the Cross,” which He surely could have done with His divine powers. Christ resisted this temptation of pride, according to the Grand Inquisitor, because He wanted to enable each individual to choose to follow Him freely and not to be awed by demonstrations of His immortality. The difficulty of this argument is that Christ is identified in our minds with the performance of miracles (e.g., walking on water), and Dostoevsky’s interpretation is therefore obscure. However, Dostoevsky, who is presenting the Grand Inquisitor as a demonic figure with wrong ideas about humanity, makes the point effectively here that it is the Grand Inquisitor who commits the sin of pride. The Grand Inquisitor is guilty of intellectual arrogance or of playing God. Dostoevsky identifies that as the main sin of the Roman Catholic Church with its avowal of infallibility, but he also sees modern science as guilty of the sin of pride because...
Lecture Fourteen
The Idea of Anarchism and the Example of Emma Goldman

Scope: In this lecture, Professor Dalton discusses anarchism and one of its premier practitioners, Emma Goldman. The theory of anarchism bears striking similarities to the theories of Thoreau and Rousseau, especially in its benign view of human nature, its stress upon compassion and community among human beings, and its extreme distrust of state power.

We examine first the origins and meaning of “anarchy,” which has little to do with the popular image of anarchists as violence-prone sociopaths. As formulated by theorists such as William Godwin, anarchism discerns a natural and rational order that is within society and is based on voluntary cooperation among equal human beings rather than on hierarchy and coercive state power. Finally, we review Emma Goldman’s understanding and application of the central principles of anarchism.

Although anarchism was a revolutionary doctrine, the revolution that it sought to achieve had less to do with Marx’s proletarian revolution than with Thoreau’s and Gandhi’s revolutions of nonviolent noncooperation with evil. Anarchists sought to transform society by removing from it the deadening weight of the state, thereby liberating men’s natural cooperative spirit. Unlike Machiavelli and Marx, they refused to evaluate the means of effecting that transformation on the basis of the good to be achieved. Subsequent revolutionaries, such as Adolf Hitler, would prove far less scrupulous.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:
1. Give an etymological definition of “anarchy,” and explain the meaning of the concept.
2. Explain the theory of human nature that underlies modern anarchism, as described by William Godwin and George Woodcock.
3. Compare and contrast Thoreau’s political and social outlook with the theory of anarchism.
4. Summarize the five principles of anarchism.
5. Describe the principles or mechanism by which social order will be produced under conditions of anarchism, according to anarchist theory.
6. Describe Emma Goldman’s critique of Marxism, particularly its reliance on violent means to effect the proletarian revolution.
7. Summarize the anarchist concept of freedom, and identify its requisites.

Outline

I. The ancient idea of anarchism, meaning literally “without rule,” expressed in modern times by a broad range of thinkers, from nonviolent Christian anarchists such as Leo Tolstoy to violent anarchist revolutionaries such as Michael Bakunin.
   A. Ancient Greeks such as Creon and Thucydides view anarchy as the ultimate human evil.
   B. However, Zeno, the founder of Stoicism in the third century B.C., advocates anarchism. He calls for a stateless society characterized by perfect equality and freedom, in which people could recover their natural goodness and develop a harmonious and cosmopolitan society.
   C. Nineteenth-century industrialism encouraged the development of anarchist doctrine.

II. The modern concept of anarchism.
   A. William Godwin in An Inquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793) maintains that anarchism presumes that society is naturally rational, equal, and harmonious.
   B. George Woodcock in Anarchism proposes that human nature will evolve to the point that government is no longer necessary. Woodcock defines anarchism as a system of thought seeking fundamental social changes and as the replacement of authoritarian rule by nongovernmental cooperation among free individuals.

III. The life of Emma Goldman (1869–1940).
   A. Goldman was born in Russia and emigrated to the United States in 1886.
   B. In her autobiography, Living My Life, she describes how her father’s authoritarianism instilled in her the desire to rebel.
   C. She campaigned in New York City for improved working conditions and was repeatedly jailed. She advocated free love, atheism, conscientious objection, and birth control.

IV. The five leading principles of anarchism.
   A. Human nature is both fundamentally benign and dynamic.
      1. One view (e.g., Machiavelli and Freud) holds that human nature is malign and that people are aggressive and untrustworthy. The state must exercise control over people.

2. Another view, typified by communism, holds that human nature is infinitely malleable according to the will of a powerful revolutionary leader or party.
3. The Fascist view, typified by the Inquisitor and Hitler, sees human nature as infinitely gullible and credulous.
4. Anarchists view human nature as benign but not as infinitely malleable or gullible. People will do the right thing if government does not get in the way.

B. Anarchists stress the importance of cooperation rather than competition, arguing that the former ensures the survival and progress of the human species.
   1. Peter Kropotkin argues in Mutual Aid that all our actions must be guided by our sense of oneness with each other. The principle of mutual support and defense is deeply rooted in all living things.
   2. Competition is injurious to the species and should be avoided.
   3. Anarchists call for cooperative forms of organization based not on hierarchy or other forms of authority but on shared interests.

C. Anarchists view the state as a repressive and illegitimate institution that obstructs social progress.
   1. All coercive power is evil and destructive, whether wielded by an authoritarian or a democratic regime. According to Goldman, the tyranny of a majority is worse than the tyranny of a dictator.
   2. The Communists hold, by contrast, that the proletariat needs the state in order to consolidate its own domination and defeat the bourgeoisie.

D. Individual liberty cannot exist without social and economic equality.
   1. Freedom is incomplete without economic opportunity.
   2. Freedom is a positive, not a negative, concept. People must be given the economic opportunity they need in order to be free.

E. Anarchists reject the Marxist principle that any means are justified to attain a revolutionary end.
   1. Some anarchists endorse violent methods, but most insist on the relationship between means and ends.
   2. According to Emma Goldman, the means must be identical in spirit and tendency with the ends sought.

Recommended Reading:
Goldman, Emma. Living My Life and My Disillusionment in Russia.
Shulman, Alix. Red Emma Speaks.
Five Principles of Anarchism

1. The future is ours to determine: determination denies choice. Human nature is dynamic, with abundant capacities for a wide range of behavior—malevolent and benign, cowardly and heroic, brutal and compassionate, cooperative and competitive. We are not locked into behaving in any determined manner; we can shape the kind of behavior we wish through the exercise of choice.

2. Community with diversity: cooperation is the way to attain it. Cooperation rather than competition is the capacity that humans should develop and reinforce. Our natural need of sociability or mutual aid is most eloquently expressed by Peter Kropotkin, who argues in Mutual Aid that we must be guided in our acts by "our perception of oneness with each human being," for "in the ethical progress of man, mutual support—not mutual struggle—has had the leading part" and will continue to foster such moral progress as we are able to attain. Social organization is necessary to further the spirit of cooperation yet guarantee diversity. Kropotkin and others like Emma Goldman and Enrico Malatesta emphasize that anarchism is not opposed to organization, only to hierarchical, authoritarian forms of it. For Goldman, organization must be "based primarily on freedom. It is a natural and voluntary grouping of energies to secure results beneficial to humanity." Malatesta cites several forms of organization, such as "scientific or peace societies and congresses, international rescue efforts, and Red Cross associations." These forms are based on satisfaction of human needs rather than accumulation of power. They allow for maximum diversity.

3. The state is an obstacle: don't vote because voting encourages the state. R. P. Wolff argues in his In Defense of Anarchism that "the defining mark of the state is authority, the right to rule. The primary obligation of man is autonomy. An anarchist may grant the necessity of complying with the law under certain circumstances or for the time being. But he will never view the commands of the state as legitimate, as having a binding moral force." That position is taken by Thoreau.

4. Liberty with equality: homelessness is not inevitable. Like most modern ideologies, anarchism is indebted to the values set forth by the French revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity. More than Marxism, anarchism stresses the value of individual liberty; more than liberalism, it emphasizes social equality. Because of that dual emphasis, anarchism has difficulties in reconciling both of those values with the third, fraternity, or the need for a caring, sharing sense of social community. But the problem of dealing satisfactorily with the three conflicting values or goals is not unique to anarchism: it is the major task of modern political theory. Gandhi attempts to reconcile the three values with his conceptions of sarvadaya and swaraj, which suggest that a sense of both human equality and community can emerge only from an individual quest for spiritual liberation. The welfare of all depends on the moral development of each.

5. Means-end relationship: what goes around comes around. The major debate among anarchists is over the issue of violent or nonviolent methods of change. For Michael Bakunin, violence is essential, while for Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi, nonviolence represents the superior path of revolutionary change and the only means to a nonauthoritarian society. Nowhere in political theory—classical or modern—has this debate over violence or nonviolence, and especially the importance of using the right means, reached a richer expression than in anarchist thought. The issue of the means-end relationship in Marxism-Leninism is at odds with the theories of several anarchists, and that, from Emma Goldman's viewpoint, is the main problem with Marxism.
Emma Goldman's Theory

Emma Goldman (1869–1940), anarchist extraordinary, was born in Russia and emigrated from there to the United States in 1886. She relates in her autobiography, Living My Life, how her authoritarian father instilled in her a desire to rebel. Her political career began in New York City (she lived in the Village at 210 East 15th Street), where she joined anarchists such as Johann Most and Alexander Berkman to promote causes such as better work conditions for women seamstresses. Goldman quickly became one of the most inspiring orators of her time and thus was regarded by the U.S. government as among America’s most dangerous radicals. She was imprisoned in 1893 for a speech that attempted to incite the unemployed of New York City to riot, again in 1901 for being implicated in the assassination of President McKinley, and finally in 1917 for opposing American involvement in World War I. She delighted in heresy, preaching “free love to puritans, atheism to churchmen, revolution to reformers,” and pacifism to soldiers. She once said, “The more opposition I encountered, the more I was in my element” (Alix Shulman’s biographical introduction to Red Emma Speaks).

After releasing Goldman from prison in 1919, the U.S. government deemed her too dangerous for this country and deported her to the Soviet Union. Goldman anticipated that she would see in Russia, following Lenin’s Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the enactment of many of her radical ideals. Instead she found the betrayal of revolution, as she comments in the “Afterword” to her book My Disillusionment in Russia (1924).

As her response to the Bolshevik revolution shows, Goldman was capable of changing her ideas drastically. That inclination is evident in her changing attitudes toward the use of violence for social and political revolution. Alix Shulman records the extent of her changing ideas on violence (Preface to Part 3 of Red Emma Speaks). At first, Goldman subscribed to the idea that the end justifies the means, a doctrine adopted by a wide range of political theorists from Machiavelli to Marx. Then, as a result of a series of failures by anarchists to use political violence successfully, she began to doubt its efficacy. By 1923, she could write that “the one thing I am convinced of as I have never been in my life is that the gun decides nothing at all. Even if it accomplishes what it set out to do—which it rarely does—it brings so many evils in its wake as to defeat its original aim.” Still later, in 1928, Goldman seemed to acknowledge the choice that must be made by revolutionaries between violence and nonviolence when she wrote that either “we must become Bolsheviks, accept terror and all it implies, or become Tolstoyans. There is no other way.” Yet, as Alix Shulman observes, she did not, in fact, make this choice. On the one hand, she asserted the necessary relationship between means and ends, but on the other hand, she refused to renounce all revolutionary violence (writing at one point, “Revolution is indeed a violent process”).
Lecture Fifteen
Hitler's Use of Power

Scope: In this lecture, Professor Dalton examines Adolf Hitler's politics of exclusion. He offers three possible explanations of why Hitler succeeded in imposing his politics of exclusion. The first is psychological in nature and invokes Freudian analysis to argue that Hitler used his demagogic powers to liberate the collective unconscious of the German people and articulate their latent aggressiveness. The second emphasizes the economic devastation of Germany following World War I, and the third stresses distinctly political factors such as leadership, ideology, and mass party organization.

Together, these explanations help to account for Hitler's rise to power. Much like the Grand Inquisitor, Hitler perceived that the German people sought economic and psychological security, in exchange for which they would willingly surrender their freedom to him. He tried to provide that sense of security by uniting Germans against an internal enemy—the Jews, whom he stigmatized as responsible for Germany's woes.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to do the following:
1. Evaluate various explanations of the success of Hitler's political movement.
2. Describe the characteristics and underlying assumptions of Hitler's "politics of exclusion."
3. Describe the role of militarism and violence in Hitler's ideology.

Outline

I. What accounts for the rapid and stunning success of Hitler's Nazi movement and his politics of exclusion?
   A. Some analysts propose a psychological explanation.
      1. Following Strasser's critique, this explanation holds that Hitler liberated Germany's mass unconscious and gave voice to its innermost aspirations. He told the German people what they wanted to hear, and he proclaimed their most secret desires.
      2. In Freudian terms, the German people's mass superego was submerged in their mass id, which led them to give full vent to their unarticulated desire for aggression.
   B. Other theorists offer an economic explanation.

II. Hitler's politics of exclusion was directed above all against the Jews.
   A. Hitler describes his conversion to anti-Semitism in Mein Kampf.
      1. Hitler came to see the Jews not only as non-German but also as less than human.
      2. He drew on a longstanding German tradition of anti-Semitism espoused by many respected German scholars.
   B. Hitler's politics of exclusion resembles in exaggerated form the dehumanization of untouchables in the Indian caste system. The excluded are typically stigmatized as unclean. Hitler perpetuated the stereotype of Jews as physically and morally unclean. The untouchables were viewed in similar terms.
   C. Hitler both dehumanized the Jews (and Communists) and portrayed them as superhuman, being everywhere and controlling everything.
   D. He portrayed the German people in feminine terms; they must be seduced by the Nazis before they are seduced by the Jews.
   E. Hitler asserted that he was doing God's work in exterminating the Jews. He invokes God and Christianity throughout Mein Kampf.

III. Hitler glorifies the state, militarism, and violence.
   A. He admits to being in love with militarism and heroic struggle.
   B. Hitler holds a very different view of violence from that of other theorists whom we have examined in these lectures.
      1. Plato and Aristotle see violence as the sign of a sick state.
      2. Machiavelli sees violence as a legitimate tool of state policy to be used when it is expedient to do so, but he does not endorse wanton or excessive use of violence.
      3. Marx sees violence as a legitimate instrument to use in attacking the bourgeois state, but he does not glorify violence.
      4. Hitler, however, glorifies violence and embraces it as a creed.

IV. Hitler offers gender analysis.
   A. Hitler views the mass psyche as feminine; it is moved less by reason than by desire for domination by a more powerful force. He analogizes
the German people to a woman who prefers to bow before a strong man rather than dominate a weakling.

B. Hitler holds that the masses, like women, have powerful emotions but low rational capability. Nazi propaganda sought to exploit simple but powerful emotional chords. It emphasized frequent repetition of emotional slogans rather than rational arguments.

Recommended reading:

Analysis of Hitler’s Ideology

Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) was born in Austria. His father was a customs official. The development of his ideas, as we will analyze them in the context of Mein Kampf ("My Struggle," written in prison in 1924), can be divided into three phases (page numbers refer to Mein Kampf).

The first phase encompasses Hitler’s childhood (1889–1907), during which he formed his impressions of life from interaction with his father (who died in 1903) and in school (he attended high school but dropped out before graduation). Early in life he began to stress the importance of struggle (pp. 6, 11–12, and later developments on 135, 285, 295–96). He depicts struggle as a masculine force and relates it to themes of nationalism (pp. 4, 10, 13, 15–16, 124) and militarism (pp. 6, 161, 163–64). All of his later ideas are outgrowths of the central emphasis on struggle.

The second phase of Hitler’s ideological evolution took place during his time in Vienna (1907–1913). In September 1907, Hitler at age 18 set out for Vienna to gain admission to the Academy of Fine Arts. He failed and was bitterly disappointed. His mother died the following December. He later tried again to enter the academy and failed. The next six years of his life were utterly crucial for his intellectual development. As one of his biographers, J. C. Fest, observes, Hitler spent his period in Vienna observing the dregs of humanity from the perspective of wretched men’s hostels: "By interpreting men exclusively in the light of that twisted experience and seeing in their motives nothing but hate, ruthlessness, corruption, greed, lust for power, cruelty, or fear, he imagined, with provincial complacency, that he had come close to ultimate knowledge, whereas actually he was merely revealing his own desperate and depraved personality" (Face to the Third Reich, p. 10). In Mein Kampf, Hitler says that Vienna was the "harshest, though most thorough school of my life," in which he obtained "the foundations for a philosophy in general and a political view in particular which later I only needed to supplement in detail, but which never left me" (p. 125). Three of the key components of his philosophy were anti-Marxism (pp. 37–48); antiparliamentarianism (pp. 76–108); and, above all, anti-Semitism, the attitude that remained at the core of his thought and personality (pp. 51–65, 300–29).

The third phase of Hitler’s development corresponds with World War I, which had a tremendous impact on his personality and thought. Hitler wrote that when the war began in August 1914, "it was desired by the whole people," and he felt an "ecstasy of overflowing enthusiasm" because it presented the "hardest of all struggles," a "gigantic struggle" (p. 161). As an advocate of struggle and militarism, he welcomed the war, enlisted in the German army, and served with distinction as a corporal until he was gassed and hospitalized just before the war ended. Hitler’s ideas about struggle, expressed in the context of his response to World War I (pp. 161–64), are related to his anti-Semitism (pp. 169–70) and to his ideas about force and violence (pp. 170–72). His concept of violence is
especially noteworthy in this chapter, for he argues that “any violence which
does not spring from a firm, spiritual base, will be waver ing and uncertain.” That
is, violence must not be seen as “naked force” alone, but should be inspired by
an ideological commitment. For this purpose the use of propaganda was
essential, as Hitler indicates in the crucial chapter on “War Propaganda” (pp.
176–86). The connection of his views on propaganda to his ideas on the means-
end relationship (pp. 177–79) and his concept of the masses (pp. 180–85) is
important. His view of the masses as feminine is introduced on p. 42 and
repeated on p. 183.

The text of Mein Kampf deserves close analysis because it presents with striking
clarity and candor the essence of Hitler’s thought. Some of the work’s main
ideas, emerging from Hitler’s phases of development just discussed, are de-
scribed below:

1. The idea of gender is connected to political struggle and leadership, a key
statement of which occurs on p. 42: “Like a woman … they have been
abandoned.” That statement should be related to the passage on p. 183 noted
above, and also to his views on anti-Semitism and on the Jews as the
“seducer of our people” (pp. 61, 63, 325). The German people need a
“strong man,” a “commander” to protect them from the “seducers.”

2. The theme of struggle relates to war, nationalism, God, and Fate (pp. 161–
64) as noted above, but also later in Mein Kampf to themes of domination as
a necessary mode of racial progress and purification. Thus throughout
history, the “Aryan”—unlike the “modern pacifist”—subjugates “lower
peoples” and bends them to his will. Through his struggle and domination,
he ensures the upward movement of peoples, the avoidance of “blood
mixture,” and the need to preserve “pure blood” (pp. 295–96).

3. A theory of movement politics, described especially in chapter twelve,
connects Hitler’s ideas of the masses (pp. 330–43) and his insistence on the
movement as “anti-parliamentarianism” (p. 345) with a powerful centralized
organization (pp. 346–47) and a dominant leadership (pp. 349–51). Hitler’s
emphasis on the need for the political movement to encourage “fanaticism
and intolerance” (pp. 350–51) and to “intolerantly impose its will on all
others” lies at the heart of his central concept of exclusiveness.

4. Hitler sees the Nazi state as the vital instrument for carrying on the struggle
for racial purity. Like Hegel, he cites Providence as the designer of the state
(p. 150), and he insists that the individual must “sacrifice himself for the
totality” of the state (p. 152). Unlike Hegel, however, Hitler injects a strong
element of racism into his idea of the state as a means to the end of
preserving racial purity (pp. 393, 397–98, 402–03).

Lecture Sixteen
Gandhi’s Use of Power

Scope: Hitler’s glorification of violence as a creed of life clashes not only with
the classical tradition’s view of violence as the mark of a disordered
state, but also with Machiavelli’s and Marx’s more restrained and
pragmatic endorsement of the use of violence. It conflicts still more
with Gandhi’s absolute rejection of violent means to achieve political
goals. Like the anarchists and unlike Machiavelli or Hitler, Gandhi
denies that a good end can ever justify unjust means. In this lecture, we
review Gandhi’s formulation and exercise of the principle of nonviolent
noncooperation, which owed much to Thoreau’s earlier theory of civil
disobedience. Perceiving that violence dehumanized the practitioner as
well as the victim, Gandhi urged Indians to fight British imperialism
through nonviolent civil disobedience.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be
able to do the following:
1. Compare and contrast the skills, methods, and goals of Hitler and
Gandhi as political leaders of mass movements.
2. Compare Hitler’s understanding of violence and its use with those of
Gandhi, Goldman, Marx, Machiavelli, Plato, and Aristotle.
3. Contrast Hitler’s liberation of the mass unconscious of the German
people with Gandhi’s liberation of the mass unconscious of the Indian
people.
4. Identify what Gandhi regarded as the primary tool of British imper-
ialism in India, and describe the means he advocated to neutralize that
tool.
5. Explain Gandhi’s concept of freedom, or swaraj, and contrast it with the
ideas of freedom held by the other theorists whom we have studied in
this course.
6. Describe the revolution that Gandhi sought to produce among the
Indian people; describe the means by which that revolution would come
about; and compare Gandhi’s revolution with those pursued by Hitler,
Marx, Goldman, and Thoreau.
7. Explain fully Gandhi’s reasons for insisting on ahimsa, or nonviolence.
Outline

I. Gandhi’s politics of inclusion and his conception of political power.
   A. While in South Africa, Gandhi read and was influenced by Thoreau, and he led Indians in civil disobedience against the government’s denial of civil rights to them.
   B. In India, Gandhi took charge of the movement for independence from British rule in 1919.
      1. Before that time, the independence movement had been split between advocates of moderation and extremism.
      2. Gandhi’s method of nonviolent noncooperation helped to energize the independence movement and win new supporters for it.
      3. Gandhi pointed to the Amritsar massacre as proof that British imperialism had dehumanized the British as well as the Indians.
   C. Gandhi’s form of mass action was rich and noble, and thus it clashes with the noxious Hitlerian kind of mass action.
      1. Nehru observes that the essence of Gandhi’s teaching was liberation from fear.
      2. Gandhi appealed to positive elements in the mass unconscious, not to negative and aggressive elements, as Hitler did.
      3. Gandhi believed in nonviolence as a creed, while Hitler believed in violence as a creed.

II. Concepts of inclusivity in Gandhi’s thought.
   A. The first concept of inclusivity was swaraj, meaning rule over oneself (self-discipline), which produces true liberation.
      1. Swaraj allows one to liberate oneself from illusion, ignorance, and fear.
      2. Swaraj includes the idea of self-mastery and the understanding of oneness with all other selves.
      3. The idea of journey is essential in achieving liberation; the individual achieves self-mastery by means of a personal journey.
      4. Political independence is not sufficient; Indians must liberate themselves from their own attitudes of exclusivity. Self-government depends ultimately on an interior revolution or reformation.
   B. The second concept of inclusivity is satya, meaning the pursuit (rather than the possession) of truth.
      1. To find truth is to realize oneself and one’s destiny to become perfect.
      2. The highest truth is that we are all part of one another.
   C. The third concept of inclusivity is ahimsa, meaning the practice of nonviolence. Ahimsa is intertwined with satya.

1. Nonviolence is the means, and the highest truth is the end. Gandhi insists on the essential connection between means and ends.
2. Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of humankind because it can elicit the best from people.
3. Nobody has full possession of the truth; it is sought but never possessed.

D. The fourth concept of inclusivity is satyagraha, which refers to the power generated by truth and nonviolence.
   1. Satyagraha liberates the active energies of love and compassion, which are stronger than hate.
   2. Satyagraha is a gentle force that is a complete substitute for violence.

E. The fifth concept of inclusivity is sarvodaya, meaning equality.
   1. An ideal civilization deliberately and voluntarily restricts wants.
   2. Gandhi believes that in perceiving the essential unity of humanity, we will desire to uplift others. The privileged classes would develop a sense of responsibility to use their wealth in a socially constructive manner, and the less privileged would resolve to overcome their own deprivation. Through nonviolent action, economic and social equality can be reconciled with individual freedom.
   3. Gandhi insists on equality among Indians as well as between the Indians and British.

Recommended Reading:
Exclusiveness and Inclusiveness in the Ideas of Hitler and Gandhi

The idea of exclusiveness is defined as an attitude of mind that views the world in terms of stereotypical categories, dividing people by assigning them fixed identities according to their class or caste, sex, religion, nation, or ethnicity. That perspective attributes abstract characteristics to individuals, seeing them in impersonal terms and transforming them into objects.

One prominent example of this mentality is the way that untouchables are perceived today in India and have been perceived for perhaps 3,000 years. They are born into the untouchable status and cannot normally alter that identity. That status dictates every form of behavior in society according to the rules that are prescribed by tradition. Untouchables are excluded from many forms of social interaction. The traditionally privileged castes rigorously enforce this exclusiveness. Although the theory and practice of untouchability is unique to India, the mentality that underlies it can be found among practitioners of apartheid in South Africa; Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; or anti-Semites, racists, and homophobes around the world. Indeed, this kind of thinking and behavior is so common that it is often regarded as inevitable. These lectures highlight the singular example of Hitler’s thought and experience of anti-Semitism because the outcome to which it led (i.e., the Holocaust) was so extreme. The Holocaust clarifies the implications of exclusiveness by showing us, writ large, its ultimate logic when it becomes state doctrine.

The idea of inclusiveness should be defined first in terms of what it is not. It is not simply a political strategy for “including” large numbers of people. Hitler was extremely successful at including millions of Germans in his Nazi movement, but that success did not make him inclusive, at least as the word is intended here. The defining feature of inclusiveness is its attitude of not excluding any individual by virtue of his or her class or caste, sex, religion, nation, or ethnicity from forms of social interaction or political participation. The theory of inclusiveness envisages a society that strives not to divide and dominate, but that instead allows us to relate to one another on the basis of one category alone—our common humanity. Just as we examine Hitler’s thought to clarify the theory of exclusiveness, so Gandhi’s thought illustrates the idea of inclusiveness. In both theory and practice, Gandhi managed to give dramatic clarity to the meaning and implications of inclusive behavior. Thus, Hitler’s anti-Semitic statements in Mein Kampf may be sharply contrasted with Gandhi’s comment:

I have known no distinction between relatives and strangers, country men and foreigners, white and colored, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Mussulmans, Parsees, Christians, or Jews. I may say that my heart has been incapable of making any such distinctions.... I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man falls, the whole world falls.

Gandhi concluded that “my nationalism and my religion are not exclusive but inclusive and they must be so consistently with the welfare of all life.”

We can enhance the value of distinguishing inclusiveness and exclusiveness by using those concepts to summarize the main concerns of these lectures (i.e., to show how the idea of inclusiveness is part of a nexus of concepts that forms logical relationships among the major ideas of the lectures). The concept of inclusiveness is related to the ideas of “truth pursued”: nonviolence, means as determining ends, freedom as residing in the capacity for individual choice and a person’s quest for self-realization, the significance of moral values in shaping human behavior, and the desirability of limited or nonexistent political authority. Conversely, the concept of exclusiveness lies at the center of a conceptual cluster that affirms the ideas of “truth possessed”: violence as necessary and desirable for conflict resolution, ends as justifying the means, “positive freedom,” and the essential role of strong political authority in the form of a powerful state or party.
Stages in the Development of M. K. (Mahatma) Gandhi as a Leader

Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, Gujarat (on the west coast of India). He was assassinated on January 30, 1948, in Delhi. His life and thought may be examined in the context of four major phases of development:

I. Primary identity: shaped by three factors.
   A. Region of birth. Porbandar was a backwater in terms of British influence. In contrast to Bombay or Calcutta, it was very provincial.
   B. Caste. The vaishya caste was third in the Hindu caste hierarchy, which meant that Gandhi was relatively lowborn. A subcaste to which Gandhi belonged was the bania, or small business caste. Gandhi means “grocer”; his caste was noted for its strong practical sense.
   C. Family. Gandhi stressed the lasting effect on him of his family, which was not anglicized, but deeply religious (with both Hindu and Jain elements). His mother exerted decisive influence on him through her example of vows, fasting, and self-control. Gandhi’s basic attitudes toward the culture of India in terms of religion, sex, and identification with the oppressed (Harijans, or untouchables) were formed in 1887.

II. Emulative identity: three periods in his personal attempt at imitating British imperialism.
   A. 1881–1886. Gandhi’s secondary education occurred at Alfred High School in Rajkot, Gujarat, where classes were taught in English with an English master. His basic attitudes of admiration and anxiety toward British culture were formed there.
   B. 1888–1891. Gandhi was in London to take a degree in law during this period. A classic expression of his emulative attitude can be seen in his Autobiography, in which he recalls this period in chapter XV (“Playing the English Gentleman”). He returned to India in 1891.
   C. 1893–1906. In 1893, Gandhi left India for South Africa where he remained until 1914.
      1. He was involved in political leadership of the Indian minority in South Africa, which in 1893 had a population of 66,000 Indians (mostly indentured laborers), 570,000 Europeans (British and Dutch), and 2 million Africans.
      2. Gandhi’s emulative attitude developed into a liberal style of action patterned on Indian liberals and moderates. He formed the National Indian Congress on the model of the Indian National Congress; he protested grievances of Indians in court; and he used petitions and the press, including his newspaper, Indian Opinion, established in 1903. These were all moderate, legal, constitutional means.

III. Exclusive identity: marked by two key “moments.”
   A. Gandhi’s break with emulation began with the Zulu “rebellion” in June 1906.
      1. He formed an ambulance corps of Indians to assist the British colonial government. The rebellion turned into a massacre of 3,500 Zulus.
      2. Gandhi’s subsequent reappraisal of his emulative identity began with a vow of brahmacharya (including sexual continence, which Gandhi saw as the path to self-discipline). In his study of Gandhi’s development, Gandhi’s Truth, Erik Erikson described the profound influence on Gandhi of the Zulu rebellion: “The experience of witnessing the outrages perpetrated on black bodies by white henchmen aroused in Gandhi both a deeper identification with the maltreated, and a stronger aversion against all male sadism, including such sexual sadism as he had probably felt from childhood on to be a part of all exploitation of women by men” (p. 194).
   B. Gandhi then made the crucial connections among the three major forms of exploitation and domination of his era: imperialism, racism, and sexism.
   C. After government passage of the “Black Act” in August 1907, he called a meeting of 3,000 Indians on September 11 in Johannesburg. That became the moment when satyagraha (“truth-force,” seen always as an active force in contrast to passive resistance, which he rejected) was born. Mass arrests followed resistance to the Black Act, and satyagraha campaigns continued until 1914 when reforms were granted by the government of South Africa.
   D. In 1909, Gandhi visited England for five months to lobby Parliament. His arrival on July 10 was preceded by the assassination of a British official by an Indian terrorist.
      1. Between August and October, Gandhi was in constant dialogue with both sides of the Indian issue—British liberals in Parliament and Indian terrorists in London.
      2. The result was his formation of a new exclusive ideology set forth on his return from sailing to South Africa, November 13–22. In those nine days, he drafted his first major treatise, Hind Swaraj (Indian Independence). He rejected Western civilization and affirmed Hindu tradition in exclusive terms by preaching the superiority of Indian culture.

IV. Inclusive identity: embraced during most of Gandhi’s political career in India, from 1919 to 1948.
A. The years of 1915 to 1918 were transitional.
1. After returning to India in January 1915, Gandhi moved slowly in an unfamiliar context to experiment with nonviolent campaigns on a small scale. He was disoriented and confused by the events of World War I and their effects on India. He mistakenly cooperated with the British government in India in its war effort in the hope that India would gain independence after the war.
2. Economic distress after the war’s end in 1918 contributed to his own and India’s disillusionment (as Nehru describes below).

B. A series of events in early 1919 jolted Gandhi into a clear view of British rule in India.
1. The “Rowlatt Bills” were passed, providing the British government with powers of trial without jury or right of appeal, allowing preventive detention of anyone “threatening public safety” and “dangerous persons may be continuously detained,” and allowing possession of any “seditious document” to be punishable by two years in prison, followed by another two years at the government’s discretion.
2. In March 1919, Gandhi called for the first national satyagraha to resist the Rowlatt Bills. The campaign included a 24-hour mass fast to prepare people for civil disobedience, suspension of all work for a general hartal (strike), and public meetings to urge withdrawal of the Rowlatt Bills.
3. In April, civil agitation in the Punjab (northern India), especially in the city of Amritsar (population 160,000) led to the imposition of martial law. There, on April 13, a turning point in the British empire was reached with the “Amritsar Massacre.” A British Indian army force of 50 riflemen under the command of General Reginald Dyer fired on an unarmed crowd of 10,000 Indians. The result was 400 dead and 1,500 wounded. The massacre was followed by Dyer’s infamous “crawling order.” Later, Dyer’s actions received high praise in London.
4. The massacre unpredictably transformed Gandhi’s political attitudes toward the British government. In his leadership of the next major campaign of nonviolent noncooperation (1919–1922), Gandhi overcame his previous exclusiveness and adopted an inclusive style based on trust, tolerance, and active nonviolence.
5. Gandhi’s theory of inclusiveness is contained in his own words. But his theory was expressed most eloquently in his actions, especially his “salt march” of 1930 and his Calcutta fast of 1947.
   a. The salt march is examined by Joan Bondurant in Conquest of Violence (pp. 88–102). She correctly states that “as for the elements of true satyagraha [nonviolence resistance], all are to be found in the salt satyagraha” (p. 100).

b. Judith Brown has analyzed the salt march or satyagraha at length in her book, Gandhi and Civil Disobedience. Its inclusiveness is demonstrated in the way that Gandhi drew into the independence struggle groups of Indians not previously politicized, especially women, and so turned the movement into a broader-based effort than had existed before in India or perhaps in any colonized country.
6. Yet, inclusiveness meant for Gandhi not merely the strategy of broadening his potential base by expanding numbers. Inclusiveness was meant to extend to one’s adversaries as well as allies. That inclusive philosophy was evident in Gandhi’s request that the British cooperate in an effort to elevate humanity above imperialism, and in Gandhi’s attitudes of trust and perception of truth.
7. The example of the Calcutta fast illustrates Gandhi’s inclusiveness toward Indian Muslims.
   a. The religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India erupted at the time of independence (1947) into full-scale civil war. The worst fighting occurred in Calcutta, where the large Muslim minority was especially powerful and where it pitted itself against the Hindus. That action produced a savage outburst called the “Great Calcutta Killing,” and its bloody aftermath lasted throughout 1946 and 1947.
   b. In August 1947, Gandhi came to Calcutta and attempted to restore order by fasting “until peace comes to Calcutta.” The fast was dramatically successful. The British historian E. W. R. Lumby called it “the greatest miracle of modern times.”
Gandhi’s Political Theory: Five Concepts

Gandhi’s political theory may be analyzed in the context of five major ideas: swaraj, or liberation; satya, or truth; ahimsa or nonviolence; satyagraha, or power; and sarvodaya, or equality. Gandhi wrote extensively on each of these concepts, and they have been examined systematically by Joan Bondurant in Conquest of Violence and Raghavan Iyer in The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi. The following selection from Gandhi’s writings represents only a brief statement on each concept. Fuller explanations of these ideas may be found in the two best one-volume collections of Gandhi’s writings, All Men Are Brothers and Non-Violent Resistance, both in paperback.

Swaraj

This term means literally “rule over oneself.” Traditionally, it signified both rule over one’s own country and also, in a spiritual rather than a political sense, rule over one’s own soul, or self-discipline. Gandhi combines those two traditional meanings, arguing in Hind Swaraj (1909) that political independence for India must also involve “spiritual freedom” (i.e., each Indian should acquire the self-knowledge that would produce liberation from fear). Gandhi thus broadens both the traditional Indian concept of swaraj and the modern idea of freedom. He speaks of “outward freedom” and “inward freedom,” or, political freedom and moral freedom respectively, Gandhi’s understanding of moral freedom is the same as Plato’s and Rousseau’s.

However, Gandhi does not connect moral freedom with the state. He believes that “inward freedom,” or moral freedom, is the result of an introspective search for self-knowledge. The most important kind of freedom that anyone could attain would be freedom from fear because only that freedom could remove the sense of insecurity that fuels both the desire to dominate and to be dominated. In discussing swaraj, Gandhi often refers to the domination or enslavement of women by men. Liberation from sexual oppression, he believed, would be much harder for India to attain than liberation from British imperialism.

By swaraj, therefore, Gandhi means the attainment of a sense of self that can come only through a quest of self-discovery, a journey perhaps through stages of emulation, exclusiveness, and inclusiveness of the sort that he experienced. Freedom in this respect is necessarily linked with a process of internal searching for what course of life is best. That process should last a lifetime. Gandhi believes that our purpose should be to gradually liberate ourselves from the attitudes of exclusivity to generate violence toward others. This is the connection between swaraj and inclusiveness: the liberated person learns to move freely among others different from himself or herself, free especially from the domination-submission syndrome that Gandhi sees at the core of exclusivity, free to experience a spirit of humanity. In this regard, there is no more important concept in Gandhi’s theory than swaraj. The prerequisite for the political liberation of any society is the personal quest undertaken by the individual. If that quest is ignored, unsuccessful, or averted, then the apparent political victory of independence, or democratic freedom, will remain superficial. The tyranny of a dictator or a majority comes easily to a state or government in which individuals neglect their primary responsibility—the search in a deeply personal sense for what course of life is best.

Satya and Ahimsa

These two concepts of truth and nonviolence are so closely related in Gandhi’s theory that he calls them two sides of the same coin. The reason for the close connection is that Gandhi believes, following ancient Indian philosophy, the highest truth is knowledge of the unity of all being. Because we are all part of one another, to inflict harm means to violate oneself. We discover that truth through swaraj: we learn to perceive ourselves in all being and all being in ourselves. As discussed above, swaraj implies a gradual process of self-discovery or, as Thoreau says, a “pilgrimage” toward truth, never being fully in possession of it. Both Gandhi and Thoreau advocate “truth pursued” rather than “truth possessed.” Gandhi says that his conception of truth “excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth, and therefore, not competent to punish.” There is no idea more central to Gandhi’s entire theory than the means-end relationship—that “ahimsa is the means; truth is the end” and that “we reap exactly as we sow.”

Satyagraha

This term may be translated in various ways. Gandhi himself coined the word, so it has no precise derivation. In its most literal sense, it denotes “holding firmly to the truth,” but because Gandhi emphasizes that power flows from adherence to the truth, satyagraha is “truth-force” or “love-force.” Professor Dalton defines it simply as “power,” to stress Gandhi’s belief that one unleashes a definite force through the practice of nonviolent action. This form of power cannot merely neutralize violence but also transform a situation by liberating reserves of energy in ways that acts of love or compassion often do.

Gandhi assumes that the means of nonviolence are superior in both moral and practical terms to the means of violence because the force contained in emotions of love and compassion is often stronger and more effective than those emotions in hatred or the desire to inflict harm. Often the former are not fully realized because they are not felt in thought as well as in deed. Gandhi seeks to explain the full force of satyagraha when he writes:

The word satyagraha is often most loosely used and is made to cover veiled violence. But as the author of the word, I may be allowed to say that it excludes every form of violence, direct or indirect, veiled or unveiled, and whether in thought, word, or deed. It is a breach of satyagraha to wish ill to an opponent or to say a harsh word to him or of him with the intention of doing harm. And often the evil thought or the evil word may, in terms of satyagraha, be more dangerous than actual violence used in the heat of the moment.
Satyagraha is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result of anger or malice. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence.

Gandhi wants to distinguish satyagraha from other terms like “passive resistance,” “civil disobedience,” and “noncooperation.” The latter two terms are components of satyagraha, but passive resistance is not. Like violent action, passive resistance is diametrically opposed to satyagraha because it allows the resister to harbor feelings of hatred and anger toward the opponent. As such, Gandhi associates passive resistance with internal violence, or what he called duragraha (holding on to selfish, narrow interest rather than to truth and the common interest). Duragraha unleashes forces of prejudice and exclusiveness rather than attitudes of compassion and inclusiveness.

**Sarvodaya**

The literal meaning of this term is “welfare of all.” Gandhi wants to invest the idea of welfare with the idea of equality. He is concerned to establish equality between men and women, but social equality requires economic justice throughout society—that is, widespread distribution of wealth. It also demands abolition of caste privilege and especially of the traditional Hindu institution of untouchability. All of those practices of social injustice and discrimination are opposed by the idea of sarvodaya.

Gandhi believed that a social revolution requires fundamental economic change. But it is not clear whether he sees social equality as reconcilable and consistent with individual liberty. Savodaya follows swaraj as social justice flows from a higher personal moral consciousness. That is the crux of Gandhi’s response to the apparent contradiction within the idea of democracy represented by Locke and Rousseau (i.e., that the dilemma of democracy implies a tradeoff between equality and freedom).

Gandhi’s concept of sarvodaya, as related to the idea of swaraj, seeks to resolve that contradiction. He argues that equality can be attained only through the liberation of each individual in society. Sarvodaya refers to a society that enjoys both liberty and equality because of its inclusive spirit. The enemy of liberty is not equality but exclusiveness. Social and economic inequality signify not more freedom but a lower moral consciousness. The latter is associated with domination and submission. More than any of the other concepts, sarvodaya expresses Gandhi’s vision of inclusiveness in a collective sense, but it rests upon the premise that every individual should pursue a quest for self-knowledge and self-realization. Gandhi holds that the highest realization is that of the integral relationship between swaraj and sarvodaya.

Gandhi sees the connection between swaraj and sarvodaya as pertinent for both the domestic and the international realms of political and economic action. In India, the problem of economic inequality stems from class and caste privilege. Yet, the problem cannot be examined in a vacuum, apart from the world context. The superpowers are guilty of domination through imperialism, of racist and economic exploitation, and of fueling the arms race. Gandhi sees all these evils as undermining the quest for sarvodaya. Social well-being depends on attaining an international as well as a national spirit of inclusiveness. Just as Martin Luther King Jr. insisted in the 1960s on the integral relationship in America between the struggle for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, so Gandhi much earlier saw a connection between international and domestic forms of exclusiveness. Sarvodaya suggests a vision of the welfare of all humanity—not just all Indians—because humanity demands a realization of our connectedness.
Recommended Political Theory Texts

Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. Careful analysis of main ideas of *The Republic*.

Barker, Ernest. *Greek Political Theory: Plato and His Predecessors* and *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*. Classic studies, thoroughly reliable.

Bluhm, W. T. *Theories of the Political System*. 3rd ed. Noteworthy mainly for the manner in which it seeks to relate theories to present-day thinking, by discussion of contemporary social scientists. Especially chaps. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11 on Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Rousseau.


Kloski, George. *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*. Especially Parts I–III.

Macpherson, C. B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, Hobbes to Locke*. This is the best of Macpherson’s substantial writings on various aspects of political theory.

McDonald, L.C. *Western Political Theory*. Useful information on the lives and key ideas of all major theorists. Chaps. 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 12, and 15 for Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Rousseau.

Sabine, George H. *A History of Political Theory*. 3rd ed. The most consistently useful text listed, pitched at an introductory level, reliable analysis of all the theorists treated in this course.

Sibley, M. Q. *Political Ideas and Ideologies: A History of Political Thought*. Clear, concise explanation of major thinkers. Chapters on Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau. Also, brief background on political life of ancient Greece (chap. 2) and sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth centuries in Italy (chap. 16), England (chap. 19), and France (chap. 22).

Strauss, Leo and J. Cropsey, eds. *History of Political Philosophy*. The opening chapter by Leo Strauss on Plato's *Republic* is excellent.

Wolin, Sheldon S. *Politics and Vision*. A more advanced text than most of the others listed here. Excellent opening chapters on political philosophy and on Plato. Also good on Machiavelli.